

Understanding the Caste System Among Christians in India: A Personal Reflection

A Personal Reflection on Caste and Christian Identity

Reflections Crossing Every Boundary: God's Love for All People 9 July 2025

Galatians 3:28

Recently, one of my nieces asked a thought-provoking question: "Do Christians in India have a caste system?" As Christians, many of us would like to believe that our faith transcends such boundaries, yet the legacy of centuries past is not so easily erased. Let me share both my perspective and a little historical context.

Our family, for example, traces its Christian heritage back five generations. Through carefully maintained genealogical records, we can proudly affirm our longstanding connection with the faith. Despite this enduring legacy, however, I have often observed—in matrimonial columns, daily interactions, and social circles—a tendency to categorise Indian Christians by community backgrounds that are reminiscent of the caste system.

Historically, when the Christian faith spread across India, it drew converts from various communities, including those considered "lower caste" by the prevailing social order. Over time, the underlying influences of the caste hierarchy seeped into Church structures, social groupings, and, regrettably, even marriage preferences. Many advertisements and conversations continue to make distinctions such as Syrian Christian, Roman Catholic, Dalit Christian, or Protestant denominations, sometimes even specifying ancestral roots or sub-communities.

Personally, I do not endorse or uphold these distinctions. They are antithetical to the very essence of Christianity. The teachings of Jesus Christ call us to a higher standard, one which sees all human beings as equal in the eyes of God. As the Bible so beautifully puts it, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28).

Christ came not to strengthen the divisions among humanity, but to bridge them. He came for Jews and Gentiles alike, welcoming all who sought truth, grace, and reconciliation. To be a Christian is, fundamentally, to be a follower of Christ—God the Son—who recognises no caste, class, or earthly hierarchy.

Celebrate your identity as a Christian, rooted in a rich family heritage

that has, for generations, borne witness to the unifying love of Christ. Remember, our first and only lasting identity is found in Him, who makes no distinction but calls each of us beloved.

May we all strive towards a community that lives out this profound truth—one where faith, rather than social divisions, is the bond that unites us.