

QUARTERLY

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Voice of minorities and oppressed people in South Asian societies



## India's Caste System: They are trying To Erase Dalit History, This is Martydom

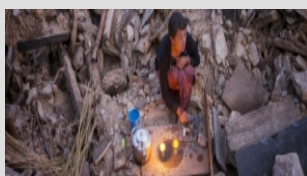
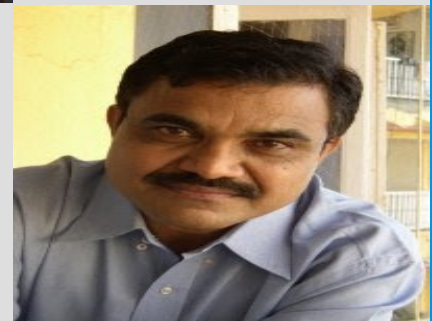
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### Scourge of the Scoundrels

*by, Dr. Anand  
Teltumbde*

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## EDITORIAL

A person who committed suicide ended his life, leaving many questions behind. It is not an individual act we must not squeeze our thoughts and only focusing that it was an individual act and forget the role of the society. During all the life a human being tries to get protection and seeks the safety of his own and his family, this is the prime objective of any human being. But on the contrary a person who act against it and ends his life by his own hands and commit suicide, shows that society did not deliver and discrimination among the people is strongly prevailing, which includes poverty, lack of equal opportunities, human rights violations and most importantly culture and behavior of social and caste based discrimination in the society. Dalits are the largest discriminated population in the world. Stats suggest that in South Asia they have population of 26 to 30 million and in India every 5<sup>th</sup> Indian is dalit. As they are victim of discrimination, which they are facing in their daily life, the trend of suicide in this marginalized community is quite high and news about dalit suicides are regularly published in Indian print media. Caste discrimination is not only individually acted and social behavior in India, has also institutionalized. The education institution regularly practice this discrimination, although general perception is that education will help to minimize the practice of caste based discrimination, but unfortunately caste system getting bigger on it and from basic to higher education institutions, caste

discrimination is practiced both individually and collectively. The recent suicide of dalit PhD. Scholar student Rohith Vemula on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2016 in university of Hyderabad is the prime example of institutionalized caste based discrimination. His suicide sparked protests and outrage from across India and gained widespread media attention as an alleged case of discrimination against Dalits and low status caste in India, in which elite educational institutions have been purportedly seen as hotbeds of caste-based discrimination against students belonging to lower caste. In his suicide note, 26-year-old Rohith had shared that he always wanted to be a science writer like Carl Sagan. Rohith Vemula's isn't the first suicide by a Dalit student on the University of Hyderabad campus. Over the last decade a string of suicides have rocked the central varsity highlighting the pronounced discrimination against students from the marginalized sections at UoH. According to WHO India has one of the world's highest rate of suicides among people aged between 15 years and 29 years. Each year, between 30 and 40 people per 100,000 Indians aged between 15 and 29 kill themselves. This accounts for about a third of all suicides in the country. India accounted for the highest estimated number of suicides in the world in 2012, According to the report, 258,075 people committed suicide in India in 2012, with 99,977 women and 158,098 men taking their own lives.

**Editor**



# Pakistan



## Sindh Assembly Approves Hindu Marriage Bill

For the first time in the country's history, marriage laws for millions of Hindus living in Sindh have been codified after the Sindh Assembly approved the Hindu Marriage Bill, 2016. Senior PPP leader and Sindh Minister for Law and Parliamentary Affairs Nisar Ahmad Khuhro moved the bill in the provincial assembly which was later passed after a debate between the opposition and treasury benches. The bride and groom cannot be less than 18 years, according to the text of the approved draft. Married couples will be required to obtain a marriage registration certificate, while a couple can also face fines in case their marriage is not registered. The law can be applied retroactively to existing

**Hindus, despite being the second-largest religious minority group in Pakistan, with a population of 3.3 million, had no legal mechanism to register marriages. Unlike the Muslim majority or Christians, Hindus lacked any legal framework for protection of their marriages and are unable to provide legal proof when required.**

marriages. Zoroastrians and

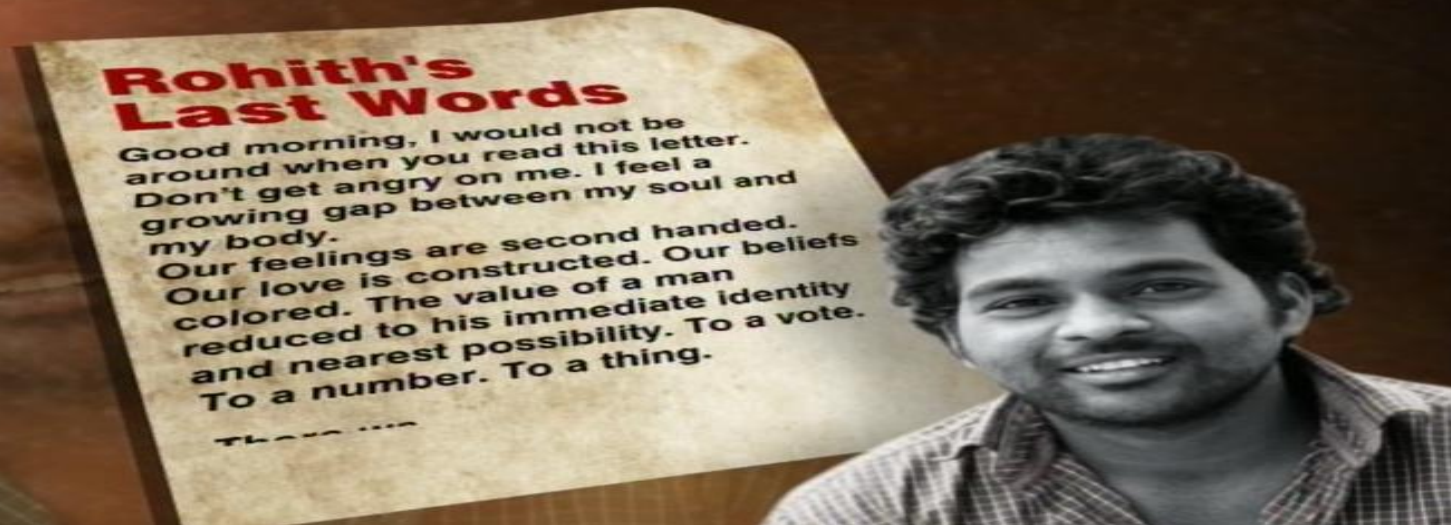
Sikhs will also be able to register their marriages under the new law. Hindus, despite being the second-largest religious minority group in Pakistan, with a population of 3.3 million, had no legal mechanism to register marriages. Unlike the Muslim majority or Christians, Hindus lacked any legal framework for protection of their marriages and are unable to provide legal proof when required.

