

Quarterly MINO-VIEW

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Voice of Minorities & Oppressed people in South Asian Societies

Has the Dalit uprising in Gujarat
given birth to a movement?

Mumbai's Ambedkar Bhavan demolition:
from Left to Right, leaders join protest

Una flogging:
As Dalits
march for
freedom
in Gujarat,
global support
puts in



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Editorial

The assault on four young Dalits has opened the way of mass protest across in India. It was not only videotaped flogging which brought Dalits on the street across the state but it is the result of the thousands of big and small incidence such as untouchability, manual scavenging, humiliation, rape, non access to drinking water and temple that Dalits have been facing and are part of their life for decades. The Gujarat state has never seen or witnessed such uprising by the Dalit community. It is a kind of revolution in making. This movement can be termed historic as never before the Dalits have united under one banner. The Dalits took oath that they will never pick carcass again and instead seek some other alternative means of livelihood.

Education is opening the Dalit mind like never before, giving him confidence to assert his just place in this world. The civil society movements are shaping the new Dalit thought process. The Dalit is becoming braver day by day. The cruel behavior of the dominant caste towards the lower caste is the cause of emergence of an organized Dalit protest. It can be a turning point in India's politics as it has exposed the injustice that prevails and those responsible for violence as well. The new age young Dalit is speaking out loud and clear. The emerging Dalit lack tolerance and have aggressive behaviour, strength, valour and courage to resist discrimination which is different from their forefathers. This movement is not to meet the victim and give them monetary compensation, they want to build something durable out of this resistance, social justice issues will be fought. The Dalits says that deprivation of land right and landlessness is the root cause of Dalit vulnerability the Una dalits demanded land to lead a life of dignity. They refused relief measures offered as compensation. They pledged to continue to fight. This Dalit agitation against the ills of the caste system will be threatening for the state than ever before. The seed of revolt has been sown which will spring up into a blaring revolution.

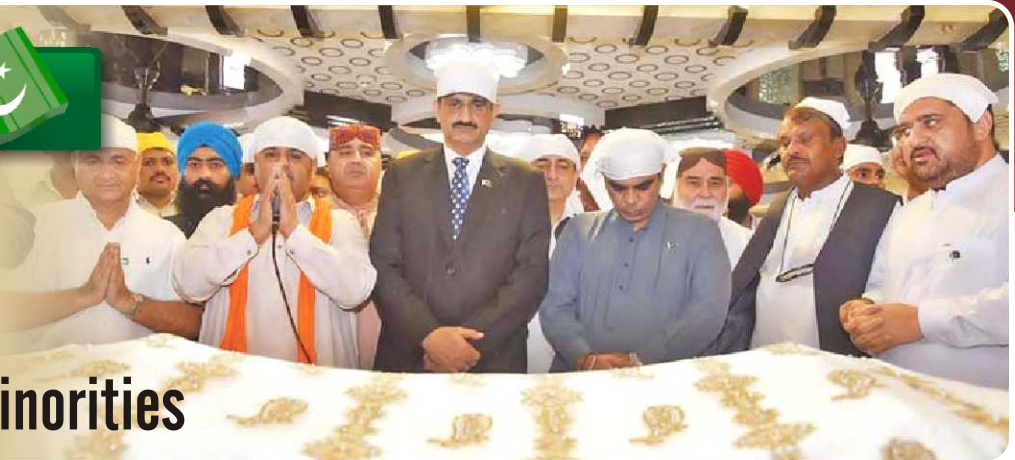
It is time for every Dalit intellectual to think, decide and act to convert Indian sociological scenario so that their future can be better than the past. Democracy is not about holding election but it is about integrating the marginalized community.

In Bangladesh the religious minorities, Dalits and indigenous people continued to be pushed to margins and violent attack against atheist and secularists are also increasing. In UK it is a matter of concern that several provision of Equality Act 2016 have not been brought into legal effect including caste based discrimination. On the eve of the National day of minorities CM Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah visited the religious places of minorities i.e. Church, Temple and Gurdawara in Karachi to express solidarity with the religious minorities and lauded their contribution in the development of Pakistan.

Editor



Sindh CM celebrates his birthday with minorities



Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on the occasion of national day of minorities visited The Trinity Cathedral, Ram Swami Temple and Gordwara to express his solidarity with the religious minorities and lauded their contribution in the development of Pakistan.

The chief minister along with some cabinet member visited Trinity Church in the morning where he was received by Bishop Daniel Sadiq. On the occasion the school girls clad in uniform played flute and drum to announce his arrival and to welcome him in befitting manner.

Speaking on the occasion, the chief minister said that the religious minorities have contributed in education and health sectors a lot. "I have received education from a Christian missionary school. I am proud to say that what I am today has your (Christians) contribution in the shape of education," he said.

Syed Murad Shah said that his government and party were committed with the cause of minorities' rights. "In my cabinet the party leadership has given representation to a Christian as special assistant," he said and added that he would be looking after their problems personally.

The chief minister said that today was his 54th birthday. "This is also something to be proud of that he was celebrating his birthday on the same day when minorities were celebrating their day."

Bishop Daniel Sadiq addressing the gathering welcomed the chief minister and lauded his gesture to celebrate minorities' day with them. The

audience, including the chief minister Murad Ali Shah rose from their seats and observed a two-minute silence to mourn the Quetta tragedy.

The programme concluded with the celebration of the chief minister's birthday. The Christian community in their gathering in order to wish happy birthday to the chief minister sang 'happy birthday' song with claps.

Latter the chief minister Syed Murad Shah went to Narain Ram Swami temple where he was received by Hindu community leaders by showering rose petals on him. First they took him to a corner where they had lit the candles to pay tribute to the people who lost their lives in Quetta blast. The chief minister also lit a candle for them.



