

## Since I was a dalit, ...

Wednesday, 15 August 2007

... I was not allowed to contest in the election for the student Council!

I am Alexander from Nallur village, Pudukotati district of Tamil Nadu, India. I am 32 years of age. I come from a Dalit (Parayar) caste. I completed university education and have a Master degree in Tamil Literature. I have 3 brothers and 3 sisters and my parents. I would like to share one of my experiences while I was doing my studies in the Higher Secondary level.

There was an election for the president of the student council in the school. I nominated myself for this responsibility. The criteria for this responsibility were that the student should be well known among the other students and should have studied in the school for the past 2 years. I had these criteria. There was also another student who nominated himself for this responsibility. However, the school administration did not hold the election. In stead it announced arbitrarily the name of the other student as the president of the student council. The reason for this was that the other student was from the Brahmin caste. Since I was a dalit I was not allowed to hold this responsibility. This shows that even in the school the caste discrimination is being practiced.

### Common reality of the Dalits

- 35% of the population are Dalit. Dalit means "Sons of the soil", "Broken people", "Victimised" and "Sub duded people"
- 
- 5 out of 6 among the dalits do not own any land
- 
- The dalits have only elementary level education only and even that is possible if it is given freely
- 
- The dalits work in the land of the upper caste
- 
- They work in cleaning the toilets, cleaning the streets, scavenging works,
- 
- They live in a corner of the village in small huts. These areas have no civic amenities (proper roads, drinking water, electrify, public toilets, entertainments)
- 
- The dalits can not enter into the houses of the upper caste
- 
- They can not enter into the Hindu temples and pray. They can not perform the rituals and can not become priests in these temples
- 
- They can not walk in the street of the upper caste
- 
- They can not sit in front of the upper caste person in public
-

In the bus the dalit has to give his/her seat to the upper caste

-

In the tea shops the dalits have to drink the tea in the coconut shell while the upper caste to drink in silver or glass tumblers (the dalits should not touch and drink in the same glass of that of upper caste)

-

The dalits have no respect even if they become the head of the local councils

-

Dalit young women face sexual harassment from the upper caste boys in their work places and fields

Alexander

Full-timer YCW India