

QUARTERLY

MINO-VIEW LAHORE

Voice of minorities and oppressed people in South Asian societies



Growing Crimes Against Dalits in India Despite Special Laws



Bangladesh: Ethnic Minorities Face Higher School Drop-out Risk



Sri Lanka: No Justice in Aid Worker Massacre



In Nepal, Scholarships Empower Dalit Girls

Will Dalits Head Newly Proposed Indian State Telangana?



Proposed Territory of Telangana

Inter-Religious Dialogue in Pakistan



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EDITORIAL

South Asia is rich in human resources but poor in human rights. If human resources are properly managed, it brings peace and stability in the region. Caste is considered to be the ground cause for violation of human rights resulting in other kinds of discrimination such as racial, religious, social, ethnic, economic, etc. Caste, in fact, is a crime but practiced in all parts of south Asian societies because it is deeply rooted and cannot be changed by government alone. In order to curb such caste-based inequalities, we need to motivate civil society, local and International organizations. Such as UNO, and European Union to work for the cause more effectively. Mino-View is a quarterly magazine of SGRHF to create above- mentioned awareness among the people for various kinds of injustice, oppression, tyranny and inequality in the region. DR B.R Ambedker is no doubt a great champion of human rights for oppressed people in South Asia. He himself is dalit and his dalit nation has been deprived and denied human rights for the last five thousand years. They are in reality the biggest minority in South Asia known as Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes (SC/ST/OBC) Dalits are certainly worst victims but the movement of Dalit empowerment is also gaining grounds. It is likely that a Dalit politician will become chief minister of Talagana, a newly proposed state in South India. In spite of this fact, Prof. A Ramaiah writes that crime against Dalits is rapidly growing in the region. He is of the view that Untouchability is still practiced in 80 per cent of Indian villages. Crimes against Dalits – ranging from humiliating verbal abuses to rape and murder, are also widespread. Prof A Ramaiah also points out that the crimes against Dalits in Chief Minister Ship of dalit Mayawati is increased due to the anger of high - caste people in the state. SGRHF, in collaboration with Interfaith Dialogue for Peace and Inter-Religious Peace Council organized a seminar on Inter - Religious Dialogue in Pakistan. Mr. Brian and Mr. Mike also participated in the seminar representing International House (USA). The present issue of Mino-View is a little effort of SGRHF to share the events and issues of minorities for bringing the spirit of human brotherhood and peace full co-existence in the region. We welcome feedback from our respected readers, invite the scholars to write for Mino-View and join our hands to develop an egalitarian society.

Inter-Religious Dialogue in Pakistan

2nd July, 2013



All the religions teach love, peace and brotherhood and we all should avoid confrontation. **Yousaf Irfan Director SGRHF**

We have seen that many people of different religions not only live together but respect each other too. **Mr. Mike**

There is no issue of minority and majority in the country. **Sardar Ramesh Singh Arora (MPA) Punjab**

I pray that the aim and purpose for which we have gathered is fulfilled. **Bishop I. Paul**

It is a rare gathering where people of various religions share their views and expressions. **Mr. Brian**

We celebrate Diwali, Holi, Sikh festivals and the birthday of The Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) together. **Munawar Chand**

Sir Ganga Ram Heritage Foundation, Interfaith Dialogue for Peace and Inter-religious Peace Council in collaboration organized a program at Dyal Singh Research & Cultural Forum auditorium on the subject of “*Inter-Religious Dialogue in Pakistan*”. All the representatives of different religions participated and expressed their views on the topic. Large gathering of audience belonging to all religions were present in the hall to hear the views of these participants. Director SGRHF, Prof. Yousaf Irfan gave a welcome address and among the participants who spoke were Shiraz Cheema, Bishop I. Paul (Christian), Dr. Munwar Chand (Hindu), Sardar Rawinder Singh (Sikh) Mr. Mick (American), Mr. Brain (American), Maulana Javed Akbar Saqi (Muslim), Sardar Ramesh Singh Arora, (Sikh), MPA and Mr. Asim Butt, Chairman Inter-Religious Peace Council. Mr. Amjad Chishti conducted the seminar as stage secretary.

Prof. Yousaf Irfan (Director SGRHF)

The director SGRHF, Prof. Yousaf Irfan gave a warm welcome to all the representatives of different religions who came for participation in the dialogue of inter-religious harmony. He highlighted the need and importance of interfaith harmony in the present global environment. He said that South Asia is religiously very fertile in the sense it gave birth to many religions such as Buddhism, Hinduism and Sikhism. So in this context inter-religious harmony is very important for this region. He further said that all the religions teach love, peace and brotherhood and we all should avoid confrontation. The teaching of all religions revolves around respect of God, Prophets and humanity and all human being represent cooperation of civilization not clash of civilization and we should work for such noble and lofty cause.

Mr. Shiraz Cheema

He said majority and minority are present in every country. As minority is fewer therefore their chance of committing mistakes is less as compared to majority who are prone to make more mistakes. He said that his organization will keep on working to create a peaceful atmosphere.

Bishop I. Paul

He said that in the recent past when Christians were ill treated in Joseph Colony, Lahore, no one practically came forward. Here we all talked about inter-religious harmony, but practically it is different. I pray that the aim and purpose for which we have gathered is fulfilled. We can all live with love and affection and avoid being conservative.

Mr. Munawar Chand

Today we have gathered under the banner of inter-religious harmony. He said no religion talked about hatred but instead teaches love. We are first Pakistani and under this banner we are one. Talking about inter-religious harmony he said, we celebrate Diwali, Holi, Sikh festivals and the birthday of The Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) together.

Sardar Ravinder Singh

Every religion believes in one God. We call God by different names. Some says God, some Bhagwan, some Wahay Guru and some says Allah. We are sent by one God to love each other. The main purpose of organizing such programs is to motivate participants of different religions for inter-religious harmony.

Mr. Mike

I will talk on three things: - 1. From where have I come, 2. My experience in Pakistan, 3. Last of all a note of thanks.

He said that International House (USA) is a place where people of different religions and culture from all over the world come and stay together. Brian and I also came from there. We have seen that many people of different religions not only live together but respect each other too. This is a pleasant experience. I wish more of such work should be done in Pakistan. He said western media is portraying a wrong picture of Pakistan, according to them Pakistan is a dangerous country and people are not friendly, but in the light of my experience I can say that their view is wrong. The hospitality and respect which Brian and I got here is commendable. Pakistan and its people are beautiful. People of all type of religions, Sikh, Hindu, Christian and Muslims are very loving. He further expressed that dialogue regarding inter-religious harmony

are very important and as a result the impression will arise that how close we are to each other. He ended his speech with the note of thanks.

Mr. Brian

Here people of various religions and notion are gathered. Including all of your religions, my religion is also very special. He said that it is difficult to understand views and thinking of other religions. I belong to an orthodox Christian family they are of the view that other religions are not good. I was not happy with this sort of thinking. When I came across different religions and studied them closely, I felt how good they are. I suggested to my wife that we should meet people of different religions. We started our journey and visited almost more than 70 countries. We found out that more we interact with people of different religions; the more quality of peace and brotherhood will develop among us. I wish the people who are present here should get some lesson from here. He further said that it is a rare gathering where people of various religions share their views and expressions. Study is going on in Columbia University regarding inter-religious harmony. Now the experience of mine, till now taught me that more we will know each other the more peace and brotherhood will increase. In this reference I have already worked on Middle East, now I am planning to work on Europe. This journey is very hard and long, we have to cross all the boundaries and barriers to meet each other. He ended his speech with the note of thanks.

Maulana Javeed Akbar Saqi

He said that all the representative of different religions gave message of their religion. There is no doubt that the greatest religion is humanity and out of all religions Islam is the only religion which pleads that the murder of one person is like the murder of whole humanity. In Pakistan minorities are always respected and honoured. He said that those who kill or murder people do not belong to any religion. Such people are a stigma in the name of religion. In his thanking note he praised Sir Ganga Ram Heritage Foundation for organizing such an event which has given pride to Pakistan.

Sardar Ramesh Singh Arora (MPA) Punjab

He congratulated SGRHF on organizing such a dignified function. He said that for the last few years the country is going through a difficult phase which is disturbing its peace. Regarding this context, this kind of event such as dialogue for peace is of great importance. Quaid-e-Azam always spoke on religious freedom and peace. Pakistan remained a peaceful country. Here people of all religions have complete freedom but for the last few years the negative forces are trying to spoil the soft image of Pakistan. He strongly said that there is no issue of minority and majority in the country, we all are one and proud to be Pakistani.

