

QUARTERLY

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Voice of minorities and oppressed people in South Asian societies

Genocide of Muslim in Myanmar



Civil Society Urges
World to Save
Myanmar Muslims

Urgent Appeal to Combat Caste Discrimination in Nepal Earthquake Relief Efforts



Life As One of
Bangladesh's
Untouchables



Rape Fastest Growing Crime in India, US Report



Homeowners
Turn Away
Dalit and
Muslims



Produced by: Sir Ganga Ram Heritage Foundation, Lahore

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EDITORIAL

The fate of majority of world minorities is in wilderness there is human rights violation happening in every corner of the world. But the situation in Myanmar (Burma) is particularly alarming where the Rohingya a Muslim minority is witnessing the worst genocidal operation at the hand of extremist Buddhists. The Burmese state does not identify the Rohingya as an ethnic community and term them as immigrants from neighbouring Bangladesh. They are being denied citizenship and other fundamental rights. They have been forced into horrible over crowded camps where they face severe restrictions and are denied basic necessities including medical care. They are facing act of brutality, which include rape of both male and female irrespective of age, slaughtering them. The plight of Rohingya became a regional crunch when thousands are washed up on the sea shores of Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand. This is second planned genocide against Muslim in Myanmar. The international community is silent as before. It is the need of the hour to term Muslim genocide as immoral, inhuman and illegal and immediate practical measure should be taken to end it permanently. It is not a question of religious community clash, but of unarmed innocent human beings being brutally killed in genocidal fashion. Before it becomes a norm we must be vigilant and mobilized to protect and preserve human rights. The another important issue which is highlighted in this issue is that according to the US report on human rights violations the rape is the fastest

growing crime in India. Official statistics described that there were 33,707 cases of rape reported nationwide in 2013. National crime statistics indicated that, compared with other caste affiliation, rape was most often perpetrated against Dalit women. In India Study shows that National Capital Region (NCR) homeowners turn away Dalit and Muslim, they are facing discrimination practiced by home provider including landlords, estate agents and brokers, Dalit because of their low caste and Muslims due to their religion and those who get houses on rent with differential terms and conditions as high rent, security and other restrictions. One in four Indians admit to be practicing untouchability. Indians belonging to every religion and caste group including Muslims, Christians SC and ST admit to practicing Untouchability. Urgent appeal to combat caste discrimination in Nepal earthquake relief efforts, A tragedy of dignity, life as one of Bangladesh's untouchable and civil society of Pakistan urges the world to save the Rohingya Muslims is also highlighted in the current issue of Mino-View. It is an attempt to pin point the issues related to the identified minorities and other oppressed classes in the region. It highlighted the darkest issues of our social system by voicing the concerns of minorities and oppressed section of South Asian societies. Valuable suggestions as well as positive criticism for the improvement of this magazine would be a great source of encouragement and will be incorporated in the subsequent editions.

EDITOR

PAKISTAN

Civil Society Urges World to Save Myanmar Muslims



We want the United Nations to ensure that the Rohingya are given their due rights. Pakistan should raise the issue at all international forums. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) should create pressure on Myanmar over the issue

We want the United Nations to ensure that the Rohingya are given their due rights. Pakistan should raise the issue at all international forums. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) should create pressure on Myanmar over the issue,” he said. “The Turkish prime minister recently announced aid for the Rohingya people.

minorities,” She said that Pakistan should play a more active role in the rehabilitation of the Rohingya refugees.

Taranjeet Singh highlighted the history of the issue, saying that the

Rohingya community members had been denied citizenship by Myanmar. “These people have been living on boats because Malaysia, Thailand or any other country is not willing to allow them ashore,” Singh

The international community should take immediate steps to save members of the Rohingya Muslim community, said Abdullah Malik, the Civil Society Network president. He was addressing participants of a demonstration held to highlight the plight of Muslims living in Myanmar.“

The Pakistani government should also do so,” he said. Sajjida Mir, a former MPA, said that the US president had taken notice of the issue. “However, Islamic countries have not raised their voice so far in support of the Rohingya. The civil society and has always taken a stand against the persecution of



said.

Source: *The Express Tribune*

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## Myanmar



There are around 1.33 million Rohingya living in Burma but the Burmese state's 1982 Citizenship Law refutes their basic right of citizenship in spite of the fact that the Rohingya people have been living in Burma for ages.

The world we live in was supposed to be civilized with no space for barbarianism. We thought ethics and respect for humanity would reign supreme in the 21st century. Alas! The fate of the majority of the world's population, in particular minorities, still hangs in oblivion. They are treated like slaves, killed without any evidence and annihilated for nothing. From South Africa and the Middle East to East Europe and Indonesia, minorities of all sorts have

## Genocide of Muslims in Myanmar

been abysmally subjected to sheer hatred, socio-economic oppression, mental torture, physical abuse and ultimately genocidal annihilation. The most recent case, in this respect, which has been appearing on social media, is of Myanmar (Burma) where the Rohingya, a Muslim minority, have witnessed the worst kind of genocidal operation at the hands of extremist Buddhists. This massacre movement for the eradication of the Rohingya has been taking place in Myanmar since 2011. The former is a Muslim racial minority living in the Arakan

state of western Burma. They have been facing severe maltreatment and oppression by the state and national regimes for decades. There are around 1.33 million Rohingya living in Burma but the Burmese state's 1982 Citizenship Law refutes their basic right of citizenship in spite of the fact that the Rohingya people have been living in Burma for ages. More importantly, the president of Burma, Thein Sein, clearly denies the presence of the Rohingya as an ethnic group of Burma, labeling them Bengalis, which is historically incorrect





since the Rohingya community has been residing in the northern western part of today's Myanmar since pre-colonial times. The British consolidated their residential status as farm labourers in the 16th century. Hence, to argue that the Rohingyas are illegal migrants from Bangladesh is a conscious distortion of historical facts.

Having sensed the gravity of the humanitarian situation, a non-Muslim state, Norway, took a much-needed initiative by holding a two-day session that called for an end to the ongoing oppression of Rohingya Muslims in Burma. The participants, who included seven Nobel laureates, termed the Muslims massacre in Myanmar as being no less than genocide. For example, Desmond Tutu, the frontrunner of South Africa's anti-apartheid movement in the 1980s, requested for a stop to the gradual genocide of the

Muslims in that country. Tutu's appeal was enlarged by six more fellow Nobel peace laureates that included Jody Williams from the US, Shirin Ibadi from Iran, Tawakkol Karman from Yemen, Mairead Maguire