Christians, the other main religious minority, have a British law dating back to 1870 regulating their marriages. Without the law, Hindus say their women were easy targets for rape or forced marriage and faced problems in proving the legitimacy of their





## INDIA



## India's Caste System: They Are Trying To Erase Dalit History. This is Martyrdom, a Sacrifice

Rohith Chakravarti Vemula never lost his poetic flair, even when writing his suicide note. “Never was a man treated as a mind, a glorious thing made up of stardust,” he wrote. “Uma anna, sorry for using your room for this thing.”

Copies of his final letter are stuck to every wall at the University of Hyderabad, where the 28-year-old *dalit*, or Untouchable, PhD scholar hanged himself from the ceiling fan of a friend’s hostel bedroom. The Indian government launched a judicial probe into his death and the prime minister, Narendra Modi, said: “Mother India has lost a son.”

Hours before he died, Rohith sat in the university’s main square and sang old *dalit* songs with his friends. For the last 12 days of his life, he had slept in a tent he called the “*dalit* ghetto”, along with the four students who had been suspended with him. They were protesting at their treatment by the university after being accused of attacking the leader of a rightwing student group and excluded from campus life. Rohith and his friends had been suspended from classes for three months, expelled from their university residence and told they were not allowed to enter any campus buildings, eat at the mess or vote in student

*This is not just a dalit movement; it is a movement for democratising higher educational institutions. It is a movement to keep the values of the constitution of India. We are ready to die for these values.”*

elections. Rohith’s friends compared the exclusion to the old practice of *villevarda*, in which people of Untouchable castes were forced out of their villages. The death sparked protests on campuses worldwide last week and prompted a national debate about the treatment of *dalit* students and academics at Indian universities. The main square on the campus, where Rohith spent his final days, was littered with posters and leaflets carrying images of the young scientist with slogans such as “We shall overcome”. The Hindu caste

**“They are trying to erase our history as *dalits* by this uprooting. We don’t believe his death is a suicide. It is a part of this erasing. His death is martyrdom, a sacrifice.”**

system’s tradition of excluding Untouchables was outlawed by the post-independence constitution, but *dalits* still face discrimination, exclusion and extreme poverty in modern India. Rohith was a passionate defender of civil liberties for *dalits* and a member of the Ambedkar Students Association (ASA), named after a prominent anti-caste activist in India’s freedom struggle against the British Empire. After Rohith’s death, hundreds of students at the University of Hyderabad gathered to protest at the administration’s decision to exclude the five *dalit* students.

A friend of Rohith’s explains: “This is not just a *dalit* movement; it is a movement for democratising higher educational institutions. It is a movement to keep the values of the constitution of India. We are ready to die for these values.” Another chips in: “They are trying to erase our history as *dalits* by this uprooting. We don’t believe his death is a suicide. It is a part of this erasing. His death

is martyrdom, a sacrifice.” A member of the Communist party of India addressed the crowd: “Rohith is not dead. Rohith is an idea. Rohith is an ideology. You cannot kill an idea.” Rohith’s younger brother, Raja Chakravarti, told the *Observer*: “I am not as clever as Rohith. My biggest mistake in my whole life was that I didn’t try to understand what he was fighting for. I wish that, when I have children, Rohith will come back as my son,” he said, referring to the Hindu belief in reincarnation. Sitting on a cot in a hostel dormitory, Raja politely refuses the plate of food offered to him as we speak. “Rohith was excluded from eating at the canteen here for the last few days of his life. The university didn’t give him any food. So I’m not going to eat a morsel here.” His mother, Radhika, sobs next to him. “I am a tailor. I earn 150 rupees (£1.50) per day. With that money, I brought my children to this level. We only had enough to eat one meal a day. Even in those conditions, he got so far,” she says, wiping her tears. His family heard about the death at around 7pm last Sunday. “He was supposed to come to see us the day he died. He told us he was coming home for a festival, Sankranti. We didn’t get news from him all day. He didn’t have a phone. We tried calling his friends three times before we found out.” “I was the one who lit the pyre for his cremation,” Raja says, his voice shaking. “Rohith had

said that once he got a job he’d pay for me to do a PhD abroad. I wanted to study geology, but since he died all those dreams are broken. My mother is scared to let me go back to university. And I’ve lost the desire to do it. That dream is over now.” Dickens Leonardo, a *dalit* student named after great cultural figures by unlettered parents, was one of the last people to speak to Rohith before his death. “It haunts me. He would speak about death and the life of death. He must be sitting somewhere here laughing at the drama that’s happening,” he says. “He must be thinking, ‘I couldn’t do this in life, and now look at all this, after I’m gone.’ It was only through death that he could spread this message.” “I ran when I got the news,” says Prabhakar, one of seven students on hunger strike. “I was one of the first to hear about it. We all ran together. We saw the body and we were screaming and crying. I lost all my confidence when I saw that.” Sitting next to him, Uma Maheshvar Rao, in whose room Rohith died, says: “This university is a graveyard of *dalits*. This is not the first death of a *dalit* student here. It is the 11th [since 2002]. We want it to be the last.” Students such as Rohith who come from *dalit* backgrounds are often educated in Telugu, a

**The Hindu caste system’s tradition of excluding Untouchables was outlawed by the post-independence constitution, but *dalits* still face discrimination, exclusion and extreme poverty in modern India.**



regional language, at government schools. Many get places at top universities through India's reservation system of positive discrimination, which favours "scheduled caste" students from low-caste backgrounds. *Dalits* find themselves unprepared to compete with their peers who come from private schools. Some struggle to read course material in English. "We have ideas," Uma says, "but we can't express them."