Mr. Asim Butt (Chairman, Inter-Religious Peace Council)

He said that for the last 15 years, our organization has been working for interfaith harmony in the region. Representative of all religions are present here. I.R.P.C in Pakistan is working on humanity and prosperity. We have invited Mr. Mike and Mr. Brian from America to show them that Pakistan is not a terrorist state. We are friendly people and also love others.

Will Dalits Head Newly Proposed Indian State Telangana?

SCs/STs comprise 24.7% of Telangana's population while the share goes up to 26.9% outside Hyderabad

Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) already announce that Dalit will be telangana's first chief Minister

If it is possible then it will be an another Indian state headed by a Dalit

Will Congress make a Dalit Chief Minister in Telangana?

In recent past mayawati a female Dalit was the head of Uttar Pradesh state as CM

Bifurcation of the state will benefit dalits in all aspects as they would emerge as a strong political force

Babasaheb advocated small states to empower dalits long ago and the division of AP would at least help them now, observed dalit leader Katti Padma Rao



Proposed territory of Talengana

Telangana is a new proposed state to be formed out of the state of Andhra Pradesh in India. The city of Hyderabad would serve as the joint capital of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh for ten years. On 30 July 2013, the ruling Congress party resolved to request the Central government to make steps in accordance with the Constitution to form a separate state of Telangana (the 29th state of Republic of India), within a definite timeframe. The timeline for the

creation of the new state involves an elaborate process, which has been allotted a 122 days, or at least four months. The split has to be approved by the Parliament of India before the state is officially created.



Members of Andhra Pradesh Legislative Council from coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema regions hold a meeting in Hyderabad to discuss the Centre's decision to carve out a separate Telangana State

On 9 December 2009, the Government of India announced the process of forming the standalone Telangana state. However, this process was halted just two weeks later, after Members of Legislative Assembly & Council from Coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema regions had submitted resignations in response to the announcement. Again on 30 July, 2013 the UPA government has announced Telangana as the new 29th independent state of Republic of India.

SCs/STs comprise 24.7% of Telangana's population while the share goes up to 26.9% outside Hyderabad and it is most likely that newly formed state Telangana having a Dalit Chief Minister if it is possible then it will be an another Indian state that headed by a Dalit. In recent past mayawati a female Dalit was the head of Uttar Pradesh state as CM from 13 May 2007 to 7 March 2012.

Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) already announce that Dalit will be telangana's first chief Minister (TRS became political force in 2004). TRS chief K. Chandrasekhara Rao reiterated that his party would make a Dalit as its chief minister if it came to power in Telangana state. He made it clear that he would not be in the race for the chief minister's post. He pointed out that backward classes, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and minorities constitute 85 percent of Telangana's population (3.22 crore). Rao comes from Velama community, a forward caste in Telangana.



TRS chief K. Chandrasekhara Rao

KCR promised 12 percent reservations to minorities in jobs and education as their population in Telangana would be higher than their existing population in Andhra Pradesh. He assured that all steps would be taken for the promotion of Urdu

KCR, as Rao is popularly known, said TRS would play a role in rebuilding Telangana. "Only time will tell whether this will be a direct role or an indirect role," he said.

He declined to answer any queries on the possible merger of his party with Congress, saying TRS would announce its political strategy only after the passage of Telangana bill in parliament.

He said he had his own doubts on the passage of Telangana bill in view of the past experience and also the fact that bill for women's reservation and reservation in promotion for scheduled castes/tribes were still pending.

KCR promised 12 percent reservations to minorities in jobs and education as their population in Telangana would be higher than their existing population in Andhra Pradesh. He assured that all steps would be taken for the promotion of Urdu.

The choice of a dalit from Telangana as deputy CM in Andhra Pradesh has long held out the possibility, first raised by Telangana Rashtra Samithi after it became a political force in 2004. Congress made another dalit from Telangana deputy speaker of the assembly.



Congress leadership

Congress insiders and observers believe that Telangana presents the best chance to end the barren patch that keeps coming up for sniggers and which questions the party's commitment to political empowerment of the weaker

But it is very important question rose by political observers that will Congress make a Dalit Chief Minister in Telangana?

The question is uppermost in the minds of observers as the Centre gets down to dividing Andhra Pradesh, with Congress having last put a dalit in the top post over three decades ago - Jagannath Pahadia in Rajasthan.



Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Kirankumar Reddy

Congress leaders believe the choice of CM would depend on the combination the party opts for after division. If Andhra continues to have a Reddy at the helm, the chances of Reddy claimants would be bleak in Telangana.

The new state has a strong presence of dalits along with OBCs and Reddys in a diverse social mix favourable for Congress. With the likelihood of Telangana becoming a reality by the year-end, Congress may find it alluring to hoist a dalit CM to send a signal to the community nationally ahead of the 2014 elections.

Congress leaders believe the choice of CM would depend on the combination the party opts for after division. If Andhra continues to have a Reddy at the helm, the chances of Reddy claimants would be bleak in Telangana.

But if the party plumps for a non-Reddy (like Kapu) in Andhra, thinking the Reddys would anyway side with YSR Congress, and then a Reddy would be in contention in Telangana.

Significance is attached to Congress recently passing a law on SC/ST sub-plan, making it mandatory for state ministries to spend on dalit welfare in proportion to their population. The stress on dalit agenda is seen as dictated by the exodus of the community to Jaganmohan Reddy, largely because they identify the welfare schemes with his late father YS Rajasekhara Reddy.

A dalit CM from Congress ranks has become a near impossibility, contrasting poorly with Mayawati who is the product of a bahujan movement dedicated to weakening the grand old party's hold over the community.

Congress insiders and observers believe that Telangana presents the best chance to end the barren patch that keeps coming up for sniggers and which questions the party's commitment to political empowerment of the weaker caste.

Mean while Dalit groups in Seemandhra believe that state bifurcation would be a boon as it would effectively end the domination of the two upper castes - Reddys and Kammas - in the

political arena of the region. Add to this their growing population; SCs in the region feel it would help them take centre stage.



Dalits will emerge as a strong political force in the divided state as almost all the districts in the region have a considerable population of dalits

Dalit groups believe that the younger generation of SCs would emerge as a force to be reckoned with as they would prefer to be stakeholders.

The SC population in Seemandhra has witnessed a jump from 16% to 18.5% in the recent census and the presence of highly educated youth among them is expected to change the fortunes of the people who have so far been largely downtrodden.

The situation in rural areas is changing fast as dalits want to play a bigger role with the support of all sections of society. I think that we have crossed the phase of struggles and "Babasaheb advocated small states to empower dalits long ago and the division of AP would at least help them now," observed dalit leader Katti Padma Rao. revolts," said Korivi Vinay Kumar of the Dalit Bahujana Front.

He said dalits will emerge as a strong political force in the divided state as almost all the districts in the region have a considerable population of dalits. "Bifurcation of the state will benefit dalits in all aspects as they would emerge as a strong political force," said Melam Bhagya Rao, another dalit activist.



Dr Ambedkar

Dalit movements after the two incidents made the sections a strong force in all districts of Seemandhra and no political party could take them for granted. A large number of dalit youth from the villages also took to higher education

A few SC leaders such as Damodaram Sanjeevaiah (Rayalaseema) and Koneru Rangarao (coastal Andhra) had risen to the level of chief minister and deputy chief minister respectively.

GMC Balayogi had become Lok Sabha speaker and Pratibha Bharathi the assembly speaker. But they failed to leave an imprint on the community in the region because of the power politics of the dominant castes.

Dalits in the coastal region are relatively better educated and own cultivable land in some districts. However, treating them as polling-day commodities had led to resentment in the community.

From 1980 to 2000, the younger generation took on the landlord community and the state witnessed virtual rebellions following the dalit massacre of Karamchedu in 1985 and the mass murder of dalits in Tsundur village of Guntur in 1991.

Dalit movements after the two incidents made the sections a strong force in all districts of Seemandhra and no political party could take them for granted. A large number of dalit youth from the villages also took to higher education and industries.