*It has been terribly shocking to see the silence on part of Aung San Suu Kyi, the liberal Burmese politician, Nobel laureate and human rights activist. "San Kyi is probably silent on the genocide done to the Rohingya Muslims in order not to antagonize her powerful Buddhist electoral community on whom she is relying for the upcoming elections," commented BBC*

from Northern Ireland, Adolfo Pérez Esquivel from Argentina and Leymah Gbowee from Liberia. These noble voices concluded that "what Rohingyas are facing is a textbook case of

genocide in which an entire indigenous community is being systematically wiped out by the Burmese government". By and large, the two-day discussion at the said conference concluded that the pattern of systematic human rights abuses against the ethnic Rohingya people entails crimes — genocide included — against humanity, the Myanmar

government's denial of the existence of the Rohingya as a people violates the right of the Rohingya to self-identify and the international community is giving privilege to economic interests in Myanmar and failing to priorities the need to end its systematic persecution and destruction of the Rohingya as an ethnic group. Moreover, the Oslo session, called upon the United Nations (UN), the European Union (EU), Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and other related international players to take required measures to stress upon the government of Myanmar to immediately end its policies and practices of genocide, restore full and equal citizenship rights of the Rohingya Muslims, institute the right of return for the displaced Rohingyas, provide the Rohingyas with necessary



protection, and promote and support reconciliation between communities in the Rakhine region. Pakistan, though belatedly, has also expressed grave concern over the genocidal persecution of the Muslims in Myanmar. To what extent the Muslim world, including our own country, can help the Rohingyas is still to be seen. Besides, the US's assistant secretary for population, refugees, and migration affairs, Anne Richard, expressed grave concern over this Muslims genocide in Burma. Anne, during a press session held in Putrajaya a few days ago, argued that relocation of Rohingyas in a third country is not the right response to the swelling tide of fleeing people in Southeast Asia and urged the Burmese state to grant citizenship rights to the Rohingya Muslim community. However, it has been terribly shocking to see the silence on part of Aung San Suu Kyi, the liberal Burmese politician, Nobel laureate and human rights activist. "San Kyi is probably silent on the genocide done to the

Rohingya Muslims in order not to antagonize her powerful Buddhist electoral community on whom she is relying for the upcoming elections," commented BBC Urdu the other day.

In reaction to the abovementioned humanitarian call to end the Rohingya genocide, the foreign ministry of Myanmar stated in the aftermath of the Oslo conference that such remarks turned a visionless eye to the efforts of Burma on reconstructing trust between Muslims and Buddhists in the western Rakhine state and "granting citizenship through the national verification process to those Bengalis living in Burma for many years".

However, the fact of the matter is that the Burmese state does not identify the Rohingyas as an ethnic community and terms them as immigrants from neighbouring Bangladesh. They are being denied citizenship and other fundamental human rights. Circa 100,000 are restricted to internal displacement

camps. Owing to the latest acts of brutality that include the rape of both male and female Muslims irrespective of age, slaughtering them alive and later mutilating the corpses, the plight of Rohingyas became a regional crunch when thousands of people landed on the seashores of Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand, with many others still supposed to be stuck at sea. To conclude, the ongoing genocidal movement against the Rohingya Muslims is not the first but second planned genocide against the Muslims in Myanmar. The international community was silent over the issue the last time and is behaving likewise with the mentioned minor exceptions. However, it is the need of the hour on the part of world powers to come forth by not only terming the Muslim genocide as immoral, inhuman and illegal but also taking immediate, practical measures to put a permanent end to it. The Muslim world, including Pakistan, should do the same. Remember, it is not a question of one religious community targeting the other; it is a question of unarmed and innocent human beings being brutally killed in a genocidal fashion. Lest it should become a norm, we must be vigilant and mobilized to preserve and protect human rights.

Source: Dr Ejaz Hussain is an independent political scientist and author of *Military Agency, Politics and the State in Pakistan*.

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## INDIA



Tenants rejected After phone interaction: Upper caste Hindus: 0% Dalits: 18% Muslims: 31% After meeting: Upper caste Hindus: 3% Dalits: 44% Muslims: 61%

## Study Shows NCR Homeowners Turn Away Dalits and Muslims

A study on discrimination in urban housing rental preferences, to be published in a forthcoming issue of Economic and Political Weekly, shows high levels of exclusion of Dalits and Muslims in the five metropolitan areas of NCR. The team of researchers, led by Prof S K Thorat, chairman of the Indian Council of Social Science Research, and comprising scholars such as

Anuradha Banerjee, Vinod K Mishra and Firdaus Rizvi, covered attempts to get houses on rent in Delhi, Faridabad, Ghaziabad, Gurgaon and Noida between January and March 2012.

The methodologies included contacting the “home-providers” via telephone or meeting them face to face. In both the methodologies, the home-seekers had the same credentials but for their

names that indicated their caste and religion.

The telephonic audit had a total of 1,469 home-seekers, 493 each bearing upper-caste Hindu, Dalits and Muslim names. While not one of the 493 high-caste home-seekers received a negative response, about 18 per cent of Dalits and 31 per cent of Muslims faced outright rejection, found the study. Together those receiving either a



negative response or a positive one with conditions attached worked out to 41 per cent in the case of Dalits and around 66 per cent for Muslims. The face-to-face audit covered 198 home-seekers, with 66 high-caste Hindus, Dalits and Muslims each. While 97 per cent of upper-caste Hindus got a

**The studies do reveal that Muslims are even worse off than Dalits as far as the rental housing market goes. "Non-monetary motive often prevails among landlords renting out houses," says the study, which chose Delhi for the research as it is often considered amongst the most migrant-friendly and cosmopolitan cities in India.**

positive response, 44 per cent of Dalits and 61 per cent of Muslims faced rejection.

Together those receiving either a negative response or a positive one with conditions attached

worked out to 51 per cent in the case of Dalits, and

71 per cent for Muslims. In other words, the chances of Dalits and Muslims finding a house fell in the case of face-to-face contact. It also means that a significant number of Dalits and Muslims have to spend much more to stay in accommodations in NCR than their upper-caste counterparts. "This indicates a clear case of market failure," says Thorat, "where even prosperity does not allow you to buy your way out of discrimination..."

The studies do reveal that Muslims are even worse off than Dalits as far as the rental housing market goes. "Non-monetary motive often prevails among landlords renting out houses," says the study, which chose Delhi for the research as it is often considered amongst the most migrant-friendly and cosmopolitan cities in India. "While about 18 per cent of Dalits faced outright refusal from upper-caste landlords due to their caste, 23 per cent of them did get houses on

rent but with differential terms and condition such as high rents and other restrictions. In case of Muslims, about one-third of them faced outright refusal from the landlords due to their religion, another 35 per cent managed to get houses on rent but with differential terms and conditions." The study focused on identifying discrimination in the NCR areas from both the supply and demand ends. The demand side included Dalit and Muslim home-seekers facing unequal treatment; and the supply side included discrimination practiced by the "house providers", including landlords, real estate agents and brokers. While the broad results were categorized as positive and negative, positive was further broken down into differential demands (in terms of rents and security). Tenants rejected. After phone interaction: Upper caste Hindus: 0% Dalits: 18% Muslims: 31% After meeting: Upper caste Hindus: 3% Dalits: 44% Muslims: 61%.

**Source: The Indian Express**

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INTERNATIONAL

Rape Fastest Growing Crime in India, Says US Report

India-held Jammu and Kashmir, the north-east, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh, as well as vulnerable women, including Dalit or tribal women, were often victims of rape or threats of rape. **National crime statistics indicated that, compared with other caste affiliations, rape was most often perpetrated against Dalit women.**

Washington: Rape is the fastest growing crime in India, but still remains under-reported, according to the US report on human right violations released. According to official statistics, there were 33,707 cases of rape nationwide in 2013, the latest year for which data were available.



This was an increase of 35.2 Per cent over 2012.

Women in conflict areas, such as in India-held Jammu and Kashmir, the north-east, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh, as well as vulnerable women, including Dalit or tribal women, were often victims of rape or threats of rape.

National crime statistics indicated that, compared with other caste affiliations, rape was most often perpetrated against Dalit women.

Although the law prohibits child abuse, it remained common in schools and institutional settings. The government failed to educate the public adequately against child abuse or to enforce the

law. The Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) remained in effect in Nagaland, Manipur, Assam, and parts of Tripura. The AFSPA allows Indian security agencies to use deadly force to “maintain law and order” if the central government declares a state or union territory as a “disturbed area”.