This is also something to be proud of that he was celebrating his birthday on the same day when minorities were celebrating their day.



Later went up to the mander and participated in their programme. They had arranged a cake with candles to celebrate his birthday. The chief minister, Syed Murad Ali Shah celebrated his birthday by cutting a cake at mander.

The chief minister just after Mander came down and went to Gordwara, the religious holy place of Sikhs. He stayed with them for some time and witnessed their religious activities.

The chief minister assured all the minorities that he was with them. "I am at a phone call away from you, whenever you need me, otherwise you would be equally respected and protected. This is your country and enjoy your life free of any fear," he assured them.

Source: The News International



Una flogging: As Dalits march for freedom in Gujarat, global support puts in



Making an already difficult situation worse for Hindutva forces in the country, support for the ongoing Dalit Asmita March from Ahmedabad to Una in Gir Somnath district of Gujarat is pouring in from around the world.

Some have even gone far enough to slam the Hindu Taliban. From across India too, rationalists, activists, supporters of the Dalit cause and people from various Dalit communities are coming together to register their protest against the continuing atrocities against the Dalits, particularly the violence unleashed by cow vigilantes across India.

ADDING TO THE NUMBERS

Groups of representatives from various Indian states are making the trek to Gujarat to join the marchers led by Jignesh Mevani and other Dalit youths, much to the discomfort of the Hindutva organisations.

"There are delegations from Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar who have already joined us. We are also expecting Rohith Vemula's mother to join us on 14 August and remain with us when the march culminates on 15 August at Una. We have been able to send across a loud and clear message that Dalits will not take the atrocities being committed lying down. Since we are getting support from all over the globe, we

are convinced that what we are doing is right," said Mevani.

'INHUMAN VIOLENCE'

In Germany's Lower Saxony, protesters led demonstrations against the Una atrocity from University of Gottingen. The march saw not only Indians participating, but also students and researchers committed to basic human rights.

"Today, we, the students and research fellows at the University of Gottingen, and Goethe Institute Gottingen,



In Germany's Lower Saxony, protesters led demonstrations against the Una atrocity from University of Gottingen. The march saw not only Indians participating, but also students and researchers committed to basic human rights.

organized a protest against the inhuman violence against Dalits in India. A few weeks ago, members of the Dalit community in Una, Gujarat, who were removing carcasses, were brutally attacked by "cow vigilantes. Dalits have been historically forced into removing carcasses and human excreta.

These occupations which were sanctioned by Brahmanical caste system are practiced even today in large parts of the country. We condemn this act of violence against Dalits and stand in solidarity with the protesters," reads a post from Sufi Hussain, an academician from Larkana in Sindh in Pakistan, who took part in the demonstration.

Similarly, the matter is being discussed at length in Canada,

particularly on NRI radio networks. Senior journalist and activist Gurpreet Singh told Catch that ever since the incident of flogging of Dalit youths at Samadhiyala came to light, it has been taken up in all seriousness by the diaspora as well as those from other South Asian countries.

Singh said, "At a demonstration held on 30 July in Surrey, South Asian activists came out in big numbers. Sikh activists like Barjinder Singh and Harbans Singh Aujla raised their concern over the growing atrocities on Dalits and the minorities under the current BJP government at the Centre. They urged all marginalised sections to identify their common enemy and fight against it."



We are getting support from all over the globe, we are convinced that what we are doing is right.

Mevani

Lead. Don't wait for others. It is do or die now for our kids and grand kids' future to live a life without caste warfare. Enough is enough," reads the post on Mevani's facebook wall.

Mevani told Catch that associations in the US like Ambedkar Association of North America, Ambedkar International Mission, Boston Study Group, Ambedkar Intentional Center, Ambedkar Association of California and other progressive groups have also expressed their support for the Una march and have conveyed that they would organise events in support of the Dalit initiative in their cities and towns over the next three days.

"Ambedkarites all over the US and Canada have decided



Param Kainth, a Dalit activist, says that the "so-called low caste Hindus or untouchables" have come under attack by the Hindu extremists.

"They (Hindutva forces) are targeting all minorities, including Dalits, one by one," says Barjinder Singh. "It's time to get united against them. First they targeted Muslims and now they have picked Dalits. The activists in Canada express their solidarity with those carrying out this march."

Similarly, Dalits residing in Melbourne, particularly those from Punjab, have expressed their support through a video clip that they have sent to the marchers. The speaker in the video can be heard condemning the attacks on Dalits in India and pointing at the injustices that have been meted out to them over thousands of years. Expressing their solidarity with the marchers, these Australian residents have stated that the day is not far when everyone has equal rights and the Constitution given by Dalit icon Bhim Rao Ambedkar is implemented in letter and spirit.

"Atrocities on Dalits and Muslims have gone up and brutalities have reached their nadir. This is the time to make Hindu Taliban realize that they have totally become animals in the name of protecting an 'animal' (cow). We agreed to work with all contacts all over India, to organise protest in support of Gujarat Dalit march for freedom in all Indian states and cities to coincide from today till the August 15. Do your part.

to have a protest in support of our march for freedom on 12 August," he said.

CHANGE IS GOING TO COME

The organisers of the march say that while a contingent of students from Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi has already joined them, they are expecting students from other universities to arrive over the next three days.

"We have come here to support the march since we believe that it is not just some instances of violence and atrocities by cow vigilantes. It is a much deeper problem that is inherent in the Hindu caste system because of which we have suffered for thousands of years. Cow vigilantism just symbolises that mindset," said Ravi Kant, an activist from Jalandhar who joined the march at Tatam village on Wednesday.

"We will take back a rich experience that will help us intensify our struggle against casteism in Punjab. We sincerely believe in awakening of the masses by distributing literature and holding discussions," he added.

