

# Quarterly MINO-VIEW LAHORE

Vol: 04 Issue: 02  
April-June 2016



Voice of Minorities & Oppressed people in South Asian Societies



**UN expert supports IDSN  
at Human Rights Council**

REVISING HISTORY!



**Hindutva Efforts  
to Rewrite History in  
California Schools Fail**



**Socio-economic Condition  
of SCs and STs in India**



**India: World Biggest Democracy  
has most slaves in the world**



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## Editorial Note

History helps us understand people and societies. We can look back at the lessons from history and use them to change ourselves and influence our culture. History is the story of our roots. It connects us with those people and culture that developed, discovered or invented many of things upon which we rely for life today. The past becomes the present which turns into future. The study of history helps us to see how people viewed themselves and events during their lifetime and how those same things are viewed today studying the stories of individual and situations in the past allow us to create our own moral sense of what is right and wrong, good and evil. People who faced difficulties in real, historical circumstances can provide real inspiration we use history to introduce a new way of doing things without understanding our past we cannot understand our world as it is today. The debate about how Indian History will be taught in California school received a great amount of media attention. Right Wing Hindu Groups want to gloss over Indian History and deny the reality of caste discrimination by deleting the word "Dalit" from history text book of the state. You can't whitewash history, can't distort facts and deny what happened to millions of Indians from marginalized communities, who are victims of caste apartheid. You cannot tamper with and bring ideology into the framing of the past. Hindu American Foundation (HAF) says Indian American children are embarrassed by the depiction of Hinduism such as caste system, the plight of Dalits and discrimination against women in ancient India in the History Text Books. The Indian American children don't want their friends to look down upon them and their culture because of text books Hindutva efforts to rewrite History in California schools fail, as the South Asian faculty group made up of South Asian Scholars from Stanford, UC Berkeley, San Francisco State University and UCLA among others held that history should not be tampered, even it is unpleasant.

Discrimination faced by the weaker, vulnerable and minority sections of the South Asian societies is continuously prevailing as sun has rise up and set down. National crime record bureau of India shows 1.5 times more suicide committed by Christian in India as compared to Hindu. While tribal and dalits also have the highest suicide rates among the caste groups. Reason may be many and different but root cause is same that is discrimination which they faced throughout their life span. One thought that slavery is eliminated in the world but it's not its has changed its shape. Economically vulnerable and exploited man power works in the different fields is the shape of modern day slaves. Asia is home of two third of the total number of people living in modern day slavery. India, world biggest democracy has most slaves in the world and many of them are Dalits. In Bangladesh half of 55 lakh dalits are ostracized. They are victim of hatred and discrimination at different spheres of life. To have decent house for living is the basic fundamental rights for anyone in the world. The UN Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing has expressed concern about India's legacy of discrimination against Dalits and other marginalized groups. All these issues are the part of this Mino-View. Intend of this little academic effort is to bring out the misery and plight of weaker section of the South Asian societies by voicing against the human right violation which they are facing.

**Editor**





## India: World Biggest Democracy has most slaves in the world

Asia is home to an estimated two-thirds of the total number of people living in modern day slavery. India world Biggest Democracy has most modern slaves in the world and many of them are Dalits. Approximately 40 per cent of the world total live in India. The survey includes a case study from Uttar Pradesh and notes that the state's 40 million Dalits are "particularly vulnerable to caste-based slavery such as manual scavenging. Quantification of modern slavery in any country is difficult, but is doubly so in a country as large and complex as India. Whereas in other countries, a national survey was used to estimate prevalence, in India, Australia-based human rights group Walk Free Foundation, a human rights group chose to proceed with surveys at the State level. In 2016, random-sample surveys were conducted by Gallup in 15 States. Collectively these surveys account for nearly 80 percent of the Indian population. The survey data suggest that there are more than 18 million people who are living in conditions of modern slavery in India. Industries implicated in the survey data include domestic work, the construction and sex industries, agriculture, fishing, manufacturing, manual labour, and forced begging.

Factors that predict the prevalence of modern slavery in India suggest that there are more than 270 million people living below the poverty line in India. Homelessness, including of children, remains a major

concern. For example, a census of children living on the street in Mumbai in 2013 found a total of more than 37,000 children, primarily concentrated in commercial areas with a bustling informal economy. Seventy percent were boys and thirty percent were girls, and 18 percent were in the 10-12 year old age bracket. Vulnerability to slavery in India has also some common elements, with poverty and the lack of

capacity to absorb shocks, and deep structural inequalities reflecting gender, caste and tribe all being highly relevant. However, vulnerability is also distinct state by state. For example, in Bihar, agricultural shocks, high prevalence within the population of members of the Scheduled Castes, combined with borders to Nepal; result in forced labour connected to migration for work both within and from India. Uttar Pradesh which has the highest proportion of castes and tribes of all Indian states, the issues are quite different. For example, manual scavenging is reported to be still widely practiced, in which members of a Dalit Community are required to clean out dry latrines. When they seek to leave or refuse to do this work, they face violence and abuse. Women and girls face significant discrimination and high rates of sexual violence across India, and this is particularly true for women and girls from the Scheduled Castes and Tribes.

The survey suggest that there are more than 18 million people who are living in conditions of modern slavery in India, approximately 40 per cent of the world slaves live in India.



**Bonded labour:** While bonded labour has been outlawed for decades, survey data and pre-existing research confirms that this practice still persists in India. Narratives available from 2016 survey respondents identify that some respondents perceived their situation to be one of bonded labour, some of which is inter-generational:

*"It is the sin of my father that I have to repay the debts unless I shall have to beg. I have a threat against my family. I am prone to physical violence every day."* (Survey respondent, 2016).

*There are many people in the village who were working with me as a bonded labor. I was physically and sexually assaulted when I was working in the field. I had also threat on my life and on my family. I was also threatened that I had to leave the village."* (Survey respondent, 2016).

Bonded labour is not only illegal, research confirms that it has serious negative health impacts for those affected, who typically work in unsanitary and dangerous working conditions with no access to health care.