As students mobilized on campus, the country's leaders and the university's administration appeared on television screens across the nation. They argued that there is no evidence that Rohith's death was linked to caste discrimination. The education minister, Smriti

Irani, said Rohith's suicide was misrepresented with "malicious intent" as "a *dalit* v. non-*dalit* issue". She argued that the students' campaign was an attempt to demonise the incumbent Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata party (BJP) and its campus representatives. Campaigners accused the BJP of pressuring the vice-chancellor to take action against the *dalit* students. The BJP has denied any wrongdoing. The university pointed out that there was no mention of caste or maladministration in Rohith's suicide note. His final words were: "This is my decision and I am the only one responsible for this. Do not trouble my friends and enemies after I am gone." The vice-chancellor told the *Observer* that he offered his deepest condolences to Rohith's family and had made an attempt to see them, which they had refused. Rohith's friends said he was completely normal, even jovial, in the days leading up to his suicide. Sesaeiah was

one of the only people who may have understood what Rohith was going through. He was one of the five excluded *dalits* excluded on campus and who slept in the *dalit* ghetto with Rohith for 12 consecutive days before he died. He suggested that Rohith did not die defending an idea, but because he was overwhelmed with emotion and a sense of defeat. "He was going through some kind of depression. We told him this is not the way. Don't be like that, everything will be OK. We didn't expect it." A scratched-out line in Rohith's suicide note suggests that his disillusionment with the minority rights student group he belonged to may have contributed to his death: "ASA... anything and everything exist for their own sake and seldom the interest of a passion. These organizations march to get power or to become famous or to be important and we think we are up to changing the system."

**Source: the guardian**

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## INTERNATIONAL

# THE GLOBAL GOALS

## For Sustainable Development



### 260 MILLION DALITS APPEAL FOR INCLUSION IN THE POST 2015 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL

We welcome the *Final draft of Post 2015 Sustainable Development Goals* which has called for reducing inequality and giving equal rights for the proposed goals with the motto of **Leaving No One Behind**. *However, the caste based exclusion has failed to get recognized in the final draft*. Dalits and those discriminated on the Work and Descent, with over 260 million worldwide facing the problem of caste based exclusion, gathered in one place, they would be the 6th largest nation in the world! Their issue needs to be recognized as an important

determinant of poverty and as under-development in various countries especially in South Asia and in some Africa and Latin American countries.

The draft United Nations Principles and Guidelines for the Effective Elimination of Discrimination Based on Work and Descent, 2009 clearly states that “discrimination based on work and descent exacerbates poverty and constraints progress.” Caste based discrimination is a dominant cause for poverty in South Asian countries, which totals about 260 million across the countries

*Caste based exclusion has failed to get recognized in the final draft. Dalits and those discriminated on the Work and Descent, with over 260 million worldwide facing the problem of caste based exclusion*

‘Leave no one behind’ encapsulates a holistic development framework. However this framework needs to take into accounts the situation of Dalits as those vulnerable and are affected by intergenerational poverty due to inherent systems of hierarchy and exclusion that prevent, discriminate and prohibit access to development and rule of law. Dalits have been victims of discrimination and hate crimes for centuries and

have been considered as impure and polluting. Significance of caste in social exclusion is indeed recognized by Post 2015 development agenda (working committee) but seems to have failed to make into the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) or Targets.

*Caste (based exclusion) should be crucial factors towards addressing the indicators for SDG*

*1- Disaggregated data based on Caste and targeted budgeting to ending poverty*

*2- Quality education for all, with data disaggregation for measuring inclusion of Dalits.*

*3- Monitoring the process towards elimination of violence and exploitation of Dalit women*

*4- Targeted Budgeting and Data disaggregation for reducing inequalities within the countries.*

*implementation*

We recommend that Caste should be recognized as the major discriminatory or

exclusionary factor in development, thus the importance of elimination of caste based exclusion should be represented in the document. For the SDGs to be transformational to 260 million Dalits across the world. It is essential that the goals, targets and the Outcome document takes into account the current realities in many parts of the world and include **descent (caste) based discrimination**.

We also recommend that Dalits and other traditionally excluded communities to have gainful participation in the development process undertaken by Governments and all development stakeholders. They need to ensure transparency and open data which are crucial to access as well as to monitor the commitments made in achieving the SDGs and the targets. This calls for a commitment to **'just' governance'** by the governments to not only being responsive to the needs of the people but also institute greater transparency, accountability and participation in terms of economic policymaking.

**To ensure the above,** we propose the following Indicators for inclusive implementation of the SDG  
**1 Towards Ending Poverty:** Disaggregated data on

multiple dimension index (MDI) inclusive of – age, sex, disability, race, **caste**, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status and rural-urban divide. Targeted budgeting for inclusion of socially disadvantaged communities in infrastructure and industrial development.

**2. Ending Hunger and Food Security:** Disaggregated data of prevalence of mal-nutrition, anemia, shunting and calorie intake among socially disadvantaged groups on the axis of age, sex, disability, race, caste, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status and rural-urban divide.


**3. Promoting Education:** Disaggregated data on educational disparity, rate of drop out, gross enrolment rate at primary, secondary, higher, college, technical and professional institutions, scholarships and grants inclusive of – age, sex, disability, race, caste, ethnicity, social origin, religion, region or economic or other status. Need of a comprehensive policy to address educational disparity.

**4. Achieve Gender Equality:** Disaggregation data on multiple dimension index (MDI) inclusive of – age, sex, disability, race, **caste**, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status and rural-urban



divide— on  
violence  
against women.

## 5. Towards Sustainable Employment:



Measurement of Intergroup and intragroup disparity of average income growth across sex, disability, race, **caste**, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other

status and rural-urban divide.