"It is good that the message has gone global. Let's see how Prime Minister Narendra Modi faces his darling NRIs on this issue when he goes to these countries next time," said a political observer from Ahmedabad.

Source: Catch News



CASTE DISCRIMINATION IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

On 28 August 2016, as a part of the regular review process, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) published its concluding observations to the UK. The Committee expressed its concern that 'several provisions of the Equality Act 2010 have not yet been brought into legal effect, including Section 9(5)(a) on caste-based discrimination'. Once again the UK government is being urged to 'Invoke Section 9(5)(a) of the Equality Act 2010 without further delay to ensure that caste-based discrimination is explicitly prohibited under law and that victims of this form of discrimination have access to effective remedies, taking into account the Committee's general recommendation No. 29 (2002) on descent'.

However, this recommendation did not come easy but was a result of persistent lobbying and campaigning by a number of actors. Dalit Solidarity Network UK, International Dalit Solidarity Network, Equality and Human Rights Commission (a national human rights institution in the UK) and other national non-governmental organizations prior to the review submitted their shadow reports, highlighting the need to adopt the secondary legislation, and took part in a number of informal meetings in Geneva.

Moreover, on 11 July, the UK parliament discussed caste-based discrimination and asked the Government on the planned steps to implement anti-caste based discrimination legislation. MPs questioned the delay in invoking the

power contained in the Equality Act 2010 to provide for caste to be "an aspect of race", and following the timetable issued by the UK Government in 2013 for the introduction of such legislation, research and consultation. The UK Government is yet to publish its feasibility study undertaken in 2014.

MP Michael Cashman noted as a concern the [government's] "casual disregard of the United Nations and our international treaty obligations". Referring to the recommendation of the CERD review of the UK in 2011, he stated it "could not be clearer: "Put in practice a national strategy to eliminate discrimination against caste, through the immediate adoption of the Equality

Law of 2010 that prohibits such discrimination, in conformity with its international human rights obligations, including", the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination's, "General Recommendation 29 and recommendations of the Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism".

IDSN and DSN-UK call on the UK Government to take specific measures, in accordance with the CERD General Recommendation 29, to eliminate this form of discrimination, including adopting a national strategy, undertaking further research, and promoting public awareness of the issue.

Source: international Dalit Solidarity Network



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INDIA



Mumbai's Ambedkar Bhavan demolition: from Left to Right, leaders join protest

**More than 20,000 march
from Byculla to Vidhan Bhavan,
state orders inquiry into the
June 25 demolition.**



A rally to protest the demolition of Ambedkar Bhavan brought traffic in south and central Mumbai to a standstill.

Rajya Sabha MP and general secretary of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) Sitaram Yechury, Mumbai Congress chief Sanjay Nirupam, AIMIM legislator from Byculla Waris Pathan, Shiv Sena legislator Neelam Gorhe, among a phalanx of leaders cutting across party lines demanded action against the demolition of the historical building in Dadar (East). Also present at the rally, which saw about 20,000 protesters, was Kanhaiya Kumar, president of JNU Students' Union.

While the BJP's leaders did not participate in the rally

from Byculla to Vidhan Bhavan, where the state legislature is in session, the party's legislators pressed Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis to announce an inquiry into how the building, home to a printing press started by Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar, was declared dangerous and fit for demolition.

Incidentally, Fadnavis had conducted a bhoomi puja for a 17-storey tower to replace the Ambedkar Bhavan on April 14, the birth anniversary of Dr B R Ambedkar. The demolition of the old Ambedkar Bhavan was carried out on June 25.

While Ambedkar's grandsons Prakash and Anandraj, leaders of the Bharatiya Republican Party (BRP) Bahujan Mahasangh and the Republican Sena respectively, had immediately protested the demolition, an inquiry was ordered only, over three weeks later. The rally was organized mainly by Prakash Ambedkar and his BRP. The massive show of strength



Prakash Ambedkar questioned the state's delay in ordering an inquiry. "The government has woken up late after the rally. The language of the chief minister has changed after seeing the public on the road," adding that attempts were being made to destroy all opposition parties and their ideologies.

and the spontaneous participation of thousands of Dalits was seen as a significant revival for him.

According to the police, there were at least 20,000 protesters at the rally, though organizers said the number was closer to 50,000. Starting from near Byculla zoo, the rally marched to CST, where more joined the protest.

Prakash Ambedkar questioned the state's delay in ordering an inquiry. "The government has woken up late after the rally. The language of the chief minister has changed after seeing the public on the road," he said, adding that attempts were being made to destroy all opposition parties and their ideologies.

"Hitler came to power in Germany through democracy. Then, he finished the opposition and went on to become a dictator. There seems to be a similar situation in our country," he said. Prakash Ambedkar also promised that the Ambedkar Bhavan would be reconstructed through public participation, and urged people to gather at the Dadar site on July 30.

Yechury said he raised the issue in Rajya Sabha. "The Centre promised to give orders to the state about reconstruction of the building. The rally has brought Left and Dalit parties together. Nobody can defeat us,"



"The attempt to demolish the Bhavan has been done so that people do not read Babasaheb's thoughts. If they read, they will become Rohith Vemula, which won't allow right wing thoughts to flourish. The Ambedkar Bhavan spread Babasaheb's ideology across India," Kanhaiya said, also starting his 'Azaadi' chant.

Speaking first, Kanhaiya said history should be preserved. "Will the government demolish historical buildings such as CST, the BMC building or Taj Mahal to build multi-storied towers there?" asked Kanhaiya, who slammed the BJP and termed the 125th birth anniversary celebrations of Ambedkar as mere lip service by the union government.

