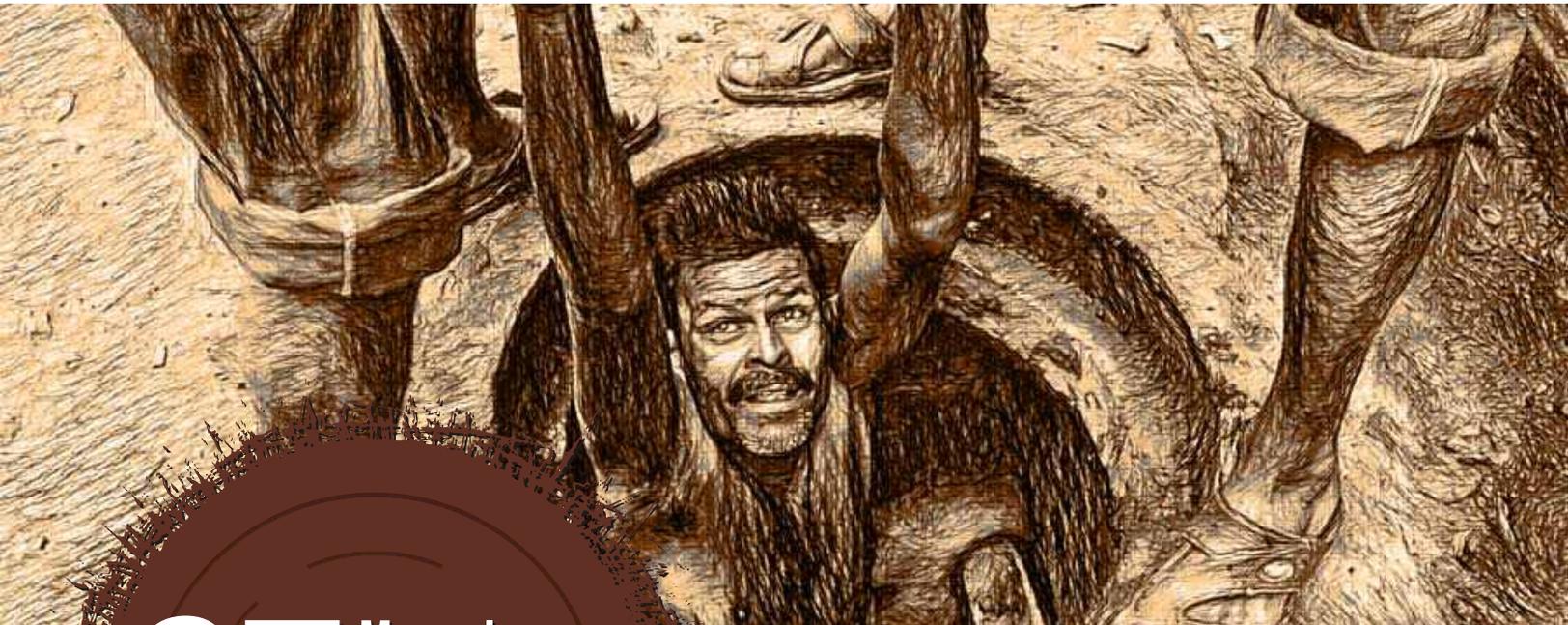


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Voice of Minorities & Oppressed People in South Asian Societies



27 Manual
Scavengers Die
in One Month
in India

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**Dalit Women and Girls of South Asia
Seeking International Support** p. 9



Sir Ganga Ram Heritage Foundation www.sgrhf.org.pk

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Editorial

Manual scavenging is the most visible feature of Indian caste system. Dalits or the untouchables are placed at the bottom of caste rank. They have been traditionally limited to manual scavenging livelihood which is unacceptable and considered low grade by higher caste groups. The practice of manual scavenging i.e. cleaning of human excrement from private and public dry toilets and open drains persist in several parts of South Asia, especially across most of India. Consistent with centuries-old feudal and caste based custom, women from Dalit communities that traditionally worked as manual scavengers still collect human waste on daily basis. This caste designated occupation reinforces this social disgrace and perpetuates widespread discrimination. The manual carrying of human feces is not a form of employment but an injustice similar to slavery. It is one of the most prominent forms of discrimination against Indian Dalit community and it is central to the violation of their human rights. Usually, the women get no wage but are given leftover food and old clothes at festival times, and if they deny they are not allowed to enter community land to collect fire wood or graze their live stock. It is an issue of Castiest mind-set of the society. While women remove untreated human excreta from bucket toilets or pit latrines, their men clean septic tanks, gutters and sewers. The irony is that they do not call these workers manual scavengers but sanitation workers and their death during manual scavenging is registered as accidental death. The primary reason for the continuation of the process is the apathy on behalf of public and the state. Indian Rehabilitation Act 2013 and Indian Supreme Court order 2014 stress that Indian constitution demanded intervention of the state to end manual scavenging and rehabilitate all the people engaged in manual practice. Court further states that abuse faced by Indian Dalit communities engaged in manual scavenging is the failure of the government to implement law and policies to address the problem. The government failure to end manual scavenging and eliminate entrenched attitude and discriminatory practices still bind the affected communities to this degrading and unnecessary occupation. This is what has caused the deaths of manual scavengers. In this edition, Mino View highlights the issue of death of 27 Indian Dalit manual scavengers within the span of one month that around 1.3 million Dalits in India are forced to carry out manual scavenging. The lives of manual scavengers are on high risk by doing this work. Those engaged in cleaning sewers may die instantly from poisonous gas in the sewers. The Indian central and state governments are not serious in diverting their resources for replacing manual scavenging with modern automatic machines scavenging. The Indian governments declare zero manual scavenging on paper which is far from truth. In July 2016, National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC), an Indian constitutional body established with a view to provide safeguards against the exploitation of Scheduled Castes to promote and protect their social, educational, economic and cultural interests, criticized that data submitted by various state governments about manual scavenging and the data is a mismatch with ground realities. The governments falsely reported less manual scavenging but zero manual scavengers. The state governments state figures. Himachal Pradesh declared 854 dry latrines but zero manual scavengers, while Chandigarh reported only 3 manual scavengers for 4,391 dry latrines. The numbers clearly show the reluctance of state governments to identify the existence of manual scavenging as a prevalent practice. But enough is enough, now the Dalits have started protesting and stands against this most inhuman and disgraceful occupation in the world. "Stop killing us" in dry latrines, sewers and septic tanks, a group of activists representing manual scavenging community have carried this message across India. The Indian government should take immediate steps to eliminate abuses against Dalits, provide concrete plans to implement laws to secure their protection and fulfill its commitment to end manual scavenging.