## 6. Reduce Inequalities within and among countries: Disaggregated

**countries:** Disaggregated data on multiple dimension index (MDI) inclusive of – age, sex, disability, race, caste, ethnicity, origin, occupation religion or economic or other status and rural-urban divide. Targeted budgeting for inclusion of socially disadvantaged

communities in infrastructure  
and industrial development

## 7. Promote Access to Justice: Disaggregated data

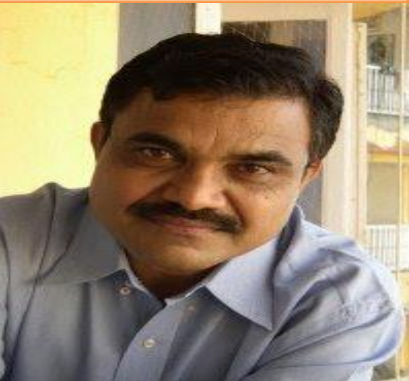
**Justice:** Disaggregated data of access to public services and entitlements by women inclusive of – age, disability, race, caste, ethnicity, origin, occupation religion or economic or other status.

*Source: Asia Dalit Rights Forum*

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# INDIA



By  
Dr. Anand Teltumbde

## Scourge of The Scoundrels

Close on the heels of the institutional murder of Rohith Vemula, has come another attack of the Hindutva forces on the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) students. A pattern in these episodes including the previous one, that of banning the Ambedkar Periyar Study Circle (APSC) in IIT, Madras is discernible: Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) accusing the students of anti-national activities, some BJP minister prompting the institutional machinery to bend into action and the latter crawling in compliance to precipitate it. In the previous episodes, the BJP Minister was the HRD minister, Smriti Irani who somehow internalized that her job is to saffronize the campuses and the institutions were the universities. This time none other than the home minister, Rajnath

Singh, has been the minister and the ultimate monstrous force of police as the institution. All veils stand torn exposing the sinister agenda of the BJP to eliminate potential obstacles in its path of establishing the ancient brahmanical supremacist regime called Hindu rashtra. And they are out to poison the polity and use state might to accomplish it with impunity. The implications are clear enough and beyond discussion. People lazily compare the situation with what prevailed in 1930s and 40s in Germany and Italy, when the storm troopers of Hitler and black-shirts of Mussolini beat up people on roads. But what is happening in India lately portends worse than Nazism and fascism. Because, the state today is far more powerful than Hitler's or

Mussolini's, laced with technologies of precision surveillance and most importantly, matured to use liberal façade of democracy with fascist content not to show up ripples of repression anywhere.

### **Nationalism sans Nation**

The sole point that is hampered upon by the hindutva camp, as their role models in Hitler and Mussolini did, is nationalism. They had accused Rohith and his friends of it and driven him to death. They are now baying for blood of the students of JNU calling them anti-nationals. Their entire claim is based on the slogans shouted in the meeting on 9 February. It is said that many outsiders had mingled with the students and shouted those slogans. They could well be the hirelings of ABVP to stage this drama of

anti-nationalism. As anyone who has little knowledge of Left ideology could testify that such slogans with “Bharat ki Barbadi”, “Allah o Akbar” or “Pakistan Zindabad”, etc. will never be given by the Left. There is no hiding the fact that the Left has been protesting against the hangings of Afzal Guru and Yakub Memon as judicial murders and also supporting the rights of Kashmiris for self determination.

The Democratic Students Federation, presumably the Left students’ outfit, cannot just shout such slogans. Certainly it was not Kanhaiya, the president of the JNU Students Union, whose speech is in public domain, who did it. Howsoever morally repulsive these slogans may sound to us; they are being shouted in Kashmir for many years. The claimants of nationalism ought to understand that India as prophetically alerted by Babasaheb Ambedkar is not firstly a nation. She could aspire to be one by ironing off many deep rooted prejudices based on caste, religion, race, and ethnicity, etc. The hindutva forces on the contrary have been aggravating this divide, foolishly imagining the ancient India was a nation. With this attitude, they already amputated arms of mother India in 1947 and now again creating conditions for further partitions. What could be the bigger harm to the unity and

integrity of India? By their own definition, they thus become the biggest anti-nationals. No terrorist on earth can do more harm to this country than they themselves. If they want to learn what nationalism is, they should cast off their blind folds and go through Kanhaiya’s speech that speaks of azadi for milling poor, Dalits Adivasis, women of this country. It can teach them what nation is better than their gurus had ever done. One may remind them that in addition to ‘Muslims, Christians and communists’ identified by Golwalkar to be the bigger enemies of Hindus than the British, there are Dalits and Adivasis too, whom they take for granted, can potentially turn the tables on them. Therefore, they had better discarded their jingoist patriotism and learnt about constitutional patriotism that teaches living with plurality and diversity in modern world, which is what our founding fathers envisaged.

**Bogey of a Crime**

While nationalism and patriotism do not have legal standing, ‘sedition’ stands on our statute books as a weapon in the hands of rulers to smother peoples’ dissent. It comes through the Indian Penal Code first drafted by a rank colonialist, Thomas Babington Macaulay. Our (as well as Pakistan’s) ruling classes adopted this colonial code while pompously declaring the new born regime as democratic republic. As is well known, The British had first used it in

prosecution of Lokmanya Tilak and rampantly thereafter against the freedom fighters. The established enlightened opinion, which was even expressed by our Constitution makers, is that it is antithetical to democracy. But how could the rulers let go of their weapon so easily? Sedition law was kept on the statutes; the Supreme Court also having held it intra vires in the case of Kedarnath Das v. State of Bihar. The court, however, set the threshold for applying “sedition” at actual violence or incitement to violence (“spark to a powder keg”) or subverting government, by violent means, through words written or spoken. This threshold definitely did not extend to punishing slogan-shouting. During the Khalistan agitation, the Supreme Court had struck down the prosecution case against Balwant Singh for shouting slogan like “Khalistan Zindabad” and had come down heavily on what it termed as immature and insensitive police actions, which could have created a law and order situation. Obviously, the sedition Act will not apply to the slogan shouting, howsoever morally repugnant, on 9 February in JNU campus, least to Kanhaiya Kumar. But the police acting at the behest of the home minister had to arrest him, slap the charges of sedition (124-A) and criminal conspiracy. In the Indian judicial system, where the process itself is punishment, Kanhaiya may come out on

bail but until then he has already suffered interrogation in police custody, judicial custody including the physical attack by the BJP goons. This process is grossly misused by the Police to harass innocent people. If one takes stock of the cases of this and other such draconian laws, which are routinely slapped on Dalits and Adivasis as Maoists and Muslims as terrorists, they are basically used to incarcerate them for years, waste their prime time in jails and drive them and their families to ruination before they are acquitted by the courts. No one ever questioned the culpability or noted the lack of accountability of police in blatantly misusing these sections against the hapless people most of whom do not have enough food to eat. Kanhaiya whose family subsists on his mother's monthly salary of Rs 3,000 as an Anganwadi worker, is made to fight his case against the mighty state for years to absolve himself of the fake charges. The ABVP, the big-mouthed leaders of the BJP, and the police would regale at the ruination of his career. In fact, if one goes by the standing interpretation, they are the ones who not only instigated violence but actually committed it inside the court premises in utter disregard to the judicial system and hence the Constitution, including the police who stood by as mute spectators, perfectly qualify for being tried for sedition.

