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## **‘Justice Dinakaran no Dalit’**

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CHENNAI: In a fresh twist to the controversy surrounding Justice Paul Diwakar Dinakaran, a collective of civil rights groups here has questioned his Dalit background, saying he ceased to be a member of the Scheduled Castes ever since he converted to Christianity.

Addressing mediapersons here, representatives of the organisations said the entire issue of elevation of Dinakaran is premised upon serious charges of corruption and those who try to rake up his caste background were unaware of what they are doing.

Going by the Constitution, the People’s Watch said, the judge was not an SC member, instead a Christian falling under the Backward Classes. The National Commission for the Scheduled Castes was “needlessly trying to jump into an issue, which basically stems from charges of corruption alone”, the NGO’s Executive Director Henri Tiphagne noted.

O Fernandes of the Human Rights Advocacy and Research Foundation and others representing Dalit forums said the issue was only about encroachment of public property, misuse of office, and “questionable” judicial orders in certain cases, besides violation of some provisions of the Motor Vehicles Act. “Most charges stand substantiated after our field visits.”

Justice Dinakaran has 527 acres of land in Kaverirajapuram village near Tiruttani. Of this, 230.19 acres come under government ‘poromboke’ and ‘adineenam’ category.

The locals used the lands for purposes like cattle grazing. Their misappropriation has affected the local poor, mainly Dalits and other backward people. “Let all charges be probed. If he is exonerated, then its fine,” Tiphagne said.

Asked how Dinakaran could continue as the Chief Justice of the Karnataka HC if the charges were true, he said, “Ideally he must not. But, we cannot ask everything at the same moment.” A detailed account of alleged misappropriation of wealth would be sent to the CJI and the collegium.