Editor



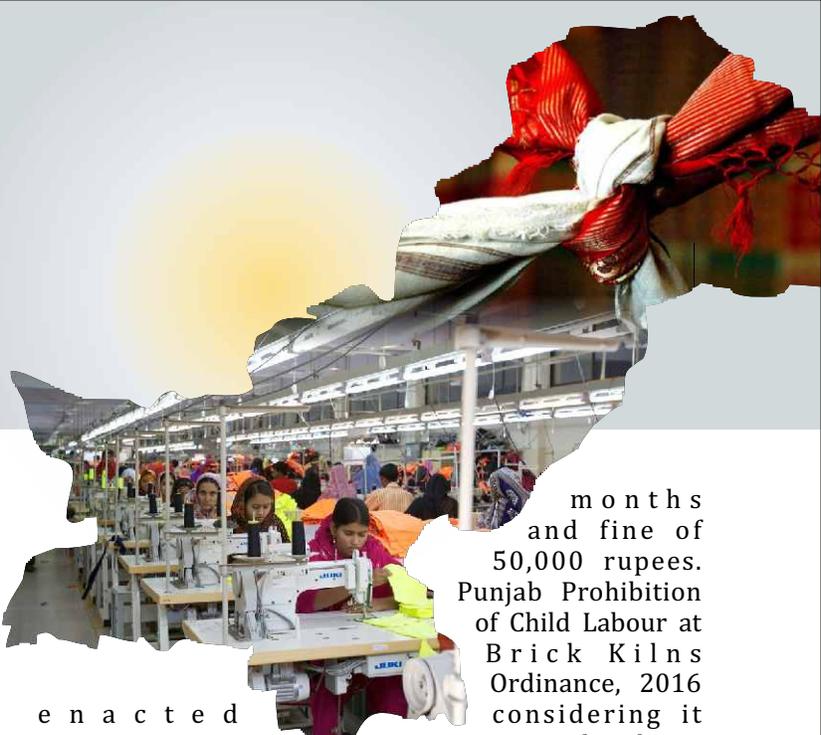
Pakistan Among Top List of Legislation to Protect Human Rights

Pakistan is one of the country which passed highest number of legislation to protect Fundamental Human Rights of people including 13 related to women protection.

Pakistan is one of the country which passed highest number of legislation to protect Fundamental Human Rights of people including 13 related to women protection, 7 child rights, 10 minorities, 65 Civil, Political, Environment Rights legislation from the National Assembly. Besides that in Punjab Assembly, 19 laws were passed on Civil, Political and Economic Rights, seven child rights, four minorities while the Sindh assembly has done legislation on 15 Civil, Political and Economic Rights, two on women rights, five on child rights and two on minorities rights, an official of Ministry of Human Rights told APP.

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 32 laws on Civil, Political and Economic Rights, two on women rights, five on child and two on minorities rights were promulgated, and the Balochistan assembly passed 19 Civil, Political and Economic Rights legislation, one women rights and two on child rights. Major bills to protect rights of masses included Protection against Harassment of Women at Workplace (Amendment) Bill, 2014, Hindu Marriage Bill, 2015, Anti-Rape Laws (Criminal Laws Amendment) Bill, 2013 and Anti Honour Killing Laws (Criminal Laws Amendment) Bill, 2014 by the National Assembly.

However, the Endeavour of provincial assemblies can be revealed through Punjab Marriage Restraint (Amendment) Act, 2015 Restraint (Amendment) Act, 2015, under which wedding of a boy below 18 year and girl below 16 years be considered an offence punishable with imprisonment which may extend to 6



enacted necessary to employment of below

months and fine of 50,000 rupees. Punjab Prohibition of Child Labour at Brick Kilns Ordinance, 2016 considering it prohibit 18 years children at hazardous work places.



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Sindh Child Marriage Restraint Act, 2013 declares marriage below the age of 18 years punishable by law. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Elimination of Custom of Ghag Act, 2013, addresses the customary practice under the name of Ghag whereby a male person forcefully demands or claims the hand of a women without her own or her parents' or wail's consent. It has been made an offence punishable with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to seven years but shall not be less than three years and shall also be liable to fine up to five hundred thousand rupees or both.

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Prohibition of Employment of Children Act, 2015, has been enacted to prohibit employment of children in any establishment and to regulate the hours and other conditions of workers in commercial establishments in the province. Besides that it is also signatory of seven cores United Nations Conventions to undertake appropriate measures to uphold the universal human rights standards in the country.

Source: Pakistan Point

INDIA



27 Manual Scavengers Die in One Month in India



Rights defenders in India are calling on the Indian Government to outline a concrete action plan within one month to end the dangerous and demeaning practice of manual scavenging, the manual removal of human excrements, primarily carried out by Dalits.

The call comes following the death of 27 manual scavengers in India within the span of one month which includes days of July and August, outlined in a press release by rights NGO Safai Karmchhari Andolan (SKA). In response, the New Delhi Government has since imposed a blanket ban on manual cleaning of sewers, saying offenders are to be booked under culpable homicide, which if implemented is an important step in the right direction.

Rights organisations estimate that around 1.3 million Dalits in India are forced to carry out manual scavenging. The practice includes removing human excrement from dry toilets and sewers using basic tools such as thin boards, buckets



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and baskets and without protective gear. Manual Scavengers fall seriously ill and risk death by doing this work. Those engaged in cleaning sewers may die instantly from being lowered down into poisonous gas in the sewers, which is what has caused the surge in death of manual scavengers. Their lives are at severe risk, dalits engaged in manual scavenging are rarely able to take up another occupation due to discrimination related to their caste and occupational status, and are thus forced to remain scavengers.

The practice persists despite being legally outlawed. The Employment of Manual Scavengers and Construction of Dry Latrines (Prohibition) Act 1993 and Prohibition of Employment of Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act 2013 hold the executive authorities responsible for the implementation of the law. According to the press release issued by SKA no prosecutions and no punishment has been awarded to any person so far, either for sending people into the sewer lines and septic tanks or for the causing 1470 deaths in the country.