"The attempt to demolish the Bhavan has been done so that people do not read Babasaheb's thoughts. If they read, they will become Rohith Vemula, which won't allow right wing thoughts to flourish. The Ambedkar Bhavan spread Babasaheb's ideology across India," Kanhaiya said, also starting his 'Azaadi' chant.

Neelam Gorhe, the only Sena leader present, said the Sena had understood popular emotion regarding the razing of the building. She said she would raise the issue in the Legislative Council and seek removal of Ratnakar Gaikwad, state information commissioner and retired IAS officer, who was on board the People's Improvement Trust, which is seeking to redevelop the Bhavan into a 17-storey building. "I will raise the issue tomorrow in the Council through a calling attention motion," Gorhe told The Indian Express.

Source: The Indian Express





Dalit Activist Chamar receives Darnal Award



Raksha Ram Chamar (Harijan) was awarded the first Darnal International Award for Social Justice for his endeavour to seek justice for Dalits and marginalized community. The award, established by Jagaran Media Centre and Sarita Pariyar Trust Fund in memory of late Suvash Darnal, who fought for social justice in the country, carries a purse of Rs 500,000. Born in Kapilvastu, Chamar, 28, an educator and a journalist and now a lawyer, is the first Dalit in his village in the district to complete high school.

Chamar began his fight for social justice by setting up a primary school in his village so that children from Dalit community would not have to leave their village for education. He then continued his advocacy for social justice through journalism as a reporter in a paper in his home district and later became the editor of a weekly newspaper, Pradeshik Samachar. He currently practices law and advocates for the rights of people from the marginalized communities.

His first break came in 2014 when the Supreme Court (SC) ruled in his favour in a case against the Public Service Commission. The commission subsequently changed its regulations to allow for reservations for marginalized groups. He rose to fame after securing legal victory in a case he filed together with Rita Sah and Vijay Kant Karna in June 2015. The petitioners had argued that “an agreement by three top political parties to promulgate a constitution that left details on federalism for future resolution was unconstitutional”. The SC ruling in favour of the petitioners had forced the parties to bring a constitution that included a map of the federal structure.

Chamar has also taken up the case of Ishan Adhikari, who had splashed red colour, as a symbol of blood, on the walls of Singha Durbar, demanding state apology, investigation and prosecution for killings of innocent citizens in the Tarai during political protests last year. Chamar said the award has motivated him to make his fight even stronger for social justice for the marginalized communities. “I salute Suvash (Darnal) for his efforts to create a society that is just and equitable,” said Chamar.

Darnal was the founding president of Jagaran Media Centre, a media hub run by Dalits for Dalits. Darnal also funded the Collective Campaign for Peace and founded the Samata Foundation. His untimely death five years ago at the age of 31 in a road accident in the United States was a huge setback for the Dalit movement in Nepal. Professor Larry Diamond, senior fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University, who had taught Darnal, praised him as someone who took pride in the fact that he belonged to the Dalit community from Nepal and had great vision to empower the marginalized communities in his country.

Carl Gershman, founding president of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), a US non-profit organization with the stated goal of promoting democracy abroad, said Nepal, a diverse country, has the opportunity to set an example to the world as an inclusive country. “Democracy is not only about holding elections, it is also about integrating the marginalized community,” said Gershman.

Source: The Kathmandu Post



Dalit Protest in Gujarat



By Anand Teltumbde

Repression of Dalits has been rampant in Gujarat and the state also ranks high in terms of atrocities against them. The recent brutal attack on Dalit youths unjustly accused of cow slaughter is an open expression of simmering casteist prejudices under the cover of supporting the Hindutva agenda.

The state of Gujarat was supposed to be a model worthy of emulation. This was the tall claim of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) which has governed the state since 2001. The BJP however considers laudable what is actually shameful. Four Dalit youths were publicly flogged by a Hindutvavadi vigilante group on 11 July. Members of the Gau Raksha Samiti came across a Dalit family skinning the carcass of a dead cow in village Mota Samadhiyala in Una taluka of Gir Somnath district. Accusing them of cow slaughter, these men beat up the entire family and then picked up the four youths, stripped them up to the waist, chained them to the back of a car and drove it to Una town, where they were again beaten up close to a police station. The gau rakshaks, confident that they would not be punished, filmed the entire act and uploaded the video on the internet. However, this last act of theirs backfired, as enraged Dalits came out on the streets in protest and there was condemnation from many quarters. This atrocity exposed how emboldened anti-Dalit elements in Gujarat have become to unleash their prejudices under the guise of supporting the government's Hindutva agenda.

Modi's Crocodile Tears

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, it is said, was "disturbed" on learning about what had happened. This seemed to imply that he has never heard of atrocities on Dalits in Gujarat before. He must surely know that Gujarat has the dubious distinction of consistently ranking among the top five states in terms of atrocities against Dalits. In 2013, even as Modi was on the verge of being designated as the BJP's prime ministerial candidate, the number of atrocities per 1,00,000 Scheduled Caste (SC) persons was 29.21, up from 25.23 in the previous years. This was disgraceful Gujarat ranked fourth among India's states in terms of the incidence of atrocities against Dalits. The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) in earlier years erroneously mentioned the number of atrocities per lakh population and corrected it only in 2012. Therefore, the incidence of atrocities against the SCs as given in NCRB tables would necessitate correction in absolute figures. However, this is unlikely to alter Gujarat's relative rank among the states. In terms of the major category of

atrocities like murders and rapes too Gujarat ranks higher than most states. Table 1 provides the rates of these atrocities for 2012 and 2013 to show how Gujarat ranks high in the list of states for crimes against Dalits. In September 2012, in Thangadh, a small town in Surendranagar district of Gujarat, three Dalit youths were gunned down by Modi's police on two consecutive days (22 and 23 September 2012) but the then chief minister did not utter a word although he was barely 17 km away from the spot, leading a Vivekanand Youth Vikas Yatra. On the first day, the police opened fire on the Dalits protesting against the Bharwads, who had beaten a Dalit youth over a minor clash, seriously injuring 17-year-old Pankaj Sumra, who later died in a hospital in Rajkot. News of the death sparked outrage among Dalits who took to the streets demanding that a complaint be filed against the police officials responsible.