Sources:

Dalit will be Telangana's first chief minister, says TRS chief. *Business Standard*

Will Telangana see a dalit CM from Congress?: *Times of India*

Dalit groups see new hope in Andhra division. *Times of India*

Growing Crimes Against Dalits in India Despite Special Laws

By Professor A. Ramaiah

Despite 1989 (POA Act) legislation and the establishment of special commissions to monitor its working, caste discrimination and caste-based crimes persist throughout India.

According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) registered crimes committed against SCs is increasing from 17,646 in 1991 To 33,594 in 2009

Untouchability is practiced in 80 per cent of Indian villages. Crimes against SCs – ranging from humiliating verbal abuses to rape and murder – are also widespread

There were 203,576 registered cases of crimes committed against SCs by non-SCs in India between 2003 and 2009

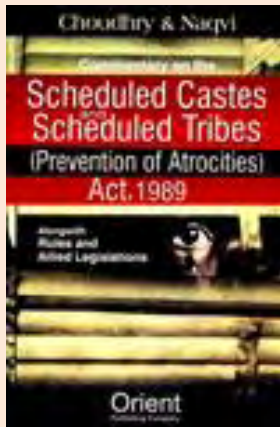
The conviction rate in IPC cases was 40.8 per cent in 2001, whereas it was only 34.1 per cent in special cases. The situation worsened by 2009 with the conviction rate declining to 29.6 per cent in special cases

Civil society organizations have proposed many amendments to the special laws regarding caste discrimination, which should be urgently incorporated to improve their effectiveness.



The Dalits, also known as Scheduled Castes (SCs), have been the victims of the Hindu caste system for centuries. They are subjected to numerous forms of caste discrimination and brutal violence, including rape and murder. A legal ban against caste discrimination and untouchability was introduced in British India under the Caste Disabilities Removal Act XXI of 1850. Later, the Government of India Act 1935 extended special protections to the SCs. Between 1943 and 1950, 17 laws were enacted by different Indian states to end caste-based disabilities. However, no national legislation was passed until the Untouchability (Offenses) Act, 1955, which was amended in 1976 to make its provisions more

stringent and renamed the Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955 (PCR Act). To deal with the atrocities committed against SCs, another law – the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 (POA Act) – came into effect in January 1990.



Crimes against SCs – ranging from humiliating verbal abuses to rape and murder – are also widespread. In this context, this post asks why special laws to protect SCs have not been as effective as desired

Despite this legislation and the establishment of special commissions to monitor its working, caste discrimination and caste-based crimes persist throughout India. It is well documented that the police are reluctant to register complaints about caste-based discrimination and violence so national statistics on caste crimes against SCs are grossly underestimated figures. However, even this limited data is enough to understand the gravity of the problem.

According to one study, untouchability is practiced in 80 per cent of Indian villages. Crimes against SCs – ranging from humiliating verbal abuses to rape and murder – are also widespread. There were 203,576 registered cases of crimes committed against SCs by non-SCs in India between 2003 and 2009; 106,522 of these cases were tried in courts. In this context, this post asks why special laws to protect SCs have not been as effective as desired, even though they have had a considerable deterrent effect.

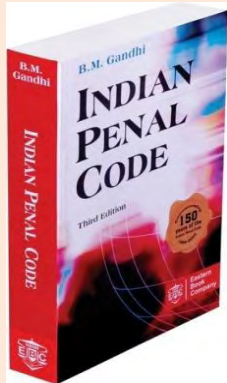


The total number of reported cases of SCs being murdered by the non-SCs also rose from 493 in 1981 to 624 in 2009.

According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data, the total number of registered crimes committed against SCs is increasing: 14,318 crimes were committed against SCs in 1981; the number increased to 17,646 in 1991, 33,501 in 2001, and with some variations in the intervening years, remained high at 33,594 in 2009. The total number of reported cases of SCs being murdered by the non-SCs also rose from 493 in 1981 to 624 in 2009. A similar rising trend is evident with regard to rape cases as well.

That said, the trend for completing investigations into registered special cases by the police is encouraging: police completed investigations in up to 87 per cent of registered cases throughout

India between 2001 and 2009; further, 95 per cent of all disposed cases were charge-sheeted for trial in the courts. However, the conviction rate for such cases remains discouraging.



At the National level, the NCRB data reveals a higher conviction rate in IPC cases as compared to special cases

India's courts dispose not only those cases involving SCs that are registered under the Indian Penal Code (IPC), but also special cases—that is, crimes committed against SCs by non-SCs that are registered under the PCR and POA acts and are meant to be tried in special courts established exclusively for the purpose.

At the national level, the NCRB data reveals a higher conviction rate in IPC cases as compared to special cases. For instance, in 2001, the conviction rate in IPC cases was 40.8 per cent, whereas it was only 34.1 per cent in special cases. The situation worsened by 2009 with the conviction rate declining to 29.6 per cent in special cases and increasing to 41.7 per cent in IPC cases, further widening the gap.

This trend is evident at the state level as well, with a few exceptions. In Uttar Pradesh, for example, particularly during the chief minister ship of Mayawati, the conviction rate has been extremely high in both IPC and special cases. At the same time, UP has also witnessed an increase in the incidence of crimes against Dalits. This can be attributed to the Dalits' growing freedom and assertion as well as the state police's prompt registering of caste-based crimes.



During the chief minister ship of Mayawati, the conviction rate has been extremely high in both IPC and special cases

Liberal education and global exposure have made some of the beneficiaries of the caste system, particularly the upper-castes; disassociate themselves from their caste affiliations. But discrimination persists, preventing special laws to protect SCs from being more effective. A major problem is that the Backwards Castes, or Shudras, abide by the caste system and, considering themselves comparatively upper-caste, commit violence against Dalits.

The relative improvement in the educational and economic status and access to bureaucratic and political power that the Dalits achieved with the help of various protective, legislative and developmental measures are provoking a backlash. Instead of considering SCs' rise in political and bureaucratic structures as an achievement of parliamentary democracy, upper-caste Hindus often perceive it as a direct threat to their caste supremacy, leading to violent reactions.

Moreover, although SCs/Dalits account for more than 16 per cent of the Indian population, they constitute too small a number in each village to confront the upper castes, pressurize the police to ensure their legal protection, or otherwise mobilize against caste oppression. They are also divided among themselves on sub-caste lines, though to a lesser extent. It also doesn't help that most Dalits are landless and depend on the very castes that violate their rights to earn their livelihoods.



Court judgments in most untouchability and atrocity cases are unduly delayed. Due process – including investigation processes, court hearings, appeals, etc. – subjects SC victims to immense mental, economic and social hardship, discouraging others from protecting their rights under India's special laws.

As the data presented here suggests, legislation is undermined by both social and systemic problems. For example, court judgments in most untouchability and atrocity cases are unduly delayed. Due process – including investigation processes, court hearings, appeals, etc. – subjects SC victims to immense mental, economic and social hardship, discouraging others from protecting their rights under India's special laws. Further disincentives arise from the fact that overwhelming caste loyalties often influence the decisions of the police and judiciary. In this context, the principal architect of the Indian Constitution and LSE graduate B.R. Ambedkar argued that caste-based conflict is inevitable as long as there is a caste system. He therefore called for inter-caste marriages to bring people together. Later, recognizing the violent opposition to inter-caste marriage among upper castes, Ambedkar embraced Buddhism and, with a view of ensuring them a life of dignity and freedom, proposed a “separate settlement” for the Dalits.

In recent years, civil society organizations have proposed many amendments in the special laws regarding caste discrimination, which should be urgently incorporated to improve their effectiveness. Moreover, the police and judiciary should be sensitized to caste discrimination and made more accountable for their handling of caste-based crimes against SCs. Above all; those who oppress SCs should be encouraged to reframe the basis of social relations.

Professor A. Ramaiah is a TISS visiting fellow at London School of Economics (LSE's) Asia Research Centre.

MEPs question EU policy on caste issue

The European Union needs to take a much more robust stance on caste discrimination



A discussion in the European Parliament's Development Committee on 8 July focused on the need for an EU policy on caste discrimination. MEPs believe that this serious human rights problem warrants EU priority action and are preparing a resolution on the issue.