According to a Times of India news



report, "The government has stated that safety standards in the cleaning of sewer and septic tanks are alarmingly low across the country in the wake of 10 people falling prey to cleaning sewers in a month in the capital. A review of the "Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and Their Rehabilitation Act, 2013" (MS Act) has found that there is no information available about the cases lodged for engaging sanitation workers in "hazardous cleaning"



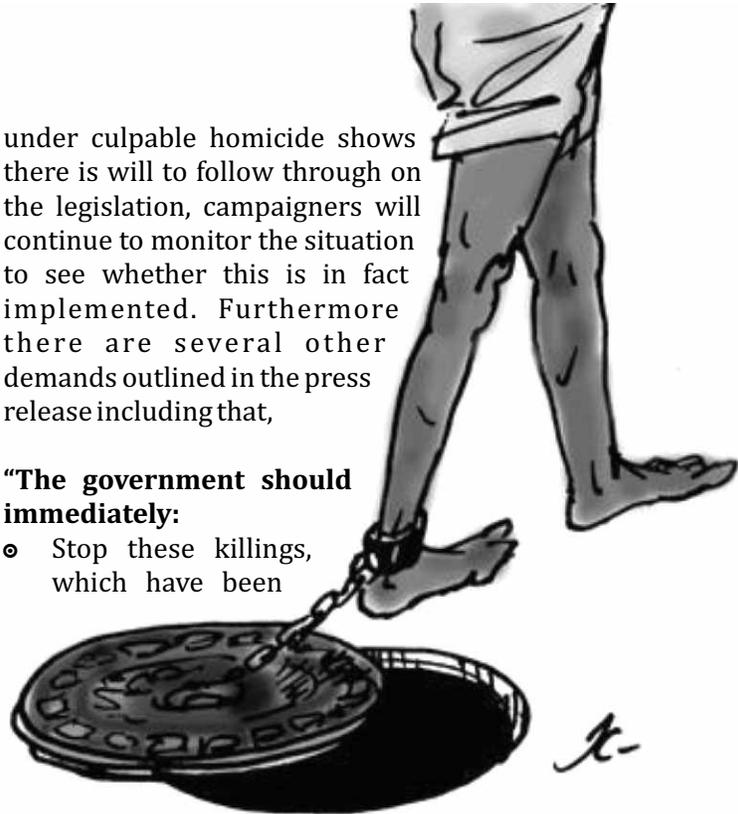
The former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, also made the following statement, "Manual scavenging is not a career chosen voluntarily by workers, but is instead a deeply unhealthy, unsavory and undignified job forced upon these people because of the stigma attached to their caste. The nature of the work itself then reinforces that stigma."

So while the latest move to book those violating the law

under culpable homicide shows there is will to follow through on the legislation, campaigners will continue to monitor the situation to see whether this is in fact implemented. Furthermore there are several other demands outlined in the press release including that,

"The government should immediately:

- Stop these killings, which have been



occurring because people are being sent down into sewer lines and septic tanks.

- It must prosecute and punish those responsible for these killings.
- The Prime Minister and the Chief Ministers of the States must prepare and announce a comprehensive action plan within a month."

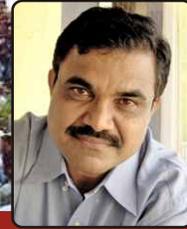
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In the meantime organisations such as SKA and Jansahas continue to support manual scavengers in leaving the practice and finding alternative sources of income. In a recent special feature by NDTV we meet some of the Dalit women that IDSN member Jansahas have supported to break out of the dangerous and humiliating practice of manual scavenging.

Source: IDSN



INDIA



Azadi Kooch - Towards a New Grammar

By: Anand Teltumbde

Non-Dalits in India would have considered July 2017 to be a month of glory for Dalits in general. A Rashtriya Swayam sevak Sangh (RSS) zealot and Dalit by caste, Ram Nath Kovind became the 14th President of India. As such, it should have been a non-event, given that the President of the Indian republic is just a ceremonial figurehead. The Constitution makers enshrined the President's stature such that the slightest whisper of disapproval against the incumbent government from him/her would create a wave of reaction across the nation. Like many other fantastic ideas in the Constitution, this too has remained a chimera. Over the years, the office of the President has been turned into a parking lot for political spent force or a house of puppets in service of the ruling party to live a royal life in the palatial Rashtrapati Bhavan, a standing irony of the Indian republic. This non-event, however, completely eclipsed a significant event that took place in Modi's backyard, north Gujarat. It also marked a significant paradox in this country of paradoxes. Dalits had taken a seven-day march demanding azadi (freedom) from the state, ironically headed by a Dalit! The march was organised by the Rashtriya Dalit Adhikar Manch in observance of the first anniversary of the Una atrocity. Several non-Dalit activists from across the country also participated. It culminated in the physical possession of land that had been promised to Dalits decades ago, but never given. The march symbolically combined the battle for *asmita* (dignity) and *astitva* (existence) to be fought with the weapon of solidarity of the oppressed masses. This, if any, was truly a reason to celebrate July 2017.

The Una Model Una, a small town in Gir Somnath district of Gujarat, shot to infamy when a video clip of four Dalit youths being mercilessly flogged by upper-caste men went viral on social media. On 11 July 2016, a mob of cow vigilantes entered the house of Balubhai Sarvaiya, a Dalit, in the nondescript village of Mota Samadhiyala, some 25 km away from Una and assaulted seven people: Sarvaiya, his wife Kubarben and sons Vasram and Ramesh, two relatives Ashok and Bechar, and a neighbour, Devarshi Banu, who had come to the family's rescue. Later, the mob picked up Ramesh, Vasram, Ashok and Bechar, stripped them, tied them to the rear of their car, and dragged them half-naked to Una, where they were again flogged in front of a police station. They were so confident of their act that they captured the proceedings on video and posted it on social media as an inspiration to others of their ilk. To

their misfortune, it went viral albeit inviting criticism not praise, spreading indignation among Dalits and giving rise to a spontaneous protest movement. The culprits were arrested and are presently out on bail. However, the Dalits are still languishing, incapacitated by their wounds. Up until this point, Una reads like any other caste atrocity. However, it soon changed course. The agitation did not follow the route of lamenting, protesting, or begging for justice from the state, which is routine after each atrocity despite the knowledge that rarely does the perpetrator of a caste atrocity get punished in this country. Protests occur within limits, which, if exceeded, are followed by much harsher atrocities by the state as in Khairlanji and most others (Teltumbde 2010). Such kind of repression by upper castes and self-restraint by Dalits were premised on the weakness of Dalits. Never did the Dalits realise their own strength and respond from that standpoint, the strategic prerequisite in any battle of consequence. The strength of the Dalits lay in what appeared to be their weakness. Their strength lay in that dirty work of dragging and flaying dead cattle itself, for which Balubhai's family was flogged. The agitation that erupted in the aftermath of Una declared that the Dalits would give up their traditional caste vocations (which according to Prime Minister Narendra Modi [2007: 4849] gave them an "experience in spirituality") and in return demanded five acres of land. The encapsulating slogan went as "gayno puchhacho tame rakho, ame amari jamin do" (you keep the tail of the cow, (and) give us our land). They threw corpses of dead cattle in the compound of the district collectorate office in Surendranagar, the stink of which shook up the administration into acting on their demand. It immediately undertook measurement and release of 300 acres of land to entitled Dalits. That was the first test of strategy, building the agitators' confidence to take new steps.