The next day, the police again opened fire on the agitating Dalits injuring three of them, two of whom, Mehul Rathod, 17, and Prakash Parmar, 26, died at the Rajkot civil hospital. These killings, just before the state assembly polls in 2012, had sent shock waves across the state and complaints were lodged against four police officials. Investigation was handed over to the Crime Investigation Department. However, despite three FIRs being filed against the accused policemen, only in one case has a charge sheet been filed and one of the accused B C Solanki was not even arrested.

Pent-up Anger

Gujarat has a long history of feudal repression of its Dalit

Table 1: Rate of Incidence of Murders and Rapes (per lakh population of the Scheduled Castes)

Year	2012		2013	
	Murder	Rape	Murder	Rape
Gujarat	0.56	2.29	0.71	3.82
Andhra Pradesh	0.39	1.49	0.38	1.64
Bihar	0.16	0.49	0.30	0.85
Chhattisgarh	0.18	3.86	0.18	3.37
Haryana	0.37	2.79	0.43	5.45
Jharkhand	0.03	0.41	0.15	0.31
Karnataka	0.34	0.83	0.30	1.29
Kerala	0.03	6.34	0.07	7.36
Madhya Pradesh	0.78	6.75	0.68	7.31
Maharashtra	0.27	1.49	0.30	2.75
Odisha	0.15	2.21	2.26	2.77
Rajasthan	0.54	3.44	0.62	5.01
Tamil Nadu	0.26	0.47	0.19	0.39
Uttar Pradesh	0.57	1.45	0.54	1.91

Source: Crime of India, 2012 and 2013, National Crime Records Bureau.

community, which being relatively small (7.1%) as compared to the national average of 16.6, had largely remained politically inert. After a brief show of strength by the Dalit Panthers in the early 1970s, they were rudely shaken out of their Gandhian slumber by the 1981 anti-reservation riots. For the first time, a spate of Ambedkar Jayanti celebrations were held all over the state. But this awakening proved to be short-lived. When the BJP realised the electoral importance of the Dalits and began wooing them, they succumbed and found themselves participating in a big way in the 1986 Jagannath rath procession and later, even becoming its foot soldiers particularly during the 2002 post-Godhra carnage of Muslims. However, nothing changed for them on the ground. The discrimination, humiliation, exploitation and atrocities continued unabated with a complicit state overtly or covertly backing the anti-Dalit elements in civil society.

A recent study has demonstrated that of all the atrocity cases that occurred across four districts in Gujarat, 36.6% were not registered under the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act (better known as the Atrocity Act). Where the act was applied, 84.4% were registered under the wrong provisions, thus concealing the intensity of the violence in the cases.¹ Earlier, the Ahmedabad-based Council for Social Justice had studied 400 judgments delivered over a decade under this act since 1 April 1995 in the special atrocity courts set up in 16 districts of the state, and found wanton violation of the rules by the police to weaken prosecution. The judiciary also contributed its own prejudices to render the act toothless.² No wonder, the conviction rate in atrocity cases in Gujarat is six times lower than the national average of over 10 years for crimes against the SCs and Scheduled Tribes (STs). In 2014 (latest available data), 3.4% of the crimes against SCs in Gujarat ended in convictions, against a comparable national rate of 28.8%-that is, one conviction for every eight across the country.

A study titled "Understanding Untouchability: A Comprehensive Study of Practices and Conditions in 1,589 villages," conducted in Gujarat between 2007 and 2010, by the Navsarjan Trust, an organisation working among Dalits in Gujarat, in collaboration with the Robert E Kennedy Centre for Justice and Human Rights, revealed widespread practice of untouchability in rural Gujarat.³ The new generation of Dalits, faced with a dark future amidst the prosperity around, would not stomach it. It is this build-up of anger accentuated by the sugar-coated

anti Dalit policies of the BJP that burst out in the form of spontaneous flare-up of Dalit anger in the state.

BJP's Killer Cow

At the root of this atrocity and consequent flare-up lies the suspicion of cow slaughter by the self-appointed vigilantes who directly derive their power from the latest



The new generation of Dalits, faced with a dark future amidst the prosperity around, would not stomach it. It is this build-up of anger accentuated by the sugar-coated anti Dalit policies of the BJP that burst out in the form of spontaneous flare-up of Dalit anger in the state.

push by the ruling BJP. This atrocity reminds one of the Jhajjar episode in Haryana, where on 15 October 2002 five Dalits were lynched and set ablaze by a Hindutva mob in front of the police station in Dulina on similar suspicions of cow slaughter. The police, instead of acting against the lynching, had registered a case against the victims under the Prevention of Cow Slaughter Act! The case was withdrawn only after the result of a post-mortem revealed that the cow had been dead 24 hours before the lynching. Only thereafter, two cases of murder and attempted murder were reluctantly registered against 32 villagers. No sooner were they arrested, all of them were out on bail by January despite being

booked under stringent sections: murder, rioting with deadly weapons, mischief by fire and explosive substances (435) and under the SC and ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989. They bragged publicly that they would not mind doing it again. The Hindutva outfits openly justified it. On 28 September 2015, a Muslim family was attacked by similar vigilante mob in Bishahra village near Dadri, Uttar Pradesh, following rumours that it was storing and consuming beef. They lynched Mohammad Akhlaq and seriously wounded his son Danish. A case of cow slaughter has been registered against the family of Mohammad Akhlaq by the police at the instance of a local court in Surajpur!