Leonidas Donskis and Thijs Berman called for a more active EU policy on caste discrimination

This view - shared by many European parliamentarians – was expressed by Dutch MEP Thijs Berman during discussion on caste discrimination in the European Parliament's Committee on Development (DEVE). Berman and his Lithuanian colleague Leonidas Donskis called for the recognition of caste as a ground of discrimination which must be tackled together with other grounds of discrimination, like ethnicity, race, religion, gender or sexuality.

According to Donskis, caste discrimination destroys the lives of hundreds of millions of people, but EU policy still does not reflect this. He noted that the EU has guidelines on LGBTI, human rights defenders and other groups, but that the large group of people suffering from caste discrimination – 260 million - is hardly mentioned anywhere.

Mr Donskis stressed that caste discrimination exists not only in South Asia, but in countries like Yemen and Nigeria and that its victims have almost no chances for development. Hence, it is

important to make the post-2015 development agenda caste-sensitive. Women are particularly vulnerable as they suffer from multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination based on caste, gender and religion.

“EU must raise the issue in the realm of EU-Indian relations, such as discussions on trade and investment agreements”, Mr Donskis said. He also raised his concerns about “a very strong lobby that tries to prevent this topic from reaching the EU and even the EP agenda”.

India’s unwillingness to discuss the caste issue was also mentioned by Thijs Berman, who warned that without an EU policy on caste discrimination, it would fall off the agenda: “We need to make caste-based discrimination a priority more than it is today,” he said.

Mr. Berman welcomed the resolution on caste discrimination that has been prepared in DEVE, and which calls on the EU to strengthen its policy on the issue. The resolution will be voted on in the European Parliament in September.

During the discussion, representatives of the European Commission and the European External Action Service answered five questions from DEVE regarding EU action on caste discrimination. Michael Swann of the EEAS stated that during EU discussions on its human rights policy it was agreed that “local human rights strategies would be the best way of dealing with the particular issue, because it affects certain regions more than others.”

According to Swann, the Commission has no plans for guidelines on caste-based discrimination “not least because of the particular nature of caste”. He noted that caste is deeply rooted within some societies and cannot be changed by government decisions alone. “It is better to work with civil society and international organizations to shift the terms of the debate,” he added.

This position borders on a cultural relativist approach to human rights, IDSN coordinator Rikke Nöhrhind said in a comment on the DEVE discussion.

“It seems that if a human rights problem is as sensitive as caste discrimination and “deeply rooted”, the EU will leave it to civil society and international organizations. This is tantamount to saying that the EU should not deal with other human rights issues - such as women’s rights and homophobia - that are also related to traditions and ingrained values. However, governments must be held accountable for human rights violations and challenged to protect its citizens against them.”

She also stressed that “the EU must speak out clearly and loudly on one of the most inhumane and systematic human rights abuses in the world, and develop a clear policy that contributes to initiatives for the elimination of this form of discrimination.”

Source: International Dalit solidarity Network

Pakistani Dalits The Disadvantaged Survivors



16 percent Pakistani Dalits get basic education and only 3 percent of them reach graduation level, while 2 percent go for postgraduate studies

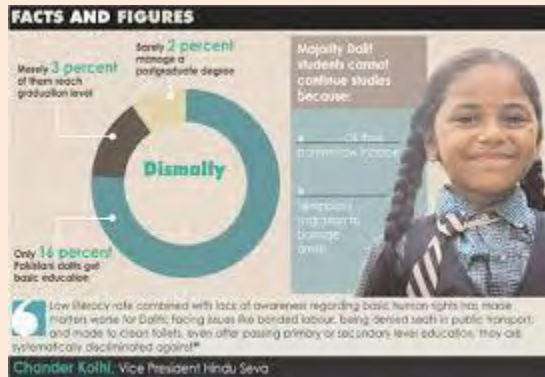
Majority of Dalit students are compelled to leave their education between primary and middle level because of their parent's low income

Low literacy rate combined with lack of awareness regarding basic human rights has made matters worse for Dalits

Dalits often work as landless peasants on farms of some of the most powerful feudal lords, who treat them as slaves

Dalits or co-called lower caste Hindus - comprising 90 percent of Pakistan's religious minorities and are the most underprivileged, with lowest access to education, said a study conducted by Pakistan Hindu Seva (Welfare Trust).

The report said only 16 percent Pakistani Dalits get basic education and only 3 percent of them reach graduation level, while 2 percent go for postgraduate studies.



Explaining facts behind the low literacy ratio, the study said that it was because of the dropout ratio of Dalit students during primary and middle school, as their parents find it difficult to afford their educational expenses. Even though the public sector schools give exemptions, the rest including uniform, school shoes, and books are the parent's responsibility, which they find difficult to fulfil.

Majority of Dalit students are compelled to leave their education between primary and middle level because of their parent's low income, who neither work in public sector nor on daily wages, but rather do mean jobs to survive.

Droughts in the Thar Desert frequently prompt temporary migration of Dalits to barrage areas to scour water, livelihood and fodder for their livestock. This seasonal migration affects their children's education," said the study.



According to Indian National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights, Dalits are 'outcasts' falling outside the traditional four-fold caste system consisting of the hereditary Brahmin, Kshatriya,

Vaishya, and Shudra classes; they are considered impure and polluting and are therefore physically and socially excluded and isolated from the rest of society.

Dalits are on the last step of ladder of Hindu caste system, in which they are treated as third-grade citizens. Most Pakistani Dalits live in different districts of Sindh with a majority in Mirpurkhas division and Thar Desert.

Dalits often work as landless peasants on farms of some of the most powerful feudal lords, who treat them as slaves. "In many places, the landlords ask Dalits about the strength of their family members for assistance in work, prior to employing them. Resultantly, influential land owners take Dalit children under their custody, which is another reason behind low literacy ratio," the study claims.

In Pakistan, parliament approved thousands of programmes for health, education and poverty reduction during each of their reign, but none of the programmes specifically focus on the issues faced by Dalits, said Vice President Hindu Seva, Chander Kolhi.

Low literacy rate combined with lack of awareness regarding basic human rights has made matters worse for Dalits; facing issues like bonded labour, being denied seats in public transport, and made to clean toilets, even after passing primary or secondary level education, they are systematically discriminated against, he said.

Government must know that minorities are a valuable asset and have been living here for a long time, even before partition. It is their right to get complete and free education, good health facilities at hospitals, proper freedom and employment as per their eligibility, said Kolhi.

It is unfortunate and sad, that it has been more than six decades since the establishment of Pakistan, but the discrimination and gap between minorities and majority keeps widening with no hope in sight, said Hindu Seva President Sanjesh Kumar.

Source: Daily Times

Only 43% of the Dalit population is literate, and the rate is much lower among Dalit women.

Seven years ago, 25 Dalit girls were given a chance to go to college. Today, they are role models for other Dalit daughters, and their parents.

Two of the 25 participants have finished their graduate studies; 13 have completed their undergraduate programmes; five more are waiting for their final results.

Living with 24 students of different cultures from different parts of the country helped me learn a lot about their cultures.
Shreepaile

Such efforts to educate girls is beneficial to the community as a whole.
Bidhyanath Koirala an educator

Success story

In Nepal, Scholarships Empower Dalit Girls



In Nepalese society, where caste-based discrimination is all-too common, being a Dalit ("untouchable") means facing a life without access to opportunity – educational, economic or political.

Being female merely adds to the challenge. According to the 2001 census, only 43% of the Dalit population is literate, and the rate is much lower among Dalit women.

Dalit women face double discrimination – added to the discrimination based on caste, they also face gender-based discrimination," said Birendra Bishwokarma, executive

director of the Professional Development and Research Centre (PDRC), a non-governmental organization that works on Dalit issues. Even if they are talented, Dalit girls rarely get chances to get higher education and reach leadership positions. Back in 2006, PDRC took steps to change that, through "Empowering Dalit Daughters," a scholarship programme for Dalit girls.

With financial support from the Nepal Youth Foundation, it embarked on a nationwide talent hunt to select 25 talented and motivated Dalit girls. They received scholarships to prestigious colleges in Kathmandu, as well as food and accommodation at a hostel in the capital for six years.



Hema Shreepaile, 23, an Empowering Dalit Daughters programme scholar, won the Gold Medal for scoring highest marks in the Bachelors in Hotel Management from

She felt very happy to have received the scholarship. It helped her in many ways. It supported her financially to achieve her dreams. It also provided her a learning environment, helped her become more confident about herself and develop leadership qualities

Before being placed in top colleges, the students received training in leadership, counseling and communications skills.