Question of Strategy Dignity and secure livelihoods are the analogues of Brahminism and capitalism in Babasaheb Ambedkar's formulation, calling them the dual enemy of Dalits in the 1930s. However, in the contentions with dogmatic communists of his days, the latter got de-emphasised. In the later years of his life, Ambedkar's experiences led him to realise that his representational logic worked only for a small section of the relatively better-off among urban Dalits and mostly failed to touch the vast majority of rural Dalits. He then

suggested to B S Waghmare, a leader of the Marathwada unit of the Scheduled Castes Federation (SCF), to organise a struggle for procuring fallow lands for landless Dalits. Waghmare organised a satyagraha in 1953 in which more than 1,700 Dalits courted arrest. After his death, his lieutenant Dadasaheb Gaikwad led two satyagrahas, the first one in Khandesh Marathwada region of Maharashtra, in which a large number of communist cadres and leaders took part and went to jail (Teltumbde 2017: 91). Unfortunately, a section of the Republican Party of India's (RPI) leadership, claiming to be true followers of Ambedkar, castigated Gaikwad as a bedfellow of the communists and split the RPI. Nonetheless, Gaikwad led a second, historic, nationwide land satyagraha in 1964-65, in which hundreds of thousands of people courted arrests over a month. The alarm it created in ruling circles eventually led to the gradual co-optation of these Dalit leaders into the Congress fold, inducing the consequent disintegration of the Dalit movement. With the emergence of the new, educated middle class among Dalits, the livelihood issues of the masses got completely sidetracked in the resultant Dalit discourse. Except for the Independent Labour Party (ILP) phase in the 1930s, when it was expedient for the 1937 elections, the need for a working-class unity encompassing Dalits has not occupied strategic space in the Dalit movement. The circumstances impelled Ambedkar to dissolve the ILP and form the SCF, but he always yearned for a broader unity of people and thus, declared his intention to float the RPI. Given the uniqueness of caste, with its propensity to split like amoeba and deeply ingrained notion of hierarchy, it can never be the basis for any radical struggle of the downtrodden. Jyotirao Phule's pioneering effort to conceive a Shudra Atishudra category or Ambedkar's lifelong efforts to construct a "Dalit" category including and uniting all the untouchable castes, did not really succeed. The debacle of the Dalit movement and the resurgence of caste identities among Dalits amply testify to this fact. Hankering on caste identities serves ruling class interests and hence, benefits its patrons but fails to benefit the larger masses, who are victims of the caste system. The conclusion is inescapable: Unless Dalits transcend castes and forge a class unity with other marginalised people, their struggle can never reach fruition. Class unity is not necessarily communist, the fond bête noire of the Dalit middle class. Notwithstanding historical mistakes on the part of the early communists, history is testimony to the fact that whenever Dalits and communists have joined hands, the struggles threatened the ruling establishment. Una consciously revived this implicit strategy in attempting to build bridges with other movements.



From Abstract to Concrete Having set the strategic tone of taking an economic route to dignity, Una Dalit Atyachar Ladat Samiti (Committee to Fight against Una Dalit Atrocity)- an outfit formed to further the Una struggle-organised a Dalit Mahasammelan (grand assembly of Dalits) at Ahmedabad calling for an end of their social discrimination, oppression and political apathy.

The victims of Una, Thangadh and many others exposed the ugly face of Modi's Gujarat, testifying to widespread and deep-rooted untouchability and discrimination rampant in the state. Nearly 20,000 Dalits pledged in the name of Ambedkar that they would give up their dirty caste vocations and instead, demanded jobs and land for rehabilitation. The anger was palpable against not any abstract manuwad or casteist elements, but the politicians, RSS, Bharatiya Janata Party and the state. It was followed by a 10-day-long march from Ahmedabad to Una from 515 August 2016. Several Dalits and progressive people from across the country had joined the march and the concluding rally at Una. A series of actions were planned, some executed and some thwarted by the state. Jignesh Mevani, who emerged as the face of Una, inspired the youth in other states to articulate their own land struggles. Although the struggle, by default, was mainly focused on the immediate issues concerning Dalits, it avoided a sectarian attitude and tried to include other oppressed classes. The changed tone of Una forced the chief minister to resign and the Prime Minister, who scarcely reacts to peoples' woes, to softly criticise the self-appointed gau rakshaks (cow protectors) and shed crocodile tears saying "if you want to beat, beat me but do not beat my Dalit brothers." The Azadi Kooch held to commemorate one year of the Una struggle resounded the slogan raised in Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) two years back, touching upon the issues concerning all oppressed people. It demanded freedom from casteism, mob lynchings, price rise, farmers' suicides, and exploitation and unemployment of workers. Apart from many noted progressive individuals in the country, Muslims, backward castes and even Patels joined the march. At the end of the march, Dalits took symbolic possession of land from among the 1,63,808 acres that was given to them decades back but continued to be in the possession of the dominant communities.¹ Una certainly presents a new grammar of the Dalit struggle rooted in a well-thought-out strategy. It has discarded the abstract cultural argument for dignity and linked it to the livelihood issues of the vast Dalit masses who are being systematically excluded, primarily by the state. It has many challenges, both internal as well as external, but one hopes it will not deflect from its path.



Dalit Women in Nepal Enter Local Government in Record Numbers

Dalit Human Rights Organisations have been Lobbying for Increased Participation of Dalit Women in Politics and Government for Decades and with Nepal's First Local Elections in 20 Years, this is Finally becoming a Reality.

When a record number of Dalit women now take their seat in local Government across the country it is indeed a dream come true. IDSN members in Nepal have been working for decades to increase the political participation of Dalit women in Nepal, resulting in the 2017 Local Level Election Act stipulating that at least one of the four members of each Ward Committee should be a woman from the Dalit community. As a result of this over 7000 Dalit women stood for election and over 6000 will be set to take their seat in local Government this autumn, according to reports.

“After a long struggle and campaign by FEDO to politically empower Dalit women and increase their representation in state structures, so as to integrate them into national development processes, the local level elections have finally provided an opportunity,” says Durga Sob, Founder of the Feminist Dalit Organisation (FEDO). “This will definitely elevate the status of Dalit women and help break the practice of untouchability and caste-based discrimination and bring about a revolutionary change in our society.”

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In a addition to lobbying for legislation Dalit organisations in Nepal have also been working to raise awareness of the rights and opportunities and build capacity among Dalit women leaders.

“I heard FEDO interviewed on the radio and was interested in what they said about Dalit women's rights,” says Pabitra Bishwokarma, the President of the Feminist Dalit Organisation (FEDO) in the Makhanpur District of Nepal in an interview with Womankind. “After I became District President I realised that I needed to be more educated so that I could motivate and help other women ... In the past Dalit women have been used by political parties, but, thanks to FEDO, we now have bargaining power.”

Following the election FEDO held a felicitation and orientation programme for a large group of newly elected Dalit women (pictured). This is a historic time for Dalit women in Nepal and it is hoped that their influence will contribute to a more equal and just society.