**Domestic workers:** Official figures in India suggest that there are more than 4.2 million men, women and children working as cooks, cleaners, drivers, gardeners and caregivers across the country. These estimates are from 2004 and experts suggest that there may be many more workers unaccounted for in these statistics. Domestic workers in some states are

The survey includes a case study from Uttar Pradesh and notes that the state's 40 million Dalits are "particularly vulnerable to caste-based slavery such as manual scavenging.

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excluded from labour laws and can experience excessive overtime, withholding of wages or receive insufficient remuneration. It is reported that girls as young as ten continue to be hired in private homes. Domestic workers can be subject to threats of and actual physical violence and in some cases, sexual abuse.

**Forced begging:** Street begging by adults and children is a prominent feature of many Indian cities. Though many beggars do so out of economic desperation, survey data confirms that criminals also force people to beg.

*"Though I am begging I am not paid a single amount. I have to deposit all to them. I am deprived of food and good sleep. I am not paid my wages only working as a bonded labor."* (Survey respondent, 2016).

**Commercial sexual exploitation:** 2016 survey data confirm the existence of forced prostitution in India. As one survey respondent said

*"I was forced to work in the flesh trade... Can you imagine that I kept in a locked room for the whole day when I refused to work under pressure? It is because they had always threatened me and my family for physical violence and tortured."* (Survey respondent, 2016).

Existing National Crime Records Bureau data indicate there were almost 5,500 cases across India under existing human trafficking laws in 2014. As the law





does not differentiate between human trafficking and sex work, and there are no formal guidelines on who is identified in rescue and raid situations, it is impossible to know if every one of these cases involved force or children, or whether some were simply cases of economic survival.

**Forced marriage:** More than 50 percent of women are married in India before the legal age of 18. Despite the illegality of sex-selective termination of female fetuses, the introduction of sex determination by ultrasound has seen some areas of India experience significant gender disparity and a dearth of available brides. The subsequent demand for brides, particularly in rural communities where many girls of marriageable age have migrated to cities for employment, has fuelled the trafficking of women for forced marriage. It is reported that in some instances, girls are forced into marriage and then used as unpaid labourers. Local day labourers cost US\$140 for a season but a bride can cost only US\$100 as a once off payment. The northern state of Haryana has India's most distorted sex ratio 114 males for every 100 females.

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The Walk Free survey questions have been carefully designed to draw a very clear distinction between arranged marriages (which are not in scope), and forced marriages (which are in scope). Cases of forced marriage were identified through the survey process.

**Forced recruitment for armed services:** A number of regions in India continue to experience armed violence and conflict between state-armed forces and armed opposition groups (AOGs). There is ongoing evidence to suggest that children are forcibly recruited into AOGs in Punjab, Rajasthan, Bihar, Orissa, Jharkhand and West Bengal, Assam, Manipur and Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. Some children as young as six are used by Naxalites as informers and trained to fight with crude weapons, such as sticks. Once children reach 12 years, they receive training in weapon handling and the use of improvised explosive devices. Some women and girls have reported experiencing sexual violence in militant camps.

*Source: Walk Free Foundation*

# Hindutva Efforts to Rewrite History in California Schools Fail



**Right-wing Hindu groups are seeking to gloss over Indian history and deny the reality of caste discrimination by deleting the word 'Dalit' from the history textbooks in California.**

**New York:** California reviews its textbooks every six years, inviting public opinion each time. The process has never been easy. The 'golden state' has again got far more than it bargained for in its latest round of reviews, with American right-wing Hindu groups demanding changes to the history and social science textbooks used in the sixth and seventh grades.

On March 28, the Hindu American Foundation (HAF), the Uberoi Foundation for Religious Studies and the Dharma Civilization Foundation suffered a setback when a history and social science committee in Sacramento threw out most of the changes they wanted to make to the new California textbooks, which are slated for publication later this year. However, the California State Board of Education is scheduled to vote on the proposed framework changes in May.

"As much as it is about California textbooks, it is truly a battle which is ideological in nature," said Thenmozhi Soundararajan of the Ambedkar Association of California, which with six other secular Indian groups is trying to make sure the "egregious edits" submitted by HAF to the education board don't find their way into the textbooks.

Right-wing Hindu groups are seeking to gloss over Indian history and deny the reality of caste discrimination by deleting the word 'Dalit' from the history textbooks in California.

According to activists like Soundararajan, right-wing Hindu groups want to gloss over Indian history and deny the reality of caste discrimination by deleting the word 'Dalit' from the history textbooks of the state.

"You can't distort facts, whitewash history and deny what's happened to millions of Indians from marginalized communities who are victims of caste apartheid," said Soundararajan, who is the co-founder of Dalit History Month. "You cannot tamper with and bring ideology into the framing of the past."

HAF and other right-wing Hindu groups, however, maintain that issues such as the caste system, the plight of dalits and discrimination against women do not belong in a sixth-grade introduction to world civilizations. HAF says that Indian American children are embarrassed

by the depiction of Hinduism in ancient India in the history textbook.

California ninth grader Akanksha Maddi wrote in a statement released by HAF that the textbooks are unfair to students of Indian heritage.

"My classmates and teachers think that we Hindus still believe in primitive and unjust practices," Maddi wrote. "I don't want my friends to look down upon me and my culture because of my textbook."

*The Uberoi Foundation for Religious Studies says Hindus are merely seeking parity with other religions in sixth*



grade textbooks, where social problems of other religions are not given the same prominence, even as the redeeming features of Hinduism are ignored.

Shiva G. Bajpai, professor emeritus of Asian Studies at California State University, asked the education board for a revision, writing: "Hindu children are bullied by their classmates for the system of *varna* and *jati* because the social iniquities of other religions go unmentioned... If the commission insists on keeping lines 862 to 874, it should add 300 to 400 word comments on social order and slavery for the Abrahamic religions."

However, the South Asian Faculty Group made up of South Asian scholars from Stanford, UC Berkeley, San Francisco State University and UCLA, among others, held that history should not be tampered with, even if it is unpleasant.

"We are disturbed by claims that an equitable portrayal should prevail over historical accuracy," said an expert who didn't want to be named for fear of being targeted. "It is a slippery slope."

### Protests over "erasing" India

HAF is spearheading protests across America because it says it has discovered over 30 places in the sixth and seventh grade history textbooks where the words "Hindu" or "India" would be replaced in the new textbooks with "South Asia."

