

• There can be no doubt whatsoever that DMs and DCs are socially known and treated as distinct groups within their own religious communities. Nor is there any room for disputing the fact that they are invariably regarded as 'socially inferior' communities by their co-religionists. In short, in most social contexts, DMs and DCs are Dalits first and Muslims and Christians only second.

• While the overall status imposed on DMs and DCs is always that of an inferior group, the manner in which social distance or superiority is asserted by non-Dalits (and specially the 'upper' castes) varies both across DMs and DCs and also across regions and contexts. Such variation is present in all Dalit communities of all religions. Thus, despite the universal presence of practices of discrimination and exclusion against DMs and DCs, it is harder to generalize about the specific content and intensity of such practices.

• Universally practiced forms of discrimination and exclusion include social and cultural segregation, expressed in various forms of refusal to have any social interaction; endogamy, expressed through the universal prohibitions on Dalit-non-Dalit marriages, and through severe social sanctions on both Dalits and non-Dalits who break this taboo. Social segregation extends to the sphere of worship and religious rituals, with separate churches and priests being almost the norm among DCs and not uncommon among DMs. Forms common to both DMs and DCs include various modes of subordination in churches and mosques, as well as insistence on separate burial grounds. Occupational segregation and economic exploitation are also very common and usually related practices, though somewhat less widespread than segregation or marriage bans. Untouchability proper is sometimes practiced, but is not widespread, and its forms vary greatly.

Based on the above material, the Report finds that **there is a strong case for according Scheduled Caste status to Dalit Muslims and Christians.**