Source: IDSN



Newly elected Dalit women participate in FEDO's orientation programme. Photo: FEDO



Campaign and New Report Highlight Caste Discrimination in Schools

Dalit children being made to sit and eat separately from other children, being beaten, abused and forced to do humiliating tasks, form part of the cases uncovered during the 'Zero Discrimination in School Education' campaign in India. These cases are highlighted in the report 'Exclusion in Schools A Study on Practice of Discrimination and Violence' by the National Dalit Movement for Justice (NDMJ-NCDHR) and the Centre for Social Equity and Inclusion.

The campaign raises awareness across India of the serious obstacles to education encountered by Dalit and Adivasi students and issues key recommendations for change. In connection with the campaign public hearings and consultations took place across India, where students, parents and teachers could voice their experiences, difficulties and challenges in the education system. A study on discrimination in education was simultaneously undertaken in eight key States resulting in the report *'Exclusion in Schools A Study on Practice of Discrimination and Violence'*. The report documents serious human rights violations of Dalit and minority students in schools in the states surveyed.

“Although we were well aware of the serious discrimination faced by Dalit and minority students in our country, listening to our children tell their stories of abuse, violence and discrimination is heart-breaking,” said Ramesh Nathan from NDMJ. “The Government, States and school authorities, must urgently take serious measures to ensure that our schools do not engage in descent based discrimination, hurt, abuse and humiliation and actively protect our children's right to an education by enacting Anti-Discrimination legislation.”

Discrimination is violating the right to education

The cases listed in the report reflect the gravity of discrimination children face, ranging from humiliation and segregation to examples of violence and sexual abuse carried out by teachers or institutionalized in the school culture. The mental and physical abuse endured by the children result in increased drop-out rates from schools of Dalit and minority children. For those children who stay in schools that sanction discrimination, the fear and humiliation they face make it very difficult for them to focus on their studies, and learn what they need to in order to progress in the school system.

Case: Dalit students beaten for drinking water from the Principal's pot

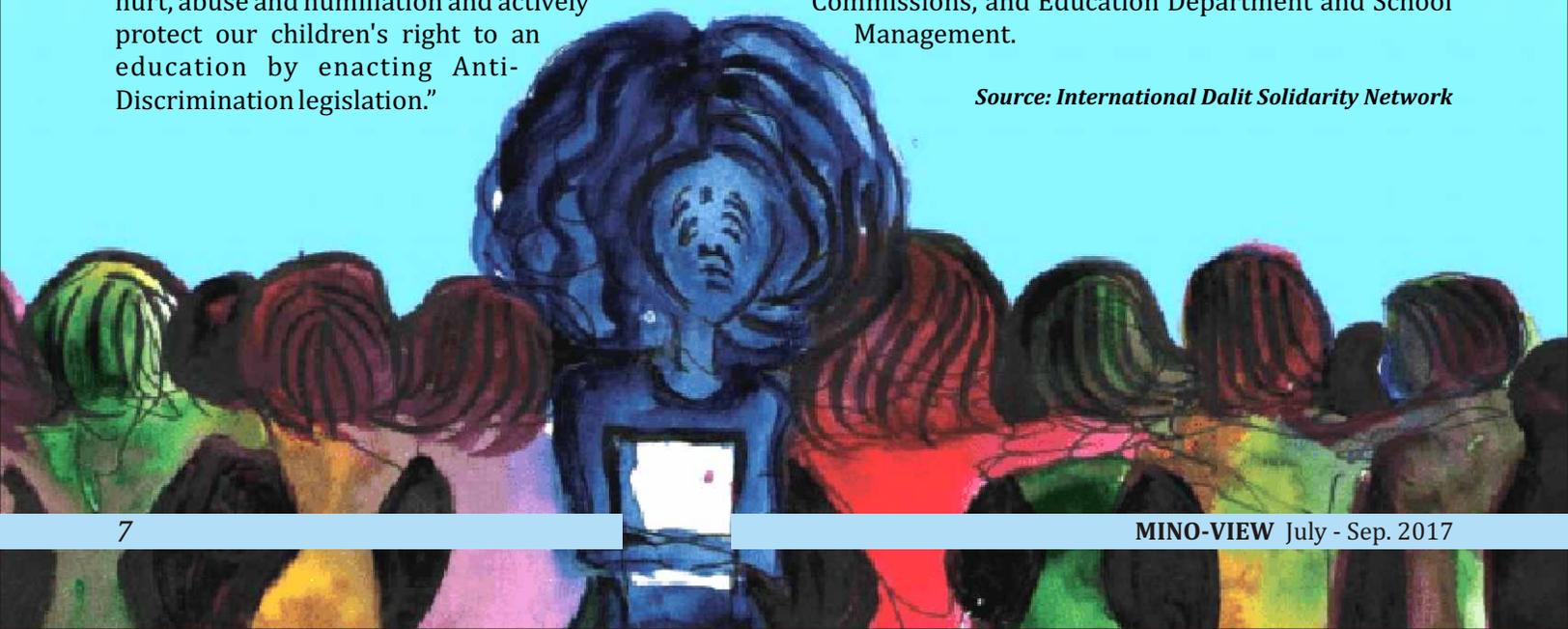
In a Government school in Rajasthan the Principal, from the dominant Jat caste, forced eleven Dalit students to squat for the whole day and brutally beat them claiming that they defiled his pot by drinking water from it.

The parents of the students complained at the unacceptable behavior and blatant practice of untouchability of the principal, who subsequently told all eleven students that they were no longer to come to school.

Moving forward

Based on suggestions from students, teachers, rights defenders and community leaders comprehensive recommendations are issued in the report. The recommendations are grouped into four sections: Central Government, State Governments, Commissions, and Education Department and School Management.

Source: International Dalit Solidarity Network





MEPs Call on EU Presidents to Address Caste Discrimination at the EU-India Summit

A cross-party group of prominent Members of the European Parliament has sent an open letter to the President of the European Council, the President of the European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, calling on them to address caste discrimination directly at the October EU-India Summit.

The letter describes a deep concern for the human rights of Dalits in India stating,

“Despite constitutional safeguards and special legislation for the protection of India's 201 million 'scheduled castes' violations of their fundamental human rights are reported to continue on a large scale. UN human rights institutions have continuously documented caste-based discrimination in India with violations affecting a full spectrum of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights. These violations also curtail the right to education and employment, undermine access to justice and catalyse sexual violence and other crimes targeted at women and girls. Furthermore, the dramatically shrinking space for civil society in many countries of the world, including India, has severe implications, also for Dalit human rights defenders.”