### **Saffronizing Institutions**

The stability of India despite its diversity and widespread poverty is largely attributed to its liberal institutions inherited from the colonial regime. The Sangh Pariwar is out to destroy their character to bring in Hitlerite rule characterized by Ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Führer (One People, One Empire, One Leader), which is echoed in their slogan of 'One Nation, One Culture, One Religion, One Language!'. Such a fascist paradigm needs only storm troopers to carry out the leader's writ and to keep people in compliance mode. Notwithstanding the constitutional constraints, the current regime has severely displayed penchant for it. Most institutions are already saffronized by installing the 'believers' as their heads. The manner in which the IIT, Madras conducted itself in the APSC episode or the Hyderabad University in ASA episode and the JNU in the current episode amply illustrate it. The entire matter of 9 February squarely fell within the domain of the JNU administration. But it allowed police to take control of the campus and incurred ignominy for the university. Contrary to the pedagogic claim that Indian state has three legs, legislative, executive and judiciary that maintains its internal balance the fact is that the executive has always been in collusion with the political masters. The most visible and important arm of the executive from peoples'

perspective is the police, which has always been subservient to them. But the manner in which the police at Patiala House court premises conducted themselves marks definitive qualitative shift. They stood by while lawyers and other activists belonging to the BJP mercilessly beat up students and journalists on camera. The BJP MLA OP Sharma, one of the several marauders, had temerity to repeatedly say on camera that if he had a pistol, he would have shot them dead. When on 17th Kanhaiya was to be produced in the court, the previous scene was defiantly re-enacted, this time Kanhaiya himself being grievously attacked. The BJP goons had declared that if he had got bail from the court, they would kill him. While the world was aghast seeing these scenes, the Police would file the FIR against unknown persons. Not a single BJP politician would see anything wrong in this naked show of hooliganism. Less said of the media, particularly the electronic ones, as the important institution of democracy, better it is. Almost all of them ran round the clock programmes that directly or indirectly fed into the argument of the state that the students indulged in anti-national activities. In a way, it is good. The BJP is baring its own fangs and digging its own grave

**Source: Economic and Political weekly**

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## BANGLADESH

### *Bangladesh* Millions Dalits Need Water & Sanitation



**Main Findings of Survey conducted in 126 rural and urban Dalit settlements: LGIs (Municipality, Union Parishad, City Corporation) and other government agencies pay highly inadequate attention to the issues of poor water and sanitation situation among Dalits. The culture of deprivation due to the caste and occupation increases the distance between service providing agencies like local government institutions and the Dalit population, which continues to impact the quality and extent of basic amenities like water and sanitation. 89% of rural Dalits use shared (common) latrines and 43% of their toilets are hanging latrines. 90% of the respondents shared that the latrines that they used had either no roof or broken roof, which restricted their use in rainy seasons.**

The Dalits of Bangladesh are deprived of access to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH). A new report urges to country's government to take action on the issue and civil society groups to pay more attention to the needs of the Dalit population. "We are lucky to have some source of water; hygienic or unhygienic, is not for us to think", says Dalit rights activist Sonu Rani Das in a report on access to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) for Dalits in Bangladesh. The situation in her 'colony' – a term for the areas that most Dalits live in – is but one example of the numerous problems that the estimated 5.5-6.5 million Dalits of Bangladesh face in their daily lives. They live in abysmal conditions, often in unclean locations with overflowing or choked drains, open sewers, lack of

latrines and bathrooms, and near garbage dumping sites. Discrimination against them manifests itself in difficulties in accessing equal water and sanitation services. In rural Bangladesh, 89 per cent of Dalits use shared latrines, mostly without roofs. In urban Dalit colonies, 84 people, on average, have to share one water point, while there is one latrine per 40 people. The report – produced by the Bangladesh Dalit and Excluded Rights Movement (BDERM) and human rights NGO Nagorik Uddyog – notes that numerous measures by the Government of Bangladesh to improve water and sanitation services for the general population in urban as well as rural areas have had little effect on the country's Dalits. "This is to a large extent because recognition of Dalit issues is

Clean water is a luxury for the Dalits of Dhaka. While members of the Bangladeshi capital's non-Dalit population mostly boil or filter their water, the economically deprived and discriminated Dalits often have to make do with unsafe water sources.

Main Findings of Survey conducted in 126 rural and urban Dalit settlements: LGIs (Municipality, Union Parishad, City Corporation) and other government agencies pay highly inadequate attention to the issues of poor water and sanitation situation among Dalits. The culture of deprivation due to the caste and occupation increases the distance between service providing agencies like local government institutions and the Dalit population, which continues to impact the quality and extent of basic amenities like water and sanitation. 89% of rural Dalits use shared (common) latrines and 43% of their toilets are hanging latrines. 90% of the respondents shared that the latrines that they used had either no roof or broken roof, which restricted their use in rainy seasons. The absence of electricity in the latrines set up in both the urban and rural areas raised

safety concerns for Dalit women in using the latrines in the night. The latrines constructed of tin shed and plastic besides being a serious threat to privacy of girls and women, are also unhygienic and pose various health hazards. The perceived notions of caste hierarchy have resulted in inability of Dalits to rent off or sell their land to other communities to construct sanitary latrines. Exacerbating the peril of living in the wretched condition of poor sanitation is the absolute lack of waste management facilities. Choking drains and overflowing ditches fail to attract the attention of the authorities concerned. 32% of latrines in the rural Dalit settlements are of ring slab, 25% are pit latrines while 43% are hanging 1or open latrine; with 89% that uses shared latrine in rural areas. On average, 16 households or 84 people use one water point in Dalit