Samir Kalra, senior director of HAF, told *The*

Ambedkar Association of California, which with six other secular Indian groups is trying to make sure the "egregious edits" submitted by HAF to the education board don't find their way into the textbooks.

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*Washington Post* that the proposed changes could have "implications for several years forward," and could diminish the significance of Hindus in the ancient civilization of India. Kalra told the newspaper that the textbook changes appear to only reflect revisions aimed at India and Hinduism: China will not be changed to "East Asia," nor will there be changes to any references to Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Sikhism or any other religions.

The South Asian Faculty Group has fired back, saying that during the submissions in the public comment process it suggested that in some places "India" be replaced with "South Asia" because some of the areas discussed currently belong to Pakistan and are not aligned with modern-day India.

"Although 'Ancient India' is common in the source material, when discussing the Indus Valley Civilization, we believe it will cause less confusion to students to refer to the "Early Civilization of South Asia" or "Ancient South Asia" because much of the Indus Valley is now in modern Pakistan. Conflating "Ancient India" with the modern nation-state of India deprives students from learning about the shared civilizational heritage of India and Pakistan," the group said in a letter responding to HAF.

The California State Board of Education will vote in May on whether to retain descriptions of the caste system, role of women, Aryan migrational history and polytheism in ancient Hindu religion and other issues as the textbook furor rages on.

*Source: The Wire*





## UN expert: India should legislate against housing discrimination



**The UN Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing has completed a 12-day visit to India during which she expressed concern about India's legacy of discrimination against Dalits and other marginalised groups.**

India needs legislation to combat all forms of “de facto housing discrimination” against any individual or groups, including Dalits, the UN Special Rapporteur on adequate housing, Leilani Farha, said at the conclusion of her visit to India from 11-22 April.

The call for legislative measures was one of numerous recommendations that the Special Rapporteur offered in a comprehensive press statement released in New Delhi on 22 April. She devoted much attention to the situation of vulnerable groups, such as scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, the official terms for Dalits and Adivasis.

“I am extremely concerned for the millions of people who experience exclusion, discrimination, evictions, insecure tenure, homelessness and who lack hope of accessing affordable and adequate housing in their lifetimes,” Ms Farha warned.

In another caste-related recommendation, the Special Rapporteur called on central and state governments to collect disaggregated data on housing evictions with a focus on age, gender disability, caste and religion.

“I have been told that evictions are most often carried out against the most vulnerable populations most of whom are living below the poverty line. Forced

evictions are often implemented without any consultation with residents, without sufficient or any notice, and commonly result in homelessness,” she said.

The Special Rapporteur also expressed concern about India's legacy of discrimination against vulnerable groups, including Dalits, who encounter barriers to housing access. She noted that the majority of homeless people and slum dwellers belong to such groups. All in all, an estimated 65-70 million Indians reside in urban slums and the country has the largest number of urban poor and landless people in the world.

“Scheduled castes and tribes comprise 22% of India's population but are over-represented amongst the poor. Despite affirmative action programs and “reservations”, these groups continue to be stigmatized and discriminated against,” Ms Farha said, adding that manual scavenging, though outlawed many years ago, has implications for the housing status of some people.

The Special Rapporteur stressed that India is a flourishing economy with high annual growth rates. Consequently, the country has “the economic capacity to ensure the right to adequate housing is enjoyed by the most marginalized and vulnerable groups.”

Leilani Farha will present her final report to the 34<sup>th</sup> session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva in March 2017.

*Source: International Dalit Solidarity Network*



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**BANGLADESH**



## Half of Dalits Ostracized

***Reveals survey by Bangladesh Harijan Oikya Parishad, Friends Association for Integrated Revolution, Manusher Jonno Foundation***

Due to their caste and nature of their profession, 50 percent of the 55 lakh Dalits, including 15 lakh Harijans, in Bangladesh became victims of hatred and discrimination at different spheres of society, reveals a survey.

During the 2013-14 survey period, 500 Dalit families fell victim to violence, which includes the rape of five women.

Bangladesh Harijan Oikya Parishad, and the Friends Association for Integrated Revolution (FAIR) in association with Manusher Jonno Foundation revealed the survey, "DALIT Human Rights Situation in Bangladesh 2013-2014" in the capital's Jatiya Press Club.

The survey made use of local mass and social media and the right to information act.

Some 52.09 percent of Dalits faced discrimination at tea stalls and salons after disclosing their identity, 48.1 percent in getting jobs other than their traditional ones while another 51.9 percent stated that they were barred from taking meals with others, said FAIR Director Dewan Akhtaruzzaman.

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Reading out the survey's summary, he said, "Dalit students face discrimination in society, state and even in schools from their classmates and teachers regularly."

He said 295 out of 504 Dalits got the scope to study till class V while 87 up to class X.

Problems getting their children admitted to schools. Twenty two of 92 guardians said their children were discriminated, neglected or faced negative attitudes from classmates due to their caste and profession, it adds. It says the prime minister instructed the authorities concerned on May 29, 2012 to keep quotas in educational institutions for Dalit students.

In the 2014-15 session, only 25 students got admission in different universities with only five universities approving the quota, it adds. Human rights activist Hameeda Hossain said though Bangladesh was becoming a middle-income country, the status of Dalits would not improve if the discrimination was not addressed. Research and Development Collective Chairman Mesbah Kamal, Nijera Kori Coordinator Khushi Kabir, Manusher Jonno Foundation Director Rina Roy and Oikya Parishad Secretary General Nirmal Chandra Das also spoke.

**Source: Daily Star**





**Special Rapporteur Maina Kiai cites the case of IDSN as an example of how procedure is being used in the ECOSOC Committee on NGOs to prevent civil society organizations from getting UN accreditation.**

The obstruction of IDSN's application for consultative status at the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) was discussed at the UN Human Rights Council on 17 June when the Special Rapporteur on the freedom of assembly and association, Maina Kiai, presented his thematic report on fundamentalism.

"Let me use the example of the International Dalit Solidarity Network which applied for ECOSOC status in January 2008. Up till today, 2016, it has not been given accreditation and has received 75 questions from one member of the NGO Committee, India. These questions are repeated over and over again," Mr Kiai said during the interactive dialogue. He added that "procedure is being used to thwart IDSN" from gaining consultative status.