Non-governmental agencies claim that due to immunity provisions of the AFSPA, the armed forces were not held responsible for the deaths of civilians in India-held Jammu and Kashmir.

Insurgents in the north-eastern states and the Maoist belt also committed serious abuses and were responsible for numerous cases of murder, kidnapping, torture, rape, extortion, and the use of child soldiers, the report said.

According to India's Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 540,000 persons were displaced by conflicts and instability in Kashmir, the north-eastern states and the Maoist belt. The most significant human rights

problems in India were police and security force abuses, including extra-judicial killings, torture, and rape. Widespread corruption contributed to ineffective responses to crime, including those against women and

members of scheduled castes or tribes. Societal violence based on gender, religious affiliation, and caste or tribe also continued, the US report said.

Source: Dawn

NEPAL



**"WAITING FOR
JUSTICE IN
RESPONSE" –
NEPAL EARTHQUAKE
2015**

Because we are Dalits

We have not received any relief because the only reason is that we are Dalits! And the next thing is only Big people know when the relief is coming. They do not distribute it by making an announcements. First they will distribute it among their near and dear once and leftovers will be distributed to Dalits. Nobody distributed Tents to us. We have seen one person receiving 3-4 Tents. And also Large families needing 3-4 tents have received only one Tent. Nobody given attention to this

Urgent Appeal to Combat Caste Discrimination in Nepal Earthquake Relief Efforts

A rapid assessment report of the situation of Dalit communities following the Earthquakes in Nepal, has found that Dalits are discriminated in the distribution of post-earthquake relief materials, receiving less aid than those from castes ranking higher in Nepal's caste system. Inequality in access to rescue and relief provisions for Dalit communities is documented in the Waiting for Justice: Report of Initial Findings

from Immediate Needs Assessment and Monitoring Responses towards Affected Dalit Communities in Nepal Earthquake 2015, released by the Dalit Civil Society Massive Earthquake Victim Support and Coordination Committee and the Asia Dalit Rights Forum (ADRF). The report covers 37 villages, in the ten worst affected districts in Nepal, and the committee behind the report includes members and advisors from 15 human rights and humanitarian civil society organizations.

The report uncovered that sixty percent of Dalits interviewed felt there has been willful negligence due to caste prejudice and that they experienced discrimination in relief and rescue services when comparing to members of the dominant castes. Sixty-five percent believed that authorities had willfully ignored bringing rescue and relief efforts to Dalit locations. The assessment team found discrimination in access to shelter, food aid, health and water and



sanitation. Immediate needs for Dalit families assessed are outlined in the report including food, shelter, health, and special attention to Dalit women, children and elderly and the provision of immediate compensation, not based on land rights. A number of recommendations for ‘Dignified recovery and rehabilitation’ are offered in the report.

In the Amnesty International report *Nepal: Earthquake recovery must safeguard human rights*, released on 1 June 2015, concern is also raised over caste discrimination in relief work in Nepal. IDSN appeals to stakeholders providing humanitarian assistance in Nepal to:

Involve local Dalit civil society representatives and organizations in their planning and provision of relief and rehabilitation, following the Nepal Earthquakes, including regular consultations. Ensure that mechanisms are established for assessing

equitable access to aid for Dalits and other discriminated groups. Collect disaggregated data along caste lines, to monitor relief and rehabilitation services. Use affirmative policies to ensure Dalit organizations are also involved in implementation. Engage with the recommendations laid out by the Dalit Civil Society Massive Earthquake Victim Support and Coordination Committee in their report of May 2015.

Follow the recommendations and guidelines in the IDSN *Equality in Aid – Addressing caste discrimination in humanitarian response* report and call upon international level policy and standard settings groupings in the field of humanitarian assistance to take due account of these aspects in their future work. Evidence of caste discrimination in relief efforts in Nepal.

The assessment team behind the ‘Waiting for Justice’ report conducted 65 focused group discussions with

villagers and 30 meetings with officials in the villages to assess the situation. Dalits shared their experiences of negligence and discrimination by rescue teams, mobilized by the Government, in detail with team members.

In reports from Gongambu, Nepal it was found that an international rescue team trying to rescue buried Dalit families from a collapsed house were taken by the Government to the next non-Dalit house. Another Dalit woman reported that due to being poor and a Dalit, police had ignored her when she was begging for help to retrieve her daughter who was buried under the rubble.

“We have not received relief because we are Dalits ... only big people know when the relief is coming ... first they distribute it among their near and dear ones and the leftovers will be distributed to Dalits,” said a Dalit woman interviewed by the team.

According to the findings 60-70% of the Dalits in a situation of despair are still waiting for shelter in the form of tents/tarpaulins or safer locations. It was found that in 80% of the villages shelter had been provided to the dominant caste members and in most cases not to Dalit families. While the Government have attempted to make temporary settlements possible based on land ownership, this is also excluding the Dalits who are mostly landless. The report

states that in Dandakhark, Nepal only 36 out of 57 Dalit families had received tents while all dominant caste families had received tents. The team also observed that while Dalit tents were very basic those received by the dominant castes were more sophisticated. In relation to receiving food the report finds that two weeks after the earthquake only 40% had received food support. In relation to the food received

Dalits also complained that this was unequally distributed, where, for example, Dalit families received one pack of rice and non-Dalits two packs. On the positive side the report does however note that in Rasuwa, Nepal, dominant caste members were found to be giving rice they received to the Dalits. Access to health services and water was also reported to be a severe issue for the Dalits interviewed. In

the relief distribution effort Dalits noted that relief was first and foremost distributed to those that owned concrete houses where those with mud houses (Dalits), damaged as severely, received it last or not at all.

Source: International Dalit Solidarity Network

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## SUCCESS STORY



## From **Slavery** to **Self Reliance**: A Story of **Dalit Women** in **South India**

Hulige Amma, a Dalit woman in her mid-forties, bends over a sewing machine, carefully running the needle over the hem of a shirt. Sitting nearby is Roopa, her 22-year-old daughter, who reads an amusing, message on her cell phone and laughs heartily.

The pair leads a simple yet contented life – they subsist on half a dollar a day, stitch their own clothes and participate in schemes to educate their community in the Bellary district of the Southwest Indian state of Karnataka.

But not so very long ago, both women were slaves.

They have fought an exhausting battle to get to where they are today, pushing against two evils that lurk in this mineral-rich state: the practice of sexual slavery in Hindu temples, and forced labour in the illegal mines that dot Bellary District, home to 25 percent of India's iron ore reserves.

Finally free of the yoke of dual-slavery, they are determined to preserve their hard-won existence, humble though it may be.

Still, they will never forget the wretchedness that once defined their daily lives, nor the entrenched religious and economic systems in India

that paved the way for their destitution and bondage.

### **From the temple to the open-pit mine**

"Walk into any Dalit home in this region and you will not meet a single woman or child who has never worked in a mine as a 'coolie' (labourer)." -- Manjula, a former mine-worker turned anti-slavery activist from the Mariyammanahalli village in the Indian state of Karnataka

"I was 12 years old when my parents offered me to the Goddess Yellamma [worshipped in the Hindu pantheon as the 'goddess of the fallen'], and told me I

was now a ‘devadasi’,” HuligeAmma tells IPS.

“I had no idea what it meant. All I knew was that I would not marry a man because I now belonged to the Goddess.”

While her initial impressions were not far from the truth, HuligeAmma could not have known then, as an innocent adolescent, what horrors her years of servitude would hold.