*Source: International Dalit Solidarity Network*

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## Success Story



### Amnesty International Human Rights Award 2016 Awarded To Henri Tiphagne From India

BERLIN, 25 January 2016 Indian lawyer and human rights defender Henri Tiphagne will be awarded the 8th Human Rights Award by Amnesty International Germany. The award, which will be presented at an official ceremony on 25 April at the Maxim Gorki Theatre in Berlin, is recognition of Henri Tiphagne's exceptional commitment to human rights. "For many decades now, Henri Tiphagne has been tirelessly and bravely standing up for human rights. His organization's invaluable work includes campaigning against discrimination and the use of torture in India," said Selmin Çalýpkan, Director of Amnesty

International Germany. "Henri Tiphagne and his organization *People's Watch* are fighting to ensure the rights of others and yet they themselves are being harassed and hampered by the authorities. There are many other civil society organizations in India that are in a similar position. This award is therefore intended to send a strong signal of support to the whole of the Indian human rights movement." Henri Tiphagne is the founder of the organization *People's Watch*, one of the most notable human rights organizations in India. *People's Watch* has been researching and documenting human rights

Award ceremony to be held on 25 April at the Maxim Gorki Theatre in Berlin, Germany is recognition of Henri Tiphagne's exceptional commitment to human rights

violations, as well as providing legal representation to those affected, for over 20 years. The organization also actively supports human rights education. In 1997, Henri Tiphagne founded an institute offering training for teachers as well as mentoring around school human rights education programmes. So far, they have managed to reach out to around 500,000 children in 18 Indian states. In recent years, many organizations have come under intense pressure from the Indian government, and *People's Watch* is no exception. The organization's



bank accounts have been frozen repeatedly since 2012 with the result that some employees had to be dismissed and many programmes abandoned. A complaint filed by People's Watch against these government actions is still pending. Successive governments in India have similarly used the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act - which imposes restrictions on foreign funding for civil society organizations - for political ends. Those targeted by the authorities include non-governmental organizations as well as activists and protest groups campaigning,

for example, against forced evictions linked to mining projects. Whenever activists and organizations are forced to limit the scope of their work due to this kind of harassment, human rights such as the rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association are under threat. The Human Rights Award is presented by Amnesty Germany every two years in recognition of individuals or organizations campaigning for human rights under very difficult conditions. Through the award, Amnesty International aims to honour and support the awardees' exceptional human rights commitment and raise

awareness of their work amongst the German public. The award comes with 10,000 Euros, provided by Amnesty Germany's foundation *Stiftung Menschenrechte, Förderstiftung Amnesty*. The Human Rights Award will be presented for the eighth time in 2016. Former award recipients include: Monira Rahman from Bangladesh (2006), Women of Zimbabwe Arise from Zimbabwe (2008), Abel Barrera from Mexico (2011) and Alice Nkom from Cameroon (2014).

**Source: Amnesty International**

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## NEPAL



### Life After The Earthquake For Dalit Communities in Nepal

Dalit communities are among the poorest in Nepal. So when disaster strikes, such as the immensely destructive earthquake in May 2015, they are inevitably one of the worst affected communities. Buddhibal Magarati, FEDO's Emergency Support Officer, recounts the time he visited a large Dalit settlement one month after the earthquake. 'The settlement was far from any accessible roads. I had to walk three to four hours to reach the settlement. Not one house was standing. Each one had fallen down. Survivors were just sitting on the ground; they did not know what to do.' Dalits are the lowest of the 125 caste groups in Nepal and make up 14 per cent of the population. They live in remote, disaster-

prone areas and are often occupied in precarious work. 45 per cent of them live below the poverty line; in comparison, 24 per cent of the general population lives below the poverty line. Since the earthquake struck, government disaster relief support has failed to reach Dalit communities, according to FEDO. Dalits, particularly women, are finding it difficult to access government resources because of their low status and marginalization. One of the biggest problems has been that Dalits do not have access to information on where to go for essential disaster relief and reconstruction services. This is partly due to lack of information out there for

Since the earthquake struck, government disaster relief support has failed to reach Dalit communities, particularly women, are finding it difficult to access government resources because of their low status and marginalization.

them, but also down to Dalits' lack of education. When Magarati visited the Dalit settlement that had been destroyed, a key task for him was to give information to the survivors regarding where they could get help. Another issue has been that they live in remote areas with poor road networks. These areas are also danger zones and prone to landslides. Many Dalit people have to walk for three or four hours to get to the nearest food distribution centres, which are set up in easier-to-reach areas far away from Dalit settlements.

Dalits often do not own land. They are therefore not able to receive government services, such as loans to rebuild homes destroyed by the earthquake, because they are not able to produce a land ownership certificate. Many Dalit survivors are now living in temporary shelters. 'Dalits are not a priority for the government,' says Magarati. They receive government resources later than everyone else. They are not getting what they need.' The situation has been worsened by a blockade of key border points in southern Nepal, preventing essential goods and fuel from reaching the land-locked country. Ethnic Madhesi, who have close ties with India, began the blockade in September and it was ongoing at the time of writing. One of the main

ways this has affected Dalits is that many are engaged in temporary erection work, and since fuel and other goods are now limited, many building and reconstruction projects have stalled. This means Dalit workers are now out of a job. FEDO has been working on the ground to support Dalits since the earthquake. In the immediate aftermath they provided disaster relief, distributing food and non-food items. Now in the reconstruction phase the organization is focusing on getting information on key services to Dalits. A key part of FEDO's work is advocacy. Recently the organization has been working to increase the representation of Dalits on district disaster risk reduction committees. These committees are in charge of

deciding what kind of support is given to survivors, so with increased participation from Dalit communities FEDO hopes their needs and particular situation are addressed. FEDO will also advocate on the new Reconstruction Bill if it is not 'minority-friendly' and lobby for proper implementation of the Bill. 'The earthquake severely affected everyone. But Dalits and other minority groups are particularly affected in comparison with higher-income communities,' says Magarati. 'We want government bodies to be inclusive, so that the voices of minority groups are raised and reconstruction programmes will meet their needs.'