In his report, Mr Kiai had already noted that India has "placed impediments" to IDSN's ECOSOC accreditation. His criticism of the Committee on NGOs and intervention on behalf of IDSN led to reactions from a number of countries during the interactive dialogue between the Special Rapporteur and the Human Rights Council.

India expressed "strong objection to the Special Rapporteur's attempt of influencing the functioning of the UN NGO committee," a sentiment which was echoed by the Russian delegate who accused him of breaching his mandate and called his behaviour "unacceptable". Mr Kiai did not mince words in his reply.

"I hope that the states that raised these issues are not trying to suggest that indeed these UN bodies should be exempt from scrutiny if and when they are abusing

## UN expert supports IDSN at Human Rights Council

or violating human rights. I hope that it is not the intention to say that because they are a group of states who are meeting that they can do whatever they want and that nobody should question them," he said.

The report which examined various kinds of fundamentalism described caste-based systems in South Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and the Asia-Pacific region as "illustrative of cultural fundamentalism that violates the rights of those considered to be of inferior status". It listed different ways in which discrimination against Dalits in India manifests itself, including "a lack of access to justice, threats to life, sexual and gender violence against women and girls."

It also stressed the difficulties of Dalit human rights defenders: "Protests by Dalits are often met with violence and excessive use of force by upper-caste individuals and law enforcement officials. Dalit activists are also detained and prosecuted on serious charges such as terrorism."

This section inevitably led to criticism from India as the country's government vehemently opposed discussions of the caste issue in international for a such as the Human Rights Council: "As far as its references to our country is concerned, we would like to ask the Special Rapporteur whether such assertions have been verified and substantiated," the Indian delegate said, thus questioning the accuracy of Mr Kiai's information.

Reacting to criticism from India and other countries about his "purported lack of specialized knowledge," Mr Kiai commented that he had requested time and again to be invited to India and a number of other states without ever getting any response. Consequently, he questioned the legitimacy of such criticism: "I think, in fact, that states should be precluded from attacking Special Rapporteurs on the basis that they don't have information when they don't invite them into their country," he said.

*Source: International Dalit Solidarity Network*





# Dalit Watch

## **Most on death row are poor, from backward caste groups, minorities: Law University report**

07 May 2016

**New Delhi:** The Death Penalty Research Project, undertaken by researchers at the National Law University in Delhi, found that over 80 per cent of prisoners facing capital punishment had not completed school and nearly half had begun working before the age of 18. The first comprehensive study of the socio-economic profile of prisoners serving the death sentence in India has revealed that most are from economically vulnerable sections, backward communities and religious minority groups.

The Death Penalty Research Project, undertaken by researchers at the National Law University in Delhi, found that over 80 per cent of prisoners facing capital punishment had not completed school and nearly half had begun working before the age of 18.

Besides, it found, a quarter of the convicts were either juveniles or between the age of 18 and 21 or above 60 years when the crime was committed. Dalits and Adivasis constituted 24.5 per cent (90 prisoners) among those on death row, whom the study gained access to, while members of religious minorities were over 20 per cent (76 prisoners). *Source: The Indian Express*

## **Atrocity Against Marginalized On Steady Rise In Odisha**

21 May 2016

**Odisha:** It's a matter of concern that there has been constant increase in atrocities against the marginalised sections, women, Dalits and Adivasies of Odisha. It is revealed from the recent White Paper of 2015 by the Home Department presented in State Assembly.

The cases of violence against women have increased and the most striking is the figure of rape has been more than double during last five years. It was 1,025 in 2010 and rose to 2,286 in 2015.

The cases of atrocities against SCs and STs have also substantially increased during last five years. The atrocity cases against SCs and STs recorded in 2010 was 1,589 where as in 2015 it was 2,504 out of which 1,816 are against SCs and 688 are against STs. It was 2,266 in 2014, 2,298 in 2013, 2,522 in 2012, and 1,662 in 2011 which shows a consistent increase. The SCs are relatively more prone to heinous forms of atrocities than the STs. The nature of atrocities are manifold that include rape, murder, house burning, destroying produces, mass attack, physical and mental assault and torture etc. *Source: The Pioneer*