The objective of the programme was to create role models out of these girls, which we believe will help make people aware about the importance of educating their daughters, It was also an effort to bring the leadership developed at local level into national level.

Better education has translated into better opportunities for these young women. Hema Shreepaile, 23, and Mala Nepali, 24, are two of them. Shreepaile works at the prestigious Hotel Annapurna in Kathmandu, while Nepali is employed with an education consultancy in the city.

Shreepaile, who hails from Kailali district in western Nepal, scored Gold Medal from Tribhuvan University in 2012 for earning highest marks in the Bachelor's in Hotel Management programme.

She felt very happy to have received the scholarship. It helped her in many ways. It supported her financially to achieve her dreams. It also provided her a learning environment, helped her become more confident about herself and develop leadership qualities.

Living with 24 students of different cultures from different parts of the country helped her learn a lot about their cultures, as well.

The programme has not only helped her, but inspired others.

More and more people in her community began sending their daughters to school

Two of the 25 participants have finished their graduate studies; 13 have completed their undergraduate programmes; five more are waiting for their final results.

According to Bishwokarma, the assistance will continue. Although as of now, we do not have funds to repeat the programme, PDRC intends to keep supporting more Dalit girls by providing them with training and connecting them with scholarship opportunities nationally and internationally.

Bidhyanath Koirala, an educator, believes such efforts to educate girls is beneficial to the community as a whole. "Since girls are more connected to their family and their community, educating girls can have huge impact.

Source: By Surath Giri for Khabar South Asia in Kathmandu

News

Sri Lanka: No Justice in Aid Worker Massacre

July 31, 2013



(New York) – The Sri Lankan government has made no real progress in holding accountable those responsible for the execution style slaying of 17 aid workers seven years ago despite renewed international calls for action.

On August 4, 2006, gunmen executed 17 Sri Lankan aid workers – 16 ethnic Tamils, four of them women, and a Muslim – with the Paris-based international humanitarian agency Action Contre La Faim (Action Against Hunger, ACF) in their office compound in the town of Mutur in eastern Trincomalee district. The killings occurred after a several-day battle between government forces and the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) for control of the town. The

ACF team had been providing assistance to survivors of the December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami.

“The Rajapaksa government is good at throwing bones to the international community, but not at taking serious measures to find and punish those responsible for serious abuses,” said James Ross, legal and policy director at Human Rights Watch. “If the families of 17 aid workers can’t get justice for their loss, it’s hard to be hopeful for anyone else.



Sri Lankan, President Mahinda Rajapaksa



James Ross, legal and policy director, Human Rights Watch

In July 2013, the government of President Mahinda Rajapaksa, in apparent response to increasing international pressure, took long overdue steps by directing state lawyers and investigators to review the case and prepare a comprehensive list of witnesses. This was one of several recent moves by the government to adopt previously disregarded recommendations of its Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) in 2011, created following the defeat of the LTTE in May 2009.

The University Teachers for Human Rights (Jaffna) has published detailed findings on the Mutur killings based on accounts from witnesses and weapons analysis that implicate government security forces in the area at the time. The group reported that two police constables and naval Special Forces commandos were alleged to be directly responsible, and that senior police and justice officials were linked to an alleged cover-up.

In July 2007, the Presidential Commission of Inquiry, established after the Mutur killings to investigate 16 major human rights cases, exonerated the army and navy in the massacre and instead blamed LTTE forces or Muslim militia. Families of ACF workers who wished to testify to the commission reported security forces personnel. The commission’s full report to President

Rajapaksa has never been made public.

In March 2013, the United Nations Human Rights Council adopted a resolution on Sri Lanka, reiterating the concerns of a 2012 council resolution, which focused on the lack of accountability for human rights violations. The council called upon the Sri Lankan government to “conduct an independent and credible investigation” into alleged rights abuses and “take all necessary additional steps” to meet its legal obligations to ensure justice and accountability for all Sri Lankans.



UN Human Rights Council

The Sri Lankan government has long had a poor record of investigating serious human rights abuses, and impunity has been a persistent problem. Despite a backlog of cases of unlawful killings and enforced disappearance going back two decades that run into the tens of thousands, there have been only a small number of prosecutions. Past efforts to address violations through the creation of ad hoc mechanisms in Sri Lanka have produced very few prosecutions. On July 26, the government announced yet another commission to look into cases of enforced disappearances.

On May 23, 2009, shortly after the LTTE's defeat, Rajapaksa and UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon issued a joint statement in Sri Lanka in which the government said it “will take measures to address” the need for an accountability process for violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law.

In April 2011, a panel of experts authorized by the UN secretary-general issued a comprehensive report on violations of international law by both sides during the final months of the armed

conflict. It called on the Sri Lankan government to carry out genuine investigations and recommended that the UN create an independent international mechanism to monitor the government's implementation of the panel recommendations, conduct an independent investigation, and collect and safeguard evidence.



UN high commissioner for human rights, Navi Pillay



Family members of the mutur victims

The UN high commissioner for human rights, Navi Pillay, is scheduled to visit Sri Lanka in late August. Human Rights Watch repeated its call for the UN secretary-general or other UN body to create an independent international investigation into violations by government forces and the LTTE. This investigation should make recommendations for the prosecution of those responsible for serious abuses during the armed conflict, including the ACF case.

Participating countries at the Commonwealth, Heads of Government meeting in Sri Lanka in November should publicly express concern about the government's minimal response to these and other serious abuses, Human Rights Watch said.

"Governments seeking justice for the victims of atrocities during Sri Lanka's long armed conflict should publicly demand an international inquiry," Ross said. "Sri Lanka's history of inaction on even prominent cases with strong evidence demonstrates the need for concerted international action."

Source: Human Right Watch

DALIT WATCH



Dalit residents of Ambedkar colony queue up for MNREGA works after caste Hindus stopped employing them in Jampad village in Bidar taluk.

50 Dalit families face boycott in Jampad village

Dalit minors lured from school, raped in Khandwa village

Rural job scheme fails to pull tribal people

Dalit student Discriminated in Nepal

U.K. Dalit groups protest delay in amending Equality Act

35 hostels to be constructed for scheduled caste girls in Madhya Pradesh



50 Dalit families face boycott in Jampad village

KARNATAKA

August 22, 2013

Bidar: Panchayat Development Officer says of the 50 families from Jampad village in Bidar taluk, around 40 have MNREGA cards. “They want us to leave the village for good. That is the message,” says Saidappa, a Dalit from Jampad village in Bidar taluk. The members of his community have become victims of social boycott by the ‘caste’ Hindus. “For nearly two weeks now, farmers have stopped employing us. Some of them have even sent back women who went to pluck weeds,” he said. He complained that the farmers were sending jeeps to villages in the neighbouring State to get labourers from the Reddy and Welma communities. “A farmer told us he would not employ us, even it meant that his crops would not be harvested,” said Raghunath Narasappa, another resident of the Ambedkar colony. The boycott has been hard on the 250 Dalits from 50 families in Jampad as none of them owns land. There is only one government employee from the Dalit community here. The Dalits say trouble started last year when they requested the gram panchayat to provide land for the Ambedkar Bhavan, a community hall to be constructed under the local area development fund of the then MLA, Rahim Khan. The Chillargi Gram Panchayat granted land and Mr. Khan released Rs. 5 lakh for the building. Meanwhile, some village residents objected saying the land could be used for a bus shelter or to park vehicles. Under pressure, the gram panchayat secretary, Ejaz Siddique, cancelled the allotment of land. Some youth approached the Dalit Sangharsh Samiti leaders, who approached the district administration for permission to build the bhavan. After this, the Nirmiti Kendra began work on the bhavan, but this was stopped too. “This time, they filled up the pits that we had dug for erecting pillars,” said Tippanna Parabhanna. “The next day, village residents held a meeting at the Hanuman temple where they resolved not to employ us. The village Dalapati, Govind Reddy Police Patil, announced that anyone who employed a Dalit would be fined Rs. 5,000 and beaten up with slippers,” Mr. Raghunath said. We have never been allowed inside the temple, he

alleged. Mr. Patil, however, denied this and said: "I have neither made any announcement nor has the village decided not to employ the Dalits." Fayazuddin Patel, a civil contractor, said the DSS leaders were trying to vitiate the environment in the village. We have been living peacefully for decades. But now outsiders are trying to disrupt peace, he said. Mangala Kamble, Panchayat Development Officer, said the government had begun pitting and planting works under the MNREGA after complaints from the Dalits. "Of the 50 families, around 40 have job cards. We will register the rest now," she said.