The government unashamedly continues to ignore the directive principles of state policy in Part IV of the Constitution that were to be the fundamental principles of governance but uses the alibi of an Article to ban the slaughter of the entire cow family to the detriment of a vast majority of people and the economy. This obsession is certainly going to be the single biggest disaster for the country in the coming years but has become the immediate killer for the Muslims and Dalits, who are vocationally linked to and derive their livelihoods from the bovine economy. The BJP may ignore its consequences only at its own peril.

Anand Teltumbde is a writer and civil rights activist with the Committee for the Protection of Democratic Rights, Mumbai.



TIME TO ACT

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India as a nation had gained nothing worthwhile in the past including its nationhood. Nationhood itself had to be imposed on Indian sub continent as a political gift of colonialism, orientalism and imperialism. The main political reason for this unenviable condition was the lack of unity between the Maharajas of the Samasthanas. But a major contributing factor to this condition, according to Dr. Ambedkar was also sociological. The sociological deterioration was the result of the caste factor which was sanctified by the **Vedas** and **the Vedantas** and all our holy scriptures. Our whole social fabric was infected with the cancer of casteism which was a basic factor of the Hindu religion. Under the name of caste, Varna which came to be honoured as the **Varna Ashrama Dharma**, majority of India's people were castigated and prevented from contributing to the growth of their mother country. We have alienated our own people. Let us rehabilitate them, empower them and confer full citizenship on them.

India never has a participatory sociology which could lead to sociological collaboration in the uplifting of our community. The **Varnashrama** system was not lateral but vertical and hierarchic. A large number of Indians did not enjoy dignified citizenship and they were like the slaves in the United States and in Greece. None of the social responsibilities were shared with them and they were not allowed to enjoy any of the rights of the respected citizens of our country.

This pathetic condition was not only imposed on them: but more pathetic, these oppressed people even submitted, and submitted voluntarily because of the fear which had socio-religious dimensions.

Now, like Marx, our Ambedkar had to change the common currency of understanding of the society. It was not sufficient to simply understand and interpret: what mattered was to **CHANGE** it!

When all our **Shastras** were 'caste-discourses' and all our scriptures are cast in the mould of the caste system, a new discovery had to be made. Our social science has to make that discovery: and the social scientist who made the discovery was Ambedkar.

But what was discovered had to be implemented: politics and law had to be brought under its service.

Luckily the social scientist was also a legal luminary. And he was able to win political recognition as a member of the

Constituent Assembly and this gave him the vantage position of changing the currency of our social understanding.

Our country which had no chance of undergoing the experience of Renaissance, Industrial and Agrarian Revolutions and had very little experience of the Enlightenment and Exploration of even imperialistic expansion worth the name had to be taught all these only through the colonial experience.

Unifying concepts like humanism in the western style, and universal concepts like sex-transcendent, caste-transcendent consciousness was unreachable and unavailable to the Indian mind. Our oriental mind that could penetrate seven oceans and seven yugas (ages) and seven worlds could not penetrate the religion-locked social structure. Unremunerated work of the Shudra became the foundation of our economy. **Arthashastra** had to win the struggle for survival in the conspiracy of the so called dominant castes. The domination of pseudo-spirituality had to be broken by Western secularism and recognition of the respectability of materialism. The economic base of the society had to be newly laid in the place of empty spirituality. Secular education, secular employment and secular empowerment of the Dalits had to be done against a stiff opposition and/ or sly alarmism from vested interests.

Colonialist and imperialistic burden became necessary in the generation of the dialectic of sociology. Under the guise of liberating the country from the clutches of the British Imperialism the empire had to strike even local caste imperialism of the dominant castes and liberate the Dalits from our own oppressors.

Dr. Ambedkar skillfully steered the course of this subterfuge and submerged war and successfully concluded it through enshrining it in our constitution.

Has Dr. Ambedkar succeeded in achieving his objectives? Has he failed somewhere? Who were his enemies? How did they work? How to defeat them? It is time for every Dalit intellectual to think and decide to convert our Indian sociological scenario, so that our future can be better than our past.

We have alienated a huge section of our people; let us rehabilitate them empower them and confer full citizenship rights and status on them so that our **FUTURE** can be better than our **PAST**.



State of the World's Minorities & Indigenous Peoples 2016

Bangladesh, a predominantly ethnic Bengali and Sunni Muslim country, is increasingly divided by the struggle between moderation and exclusion a situation that leaves its ethnic and religious minorities vulnerable, particularly during moments of political crisis. The ruling party, the secular Awami League, continues to face strong resistance from opposition parties Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and Jamaat-e-Islami, resulting in widespread street protests and a heavy-handed response from state security. Within this wider political conflict, however, is the battle for the cultural identity of the state. While Bangladesh's religious minorities, Dalits and indigenous peoples continue to be pushed to the margins, often violently, attacks against atheists and secularists are also increasing.

The year 2015 saw five people brutally hacked to death in separate incidents throughout the year. Avijit Roy, Oyasiquir Rhaman, Ananta Bijoy Das, Niloy Neel and Faisal Arefin Dipan were all targeted for their books and blogs. Roy, Das and Neel, who were from the minority Hindu community but were either avowed secularists or atheists, had been on a 'hit list' targeting bloggers and writers believed to be atheists released by the extremist Ansarullah Bengali Team in 2013, a Bangladesh Islamist organization that has taken responsibility for many of these killings.