The devadasi tradition – the practice of dedicating predominantly lower-caste girls to serve a particular deity or temple – has a centuries-long history in South India.

While these women once occupied a high status in society, the fall of Indian kingdoms to British rule rendered temples penniless and left many devadasis without the structures that had once supported them.

Pushed into poverty but unable to find other work, bound as they were to the gods, devadasis in many states across India’s southern belt essentially became prostitutes, resulting in the government issuing a ban on the entire system of temple slavery in 1988.

Still, the practice continues and as women like Hulige Amma will testify, it remains as degrading and brutal as it was in the 1980s.

She tells IPS that as she grew older a stream of men would visit her in the night, demanding sexual favours. Powerless to refuse, she gave

birth to five children by five different men – none of whom assumed any responsibility for her or the child.

After the last child was born, driven nearly mad with hunger and despair, Hulige Amma broke away from the temple and fled to Hospet, a town close to the World Heritage site of Hampi in northern Karnataka.

It did not take her long to find work in an open-cast mine, one of dozens of similar, illicit units that operated throughout the district from 2004 to 2011.

For six years, from dawn until dusk, Hulige Amma extracted iron ore by using a hammer to create holes in the open pit through which the iron could be ‘blasted’ out.

She was unaware at the time that this back-breaking labour constituted the nucleus of a massive illegal mining operation in Karnataka state, that saw the extraction and export of 29.2 million tonnes of iron ore between 2006 and 2011.

All she knew was that she and Roopa, who worked alongside her as a child labourer, earned no more than 50 rupees apiece (about 0.7 dollars) each day.

In a bid to crack down on the criminal trade, police often raided the mines and arrested the workers, who had to pay bribes of 200-300 rupees (roughly four to six dollars) to secure their release.

In a strange echo of the devadasi system, this cycle

kept them indebted to the mine operators.

In 2009, when she could no longer tolerate the crushing workload or the constant sexual advances from fellow workers, contractors and truckers, who saw the former temple slave as ‘fair game’, Hulige Amma threw herself on the mercy of a local non-governmental organization, Sakhi Trust, which has proved instrumental in lifting both her and her daughter out of the abyss. Today all her children are back in school and Roopa works as a youth coordinator with Sakhi Trust. They live in Nagenhalli, a Dalit village where Hulige Amma works as a seamstress, teaching dressmaking skills to young girls in the community.

### **Caste: Indian’s most unsustainable system**

The story may have ended happily for Hulige Amma and Roopa, but for many of India’s roughly 200 million Dalits, there is no light at the end of the tunnel.

Once considered ‘untouchables’ in the Indian caste system, Dalits – literally, ‘the broken’ – are a diverse and divided group, encompassing everyone from so-called ‘casteless’ communities to other marginalized peoples.

Under this vast umbrella exists a further hierarchy, with some communities, like the Madiga Dalits (sometimes called ‘scavengers’), often

discriminated against by their kin.

Historically, Madigas have made shoes, cleaned drains and skinned animals – tasks considered beneath the dignity of all other groups in Hindu society.

Most of the devadasis in South India hail from this community, according to Bhagya Lakshmi, social activist and director of the Sakhi Trust. In Karnataka alone, there are an estimated 23,000 temple slaves, of which over 90 percent are Dalit women.

Lakshmi, who has worked alongside the Madiga people for nearly two decades, tells IPS that Madiga women grow up knowing little else besides oppression and discrimination.

The devadasi system, she adds, is nothing more than institutionalized, caste-based violence, which sets Dalit women on a course that almost guarantees further exploitation, including unpaid labour or unequal wages.

For instance, even in an illegal mine, a non-Dalit worker gets between 350 and 400 rupees (between five and six dollars) a day, while a Dalit is paid no more than 100 rupees, reveals Minjamma, a Madiga woman who worked in a mine for seven years.

Yet it is Dalit women who made up the bulk of the labourers entrapped in the massive iron trade.

“Walk into any Dalit home in this region and you will not meet a single woman or child who has never worked in a mine as a ‘coolie’ (labourer),” Manjula, a former mine-worker turned anti-slavery activist from the Mariyammanahalli village in Bellary District, tells IPS.

Herself the daughter and granddaughter of devadasis, who spent her childhood years working in a mine, Manjula believes the systems of forced labour and temple slavery are connected in a matrix of exploitation across India’s southern states, a linkage that is deepened further by the caste system.

She, like most official sources, is unclear on the exact number of Dalits forced into the iron ore extraction racket, but is confident that it ran into “several thousand”.

### **Destroying lives, and livelihoods**

Annually, India accounts for seven percent of global iron ore production, and ranks fourth in terms of the quantity produced after Brazil, China and Australia. Every year, India produces about 281 million tons of iron ore, according to a 2011 Supreme Court report.

Karnataka is home to over 9,000 million tones of India’s total estimated reserves of 25.2 billion tons of iron ore, making it a crucial player in the country’s export industry.

Bellary District alone houses an estimated 1,000 million tons of iron ore reserves. Between April 2006 and July

2010, 228 unlicensed miners exported 29.2 million tons of iron ore, causing the state losses worth 16 million dollars.

With a population of 2.5 million people relying primarily on agriculture, fisheries and livestock farming for their livelihoods, Bellary District has suffered significant environmental impacts from illicit mining operations.

Groundwater supplies have been poisoned, with sources in and around mining areas showing high iron and manganese content, as well as an excessive concentration of fluoride – all of which are the enemies of farming families who live off the land.

Research suggests that 9.93 percent of the region’s 68,234 hectares of forests have been lost in the mining boom, while the dust generated through the processes of excavating, blasting and grading iron has coated vegetation in surrounding areas in a thick film of particulate matter, stifling photosynthesis.

Although the Supreme Court ordered the cessation of all unregistered mining activity in 2011, following an extensive report on the environmental, economic and social impacts, rich industrialists continue to flout the law.

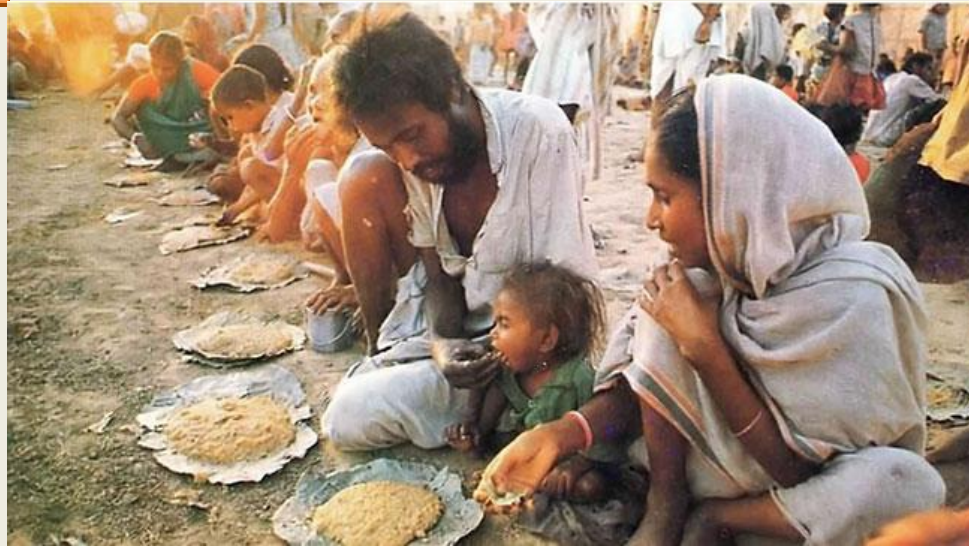
Still, an official ban has made it easier to crack down on the practice. Today, from the ashes of two crumbling systems – unlawful mining



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INDIA

One in Four Indians Admits to Practicing Untouchability Survey



65 years after untouchability was abolished, one in four Indians admit to practicing it in some form in their homes-- a shocking fact revealed by a pan-India survey that was flagged at a seminar of Dalit intellectuals, writers and academicians here.