The letter calls on the EU to encourage the Indian Government to:

- Take immediate steps to eliminate abuses against Dalits and all other marginalized communities and provide concrete plans to implement laws and government policies to secure their protection
- Publicly condemn crimes against Dalits and minorities, and promptly prosecute all those responsible for such crime
- Protect the rights to peaceful expression and assembly and ensure that all human rights defenders, including Dalits, are able to carry out their work without being harassed by the authorities

Source: International Dalit Solidarity Network





Dalit Women & Girls of South Asia Seeking International Support

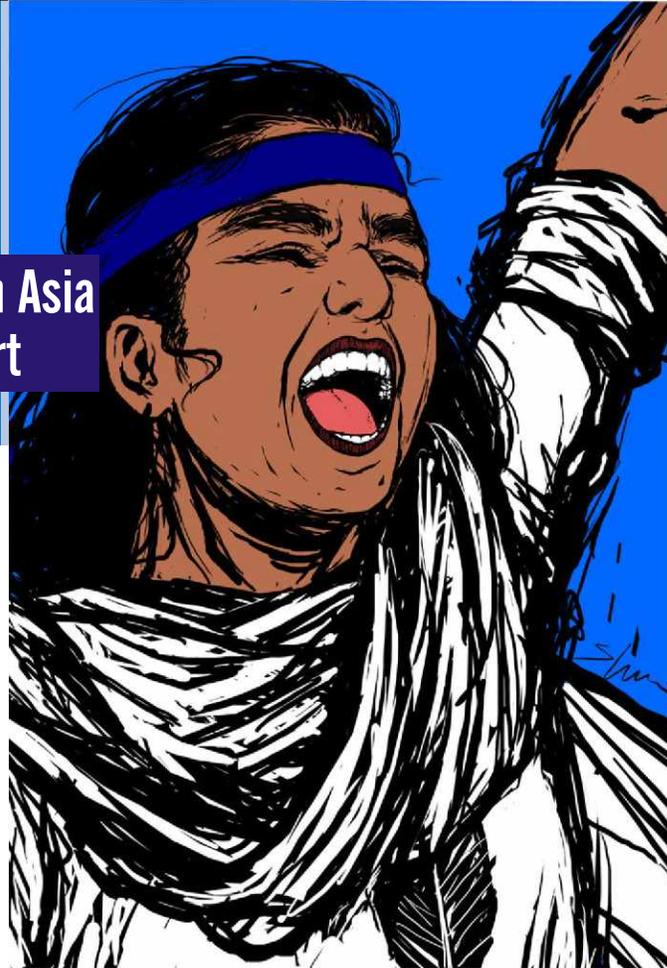
By: Manjula Pradeep

When the entire world's focus is on extreme forms of violence and atrocities happening against Dalit girls and women in India, it is crucial to lay out in front of the international community that it's not only happening in India, but also in other caste affected countries of South Asia. Unfortunately most of the times, it is not reported by the media.

Caste based discrimination is being debated in the United Nations for more than a decade and it has been receiving lot of support and solidarity from various UN mechanisms, member states, etc, despite a stand taken up by the Indian Government that it's an internal problem and not to be discussed at the international forum. It's important not only to look at the issues of caste based discrimination as a global problem, but also to understand the issues of Dalit women as they being a social category representing a large population of almost 120 million in South Asia, historically being discriminated based on their multiple identities rooted in structural inequalities relating to caste system imposed on them since they were born.

While looking at the issues of Dalit women in the South Asian context, mainly in the countries like India, Nepal, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, there are several issues and aspects relating to the kinds of discrimination and violence being faced by the Dalit women that intersects with their gender, caste, class and religion, which most of the times remain hidden in the ambit of caste, as caste rules over other identities of Dalit women making them more vulnerable compared to other marginalized women in the South Asian region and in the globe. Hence there is a need for high level advocacy by the office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and other UN agencies for elimination of caste based discrimination and caste based violence against Dalit women and girls.

While looking at the present socio-economic and political situation of Dalit women, one has to recognize the historical and political context of each of the caste affected countries in South Asia. While India continues to boast about its affirmative action and laws for the



protection of the rights of the Dalits and women, it has forgone to analyze the situation of Dalit women. Caste vis a vis gender is ignored and there is no framework on the basis of which a reformatory action could be developed, which can review the legislations, policies, programs and bring amendments to the same. Nepal government closely follows India in framing legislations despite its political instability. It has come up with anti discrimination law that came into force at the end of 2011. Despite protection guaranteed by the governments of these two countries, situation and conditions of Dalit women and girls is getting worse and worse, which needs immediate attention by the governments of respected countries and the international community's as well.

Dalits in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka are minority and have not been recognized in their constitutions, leading to no safeguards and no protective mechanisms to protect their rights, making the situation of Dalit women most of the times hidden, ignored and neglected. Although, Bangladesh Government has just initiated process to draft a legislation to recognize Dalits as a constituency, but still much more has to be done in these three caste affected countries of Asia.

Parallels could be developed between the situation of Dalit women in India and Nepal as these two countries

have higher population of Dalits and caste has been recognized as a form of discrimination in their constitutions.

Certain patterns and forms of caste based violence against Dalit women are similar in caste affected countries and certain are more prominent in some of these countries. Stripping and naked parading, forced temple prostitution in India are certain forms of violence against Dalit women, which differs from other caste affected countries in South Asia. Similarly, forced conversion of young Dalit girls in Pakistan is a pattern of violence against Dalit women, which is unique in the given context of caste based violence in South Asia.

Violence against Dalit women and girls is used as a tool by the dominant communities to shame the Dalits. Certain forms of violence on Dalit women and girls, which are more prominent and reported are rapes, gang rapes, murders, mass attacks in most of the caste affected countries in South Asia with the exception of Sri Lanka, which does not have reporting of cases of violence and discrimination against Dalit girls and women making their situation more vulnerable and questionable. Hence, there is a need for a regional study in caste affected countries by OHCHR and UN women on violence and discrimination against Dalit women and the State impunity.

The entire question of landlessness, dependency and poverty also makes Dalit women and girls more vulnerable than other women. Due to lack of educational opportunities, majority of Dalit women are in the unorganized sector which includes cotton ginning, textile industry, tea and rubber plantation, quarry and brick kilns, etc. Most of these industries are being set up in collaboration with the multinational corporations which impact the labour rights of the Dalit women and girls as they are trapped in to exploitative situation due to lack of implementation of laws protecting their labour rights.

Bonded labour is another form of caste based slavery in which the Dalit community's are forced and trapped into, due to poverty and lack of economic and livelihood opportunities due to caste based discrimination. Many of the Dalit women and girls, who are wives and daughters of these bonded labourers become victims of sexual exploitation, which is never reported due to fear of the landlords. More and more Dalit girls from Nepal

Lack of availability of opportunities for Dalit girls and women has created a situation thereby shrinking their spaces and weakening their voices to fight for their rights for justice, dignity and equality.

and Bangladesh are illegally sold and bought into the brothels of India, making their lives miserable and vulnerable to sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS.

Dalit girls and women are being victimized as their families are into forced labour like Haliya practice in Nepal. They are also forced into caste based occupations and

inhumane practices, which are most degrading and unacceptable across the globe and one of them is manually handling of human excrement, which is called manual scavenging in India. Dalit girls and women clean the human excrement with bare hands and in return are paid as bare minimum or leftover food or handful of grains.