Deputy Commissioner P.C. Jaffer steps would be taken to protect the Dalits and end the boycott. Ambedkar Bhavans are public buildings of the Social Welfare Department built on government land. The entry is not restricted to the Dalits. If the site granted by the panchayat earlier is on government land, we will go ahead with the construction, Dr. Jaffer said. We will issue ration cards and pension to the needy. We will explore options of land grants and give them cattle, he said. K. Thiagarajan, Superintendent of Police, said the solution to the problem will be explored in a joint meeting with the officials of the Revenue Department and zilla panchayat.

Source: The Hindu



Dalit minors lured from school, raped in Khandwa village

Madhya Pradesh

Sep 7, 2013

INDORE: Two minor dalit school girls were raped by two youths in a forest near Patajan village in Khandwa. The girls had stepped out of their school to buy stationery when they were lured by the accused. The FIR was lodged at the Roshni Police check-post against two accused. Police said

the girls are residents of Rehnai Village in Khandwa district and used to commute about 4km from their village to school. They said that the two girls went out of the government school to buy some stationery, when the two accused identified as Saddam Qureshi, 22, and Hamid Qureshi, 22, approached them in a four-wheeler (MP47 D 0240) and said that the mother of one of the girl is unwell and they had come to take her home. Worried on learning about it, the girl agreed to accompany the two and her classmate too joined her. The accused instead of taking them home threatened them and took both the girls to a nearby jungle in Dhawdi forest and raped them. They also threatened the rape survivors of dire consequences if they informed anybody about the incident. They were later dropped on way to their homes," said the investigating officer RR Mugalde posted at Roshni Chowki. He said that both the accused belong to Harda district and were working at the farm of one of the girls family. The girls managed to reach home and informed their parents about the incident. Later, the parents approached police station and registered a complaint. Taking cognizance of the severity of the case, police sent the girls immediately to Khandwa government hospital for medical examination, which later confirmed rape on them. The police registered case against the accused. After the complaint, a hunt is on to nab them. "Both the accused are on the run. We have launched a search to nab them," said Mugalde.

Source: the times of India



Rural job scheme fails to pull tribal people

They opt for private plantations in neighbouring States for more pay

July 16, 2013

Kozhikode: The district administration is finding it hard to enroll members of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS). The wages under the scheme, which targets the uplift of the weaker segments, have not been revised. Hence, private players offer more and lure labourers to their ventures. **Rs.180 a day** The pay offered to a worker under the MGNREGS is just Rs.180 a day, for both men and women. Private players opt for men and offer them more pay. Liquor and tobacco are among the perks offered. Officers who enroll tribal families in the scheme say that only very few take up MGNREGS work. The trend now is to work in plantations in

neighbouring States, save money, and lead a comfortable life here. K. Yusuf, Joint Programme Coordinator of MGNREGS in Kozhikode district, says several members of Dalit and tribal families in Kunnamangalam and Koduvally regions work in private plantations. “The employers even arrange vehicles for their transport and they seem comfortable with the package,” he adds. As a result, the number of Dalit and tribal families depending on the government scheme in the last two years is fewer than 25,000 in Kozhikode district. The total work days of these families are far below than that of the general group. Official figures show that only 1,518 tribal families have so far registered for works under the scheme. Regular workers are even fewer. “In Kozhikode, 92 per cent of the MGNREGS workers are women. Since the launch of the project here in 2008, the trend has not changed,” says Mr. Yusuf. According to him, the inclusion of more fitting trades for men in the MGNREGS is a must, along with the revision of wages, to attract backward segments.

Source: The Hindu



Dalit student Discriminated in Nepal

JUL 29, 2013

MORANG: Bishal Marik, a [dalit](#) boy and third grader at the Public Higher Secondary School in Rangeli district, said he dropped out of the school recently after he was allegedly discriminated against by his teachers. “Teachers do not even touch our textbooks and copies. They ask us to sit at the back of the classroom,” he said. Like Bishal, more than 12 children from the community, studying in grade one to five, quit their studies midway due to alleged discrimination against them in the school. “We frequently urged the principal and chairman of the school management committee to stop such discriminatory practices. However, the teachers’ behaviour did not improve,” said Bilaruwa Marik, whose son Ramesh also quit studies. Principal Birendra Prasad Sah said he was uninformed about such discrimination. “I will look into the matter after the school resumes,” he said. The school is closed for the summer vacation.

Source: [ekantipur.com](#)



U.K. Dalit groups protest delay in amending Equality Act

UK

August 2, 2013

LONDON : British-Indian human rights and Dalit groups in the U.K. are up in arms over what they see as an attempt by the government to delay the process to make caste-based discrimination illegal by bringing it within the ambit of the Equality Act, 2010. While the legislation to amend the Act was given the nod by Parliament this April, the government announced on July 29 that the consultative process leading up to this would take two years, i.e., by the summer of 2015 at the earliest. Dalit groups say that caste discrimination is rampant in workplaces, schools and service industries, and affects at least 400,000 people of so-called “lower-caste” descent. “I am very, very disappointed. The two-year deadline is unprecedented. Consultation guidelines say that the process should not take more than two weeks,” Meena Varma, Director, Dalit Solidarity Network, told *The Hindu*. “We were delighted this April when the House of Lords voted to amend the Equality Act 2010 to recognize caste as discriminatory and illegal, but it looks like the government has bowed to the anti-legislation lobby, the Alliance of Hindu Organizations. Basically this means that thousands of Dalits, both current and potential victims of caste repression have been denied recourse to justice.” “Unprecedented, and an indication that they want to push the issue into the long grass,” Lord Avebury, Liberal Democratic peer in the House of Lords, who had campaigned for the legislation, told *The Hindu*. “The reason behind it is quite simply because they do not like the idea of bringing in caste into the Equality Bill. The consultations will take place till 2015, after the general elections. They will use negative expressions that arise during the consultations to scrap it.” There are nine “protected characteristics” (like sex, age, race, gender re-assignment, sexual orientation, religion or belief etc.) in the Equality Act, and caste was to have been brought into the Act as “an aspect of race”, a definition that many groups disagreed with. “I am of the opinion that caste is no more complex than race for the purposes of the Act. We don’t need to know the complexities of caste discrimination. The Act only pertains to [discrimination] in employment, education and the

provision of goods and services. Social discrimination, for example within marriage, is not dealt with by the Act,” Lord Avebury said. A study commissioned by the U.K. government on caste discrimination in the U.K. and conducted by the National Institute of Economic and Social Research (“Caste discrimination and harassment in Great Britain”) published in 2010, established that caste in the U.K. was not religion-specific, and existed in the areas of work (bullying, recruitment, promotion and task allocation), in the provision of services, and in education. “We urge the government to re-think the time-table,” said Ms. Varma. “They could at least advance it to next summer rather than 2015.”

Source: THE Hindu



35 hostels to be constructed for scheduled caste girls in Madhya Pradesh

Jul 15, 2013

BHOPAL: As many as 35 hostels are being constructed for quality education of scheduled caste girls this year in Madhya Pradesh. For this scheduled castes welfare department has provisioned Rs 37 crore in its budget. Minister of state for scheduled castes welfare Harishankar Khatik has directed district officers to ensure construction of these buildings with quality and within time-limit. This year, 3 scheduled caste girls hostels each are being constructed in Shivpuri, Ujjain and Tikamgarh districts, 2 each in Sehore, Chhatarpur, Khandwa, Dewas, Khargone and Narsinghpur and one each in Chhindwara, Gwalior, Bhind, Ashok Nagar, Guna, Seoni, Raisen, Rajgarh, Ratlam, Satna, Morena, Vidisha, Panna and Harda districts. In the state, 1388 hostels are being run for scheduled caste students. Of these, 163 do not have building of their own. The department has also sanctioned construction of additional rooms in 190 buildings.