Indians belonging to virtually every religion and caste group, including Muslims, Christians, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, admit to practicing untouchability, shows the India Human Development Survey (IHDS- 2).

Indians belonging to virtually every religion and caste group, including Muslims, Christians, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, admit to practicing untouchability, shows the India Human Development Survey (IHDS- 2).

The survey was conducted by National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) and University of Maryland, US and its full results are to be released later this year.

The issue was highlighted at a seminar "Rise of the Oppressed: Impact of Dalit Literary and Cultural Interventions" in Maharashtra and beyond over the weekend.

Speakers including former member of Planning Commission Bhalchandra Munagekar Y S Alone, Professor of Art and Aesthetics, JNU, and Woman Kendre, Director of National School of Drama, Suhas Borkar of Working Group on Alternative Strategies, called for waging a war on "the mindset of social injustice".

A shocking fact revealed by a pan-India survey that was flagged at a seminar of Dalit intellectuals, writers and academicians

After Borker spoke about the findings of the survey, other speakers including Mungekar, who is a member of the Rajya Sabha, said that the revelations were quite shocking.

Munagekar recalled the pain and hardship he and his family had to undergo due to the stigma of being a Dalit. He, however, said that the writings of Babasheb Ambedkar and Jnanpith Award winner V S Khandekar had greatly influenced his way of thinking.

Alone said dismantling of hegemony of the upper castes began with the rise of the Ambedkar movement in the country.

Kendre dwelt upon the tradition of great Dalit writers and poets like Namdev Dhasal, Annabhau Sathe, Daya Pawar, Shantibai Kamble and Narayan Surve among others and how their revolutionary writings brought about resurgence and gave a sense of self-confidence to the Dalits.

Smita Patil, Assistant Professor, School of Gender and Development Studies, IGNOU spoke about the contribution of Dalit women writers. Speaking about the impact of Dalit literature

beyond Maharashtra, Ram Chandra, Associate Professor of Language, Literature and Cultural Studies at JNU, called for rejection of the "exploitative and unjust" Hindu caste system. The

seminar was organised by Maharashtra Sanskritik Ani Rannaniti Adhyayan Samiti and Working Group on Alternative Strategies.

Source: National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) and University of Maryland, US



DALIT WATCH

80% Dalit Christians Facing Caste Discrimination

Tamil Nadu
24 June 2015



Dindigul: Around 80 percent of Dalit Christians suffer from caste discrimination in the Church especially in some Dioceses with a group of persons enjoying foreign funds, according to Christopher of Dalit Viduthalai Iyakkam (Dalit Liberation Movement). Deposing before the TN Minority commission, which held a review meeting here, he alleged that people belonging to the minority communities are being denied their rights.

Drawing the attention of the panel to the closure of the Kuralampatti church by the Tahsildar, Fr Ramesh sought adequate security for the minority community. Responding, Murugesan, Tahsildar, Dindigul West, said permission would be given for holding prayer service in the church if it did not disturb locals.

Besides complaints against minority-run schools denying admissions to students belonging to those communities, there were also demands for community certificate to those who had converted to Buddhism. Some aided schools were accused of not providing 18 percent reservation for Dalits and STs.

Commission chairman Bishop Rev Prakash computerised community certificates for Buddhism could not be given at present and steps would be taken to give hand-written community certificates. He said people could approach the district minority welfare office and avail the benefits given by the government. Giving statistics, he said `2.14 crore scholarship was given to minority students in 2014-2015. Financial assistance of `6.08 lakh was offered to 15 members of Muslim Mahalir Uthavum Sangam. While 480 people were given identity cards by the Ulema and Employees Welfare Board, free cycles were distributed to 352 Ulemas besides spectacle assistance of `18,000 to a few. Moreover, 20 beneficiaries have availed marriage assistance and `1.545 crore worth loan was extended to a total of 310 people. The review meeting

was attended by panel members Sardar Manjith Singh Naiyar, Justin Selvaraj, James and Kalamani. District Collector T.N.Hariharan and Naganathan, district backward and minority welfare officer, and other officials were present.

Source: [The New Indian Express](#)

Dalit youth Killed in police custody in Jammu

Jammu,
22 June 2015

Jammu, June 22 (KMS): In occupied Kashmir, Indian police killed in custody reportedly a Dalit youth, Tarsem Lal, 24, in Jammu. Tarsem Lal was killed by the Special Operations Group (SOG) of Indian police.

National Panthers Party Chief Patron, Professor Bhim Singh while denounced the killing in a statement demanded registration of FIR against police under section 302. He said that the Dalit youth was killed right in front of Damana Police Station. The NPP chief described the killing as a terrorist act of the men in uniform and demanded entire reshuffle in the police. He urged Governor to declare



emergency as the puppet regime had failed to protect the life and property of the people

Source: Kashmir Media Service

Villagers beat 15 Dalit women and parade them naked

Uttar Pradesh,
17 May 2105

A Mediaeval mindset continues to prevail in parts of India, despite the fact that 67 springs have passed since Independence. In the latest reign of terror, 15 Other Backward Castes (OBC)

villagers of Shahjahanpur's Hareva in Uttar Pradesh stripped five women of the Dalit community,

paraded them naked, caned them and then put them on show on the highway because one of their daughters had allegedly eloped with a Dalit's son. "They dragged us out of our houses on Saturday, stripped us in the middle of the village, beat us with batons, and took us to a tea stall on the Saraya-Budhwana Road where passersby stopped to leer at us. This continued for about four hours before some other villagers intervened," one of the victims, whose son has allegedly run away with the OBC girl, told the police.

Following the incident, Jalalabad police of the district have arrested four persons, including Sarvesh Kumar

Kashyap, the father of the girl. However, Sarvesh said that his daughter was going towards the agricultural field along with her mother on Wednesday evening when the boy Santosh Kumar reached there on motorcycles along with his friends and kidnapped her. He said: "We had gone to the boy's house and tried to convince them that they should return my daughter. But, our efforts went in vain. Later, though our tenor was of anger when we had confronted them, it is wrong to accuse us that we had paraded them naked."

Santosh belongs to the Dhanuk caste that falls under the Dalit community. The girl is from the Kashyap caste, a powerful and affluent OBC community in the state.

State Director General of Police Arvind Kumar Jain ordered an inquiry into the incident and said that the culprits would not be spared.

He said: "The police officers of Shahjahanpur have been asked to probe the case and take action against whosoever is guilty. I have also asked them to recover the girl, who is a minor." Jain claimed that the women were not paraded naked and that their clothes were torn after they were beaten up.

Additional Superintendent of Police Asharam Yadav said: "Cases have been registered against 15 people, including women of their family for allegedly helping the men in attacking the Dalits."