Migration of Dalit families in search of livelihood opportunities again makes the condition of Dalit girls and women more vulnerable as they are forced to live in open fields without any proper protection many times leading to sexual abuses.

Assertion and demanding rights as equal citizens by Dalit communities results to social boycott by the dominant castes, which many times result into forced eviction of Dalit families leading to difficult times for young Dalit girls and women. Lack of availability of opportunities for Dalit girls and women has created a situation thereby shrinking their spaces and weakening their voices to fight for their rights for justice, dignity and equality.

Lack of documentation of the issues of Dalit girls in Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, points to the need for international attention, support and solidarity. Visibility of the issues of Dalit women and girls in India and Nepal signifies further attention to be drawn in representation through the international human rights mechanisms. Hence the visit of UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women in India and Bangladesh does provide a space to create concerns of Dalit girls and women in the International forum putting due pressure on the governments of caste affected countries in South Asia. But much more is needed from the international community's and the United Nations to address the concerns of Dalit women and girls in the South Asian region. The first and foremost approach is to bring forward to the governments of the caste affected countries, the need to recognize the situation of the Dalits and Dalit women and to create mechanisms to protect their rights.



Dalit Flood Victims Need

Food, Water and Medicine



Following the devastating floods in South Asia serious concern for Dalit communities affected by the disaster is being reported. IDSN's members are on the ground responding and monitoring the situation as it unfolds.

Nepal, Bangladesh and India have experienced severe flooding over the past weeks and many Dalit communities are hard hit. In this article we will share some of the reports we have received from members in Nepal. We will be following up on this once more when reports have come in from the rest of the region.

While monsoon flooding in Nepal is not unusual the amount of water and the large area it is covering has not been experienced for over 20 years. According to news outlets the flooding is especially affecting Nepal's poorest, such as those in Bairawa village in Saptari District, whose residents are mostly Dalits.

The Feminist Dalit Organisation (FEDO) reports that they are collecting and distributing relief materials to the flood victims and have provided some cash to their district chapter so as to buy goods for the victims of Siraha, Saptari, Rautahat, Bardiya, Udaypur and Mahottari. They have also provided warm clothes, medicine and dry food - and are trying to collect as much as they can to distribute to victims.

The Dalit Human Rights Portal, operated by the Jagaran Media

Center (JMC) and implemented through a consortium of five organizations NNDSWO, SAMATA Foundation, RDN Nepal, JMC, and MDDF also highlighted the following case of Dalits in desperate need of relief:

No end in sight to plight of Saptari flood victims

Children in Dalit settlements of Bishnupur Rural Municipality in Saptari are in dire need of relief materials, as they have lost their houses along with clothes and food grains in the floods.

The children, along with their parents, have been taking shelter in makeshift tents on the roadside ... Flood victims said children in Dalit settlements had no

food to eat and no clothes to wear. They complained that the government had paid no attention to their plight. Puran Sada, another victim, said the flood victims were in desperate need of government relief and rehabilitation.

As many as 40 homeless families from Dalit settlements have been taking refuge at a local school and community buildings. Some of them are living under the open sky. Reports said a total of 3,990 families had been displaced due to floods in local rivers in the district... In Saptari district alone more than 1,500 houses have been submerged in water and 350 families have been displaced. As the land and houses submerged people have gathered at sections of many roads.

Source: Dalit Network Netherlands



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Bhim Army: Dalit Uprising from the Front



By:
Parmod Kumar



Across the dormant area of Ghadkoli in Uttar Pradesh's Saharanpur, an unlikely blue board hangs tall. In a simple, bold font, the board spells "The great Chamar" in Hindi. While it hardly bears any sign of violence, this ostensibly plain board has fired up emotions and sentiments across caste lines in this village and others around Saharanpur. Saharanpur's Bhim Army is part of the tradition of organisations for the self-defence and cultural assertion of the Dalit community.

This small village in Saharanpur district of Uttar Pradesh, with a Dalit and Muslim population of around 10,000. In 2013, a young Dalit man named Chandrashekhar, returned to his village after his father died of cancer. He had never forgotten how his father, a headmaster, was humiliated due to his caste. Chandrashekhar was determined to be an advocate for the Dalit community and the best way he thought he could do this was by forming an organisation of local Dalit youth. This organisation has now come to be known as the Bhim Army.

The Bhim Army was formed around 2015 after a group of Dalit youths raised its voice over stray cases of discrimination and oppression in Saharanpur. It came into the limelight when Mr. Chandrashekhar Azad put up a board in his native

village extolling his caste identity: "The Great Chamar of Dhadkauli Welcome You."

The emergence of Bhim Army can be directly linked to the increasing incidents of violence against Dalits. According to NCRB data, the total atrocities in the state in 2003 were 2821, rising to 3785, 4397 and 4960 in the next three years when Mayawati was out of power, indicating the backlash and political vulnerability of Dalits created by the politics of a pro-Dalit party. Movements like the Bhim Army can easily be cast into narratives of Maoism, Naxalism and terrorism by the government. However, the Ambedkarite movement is also building its own counter-narrative against Brahmanical oppression.

It is also very interesting to observe here that most dalit struggles have largely been strong but non-violent as the most powerful discursive tool with Dalit movements to counter exclusions of caste system, continues to remain the provisions provided under the constitution, which directly challenges the graded hierarchy embedded in Brahminism. Dr B R Ambedkar, as the chief architect of equality norms in the constitution, provided the necessary tactic to fight for equality and justice for generations to come. Building on constitutional norms, caste-based



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reservation for SC, ST and OBCs in (public) education and politics has provided the grounds for the most emancipatory endeavours in the country. Thus, it is no surprise that reservations would incite the maximum hatred among the conservationists of the caste system and refuse it to be extended for women and minorities. Here it is the discourse of merit that attempts to undermine the affirmative action for disadvantaged caste-groups.

It is unfortunate that the count of atrocities during Mayawati's last spell in power, from 2007-2012, are 6144, 8009, 7522, 6222, 7702, and 6202, respectively. Not only is this a significant jump from the previous three years, from an average of 4381 to 6967, but importantly, the figures have stabilized at that high level. Needless to say, the govt machinery has completely collapsed and failed miserably to perform its constitutional duties.

Bhim army is the latest form of dalit assertion like Bhim Sena which had two lakh members and spread to UP, Haryana and Punjab, in also to Maharashtra, Telangana and Karnataka. Core to its demands, are 25 per cent of villages in every taluq be given to Dalits; sought separate electorates, separate universities and aimed at creating a separate political organisation for Dalits. Dalit youth rallied with the Bhim Sena and addressed atrocities, providing a self-defence force as well. After the demise of Shyam Sunder in 1975, the Bhim Sena withered away. But it inspired the creation of another organisation, the Dalit Panthers, in 1972. In a similar mode, the Bhim Army has appeared in western Uttar Pradesh within "the great Chamar" movement as a cultural assertion. Dalit

assertions for an egalitarian social order have always been resisted with violence by those groups which don't believe in equality.

