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Title: Need to amend the Scheduled Castes Order of 1950 to provide reservation to Dalit Christians in the country.

SHRI PRATAP SINGH BAJWA (GURDASPUR): Hon. Chairman, Sir, I stand today to support the long-pending demand of Dalit Christians that they should be included in the category of Schedule Castes, since they share the same socio-economic status, and stigma as their counterparts. The plea of the Dalit Christians is that when the Schedule Castes Order has been altered twice on this issue, why can it not be amended again to include them? It has already been done in case of both Dalit Sikhs and Dalit Bodhs.

Most of the Dalit Christians are economically poor, educationally backward, politically powerless and socially outcaste. For this reason, Dalit Christians demand that the Indian Government should restore their legitimate rights and cease to discriminate against them on grounds of religion.

As per a recent study, inter-caste marriages between Dalits and non-Dalits among Christians is not common and is even prohibited, and social sanctions are imposed on those who break this taboo. Social segregation is also there in the sphere of worship and religious rituals as well as insistence on separate burial grounds for Dalit Christians. The study further says that since the last major judicial pronouncement on Dalit Christian issue, there is a lot more evidence available now on the social, economical and educational backwardness of Dalit Christians. As per this study, there is no compelling evidence to justify denying SC status to Dalit Christians. I am made to believe that Justice Ranganath Mishra Commission has supported my contention in its report.

Since I am personally aware of the problems being faced by the Dalit Christians because there are, around 1,50,000 Christians in my parliamentary constituency, Gurdaspur in Punjab, and since there are no schemes for their upliftment, I urge upon the hon. Minister of Minority Affairs to kindly bring in the necessary amendment to the Scheduled Castes Order of 1950 to provide reservations to the Dalit Christians in order to do justice to the long-pending demand of theirs.