Source Mail Online India

Dalits' Houses Burnt after Clash in Perambalur

Tamil Nadu

5 May 2015

Tiruchy: A dispute between the Dalits and Caste



Hindus of V-Kalathur in Perambalur over Chithirai festivities took a violent turn when the members of both the communities entered into a free-for-all, leaving many injured. Later, a group of Caste Hindus allegedly went on a rampage, torching seven huts belonging to Dalits. However, no casualty was reported in the arson. Sources said the village had a public ground (chavadi), which was used by both the communities. The Dalit residents decided to organize a festival to honour Moopanar Swamy and erected a digital banner at the chavadi. The members of the caste-Hindu group planned to organize Chithra Pournami festival and decided to take out a procession, followed by a pooja at chavadi. A group of Caste Hindus visited the spot and demanded that the Dalits postpone their plans and remove the banner. Opposing the demand, the Dalits entered into a heated argument with the caste-Hindus. Soon, the matter came to a head and the verbal altercation gave way to fisticuffs. Sources said that during the fight, members of

both the communities began pelting each other with stones, injuring many from the two sides injured. The fight was stopped after village elders intervened. However, a few hours later, a group of Caste Hindus reached the Dalit settlement in the village and set afire seven houses. On information, Perambalur Fire and Rescue personnel rushed to the spot and doused the fire. The victims of the attack were identified as Govindhan (45), Samikannu (37), Selvamani (40), Amarthavalli (43), Ramesh (32), Raja and Ramasamy. On information, SP Sonal Chandra and sub-collector P Madusuthanan held a spot inquiry. One of the victims was sanctioned a house under the Greenhouse project while the rest were awarded a compensation of `5,000. Based on complaints lodged by both groups, the police registered a case and arrested 40 people from both the communities. A huge posse of police was deployed to avert the incident from flaring up again.

Source: [The New Indian Express](#)

Is this justice? Panchayat punishes man accused of raping a Dalit girl by slapping him five times with a shoe

Bihar

1 April 2015 **Bhagwanpur:**

The number of sexual harassment and

rape cases is increasing in Haryana, but it seems the panchayats in the state are not much bothered. In a recent incident, a panchayat in Bhagwanpur village of Yamunanagar district reportedly let off an accused in a "rape case" with the minimal punishment of "five shoe strikes". The incident occurred on March 25 when the 19-year-old victim, who belongs to a Dalit family, had gone to the field to collect fodder. It was then that Kala, her 22-year-old neighbour, allegedly raped her. When the victim's family approached the Ranjitpur police post, they were told to approach the village headman instead. The panchayat convened a meeting where it was decided that the accused will receive "five shoe strikes" as a punishment. The panchayat had concluded that the shoe strikes were enough as punishment for committing rape. Mahipal, the village headman, said of the allegations: "A panchayat meeting was called, but it was to discuss a quarrel and not a rape case." Sources said police personnel were present at the meeting when the 'judgment' was pronounced. However, police officials denied that any policemen were around during the panchayat session.

Most of the local residents are tight-lipped about the incident. Mayaram, who lives in the village, said: "I cannot say whether it was a case of rape or just a quarrel.

The accused man was slapped with shoes, I heard."

Village headman Mahipal confirmed that a panchayat meeting was called, but it was "to discuss a quarrel and not a rape case". The case was "settled in the presence of two policemen," Mahipal added. State Women's Commission vice-chairperson Suman Dahiya visited the victim's family. However, the victim did not divulge anything to Dahiya.

The family, it has been alleged, are under tremendous pressure from the panchayat to stay silent. "The victim is not giving any statement. No medical examination has been conducted so far. She has now changed her statement," Dahiya said. Yamunanagar Superintendent of Police Arun Singh Nehra said the accused and the victim are relatives, and the alleged rape has not been confirmed. "I don't know who spread this rumour. The girl has not told anything to the Women's Commission. She was neither raped nor eve-teased. Five officers, including the SDM, visited her and asked about the incident. When the girl is not saying anything then how can we say she was raped?" Nehra said. Haryana Social Justice and Empowerment Minister Kavita Jain was not available to comment on the incident. This is not the first incident of rape reported from the area. In December last year, an 80-year-old woman was allegedly raped in Yamunanagar's suburb



Kalanaur. The police then arrested a 40-year-old man in the case. In September, 2014, two sisters were beaten up by six men in the locality. In November, 2013, a minor was gang-raped by her neighbours.

Source: Mail Online India

BJP, Congress in race to 'own' Dalit icon

New Delhi

10 April 2015

LOCKING HORNS OVER LEGACY

PARTIES COMPETING FOR DALIT VOTES: EXPERTS



After Vallabh Patel, B.R.

Ambedkar is the next national icon over whose legacy the Congress and the BJP are set for a

tug of war. With Ambedkar's 125th birth anniversary year beginning on April 14, the two parties are drawing up plans to hold year-long celebrations.

The basis for the BJP's claim to Ambedkar's legacy is a project of its ideological parent, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, which aims at presenting him as a nationalist Hindu despite his adoption of Buddhism with five lakh followers at Nagpur in 1956 and his stiff opposition to Brahminical dominance. "Appropriating national history is not new and Dalit votes have always been important," Sudha Pai, Political Scientist and Rector, Jawaharlal Nehru University, said. "These parties feel that the Dalits are no longer attracted only by identity and

therefore their votes are up for grabs." While the Congress has constituted a committee under its president, Sonia Gandhi, and vice-president, Rahul Gandhi, to form plans to commemorate the year, the BJP is organizing a commemoration on April 14 at all district-level offices of the party. The RSS's mouthpiece, *Panchjanya*, and its English version, *The Organizer*, are coming out with commemorative collectors' editions on Dr. Ambedkar that will be released in New Delhi on the birth anniversary day by its general secretary, Suresh Bhaiyyaji Joshi, and Minister of Social Justice Thawarchand Gehlot. The Minister announced in December that the government had set aside Rs. 100 crore for a memorial.

The Congress committee will meet on April 13 and draw up the commemoration plans for the year. This is expected to be Mr. Gandhi's first major engagement after his return from a seven-week sabbatical. The Pradesh Congress committees have been directed to observe the birth anniversary, a function that was earlier performed by the State Scheduled Caste department of the party, K. Raju, convener of the committee, told *The Hindu*.

Years of efforts by RSS to appropriate legacy of Ambedkar

Over the past few years, senior Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh leaders

have often referred to B.R. Ambedkar as a nationalist Hindu. Sangh joint general secretary Krishna Gopal wrote a 52-page pamphlet on Dr. Ambedkar that talked about the "deep friendship" between Ambedkar and RSS founder K.B. Hedgewar. RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat said at an RSS meeting in Unao last month that Ambedkar believed in the ideology of the Sangh.

"Biggest challenge"

As for the Congress, K. Raju, convener of the party's Ambedkar birth anniversary celebration committee, admitted: "Our biggest challenge is to clear the misconceptions about Ambedkar and the Congress. His ideology has been projected as antagonistic to the Congress, whereas it was a partnership between the two." "In a few weeks' time, the party will hold a commemoration at Mhow [Ambedkar's birthplace] in Madhya Pradesh which will be presided over by the party president or vice-president," he said. Mr. Raju said the Congress did not want to confine Dr. Ambedkar's legacy to that of a Dalit icon. Neither does the RSS.

Manmohan Vaidya, All India Prachar Pramukh for the Sangh, said: "Ambedkar is a national leader not just of a particular group. The complete Ambedkar needs to be brought to the people and efforts will continue to be made in that direction."