## 500 dalits, OBCs embrace Buddhism

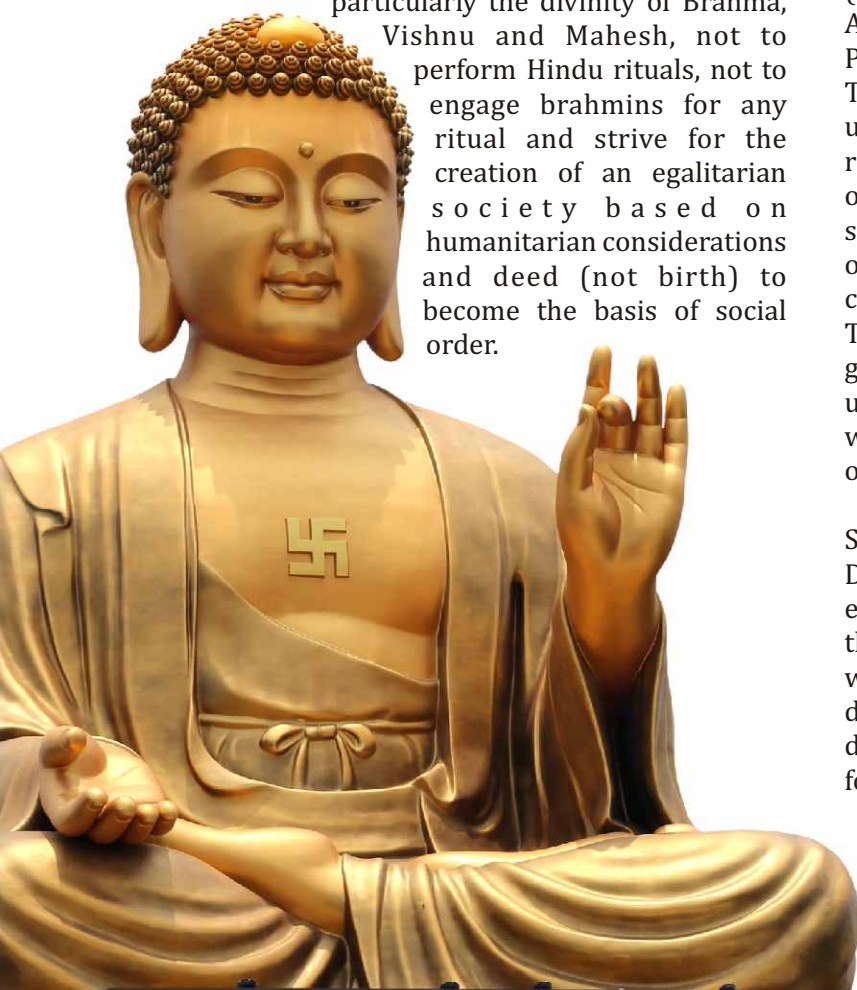
22 May 2016

**Gaya:** About 500 Dalits and OBCs from different states including Bihar, UP, Maharashtra and Chattisgarh, embraced Buddhism apparently to denounce the varna system and opt for a casteless social order. The baptism ceremony called 'deeksha' was performed at the Kalchakra Maidan in Bodh Gaya, about 200 meters north west of Mahabodhi temple. The baptism took place on the eve of Buddha Jayanti symbolising Buddha's birth, enlightenment and salvation.

According to Bhadant Pragyasheel, former chief priest of Mahabodhi temple, "Those embracing Buddhism also took 22 vows. The vows were originally authored by Bhimrao Ambedkar, the architect of Indian Constitution, who embraced Buddhism to register protest against the caste order and alleged discrimination."

The vows, according to Pragyasheel included the resolve not to believe in Hindu gods and goddesses, particularly the divinity of Brahma,

Vishnu and Mahesh, not to perform Hindu rituals, not to engage brahmins for any ritual and strive for the creation of an egalitarian society based on humanitarian considerations and deed (not birth) to become the basis of social order.



Bhadant Pragyasheel made it clear that in true Buddhist spirit, the neo Buddhists do not nurture any ill will towards the followers of their former faith (Hinduism). Playing down the event, VHP state patron Udai Kumar said it was not a conversion as VHP regards Buddhism as another sect of Hinduism. Hinduism, according to Kumar is a broad umbrella open to the followers of all belief systems. "Lord Buddha was a Hindu reformist," said Udai Kumar and Hindus regard him (Buddha) as the ninth 'avatar' (incarnation) of Lord Vishnu, the creator. Unlike many other religions, Hinduism is flexible enough to accommodate divergent views. Hinduism is much more than only 'karm kand' (rituals) and the faith even accommodate non-believers, said Kumar.

*Source: The Time of India*

## Two manual scavengers dead, another critical at Cuddalore after entering drainage pipe

27 may 2016

**Cuddalore:** Two manual scavengers who were clearing blockages in the drainage system at CISF quarters in Block 15 of the Neyveli Lignite Corporation (NLC), died after being suffocated by toxic gases. Another scavenger is undergoing treatment at PIMS in Puducherry. The deceased were identified as Thangarasu (45) and Chinnadurai (37). David (35) is undergoing medical treatment. Police said, "Following repeated complaints from the CISF quarters, the Office of Water Supply and Drainage Maintenance (OWSDM) sent three workers to clear the drainage system. They opened two manholes in the drainage system and cleaned them. When they opened the third manhole, Thangarasu was knocked unconscious by the toxic gases. Chinnadurai, who tried to rescue him, also fell unconscious. The third worker, David, who was witness to this, called the Fire department and NLC officials for help."

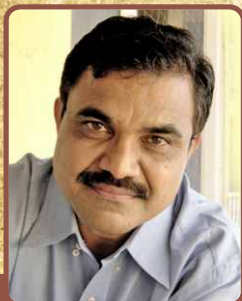
Sources said, "The Fire Department, with the help of David, rescued the two unconscious workers. David entered the manhole to take his fellow workers out of the pit. and also fell unconscious. All three workers were rushed to the NLC General Hospital. Doctors declared Thangarasu and Chinnadurai as brought dead. David has been referred to PIMS in Puducherry for better treatment."

**Following repeated complaints from the CISF quarters, the OWSDM sent 3 workers to clear the drainage system. When they opened the third manhole two workers fell unconscious.**

*Source: The new Indian Express*



# Two Years of an Ambedkar Bhakt & the Plight of Dalits



**With a self-proclaimed Ambedkar bhakt at the helm of the government, the Dalits might have expected a modicum of directional change in policies towards them. Instead, the two years of Narendra Modi's government have led to a reversal of many of the gains made by the Dalits in the past few decades.**

Narendra Modi, the self-proclaimed Ambedkar bhakt, has completed two years of his boastful rule. Babasaheb Ambedkar, an iconoclast par excellence, was loath to having bhakts but with characteristic pragmatism, he might just have relented when a Prime Minister announced himself as his bhakt. Ambedkar had made a modest demand for Dalit representation in the state structure. He had hoped that such representatives would safeguard Dalit interests from the majority of the caste Hindus. Ambedkar experienced in his own lifetime the futility of his demand. But with an all powerful Prime Minister as an Ambedkar bhakt, the Dalits could have expected a change in their state of affairs. A modicum of expectation that Dalits would have had from an Ambedkar bhakt would have been to turn the country somewhat along the direction prescribed by Ambedkar. It is well known that he had asked the new rulers to bring in social and economic democracy at the earliest. For this purpose, he had provided a vehicle in the form of the Directive Principles. Although not justiciable, they were to be the fundamental principles for governance of the country. But these principles were totally ignored in the 60 years of Congress rule. An Ambedkar bhakt would have been expected to get them back into focus. He was also expected to arrest the worsening conditions of Dalits. Two years may not be a long time to show visible results but certainly enough to mark a directional change. What does the Ambedkar bhakt have to show in these two years?