Many of the writers targeted had been outspoken in their support of the death penalty for those being tried under the International Crimes Tribunal (ICT), a domestic court set up to prosecute war crimes committed during the 1971 War of Independence, including charges of genocide, for atrocities against Hindu minority communities. The proceedings of the ICT, however, have been repeatedly criticized by observers for not reaching minimal international fair trial standards. On 18 November, the Bangladesh Supreme Court rejected the death sentence appeal petitions of Ali Ahsan Mohammed Mujahid of the Jamaat-e-Islami party and Salahuddin Qader Chowdhury of the BNP, both of whom were charged with genocide for their role in killing Hindus, among other charges. Both were subsequently hanged on 22 November, despite accusations that the trials

were politically motivated and allegations of procedural misconduct, including arbitrary limiting of witnesses.

The public response to the hangings was polarized, with many major newspapers supporting the decision, while Jamaat-e-Islami called for a nationwide strike. These most recent rulings, however, did not lead to widespread attacks on minorities, in contrast to the violence that had taken place after the execution of Jamaat-e-Islami leader Abdul Quader Mollah in 2013, when minority Hindus were



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physically attacked and properties destroyed. Similar outbreaks occurred following the ICT ruling in February 2013 against Delwar Hossain Sayeedi, when Hindu community leaders reported attacks on over 50 temples.

Hindus were not the only minorities targeted during 2015. Sectarian violence against Shi'a Muslims had been almost unheard of in Bangladesh, but on 24 October three bombs exploded during the Shi'a Ashura procession in Dhaka, killing one and injuring dozens. The procession had reportedly been conducted peacefully for four centuries until the attacks. Then on 26 November, gunmen entered a Shi'a mosque in the northern Bogra district, killing the mosque's muezzin and wounding three others. On 14 March 2016, a Shi'a preacher was also hacked to death in south-western Bangladesh by extremists. The militant group ISIS claimed responsibility for all three attacks, as well as the brutal murder of a Hindu priest on 21 February 2016 at a temple in Panchagar, although authorities have repeatedly denied the organization is operating in the country.

The government of Bangladesh has systematically eroded the right of its indigenous peoples to self-determination, particularly control over their ancestral lands, closely related to the realization of their collective cultural rights. The Constitution of Bangladesh, through an amendment in 2011, asserts that 'The people of Bangladesh shall be known as Bangalees as a nation', effectively creating an even more restrictive national identity that excludes the indigenous non-Bengali

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Indeed, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, in its October 2015 Concluding Observations, noted its general concern about 'the lack of recognition by the State party of indigenous identity of the Adivasi indigenous peoples'.

education is largely in Bengali, with little emphasis on indigenous history or culture, leaving many students struggling with language barriers. Despite some limited government efforts in recent years to support indigenous learning, the survival of many languages remains in the balance.

The 1997 Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Peace Accord identifies the area as tribal, guaranteeing rights to self-governance and recognizing the cultural rights of the region's indigenous communities, collectively known as Jumma. The accord remains largely unimplemented, however, and the proportion of the indigenous population in the area has steadily declined, from 97.5 per cent in 1947 to 51 per cent by 2014, due to in-migration by majority Bengalis. This has led to ongoing conflicts, landlessness and the erosion of cultural rights as indigenous traditions and identity are closely connected to the land. According to the Kapaeeng

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This has occurred against a backdrop of violence, intimidation and sexual assault. On 10 and 11 January 2015, for example, clashes between Jumma and Bengali communities broke out during the inauguration of a college in Rangamati, in the CHT, as Jumma student organizations began a protest calling for the implementation of the peace accord. Two houses belonging to indigenous people were burnt to the ground, dozens were injured and a curfew was imposed. The Kapaeeng Foundation documented continued harassment, arbitrary arrests and torture of indigenous community members, including the extra-judicial killing of at least 13 people. The Bangladesh Adivasi Women Network (BAWN) has highlighted the increasing prevalence of sexual assault and murders against indigenous women, with rape reportedly used by some Bengali settlers to instil fear in the community and drive them off the land.

Tourism too poses an increasing threat to the rights of indigenous peoples. According to the CHT Accord, local indigenous communities must be consulted in development that affects them, yet

Jumma activists continue to report cases of land grabbing to accommodate tourism developments. So too in south-central Bangladesh, coastal tourism development has been destroying the way of life of the indigenous Rakhine community in Kuakata. Land

donated by the then prime minister in 1999 for community improvement purposes has been illegally confiscated to build a shopping complex in this resort town. Rakhine have found it increasingly difficult to maintain their distinct culture as their sacred waterways, cremation grounds and temple lands are reportedly under threat, damaged or occupied by new migrants to the area. Their Buddhist religious sites have also been destroyed and in some cases, ransacked: in 1906, there were 19 Buddhist temples in the area, but today there is only one left.

For Bangladesh's Dalit community, the year did not see any progress with the draft anti-untouchability law that was submitted to the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs in 2014. The draft intends to implement constitutional rights to non-discrimination for Bangladesh's estimated 5.5 million Dalits. While it had been accepted positively by the ministry, Dalit rights advocates say the government is stalling on enacting the legislation while Dalits continue to suffer from discrimination in access to essential services, particularly water and sanitation in urban housing.

Source: Ref World

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Has the Dalit uprising in Gujarat given birth to a movement?



There has never been such a concerted show of Dalit strength, **Mari Marcel Thekaekara** reports.



While most of India was busy celebrating its 70th Independence Day, many people were trying to comprehend and make sense of a sudden Dalit uprising in Gujarat. Gujarati Dalits had begun a huge march for dignity and respect culminating in a rally on 15 August, Indian Independence day. They were demanding justice for four young Dalit men who had been stripped, tied to a car and viciously thrashed for hours in public on 11 July, by cow vigilantes, known locally as gau rakshaks, for skinning a dead cow.