Source: The Hindu

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## BANGLADES



The country's census does not record information about Dalits. The report notes that "the lack of concrete data contributes to the invisibility, marginalization, and disempowerment of these communities," and prevents any moves to politicize the issue, including claims for "special measures, representation, or participation in policy making, development, employment, and equality of access to basic services."

There is no future for us here," Ratan Basfur says angrily. Basfur is an "untouchable," a member of one of Bangladesh's lowest castes, and his surname cements it. The Basfurs are part of the "sweeper class" that live in Horijon Polli, a

### A **Tragedy** of **Dignity**: Life as One of **Bangladesh's** '**Untouchables**'

densely packed slum in Mymensingh District that contains 1,200 households, with an average of five inhabitants in each. Living here means being condemned to poor sanitation, limited employment opportunities, and debilitating floods. The slum is dense with humans living in buildings that are structurally unsound and the area is not served by municipal waste collection.

Within the slum, Basfurs are the lowest of the low — even their neighbors avoid coming in contact with things they

have touched, won't share their water, and sometimes even refuse to speak to them. Bangladesh has a population of over 150 million people. Almost 90 percent of those are Muslim, and Hindus are the largest minority, making up just over nine percent. The country's constitution grants the rights of all citizens regardless of caste, race, sex, religion, or place of birth, but in reality being born at the bottom of this system has long-lasting consequences.

A 2013 study by Mazharul Islam and Altaf Parvez





pointed out that while sample surveys indicate that there are between 5.5 and 6.5 million "Dalit" people, designated as "untouchables," living in Bangladesh, the country's census does not record information about them. The report notes that "the lack of concrete data contributes to the invisibility, marginalization, and disempowerment of these communities," and prevents any moves to politicize the issue, including claims for "special measures, representation, or participation in policy making, development, employment, and equality of access to basic services." The Basfurs can usually only get casual work. Existence at the lowest levels of the social hierarchy means they have the least access to political recourse, and therefore they are often overlooked for service provision by the local government.

Religious minorities often lie at the bottom of the caste system and a language barrier

can exist too. Many older Horijon Polli residents speak only Hindi, while those who are younger and more educated may speak Bengali as well. Ratan Basfur, 32, works as a casual cleaner for a hotel and for Mymensingh's Municipal Authority, for which he earns \$36 per month. He is increasingly frustrated, an emotion that bursts out as he talks. "We're looked down on," he stated. "That is a challenge. We are not connected to the rest of the world." Even among the most disadvantaged, infighting is common. Inside the slum a further level of caste differentiation applies. Basfur families are considered to be even lower than another discriminated against group of people — the Horijon. "People are always in disagreement here," Ratan said. "There are two communities here, one is Horijon and the other is Basfur. Horijons are perceived to be a better community, of a better caste, and they usually live in a

better environment. A Horijon will not enter our house, they will not touch what we've touched, or eat what we eat. But we eat what they've touched." Horijons are usually better educated than Basfurs, even though we do similar work. There is a caste system even among us — in the same slum — which divides us. Horijons look down on us, as we are considered a lower class." The word "Dalit" comes from Sanskrit, and translates to "those who have been broken and ground down deliberately by those above them in the social hierarchy." Dalit people can be found across South Asia and discrimination against them, as a social group, has become increasingly politicized.

"There is a growing civil society movement to defend and ensure the rights of Dalits in Bangladesh," Rikke Nöhrind, executive director of the International Dalit Solidarity Network, told VICE News. "Young Dalits, including young women, are increasingly getting organized to stand up for their rights and claim an education." Nöhrind added, however, that most do not have the resources to maintain what is a "significant struggle, so we are still only seeing a few managing to break out of their traditional caste occupations and economic status." Nöhrind said that a considerable amount is being done by Bangladeshi human rights defenders to urge the



government to "enact special anti-discrimination legislation, collect data on the welfare of Dalits in the country, enact quota systems, special measures, and budgets for Dalits, as well as cooperate with UN human rights mechanisms to end caste-based discrimination and exclusion." However, the group's designation continues to have both subtle and shocking consequences. A 2011 report published by South Asians for Human Rights found that violence towards members of lower castes was on the increase. The incidents recorded included murder, rape, the denial of access to public places, physical torture, land grabbing, forceful conversion, the looting of houses, and discrimination in schools. Nöhrind also noted that Dalit women are particularly hard hit, "as they suffer triple discrimination on the grounds of caste, gender, and religion." Around half of all Horijon Polli residents don't have access to a toilet connected to their living quarters. Queues for the one open public toilet block in the Basfur area can last between three and five hours each morning. Children defecate in a drain in the slum. As there are no showers, some women wash fully clothed using water from the well. Munni Basfur works three cleaning jobs. She wakes at 4am to clean the street, employed casually by the city

government. Then she moves on to a pharmaceutical company to do a two-hour cleaning shift, and does another half an hour's work in a store. She spoke about one of the biggest concerns of the sweeper class — the fact that they've condemned their offspring to a life in the lowest caste. There have even been reports of untouchables sending their children away and encouraging them to change their names, in the hopes that the next generation can escape the stigma that has plagued their parents. The Basfurs' four children all currently attend school.

Munni remarked: "If someone asks me what my mobile number is I cannot tell them, because my parents didn't teach me. I want my children to learn numbers."

With certainty, she said that she has no way to help her children find employment. "I don't know what their future holds, their fate is a question I can't answer." Her 14-year-old daughter Chandra is in Year 7 in school. Chandra — whose name has been changed — loves playing sports, particularly badminton and football. She is often forced to sit in the back of the schoolroom with other children of the sweeper class. Their classmates aren't allowed to touch these children. Chandra said this has impacted on her, and that she has "learned at school how to be clean and how to behave with people. If you live in a clean place you

won't have diseases. I try to keep the home clean and clear, and I try to keep my little brothers clean, as well as the environment." While Chandra finds the practicalities of her home life can be difficult, she added: "I actually like living here, because you always like the place you're born in. My whole family is here with me." Chandra would like to graduate "at least from college," a dream she says her father has acquiesced to for the moment. "My parents treat us boys and girls equally but most parents do not. Some girls are not allowed to go outside — but boys can go wherever they want," she continued. "I can only go to school alone. If I want to go somewhere else my parents take me... When I'm older my parents will marry me off and I'll not be allowed this freedom then either. My husband will have to take me. Here — I don't mind. My mother has my safety in mind. "But maybe when I'm married off I might resent this and want more freedom to do my own thing," she added. "It's difficult to really be someone here,



because girls are married off at such a young age. The law says 18, but it's not enforced here. So I'll be married young." Luke Henrion, an Oxfam commissioning editor who traveled to Bangladesh late in 2014 to work with the inhabitants of Horijon Polli, said that many of the people he met were as much embarrassed about their situation as angry at the unjustness of it. Older people were "more frustrated than the young people," he said. "For the young people it was all they knew. It seemed that life got harder the older you got, the more responsibility you had and the kids just carried on playing, but they were playing in really squalid conditions. Every time it flooded they had to play in sewage water from

the drain." Henrion's overwhelming impression, he said, was of a "huge kind of tragedy of dignity, especially for the women who have to queue for four or five hours in the morning to use a tiny, dilapidated block of pit latrines, which then get horribly flooded when there's rain." While there are ways to escape and climb the social strata, in Henrion's opinion those are few and very far between. "To get through the system you have to be very entrepreneurial and think outside the box," he said, but added that even then their stigma was often inescapable. "Their name is their caste. They're identifiable by that." Because of the lack of proper drainage in the slum, rain often results in floods, and 15 minutes of

deluge is all it takes to start to engulf Ratan and Munni's house. Munni explained: "The water comes up 1.5 feet every time it floods. During monsoon, the drain outside our house gets inundated. The water level exceeds even my bed. We have to raise it up on bricks, and sleep above the soiled water. For two days we can be stuck up on the bed on bricks." Ratan also highlighted the constant fear of disaster and its resultant tragedy. "I am 32 right now," he said. "In my 32 years I have seen 10 slums completely burned by fire. That's also a scare. The houses are small and just beside each other. If one room catches fire it doesn't take much time to spread."