## **Rhetoric and Reality**

On the eve of the last general elections, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) upstaged the Congress by buying off all

the prominent brokers of Dalit votes. This investment paid rich dividends. Enthused by this win, the BJP went full blast in appropriating Ambedkar through a propaganda blitzkrieg and grabbing all possible places where his memorials could be erected. Paradoxically, whatever Ambedkar stood for was being trampled upon with impunity. There was harassment and brutalities unleashed on Dalit students in higher education. There was deliberate delay in scholarships to Dalit students and institutional attempts to smother voices of radicals among them, eventually exposed by the institutional murder of a bright research scholar Rohith Vemula. As such, discrimination is nothing new to Dalits but the institutional manner in which it has been perpetrated in the past two years is certainly conspicuous. Despite countrywide outrage and struggles for justice to Rohith, Modi continues to back his killers. Modi swears by the Constitution as his sacred text but in the past two years he has trashed it. He has not only neglected the Directive Principles but has also not hesitated to mutilate them. Leave apart the spirit of the Constitution, its key guiding principles like secularism, equality and liberty have become a travesty in the past two years. The basic principle of "equality before law" in the Constitution, the single biggest constitutional solace for the poor and marginalized, has been almost dismantled as evidenced by the "clean chit" to the Hindutva criminals in Malegaon blast case. Ban on beef eating, ghar wapsi, saffronisation of education, jingoist promotion of nationalism/patriotism and irrationality are directly detrimental to the Dalit interests. All these are effective reversals of all gains made by Dalits during the last century.

## **Deprivation of Dalits**

We will see how deprivation of Dalits has increased during Modi's rule by looking at the budget allocations for two schemes: one, their overall development vide Scheduled Caste Sub Plan (SCSP) and Tribal Sub Plan (TSP) and, two, through the safai karamchari-related schemes. The Constitution recognized the need to close

the socio-economic gap between these communities and the rest of the Indian population and mandated special protection and provisions for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. It was actualized in prospective terms only in the Fifth Five Year Plan period in 1974-75 by the policy of the TSP and later in 1979-80 in the Sixth Plan period by the Special Component Plan (SCP), later christened as SCSP. They were the statutory allocations to be made in every budget, central as well as state, to be spent on these communities and were mandated to be budgeted in plan outlays in proportion to the population of the two communities. As in any scheme for Dalits, the government never kept its promise. Most of the funds were diverted to unrelated activities and even then the actual spending was far less than what was budgeted. Even with such misdoings, the allocations by the previous regimes look better than the two budgets (2014-15 being the interim budget) of the Modi government. As Table 1 shows,

**Table 1: SCSP and TSP Allocations in ₹ Crore**

	2007-08 RE	2008-09 RE	2009-10 RE	2010-11 RE	2011-12 RE	2012-13 RE	2013-14 RE	2014-15 RE	2015-16 RE	2016-17 BE
Plan Outlay	1,58,491	1,83,528	2,33,386	2,84,284	3,27,396	4,13,625	4,75,532	4,67,934	4,65,770	5,50,010
SCP/SCSP										
SCP Allocation	12,368	14,727	15,906	23,183	29,918	33,085	35,801	43,208	30,851	38,833
%	7.80	8.02	6.82	8.15	9.14	8.03	7.53	9.23	6.62	7.06
TSP										
TSP allocation	7,447	8,771	8,600	10,363	17,959	18,721	22,030	26,715	19,980	24,005
%	4.70	4.78	3.68	3.65	5.49	4.53	4.63	5.71	4.29	4.36

Source: Union Budgets 2007-08 to 2016-17.

for the year 2015-16 the ratio of the SCSP allocation to total plan outlay worked out to just 6.62%, by far the lowest since 2007-08 and that for the TSP at 4.29%, lowest since 2011-12. These ratios should have been 16.62% and 8.6%, respectively, as per their population. Although, in view of the important state elections, these ratios improved slightly in the current budget to 7.06% and 4.36%, respectively, they were lower than the earlier ratios. In these two years Modi has deprived Dalits and tribals of ₹13,370,127 crore and ₹5,689,940 crore from their legitimate share. Safai karamcharis, or manual scavengers, accounting for about 10% of the total Dalit (SC) population, are the Dalit among Dalits ("Dalits Cry on the Eve of the Ambedkar Festival," EPW, 7 May 2016). Modi's concern for this section of the population is evidenced by the drop in the allocation for Self Employment Scheme for Rehabilitation of Manual Scavengers from ₹557 crore in the last two budgets (as Table 2 shows)

**Table 2: Outlays for Safai Karamchari-related Schemes (₹ crore)**

	2013-14 BE	2014-15 BE	2014-15 Actual	2015-16 BE	2015-16 RE	2016-17 BE
Self Employment Scheme for Rehabilitation of Manual Scavengers	557.00	439.04	47.00	470.19	10.01	10.00
Pre-matric Scholarships to the Children of those Engaged in "Unclean" Occupations	9.50	10.00	10.00	10.00	2.50	2.00

Source: Union budget for respective years.

to ₹439.04 crore and ₹470.19 crore, which were further slashed to a token entry of ₹10 crore. The allocation for Pre-matric Scholarships to the Children of those Engaged in "Unclean" Occupations shows an even more dismal picture: while the budget allocation was marginally raised to ₹10 crore from the earlier ₹9.5 crore, it was slashed to ₹2 crore in the last budget.

### Spurt in Caste Atrocities

While the BJP desperately depends upon Dalit votes, its win in the last elections with a clear majority in the Lok Sabha for the first time, coupled with the overbearing style of Modi, has bolstered the entire Sangh Parivar. Its aggressive Hindutva rhetoric generally emboldened the feudal forces and lumpen elements in rural areas to suppress any assertive action by Dalits. Not everyone in the Sangh Parivar internalises the tactical need of the BJP to woo Dalits. Such dynamics have aggravated caste contradictions in villages which often manifest in gory atrocities. While the atrocity graph has been going up since the economic reforms were instituted, the rise during Modi's rule appears spectacular. The National Crime Records Bureau has only the 2014 atrocity figures, but they might be enough to reflect the nature of this dynamics. Table 3 gives a glimpse into the atrocities on Dalits,

**Table 3: Atrocity on Dalits from 2010 to 2015**

Type/Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014*
Murder	570	673	651	676	794
Rape	1,349	1,557	1,576	2,073	2,388
Kidnapping	511	616	490	628	1,456
Dacoity	42	36	27	45	37
Robbery	75	54	40	62	92
Arson	150	169	214	189	201
Grievous hurt	4,376	4,247	3,855	4,901	4,531
PCR Act	143	67	62	62	101
PoA Act	10,513	11,342	12,576	13,975	8,887
Others	14,983	14,958	14,164	16,797	21,541
Total	32,713	33,719	33,655	39,408	47,064
Percentage rise	-	3.08	-0.19	17.04	19.43

\* Break-up computed from the figures in Table 7.2, Crime of India 2014.