Source: Times of India

Oppressed Dalits of Bangladesh Fight for Their Future



I have been educated to an advanced level by Bangladeshi standards and I have applied for government jobs but they tell me that I have to work as a sweeper," says the 29-year-old. "They say, 'Your father was a sweeper and you have to be a sweeper as well. *Ramu Nandikolla*

Ramu Nandikolla's dream is quite simple. He hopes that unlike himself, unlike his father, unlike his grandfather and unlike every member of his family for centuries, his four-year-old daughter grows up to be something other than a sweeper.

"I have been educated to an advanced level by Bangladeshi standards and I have applied for government jobs but they tell me that I have to work as a sweeper," says the 29-year-old. "They say, 'Your father was a sweeper and you have to be a sweeper as well'. It makes me feel very bad. I wanted to train to be a nurse."

Ramu is a Dalit, a member of a so-called "untouchable" caste that sits at the very bottom of traditional Hindu society. Forced to live in separate communities, tradition has held that a higher-caste person touching a Dalit, or in some cases coming within the shadow of a Dalit, had to be ritually cleansed. In some communities Dalits were forced to ring a bell as they walked to warn of their presence.

There are 300 million Dalits in South Asia. They are expected to perform only society's most unpleasant tasks such as unclogging drains, removing corpses and cleaning toilets by hand. In India, Dalits have recently made considerable progress in terms of poverty reduction, access to jobs and winning power.



But here in Bangladesh, where 90 per cent of the population is Muslim and just 8 per cent Hindu, the Dalits have a much lower public profile and no political power. And for all the discrimination they face, Dalit groups say the Bangladeshi authorities do not officially recognize that Dalits even exist. "They say there is no such thing as a Dalit," says Ramu. "They say everybody is equal."

The Dalits of Dhaka say their ancestors were brought to what is now Bangladesh from Hyderabad in southern India by the British Empire to perform manual work. The community's first language remains not Bengali but Telugu, a southern Indian tongue and the name they sometimes use to describe themselves.

But after centuries of discrimination – of being refused access to jobs and education, of being forced to live in the most wretched neighborhoods and of being told they cannot escape their fate – Bangladesh's Dalits are slowly gaining hope. Organizations have been working at a grass-

roots level to educate Dalits and make them aware of their potential influence if they can work together.



"Dalit rights is a new idea in Bangladesh [even though] there are probably five million in the country," says Zakir Hossain, who heads the Dhaka-based human rights group, Nagorik Uddyog. The group is funded by One World Action, one of the charities supported by The Independent's Christian Appeal, and its objectives are three-fold. "We want to increase awareness, we want the government to introduce reservations for Dalits in jobs and at universities and we want a law that ends discrimination."

Ramu led The Independent on a tour of his Dalit neighbourhood. The PWD Sweeper Colony is next to a clinic which since the time of the British Empire has been called the Pongo hospital and there is not a lot of room. A maze of alleys divides the bamboo and metal-sheet home. More than 400 people are squeezed here, extended families sharing a few rooms, six people crushed in a bed.



The homes are spotless and well-cared for, but the facilities are wretched. Running hose-pipes at the rear of the houses provide water that runs into a stinking, stagnant ditch. This is also the only toilet facility. There is no school, no clinic. "The main problem here is that there are insufficient houses," says Aparo Pulatti, a community leader. "The big problem is that we are landless."

Two years ago, without notice, the authorities evicted 20 Dalit families from a patch of land they had occupied for more than 60 years. They were told the government wanted it for development. The families were moved to the very northern edge of the city, next to an estuary.

The people have been literally marginalized, miles from their jobs. They live now in a few narrow streets of concrete homes provided by the government. The land adjoining their

community is a makeshift brick factory, where women mix sand and burnt straw to fashion bricks that are "cooked" by stinking and choking fires. "We are in a very bad position here," says Mehalaxmi Rissi, another community leader. "The conditions are not good. There is no fresh water. There is no security."

Ramu works as a cleaner at the Pongo hospital. Such was the determination of his father that his son should be educated, that he sent him to a relative outside Dhaka, gave him a different family name and told him not to disclose his background. Even that was not enough for this smart young man to break through the spirit-crushing discrimination.

He is determined his child will not suffer a similar fate. Ramu's daughter is aged four and her name is Harivend. I asked Ramu what he would like his daughter to become. As he smiles at his little girl, he answers without hesitation: "I want her to be a doctor."

Source: The independent

Learning from Baba saheb Ambedkar's Engagement with the Question of Social Justice



By

M Rajivlochan

Professor of Contemporary Indian History

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India

We are assembled here to celebrate the birth anniversary of a great man whose greatness was realised by the people of south Asia only in the last two decades or so. Therein lies the story of Baba Saheb Ambedkar's prescience in being able to focus on the question of social justice. No one other than Baba Saheb Ambedkar had ever thought during the period of the freedom struggle that the question of social justice would become the central question for the societies of south Asia. Currently if there is any trouble in our societies, it is attributed to the problems of social justice. If there is an effort to find a solution, it is within the realm of social justice. For, it became quite clear as soon as the societies of south Asia began to prosper, that no amount of

prosperity was going to bring about peace and quiet in our societies unless the matter of social justice was addressed in an aggressive manner, simultaneously.

Today we can presume, at least among the well-educated audience such is present here, that all of us take the matter of social justice for granted. We all agree that in order to take our societies forward we need to focus on bringing about an adequate amount of social justice in our societies. In which case, the question comes up: is there anything more to learn from Baba Saheb Ambedkar? Well, for one, this audience, comprising of well-educated, economically reasonably well off young people, can learn from the method that Baba Saheb Ambedkar has bequeathed to us. The method of analysing social inequities, the method of forcing society to take cognizance of these inequities and then finally, making an effort to institutionalise the issue of providing social justice to people.

I would invite you to please transport yourself, in your minds, to the early twentieth century when Baba Saheb Ambedkar was still a school going child, a young man about to embark on a journey to change the world. There was no doubt in his mind about being a bright, alert and sensitive young man. There was also no doubt in his mind about the iniquitous manner in which the world functioned. In fact, for a person of his caste, living amidst the upper caste dominated society of central India, it would have been almost impossible not to have come across the humility that is regularly heaped by the upper castes on those not so. In the kind of education system that we had in India in those days, where premium was placed on educational attainments, there would have been no doubt in his mind as to his superior abilities and attainments as compared to his other class mates. He was lucky. Luck often plays an important part in providing someone with the necessary breaks that enable them to take society changing steps. He was lucky in order to find a mentor in

We need to pause here and notice a few things about the Gaikwar of Baroda. From the caste structure point of view he was not from one of the dvija castes. However, the educational fellowships that he had instituted, the benefits of state patronage that he used to extend to bright young students, was, as far as we know, neutral to the caste status of a person. So when young Ambedkar was selected for a subvention to help him with his studies it was not on the basis of his caste but most probably on the basis of his achievements. Ambedkar's contact in the USA with Professor John Dewey sensitised him to the liberal idea of equality and justice. Indian society, then as now, was far removed from such ideas. A handful of people might have supported them, an even fewer number of people might stand by them, but by and large, it would not be incorrect to say that India and Indians of the 1920s had little to do with either liberalism or equality or justice as far as the disabilities heaped upon the lower castes by those of the upper castes were concerned. Of course there was Gandhi and his temple entry movement. But, as Ambedkar would say with so much wisdom, how many Indians actually go to the temple? Or even aspired to go to one? Or would it make any difference to them if they were given the permission to go to a temple? Ambedkar was one of the few people in public life to notice that with the temple entry movement Gandhi was not about providing help to the dalits but instead

simply about forcing the upper caste managers of the temples to bow before the whims and fancies of Gandhi in the name of social justice. What Gandhi's agenda was therefore is a question for a different discussion.

My wonderment at the moment is just this: why did Ambedkar notice this and not so many other Indians? Is it possible that working with a leading American philosopher as his thesis supervisor taught Ambedkar the skills for systematic observation and the ability to look into the structures underlying popular rhetoric? For after all, Ambedkar was working mostly on the issue of public finance. What might that kind of a subject have anything to do with his understanding of Gandhi's politics? Perhaps, one might say, it had everything to do with it. After all, the same skills that are required to unpack the complex mysteries of the subject of public finance are also the skills that are required to unpack the arguments that underlie something as superficial as temple entry? All that one had to do was to question the movement for temple entry from the point of view of those who were supposed to enter the temple. As Ambedkar asked: Did they (Dalits) even want to enter the temple? To use the language of contemporary times one would say that when Ambedkar trashed the temple entry movement for being meaningless he was merely looking at it from the point of the person who was supposed to benefit from that movement. Or to state the first point that I would like to say to this audience of young people: the first important lesson to learn from Ambedkar's engagement with the issue of social justice is to learn how to use the formal skills that you have learnt in the class room, skills for systematic observation, analysis and cross checking of facts, in everyday life, outside of the class room.