[Source: Voice News](#)

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# INDIA



Dalit girls and women are victimized and violated in villages, towns and cities up and down the country. The Dalit Freedom Network (DFN) records that they are murdered and burned alive, “raped, held captive in brothels and temple ceremonies, and forced to work as bonded laborers”, while young girls are kidnapped and trafficked into prostitution or trapped into domestic servitude

The vast majority of India’s 1.3 billion people live in its 630,000 villages. They have seen little or no benefit from the country’s economic growth. Over 80% do not have ‘approved sanitation’ according to UNICEF, and are forced to defecate in public. Village health care, where it exists, is poor and inaccessible. Education is basic, with large class sizes and schools lacking desks and chairs, let alone books.

## Dalit Women and Village Justice in Rural India

The caste system dominates all areas of life and, although the constitution of India prohibits

discrimination based on caste, violent exploitation and prejudice are the norms. Add economic and gender divisions to this medieval Hindu social system and a multi-layered structure of separation begins to surface. At the bottom of the social ladder are girls and women from the Dalit caste (previously known as the untouchables), who are born into a life of exploitation, entrapment and potential abuse. As an International

Dalit Solidarity Network (IDSN) report for the UN makes clear, “discrimination and violence systematically deny them opportunities, choices and freedoms in all spheres of life”. The police are negligent, discriminatory and corrupt, and village justice, as dispensed by the ‘Panchayat’, is archaic. The village council or Panchayat “consists of five members ... [and] sits as a court of law”, adjudicates in cases which the *Encyclopedia Britannica* describes as relating to ‘caste’ offences. These ‘offences’ are trivial one and all, and range from a Dalit woman taking water from a



well reserved for higher caste families, to breaching eating, drinking, or smoking restrictions to—God forbid—having a relationship with a man from a neighbouring village. The punishments meted out by the Panchayat are extreme, often brutal and always unjust.

**Dependent** The most common victims are Dalits, of whom there are an estimated 167m in India (16% of the population). They tend to be poorly educated, landless, with few employment opportunities and so dependent on the very people who mistreat them—men and women of the higher castes. It is a dependency based on vulnerability, allowing exploitation and abuse.

Dalit girls and women are victimized and violated in villages, towns and cities up and down the country. The Dalit Freedom Network (DFN) records that they are murdered and burned alive, “raped, held captive in brothels and temple ceremonies, and forced to work as bonded laborers”, while young girls are kidnapped and trafficked into prostitution or trapped into domestic servitude. All because they happen to have been born into a particular family, in a particular place. Kessi Bai has lived in Thuravad village in Rajasthan for 21 years. In November last year the 45 year-old mother of five was accused, with no evidence, of murder, by a mob of villagers

led by the village council. She was violently punished: stripped naked, her face was blackened with charcoal, her head was shaved and she was repeatedly beaten with wooden sticks. Her husband and son were locked inside their home while she was paraded for six hours around neighbouring villages on a donkey. The procession returned to Thuravad at around 8pm, she was thrown from the donkey and again beaten, before the police finally arrived. When I met this frail, desperately poor Dalit woman in December, she would not show her face and wept repeatedly. She has not left her house since the distressing incident. In a similar recent case in Uttar Pradesh, the *Daily Mail* reports, “15 Other Backward Castes (OBC) villagers stripped five women of the Dalit community, paraded them naked, caned them and then put them on show on the highway because one of their daughters had allegedly eloped with a Dalit’s son”.

And most shocking of this trinity of injustice: last January in the remote village of Subalpur in West Bengal, a 20 year-old Dalit woman who was “found in the company of a married man from another village”, was, the *Guardian* reported, “dragged out by her neighbours ... tied to a tree then raped by up to 15 men as punishment for the illicit liaison”. The woman, known only as ‘W’, has since been regarded as a ‘woman of bad

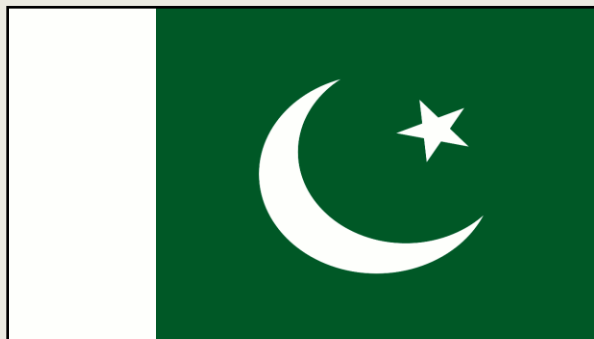
character’, who “‘spoiled the atmosphere of the village’ by going against local customs”. These medieval ‘traditions’ of suppression and division enforced by the Panchayats, which are widespread in India’s villages, support a deeply patriarchal society and have no place in any civilized country.

**Lacking** The Panchayat is elected by villagers and is paid for by the Indian government—it is in effect the first level of local governance. All members are duty-bound to maintain communal harmony and to discharge their office, the official legislation says, in “a fair and judicious manner without fear or favour, affection or ill-will”. As with many areas of Indian life, however, what is universally lacking is the implementation of such liberally acceptable legislation. Complacency and corruption are two of the major obstacles to the observation of universal human rights and the realization of democracy in India. If the government, under the leadership of the Hindu-nationalist Narendra Modi, wishes to build a truly democratic state, it needs to enforce its legislation on caste, ensure village Panchayats operate within the law and provide Dalit women with the justice and support they so badly need.

Source: By, Graham Peebles

Graham is an artist, writer and director of The Create Trust, an NGO he founded in 2006. He has run education projects and teacher training programs in Palestine, India and Ethiopia.

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## ***We Remind the Nation***

The importance Pakistani nation gives to its minorities can be measured by public announcement of the founder of the nation, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, which he made just three days before the declaration of the partition of India. He said in his historical speech delivered in parliament on September 11, 1947 that: There would be complete freedom to the minorities in Pakistan for spending their lives according to their faith and life style. They will be absolutely free to go to their temple, churches, and other worship places for performing their religious practices.

It was not just the word of ordinary assurance after the formation of Pakistan when a three Member committee had been constituted under convener ship of Syed Ameer Hussain Qudwai, for designing the national flag of newly born nations, the committee followed Quaid's approach towards the minorities in the region by considering minorities as essential part of the nation, our First national assembly approved the proposed national flag, where, color white was suggested as the symbols of minorities. By adopting this two colored flag we gave message to the whole international community that minorities are essential section of Pakistani nation. Although minorities at large in Pakistan are satisfied, as they themselves and the people outside the country recognized this fact. Now when election campaign is going to stand, Sir Ganga Ram Heritage foundation remind the nation Particularly all political parties that chalking their election program they should keep in mind Quaid's and people's commitment with our friendly and patriotic minorities as Pakistani Muslim majority is religiously and morally bound to protect the interests and right of the minorities of the country.

**SIR GANGA RAM  
HERITAGE FOUNDATION  
LAHORE**