Source: NCRB, "Crime in India" for various years.

which shows an alarming increase of over 19% from the previous year. In sum, the two years of Modi have been grossly devastating to Dalits in the short term and utterly ruinous in the long term. Dalits had better realize that the Sangh Parivar's dream of establishing Hindu Raj, a curious cross of the Hitlerite Ein Volk, Ein Reich, Ein Fuehrer and Manu's Brahmanism, is a deadly antithesis of Ambedkar.

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# NCRB figures show highest suicide rates among Christians, Dalits and Tribals

The NCRB data obtained by this newspaper (see page 2) shows that Christians have the highest suicide rate at 17.4, as compared to Hindus at 11.3

A Christian in India is 1.5 times more likely to commit suicide as compared to a Hindu while tribals and Dalits have some of the highest suicide rates among caste groups, the Union Home Ministry has revealed in response to an RTI application filed by The Indian Express on religion and caste-based suicide data.

In 2014, the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), for the first time, collected data on suicides based on religion and caste groups. However, the data, which was to be published in 2015, was never released by the Home Ministry.

The NCRB data obtained by this newspaper (see page 2) shows that Christians have the highest suicide rate at 17.4, as compared to Hindus at 11.3 the national average stands at 10.6. Muslims and Sikhs, at 7 per cent and 4.1 respectively, record the lowest rates. In this context, rate refers to the number of suicides per population of one lakh.

Among caste groups, Scheduled Tribes have the highest suicide rate at 10.4 followed by Dalits at 9.4, according to the data. Although the "general" category has a higher rate (13.6), it includes suicides by those from of all other religions as well.

Some of the other pointers revealed by the data include:

\* The 2011 Census data says Christians make up 2.3 per cent of India's population, but their share in suicides is 3.7 per cent. That virtually translates into a gap of over 60 per cent between Christian representation in the national population and in suicides.

\* Hindus, too, have a greater share among suicides (83 per cent) than their representation in the population (79.8 per cent).

\* The percentage of suicides among Muslims is much lower (9.2) compared to their share in population (14.2 per cent).

According to former Kerala Director General (fire and rescue services) Siby Mathews, who has written a book on suicides, "My research shows that economic security is very closely associated with suicides. One meaning that could be arrived from the data is, perhaps, the minority is not finding expected opportunities to come up."

While the rate of suicides among SCs and STs hover around 10, which is close to the national average, the rate among other backward castes (OBC) stands at 9.2 per cent based on the National Sample Survey's numbers, their share in population is 40.2 per cent. The Home Ministry, incidentally, is also yet to release the caste census conducted in 2011.

P S Krishnan, former secretary, Ministry of Welfare, says the figures must be seen in the modern socio-economic context. "People commit suicide out of helplessness. There are a variety of reasons, both economic and social, that lead to suicides. The two classes of Dalits and tribals, being the most socially and economically disadvantaged, are vulnerable. Health is another prime reason because of which people commit suicide. Again, the two classes have little access to healthcare."

Krishnan suggests that suicides could also be a reflection of social tensions and cited the suicide of Hyderabad student Rohith Vemula as an example.

"Discrimination and humiliation begin to play a part in suicides when one gets educated. An illiterate Dalit is not perturbed by humiliation as he takes it as his fate. An educated Dalit will find it difficult to deal with as in the case of Rohith Vemula," he said.

Source: The Indian Express

SUICIDES IN NUMBERS

	Rate of suicides*	% share in suicides	% share of population	Number of suicides
<b>RELIGION</b>				
Christian	17.4	3.7	2.3	4,845
Hindu	11.3	83	79.8	1,09,271
Muslim	7	9.2	14.2	12,109
Sikh	4.1	0.6	1.72	848
<b>CASTE</b>				
Scheduled Tribe	10.4	8.2	8.6	10,850
Scheduled Caste	9.4	14.4	16.6	19,019
OBC**	9.2	34	40.2	44,827
General	13.6	43.3	34.6	56,970
<b>All India</b>	<b>10.6</b>	—	—	<b>1,31,666</b>

\*Suicides per one lakh population \*\*OBC population calculated on the basis of National Sample Survey data, others on Census 2011 figures.



# India's plan to tackle disasters neglects women, disabled and lower castes: aid workers



NEW DELHI (Thomson Reuters Foundation) - India's new plan to tackle disasters fails to address the needs of vulnerable groups, which could lead to millions of women, children, disabled and elderly people as well as lower caste and tribal communities being put at further risk, aid workers said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi unveiled India's first National Disaster Management Plan (NDMP). The plan aims to boost resilience to earthquakes, cyclones and floods and reduce deaths by focusing on early warning, response and recovery.

While the United Nations and relief agencies have generally welcomed the plan, some aid groups say there are serious gaps.

"The NDMP document should have included guidelines and systems to ensure that the government's disaster response, mitigation and recovery especially target most vulnerable sections amongst the disaster-impacted population," said Sandeep Chachra, Action Aid India's executive director.

Disasters affect people to varying degrees, and the government should identify the specific needs of different groups to respond effectively, aid workers say.



For example, adolescent girls and women face many problems - from a lack of sanitary towels during menstruation to sexual violence in camps and poor healthcare for expectant mothers.

As a result, maternal and infant mortality rates, infectious diseases fuelled by poor sanitation, sexual abuse and unsafe abortions tend to rise in the chaos following a disaster.

Disabled people are also disproportionately affected by disasters, say aid workers. Many cannot physically access buildings or transport, relief camps or aid distribution points.

## EXCLUDED

Another vulnerable group are people from lower-caste communities, or Dalits, who often live on the outskirts of settlements, in poor quality housing with little protection against natural hazards.

A 2013 report found many Dalits do not get the same access to emergency aid such as clean water, dry food rations or shelter as their higher-caste neighbours.