**Source: International Dalit Solidarity Network**

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## DALIT WATCH South Asia

### Modi is anti-Dalit, anti-student: Rohith Vemula's mother

March 2<sup>nd</sup> 2016

**New Delhi:** Dalit research scholar Rohith Vemula's mother described Prime Minister Narendra Modi as being "anti-Dalit" and "anti-students". Speaking during a protest organised by the Indian Youth Congress (IYC) and joined by senior Congress leaders at Jantar Mantar, Radhika Vemula said the death of her son was politicised by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which was an insult to her son. "The way this whole issue was politicized by BJP and its ministers is an insult to my son. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is against students and Dalits," she said. Radhika also thanked Congress president Sonia Gandhi and Vice-president Rahul Gandhi for supporting her. "I am thankful to Rahul Gandhi ji and Sonia Gandhi ji for fighting against the injustice done to my son. They (Congress) are not playing politics over my son's death. As a matter of fact, it is Rahul Gandhi who visited Hyderabad and supported me and gave assurance that he will fight till the end," she said. IYC president Amarinder Singh Raja

attacked Smriti Irani, saying Rohith's death was not a suicide but a political murder. "Rohith Vemula was not only his mother's son but he was the son of the nation. We will fight till the last breath of our life for justice to Rohith Vemula. *Source: The Siasat Daily*

### Dalit youth killed for marrying caste Hindu girl

March 14<sup>th</sup> 2016

**Tirupur/Chennai:** In a suspected case of honour killing, a Dalit student, who had recently married a caste Hindu girl, was brutally murdered in public view in front of a shop at Udumalpet in Tirupur district. A three-member gang that came on a motorcycle attacked V. Sankar (22) and his wife S. Kausalya (19), with lethal weapons. While Sankar died on the way to the hospital, his wife who suffered a head injury was admitted to the Coimbatore Government Hospital. Relatives of the girl who had opposed her marriage with the Dalit youth are suspected to be involved in the incident. The gruesome daylight attack was reportedly captured on a surveillance camera installed in the locality. Local people even took pictures (on mobile

phones) of the suspects escaping on the motorcycle leaving the victims in a pool of blood, police sources said. Sankar, a native of Kumaralingam near Udumalpet, and Kausalya, a native of Palani in Dindigul district, were students of a private engineering college in Pollachi where they met and fell in love. The couple got married a few months ago against the wishes of the girl's family. Kausalya, who had just joined the college, gave up her studies and went to a private firm in Tirupur for work to support her husband who was in the final year. Her parents had opposed the marriage and even moved the court to separate them. Since she was a major and the marriage was on mutual consent no legal action could be initiated, the sources said. Sankar and Kausalya went to a departmental store in Udumalpet when the accused attacked them. Sankar suffered a grievous injury on his neck and fell unconscious on the spot. He succumbed to the injury while being rushed to the hospital. The condition of Kausalya was said to be stable. Even as many people in the area watched in shock, the accused fled the scene on a motorcycle. A senior police official who inspected the scene of crime said one of

the girl's close relatives had hired mercenaries to murder the Dalit youth. "We have detained a prime suspect who masterminded the attack. The three assailants would be apprehended soon," he said.

*Source: The Hindu*

## 81 honour killings in 3 years, 0 convictions

*March 16<sup>th</sup> 2016*

**Madurai:** Honour' killings is indeed a misnorm. But the communities and families involved strongly believe that their honour can be redeemed only if the dalit involved in an inter-caste marriage with a member of their community is killed. In some instances, non-dalit women who married dalits have been murdered by their own families because the women's act has brought shame to their families. With the daylight murder of dalit youth Sankar in Udumalpet on Monday, 81 'honour killings' have taken place in Tamil Nadu since July 2013. Eighty per cent of the victims are female. Till date, not a single killer has been brought to book. These are pre-meditated murders, caste being the main factor. Inter-caste marriage of young people, mainly between dalits and

Non-dalits is seen as a social disgrace. According to executive director of Evidence, an NGO, A Kathir, usually the murders are committed only when the groom is a dalit; when the bride is a dalit, they usually separate the couple and warn the girl not to have any contact with the man in the future. This NGO conducted a study on dalit women who were single after marriage and found that 84 per cent of them were forcefully separated from their non-dalit husbands, and are now finding it difficult to make both ends meet. Caste based organizations were found to be behind most of these communal murders, sometimes instigating the perpetrators of the crime. In cases where non-dalit women who married dalits have been murdered by their own families, the bodies are cremated without informing the police. These are made to look like suicides and the police close the matter by registering cases under section 174 of the CrPC as suspicious death or as cremating the body without informing the police. "This is what calls for an exclusive Act for honour killings; any instance of cremating a young girl, who is said to

have committed suicide, without performing a postmortem should be registered as a murder case and not under 174 of the CrPC," said Kathir.

**Source: The Times of India**

## Dalit woman gang-raped in Rautahat

**February 2<sup>nd</sup> 2016**

**Nepal:** A Dalit woman was dragged out of her house and gang-raped in the wee hours of Monday morning in Bishrampur village, Rautahat district. Around five-six people barged into her house in the dead of night and rendered her husband helpless by tying him and took her away on a heap of hay before raping her taking turns. Police Inspector Santu Prasad Jaiswar said a team from Garuda Area Police Office immediately reached the site and rescued the woman. The perpetrators have not been identified yet, police said. Meanwhile, family members of the woman are grief stricken by the incident. Locals informed that the perpetrators had come in motorbikes. The woman was taken for medical checkup in the morning and now her health condition is normal, informed police.