The story of Ambedkar is quite well-known. One does not need to repeat it in any detail. But one small point that requires reiteration concerns the so-called Pune Pact that he had with Gandhi. Once again that is an issue that leaves much space for wonderment. The most significant wonderment that occurs to me is this: why did Ambedkar agree to back off. After all, at this juncture Gandhi was not considered such a great leader. He had just had his spat with Jawaharlal Nehru. Within the Congress voices were being raised against Gandhi. The government, in its responses to the demands of the various social groups in the country had already asked for representatives of different groups to come together for what today are known as the Round Table Conferences. Gandhi had already missed out on the first one. For the other two Gandhi would be present but there would be much suspicion about him in many people's eyes. The government had already implemented separate electorates on the basis of religion. There were also separate electorates for different classes of people, especially the educated. The big political movement that would catapult Gandhi as the most important political leader of the decade had not yet gained steam. So why was it that Ambedkar catapulted to Gandhi's demand that he not insist on separate electorates for the dalits?

The answer to this puzzle resides not in Ambedkar, for he would continue to harbour considerable ill-will against Gandhi for having short-changed the dalits. He would continue to point out, in 1933 and later, that Gandhi essentially spoke in two voices: the voice that addressed the English speaking liberal audience who spoke about liberty, equality and brotherhood; the

voice that addressed the desi audience in local languages, who spoke of the importance of the Vedic system of hierarchies and of the evils that are inherent within the western system of liberal thought. Ambedkar was under no illusion as to Gandhi's ambivalent attitude towards the question of caste based inequities. He also was under no illusion about Gandhi's inability (even were he to try his level best) to be able to provide any social justice within the existing system of society and polity. The answer to our puzzle resides in Gandhi's communication to Ambedkar. Gandhi was clear, if the objective was to do away with social injustice, social inequities and dissolve the caste system then creating a system of separate electorates on the basis of caste would only result in ossifying the caste system and there would be no way in which it could be dissolved in the future. We do not have any direct evidence about Ambedkar's response to Gandhi's formulation. What we do know is that Ambedkar withdrew his demand for separate electorates. Historians and scholars studying Ambedkar have hitherto said that Ambedkar withdrew in the face of Gandhi's deteriorating ill-health and the great love that the people of India had for Gandhi. My submission is that this is misjudging Ambedkar almost entirely. Ambedkar was not known to be a weak-minded person who would so easily succumb to emotional blackmail on an issue that he considered to be wrong. It is also misjudging the character of Ambedkar as an analytical person. We need to remind ourselves that Ambedkar had tremendous ability to bring his academic analytical skills to bear upon the problems of everyday life faced by his countrymen. Chances are that Ambedkar was convinced about Gandhi's point that having separate electorates would ensure that there would evolve a set of politicians in the future who would have a stake in perpetuating the caste system. The one thing that he, Ambedkar heartily wanted was the abolition of the caste system. He would at a later date even insist that the only way of ensuring the dissolution of the caste system was to promote inter-caste marriage. Still later, we need to remember, he married a woman who was an accomplished doctor and a Brahmin to boot. In 1933, on the eve of the so-called pact with Gandhi, however, he agreed to back off because he was able to figure out the long term consequences of his ideas. That perhaps is the second important lesson that can be learnt from Ambedkar by a young audience, still not caught up in the nitty-gritty of everyday life: to be able to understand the long term consequences of one's ideas and actions.

For the moment I would confine myself to just these two points.

I trust it would be possible for us to be able to stand for issues of social justice in the same manner as Baba Saheb Ambedkar did. He has left us with a legacy that is worthy of being emulated and it would be a complete waste if we as a society are not able to learn substantive lessons from his thoughts and actions.

BANGLADESH: Ethnic Minorities Face Higher School Drop-Out Risk



The rate of literacy is far lower among the ethnic minorities than it is nationally.

When they have nothing to eat, parents prefer to employ their children in any work rather than sending them to school.

Dozens of minority groups here lag behind the rest of the country in land ownership, income, employment, health and significantly, literacy

Ethnic minority children in Bangladesh from the southeast Chittagong Hill Tracts are among the country's least literate and at heightened risk of dropping out of school, say experts and community leaders.

Children in this region bordering India and Myanmar face discrimination in government-run schools where they are often badly treated by teachers and students from the country's largest ethnic group, Bengalis, said Saikat Biswas, a programme officer with Oxfam GB.

The mostly Buddhist population of 1.3 million ethnic minorities - about 1 percent of the country's predominantly Muslim population - are concentrated in the districts of Bandarban, Rangamati and Khagrachari, also known as Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT).

Dozens of minority groups here lag behind the rest of the country in land ownership, income, employment, health and, significantly, literacy.

"The rate of literacy is far lower among the ethnic minorities than it is nationally," said Rezai Karim Khondker, an economics professor at Bangladesh's Shahjalal University of Science and Technology.

More than half of all household members surveyed in CHT (55.2 percent) have no formal schooling, according to a recent study by Khondker and others.

And for those who start schooling, fewer than 8 percent complete primary education while 2 percent complete secondary education, according to a 2009 study by the Dhaka-based research group, Human Development Research Centre.

Nationwide, estimates of the percentage of children who finished their primary education from 2005-2009 varied from 55 to 94 percent, based on various UN surveys.

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Children get a totally different environment in school when teachers are of another community and the text is in a different language.
Sanjeeb Drong

Children from four to six years old soon lose interest in the classroom and drop out when they cannot communicate with teachers or understand lessons, said Biswas.

"Ethnic minority children communicate in their mother tongue in their house. But, in school, they are compelled to face Bengali text while the teachers are also from the Bengali community. The whole teaching method is in Bangla."

Mongching Marma, 7, enrolled in Shishu primary school in Khagrachari District, but left within two years. "In school, we have to read in Bangla language. I struggled a lot to understand the Bangla text," he said.

Many of his friends also left before finishing primary school for the same reason, he added.

Children get a totally different environment in school when teachers are of another community and the text is in a different language. Sanjeeb Drong

, general-secretary of the CHT-based ethnic minority rights coalition, Bangladesh Indigenous Peoples Forum. Most of the country's 45 ethnic minority groups live in CHT.



"It is totally impossible to increase literacy rates among the ethnic minority groups if the government cannot introduce primary education in their mother tongue," he added.

Teachers should also come from ethnic minority communities so pupils have a similar environment in school as they do at home, said Drong.

Bangladesh's 2010 National Education Policy recommended introducing primary education for

ethnic minority groups in their own languages, but Drong said he had seen little progress and no "effective steps" toward implementing the initiative.

The government has formed committees to carry out the education policy, said the chairman of the parliamentary standing committee at the Education Ministry, Rashed Khan Menon, but expanding the languages of instruction is a big undertaking and requires "huge funding".

Meanwhile, the government continues to take different steps to improve ethnic minorities' access to education and literacy, including opening new schools in CHT and setting quotas for ethnic minority student university placements and employment, he added.

But even with little funding, governments can train non-ethnic minority teachers to support ethnic minority students who do not speak the dominant language, said Fred Genesee, a psychology professor at McGill University in Canada, who has researched language among minority children in the Americas.

"The tendency is to think there is nothing special that needs to be done with second language learners. This is a huge mistake... A century of research shows that education in the dominant language does not work for many children. These children underperform and drop out at higher rates."

A shortage of schools in rural areas is another hurdle to boosting literacy, said Biswas and Drong.



Poverty is also a factor, said the economics professor, Khondker. "When they have nothing to eat, parents prefer to employ their children in any work rather than sending them to school. Six out of 10 households in CHT - irrespective of ethnicity - live below the national absolute poverty line where each member consumes less than 2,100 calories per day; the other four households live in extreme poverty (less than 1,800 calories per day), according to a 2009 UN-funded study.

Source: IRNI