It said lower-caste communities were refused food at a relief camp in Sri Lanka after the 2004 tsunami, while during the same disaster in India, Dalits were exploited for their labour to remove corpses and debris.

"We are disappointed with the National Disaster Management Plan, as it fails to consider the specific needs of Dalits and other vulnerable groups," said Rikke Nöhrind, Executive Director of the International Dalit Solidarity Network.

"The Indian government is undoubtedly aware of this, and it seems incomprehensible to us that it fails to address the issue. The fact that more attention is paid to animals than vulnerable humans in this important plan is very telling indeed."

*Source: Reuters*

# Socio-economic Condition of SCs and STs in India



After 68 years of Independence, not only does discrimination endure against Indians from scheduled castes and scheduled tribes - 201 million and 104 million according to Census 2011 - crimes against India's most marginalized are rising.

Despite progress, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes - who together constitute 25.2 per cent of India's population - continue to trail other Indians. To quantify the gap, India Spend used four criteria: Education, income, land and home ownership and government jobs.

Every so often, even those Dalits who have broken through India's logjam of caste find it difficult to navigate a society dominated by upper castes. Rohith Vemula, a 25-year-old University of Hyderabad Dalit PhD student - whose January 2016 suicide became a rallying point for those who felt discriminated - referred in his suicide note to the "value of a man" reduced to "his immediate identity and nearest possibility. To a vote. To a number. To a thing."

## EDUCATION

Both scheduled castes (SCs) and scheduled tribes (STs) lag Indian educational indicators, according to Census 2011: 66 per cent of SCs are literate, as are 59 per cent of STs; literacy among the general population is 74 per cent.

Reservations have helped improve enrolment rates in higher education, but many students feel the pressure of expectations and subtle discrimination. More than half of all SC, ST and OBC (other backward castes) students felt discrimination, although it was not overt, according to a 2014 survey (reported by DNA) conducted by a student organization at the Indian Institute of Technology-Powai.

"Government interventions, programs and policies are helping but they are too little compared to the actual need," said A. Narayanan, Director of CHANGE India, an advocacy based in Chennai. "And privatization of education is depriving the Dalit."

## INCOME

In 83 per cent of SC households and 86.5 per cent of ST homes, the monthly salary of the highest-earning

member was less than Rs 5,000, according to data from 2011 Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC).

SC and ST households constitute half of India's "poor, deprived households", according to this 2011 year pilot survey to identify how many Indians lived below the poverty line. That deprivation is evident in the homes and lands that SCs and STs own.

## LAND AND HOME

ST land holdings are lowest in some relatively prosperous states, such as Goa, Gujarat and Telangana, where they constitute 13 per cent, 21 per cent and 11 per cent of the population. As for SCs, they own little or no land in Haryana and Chhattisgarh, where they constitute 23 per cent and 14 per cent of the population.

No more than 0.36 per cent of ST and 0.64 per cent of SC households pay income tax, according to 2001 SECC data, the latest available among the general population, 3.81 per cent pay income tax, as India Spend reported in May 2016.

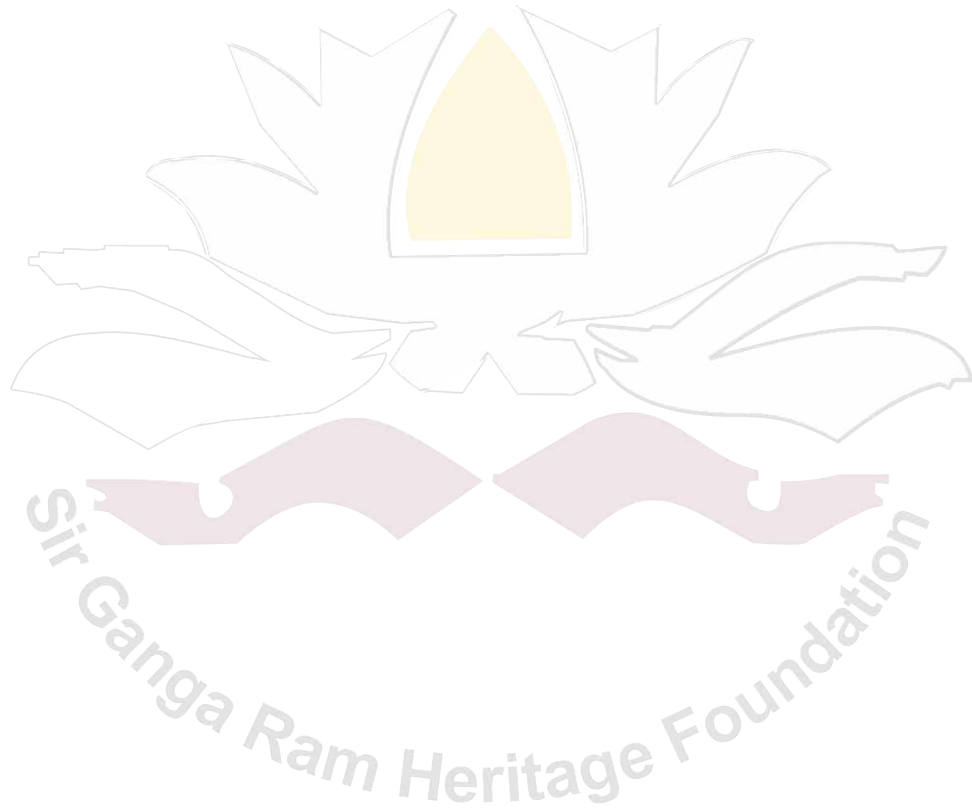
## GOVERNMENT JOBS

There is no data on how many SCs and STs are employed by the private sector, but an analysis of SC/ST representation in government services reveals that despite reservations - 15 per cent of such jobs are reserved for SCs and 7.5 per cent for STs - they lag other Indians.

No more than 0.48 per cent of ST and 0.73 per cent of SC households had a salaried government (both centre and state) job, according to the SECC 2011. In 1994, the latest year for which such data is available, 16.9 per cent of all central government employees were SC and 5.49 per cent were ST - their proportion in the general population.

As for self-employed SCs and STs, their businesses fared "significantly worse" than those owned by upper castes, with 55 per cent of the earnings gap unexplained, implying "greater discrimination", said another 2015 study from Deshpande.

*Source: Big News Network.com*



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