Every single day I receive a report of collated Dalit stories. With sickening, mind boggling regularity I read about Dalits who have been raped, flogged, humiliated and murdered, every single day, in some part of the country. Yet this particular incident, the flogging of four young lads from the leather tanning community, for doing a job their forefathers have done ever since anyone can remember that is, skinning two dead cows, created uproar not just in Gujarat but in Dalit circles all over India.

Why, I asked Dalit leaders in Navsarjan Trust, an organization I have known for 25 years, did this particular incident get such an extraordinary response from the entire Dalit population of India? Manjula Pradeep, Director, explains: 'We have worked on these issues of injustice and atrocities since the '80's. So many of our activists are prepared to deal with situations when the issues emerge. They know how to file a firsthand information report with the police, to meet the media, to support victims of abuse. They've studied the law. More than 30 years of work on the ground is paying off finally.'

Gagan Sethi, a veteran community organizer says, 'It's all about economics and power. The jealousy factor. There's big money in disposing of bovine carcasses. Runs into millions. Young Dalit boys are tech savvy. With shiny new smart phones, they can ring up Kanpur or Kohlapur to find out the highest rates for leather or bone meal. The dominant caste men become incandescent with rage at the sight of Dalit lads racing around on bikes. Buying pick-up trucks'.

Martin Macwan, Navsarjan's founder says: 'Stories and photographs in newspapers never had any impact. But this time, the videos that the gloating gau rakshaks uploaded via social media, of themselves flogging the four Dalits, went viral. Every Dalit village, not just in Gujarat but all over India, could see these young boys being brutally, beaten up. Dalits have had enough. There was an explosion of anger.'

The anger took the form of unprecedented organizing in the state. Several Dalits, regardless of their party affiliation, with other supportive groups, came together to protest. Politicians of all hues arrived en masse, for their photo ops, the cynical were heard to mutter. Also, important elections were round the corner. National leaders came to commiserate with the lads and their families. The march went determinedly on, though at some spots, dominant caste thugs, incensed that Dalits could dare to defy them, attacked a few people. That's all in a day's work for the average Dalit.

There has never been such a concerted show of Dalit strength before. Nor such a massive rallying together of Dalit sympathizers and supporters from trade unions, Dalit organizations, workers' unions, youth groups and concerned individuals. Unusually, without political party money backing them, participants poured in from all over India. Dalit leaders from Punjab, Maharashtra, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana came to show solidarity.

The question now being asked is, 'has a movement been born'? Will this go on? Can they keep up the momentum? Only time will tell. Yet, the winds of change are definitely in the air. The younger generation is no longer illiterate. Nor will they take the abuse quietly like their fathers, cowed by centuries of violence. Social media works powerfully for them. Will India seize the moment to eradicate the curse of our nation?

With millions of other Indians, I fervently hope so.

Mari Marcel Thekaekara is a human rights activist and writer based in Gudalur, Tamil Nadu. She is president of the Nilgiris chapter All India Womens' Conference.

PAKISTAN



CITYLIGHTS PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS
RANG RAAZ
a short film by
HAMZA BANGASH

'Rang Raaz' highlights plight of minorities in Pakistan



In times of today, one views cinema as a distraction, as opposed to a reminder of the evils that plague society. Independent film-maker Hamza Bangash, however, has risen to the challenge and will be depicting a Hindu-Muslim love affair in his upcoming short film, *Rang Raaz*.

After living in multiple countries himself, Bangash has developed a keen understanding for problems faced by minorities across the world. Through *Rang Raaz*, he hopes to shed light on these very problems. "I aim to tell stories which also reflect a positive image of Pakistan. There are too many stories which show minorities as victims. But you know, there are also many Hindus living good lives here," said Bangash.

In *Rang Raaz*, the ill-fated couple decides to elope one night but when day finally breaks, consequences await them. And if the controversial storyline is not enough, the teaser trailer for the film hints at some intimate scenes as well, which Pakistani audiences might not be ready for quite yet. "See, the film is a love story at heart and sexuality is normal," explained Bangash. "It comes naturally within a love story so I don't think there is any cause for concern."

Rang Raaz stars young, up and coming actors such as Hadi bin Arshad, Amtul Baweja and Kashif Hussein. Osman Rafique serves as the cinematographer while Sumair Saleem is producing. Bangash who has previously worked on some documentaries as well said he finds the transition from fact to fiction fascinating. "I find it more interesting actually, because it has a larger impact. Then there is a much larger audience for fiction as well, as compared to documentaries."

When asked about the visual treatment he has given to *Rang Raaz*, Bangash revealed that he sought inspiration from Hong Kong-based film-maker Wong Kar Wai and Canadian director Xavier Dolan. "Kar

Wai's *Chungking Express* was a major inspiration for the visuals," he revealed.

Fortunately, *Rang Raaz* which is currently in post-production has already been receiving much support from the film fraternity. "It's so amazing that people have been coming out to support us! Jami Mahmood has advocated the film on social media. Sabiha Sumar who is one of my mentors also came onboard as a contributor," said Bangash.

The director has established a *Kickstarter* campaign to cover the costs of post-production. The film has been selected in the 'Project We Love' category on the funding website as well. "Just three days in and we already have raised about 27%," said Bangash. "We're aiming for \$4,000, which will cover post-production costs, along with festival fees."

”I aim to tell stories which also reflect a positive image of Pakistan. There are too many stories which show minorities as victims
Film-maker Hamza Bangash



The team is also targeting the Cannes Film Festival for *Rang Raaz*. "I went there back in 2014 with my short film *Badal* but it was not a part of the competition. This year, we want to compete," said Bangash, adding that he would like to take the film to India and the rest of South Asia as well.

Source: *The Express Tribune*



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