*Source: The Kathmandu Post*

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# INDIA



## Budget 2016: Once Again Fails To Deliver For The Dalit Adivasis

On February 29, Union Finance Minister delivered the second full budget of the BJP-NDA government. Though we applaud the allocation of Rs. 500 crores under the stand-up India scheme for SC/ST entrepreneurs, the overall allocation under SCSP TSP is extremely poor. The allocations for SC under the Union Budget 2016 is only 7.6% when the due amount under SCSP budget should be 16.8% which should amount to Rs.91,301 and 8.6% under TSP which should amount to Rs.47,300 crore. Thus denying a total of Rs 75,764 crore. NCDHR condemns this denial in allocation. The

budget comes at a crucial point with UGC withdrawing non-NET fellowships and death of Rohith Vemula a PhD student at Hyderabad University. The underlying issue of both these instances has been denial of mandatory funds to research scholars. Paul Divakar, General Secretary, National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights, holds the finance minister accountable when and questions, *“Where is the missing Rs. 75,773 Crs? Yet another massive denial & disinterest to bridge the growing development gap.”* Dr. B.R. Ambedkar reasoned that higher education was an important instrument, to seek

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar reasoned that higher education was an important instrument, to seek power and dignity for all. Hence advocated for public education being critical for the empowerment of Dalit and backward classes

power and dignity for all. Hence advocated for public education being critical for the empowerment of Dalit and backward classes. Access and opening of educational institutions by the historically excluded groups has been a moment of rupture in history and met with violent backlash from the dominant community. cutting of non-NET fellowships, denial of fellowship money to PhD students in Hyderabad and other universities— point at this violent backlash from the dominant community. The Union Budget 2016-17 is



The budget continues to marginalize Dalit-Adivasi women by allocating a measly 1% to Dalit women and 2% to Adivasi women without taking into account the needs, and voices of women. The schemes lack an understanding of their lived reality and is blind to the concerns of the Dalit and Adivasi women.

another example of this violent backlash. The denial in money allocated for the purpose of higher education to be accessed by the community further makes their struggle for equality a tougher one. Additionally, it acts as violation of constitutionally mandated rights of the SC/ST community. Of the total of Rs

897 crore allocated under UGC. 60% goes towards capital assets and another 30% towards grants-in-aid and only 8% directly benefitting SC and ST students.

**SECTOR-WISE** If we analyse the allocation sector wise, over 86% of the Dalit budget is spent on Social Service, Welfare and Housing Sectors. They do not form the triggers for development except for Higher education. Without greater allocations for Agriculture and allied, rural development Schemes, Energy, industry and mineral, Science and technology and communication, the overall

growth of the SC and ST will be very lopsided. Innovation is needed to design schemes for the Dalit & Adivasi men and women in these sectors.

**Dalit Adivasi women continue to be at the margins** The budget continues to marginalise Dalit-Adivasi women by allocating a measly 1% to Dalit women and 2% to Adivasi women without taking into account the needs, and voices of women. The schemes lack an understanding of their lived reality and is blind to the concerns of the Dalit and Adivasi women.

Source: Beyond Headlines

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# Pakistan



## Bringing Colours Back

The state's decision to celebrate Holi as a national holiday is a breath of fresh air. For the Hindu youth of Karachi or Sindh for that matter, this year's Holi celebration held a special meaning. The provincial government's decision to declare the festival a holiday was greeted with utmost pleasure and was celebrated to match the significance of the first non-Muslim religious event to be officially acknowledged by a government in Pakistan after decades. On the evening of March 23 — a national holiday — Hindu devotees gathered at various temples across the province to celebrate the festival of colour meant to mark the triumph of good over evil. In Karachi, the biggest

gathering took place at Swami Narayan Mandir, the centuries-old Hindu enclave in the old part of the city. Hundreds gathered in the open compound of the temple to drench themselves in colors. "It's not usual that you spread colour till late night," says Sanjesh Dhanja, a social activist who runs Pakistan Hindu Seva, "but the thought that tomorrow is a holiday is very comforting so the party will continue till late midnight." A huge bonfire was set at the centre of the open compound, which kept burning throughout as Hindu families danced around the fire to celebrate the end of Holika — the demoness. Young Muslim students from various universities also joined their Hindu

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compatriots in the city to "spread colour and have a good time," as Walid Rahman, a student of a private engineering college, puts it. Outside the temple, a busy twenty-year-old Ramesh is selling powdered colours at inflated prices along with other religious souvenirs like little statues of Hindu gods and jewellery for married



Hindu women e.g. Mangalsutra. "This year the turnover is conspicuously huge," estimates Ramesh, "and you see a lot of Muslims too perhaps because it's a holiday tomorrow." Spirits soar at this year's Holi celebrations. Ramesh has been running the souvenir shop for the past five years, and admits in private that he is making a killer profit selling colours. Children are jostling around him to buy

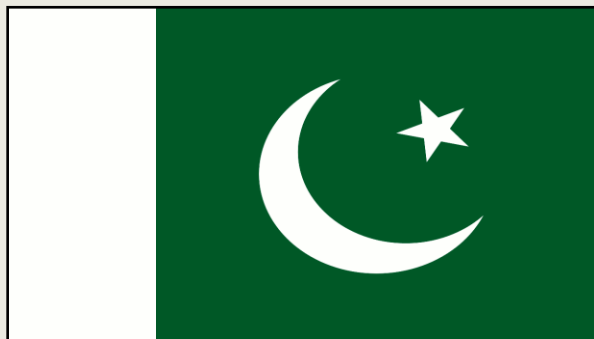
the vibrant paunches aesthetically decked on the counter — being sold at thrice the market price on a usual day. Children are the ones most engrossed in the business of playing with colours. Some of them are armed with water-guns filled with colours to drench an opponent head-to-toe. Over the past several years, the Holi celebration, which was more or less a closed-door event for the Hindu community, has assumed wider acceptance in the city. Visitors are often ambushed by the warring children who shoot at each other from the constantly



shifting dugouts amid the throng of crowds. The importance of good, upbeat music can never be emphasized enough at Holi. This year, an amateur DJ took over at the Swami Narayan Temple, just to add some “creative twists to the old classics.” Bollywood offers enough songs that cover the most peripheral rituals of Holi. In fact, every year, at least one song is custom-made for the occasion. But the classics refuse to die. ‘*Rang Barse*’, a 1981 song from the Amitabh Bachhan starrer *Silsila* seems to be the anthem of the festival as young men and women went berserk when the DJ tuned it on. [Source: The News](#)

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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**