Most Dalit philosophers feel that the Bhim Army have taken shape out of the social vacuum created by mainstream political parties and their failure to address issues like unemployment, land distribution, atrocities and real empowerment, despite seizing political power. At a time when the BSP has lost ground electorally and the BJP has begun mobilising Dalits, the Bhim Army is a symbol of resistance from within Dalit society. Noted Dalit scholar

Anand Teltumbde has said that its emergence "may be likened to the Dalit Panthers in Maharashtra in 1972, which in turn was the by-product of the bankrupt politics of the erstwhile Republican Party of India."

Everyone understands that the Brahminical forces will do everything to stop Bhim Army from spreading and will register false cases against the leaders of the organisation as Brahminical forces did with Dalit Panthers. Dalits need to come forward to consolidate the momentum and support Bhim Army.

The ongoing caste conflict and violence in Saharanpur and elsewhere in India is unfortunately repeating the all too familiar ugliness of caste hierarchy embedded in the

religious order of Brahminism. Although Dalits continue to work through invisible mechanisms of caste everyday, even in the 21st century, it only shows its ugly head when there are attempts to annihilate the most dangerous social evil.



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The term 'Dalit' is a Sanskrit word that means "those who have been broken and ground down deliberately by those above them in the social hierarchy. Those at the bottom are considered 'lesser human beings', 'impure' and 'polluting' to other caste groups. They are usually descent based and these communities often suffer from related practices of discrimination, segregation and untouchability. By occupation, ethnicity, language and family name they include Rishi, Rabidas, Muchi, Majhi, Jaladas, Paroi, Kaiputro (Kawra), Beara, Nikari, Shikari, Swarnaker, Kapali, Kumor/ Kulal, Kuar, Sutradhar, Karmakar, Hari, Goala, Chamar, Bauri, Suri, Mali etc.

The Constitution of Bangladesh guarantees equal rights and freedoms for all citizens, and gives accent on ameliorating the conditions of the vulnerable groups. The Government has taken initiatives to protect various disadvantaged groups from discrimination and stigmatization. These groups have been included in the social safety net programmes and free housing schemes for vulnerable groups. Some of them have been provided with reserved quotas for their employment in the public sector and in educational institutions. Consistent with the above statement by the Government of Bangladesh, the 2014 Bangladesh National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS) commits to ending social and economic discrimination through legislative and other measures. In particular, the NSPS identifies access to basic services, including education, health, nutrition, family planning and water supply and sanitation as fundamental objectives. In addition, Public universities have introduced quotas for Dalits to gain access to higher education. In 2013-14 academic year, Dhaka University introduced quota for Dalits for the first time. In the academic year 2016-17, 8 more universities followed suit and introduced quotas for Dalit students.

There are a number of NGOs and Dalit lead organisations working towards addressing the issues that Dalit communities face and there have been positive changes as a result of their work. NGOs have identified numerous ways to further address the issues including a change in the constitution to include a reference to untouchability, more awareness raising activities, further research and the inclusion of Dalit communities in the government census. Some of these NGOs and Civil Society organisations include Nagorik Uddyog, Bangladesh Dalit and Excluded Rights Movement (BDERM), Research Initiative Bangladesh (RIB), Paritran, Bangladesh Harijan Oakko Parishod (BHOP), FAIR, Dalit and Excluded Women's Federation (DEWF).

The National Human Rights Commission of Bangladesh (NHRC), Bangladesh is an independent statutory body formed under the National Human Rights Commission Act 2009. The NHRC serves as the major national human rights watchdog, monitoring implementation of state obligations to respect protection and the fulfillment of the rights of every citizen of the country. The NHRC through its mandated functions, as mentioned, promotes and facilitates achievement of social inclusion specially the development of Dalits and backward section of citizens in Bangladesh. The Commission has a thematic committee on Dalit, Hijra and other excluded minorities and this committee is working actively for ensuring the right of the Dalits and ending discrimination against them. The Anti-discrimination Act (2014) was drafted and submitted to the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs in 2014. The Draft contains a number of clauses to ensure the rights of Dalits and would effectively prohibit untouchability practices.

Above all, public perceptions about socially excluded communities and the jobs they do, and discriminatory social norms and practices, need to be changed. The constitutional intention to eradicate discrimination does not seem to have succeeded. There is a need for new policies to address discrimination linked to caste hierarchies and decent based professions. Such discrimination means that the majority of Dalits are trapped in poverty with extremely limited access to adequate housing, health and education services. Dalit communities need to be fully informed about their rights and must have meaningful opportunities to contribute to policy making at all levels. National policies, plans and budgets need to be audited and monitored to ensure resources and political will are directed to addressing discriminatory social norms and practices and their outcomes. Special provisions for socially excluded communities should be implemented, monitored and reviewed for effectiveness and appropriateness. Alongside these, raising awareness about the issues facing socially excluded communities, and strengthening negotiation skills and self-confidence of the communities themselves would help ensure their greater participation and influence, and build respect for their rights.

The writer is Professor and Chairman, Department of Public Administration, University of Dhaka, and Member, National Human Rights Commission, Bangladesh.

Source: Daily Sun



Lahore: Christians Stage Protest in Front of Old Graveyard in NA-120

Christians nestled in Lahore's NA-120 constituency staged protest in front of an old graveyard calling for government's attention towards the wear and tear to the cemetery. The Taxali Gate graveyard, which has been used by the Christian community, is now in a bad shape. Local Christians rant and rave over what is described as crisis in the maintenance of the graveyard.

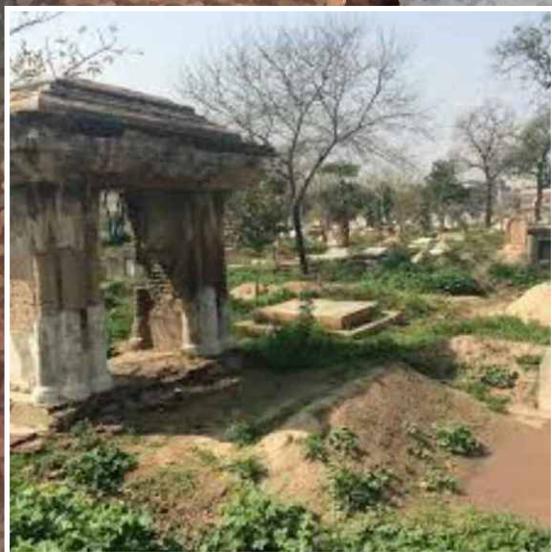
Christians protested against the negligence of the concerned authorities as the graveyard is deteriorating through weathering. They criticized the authorities saying neglect of the site also threatens the rich social history the graveyard contains.

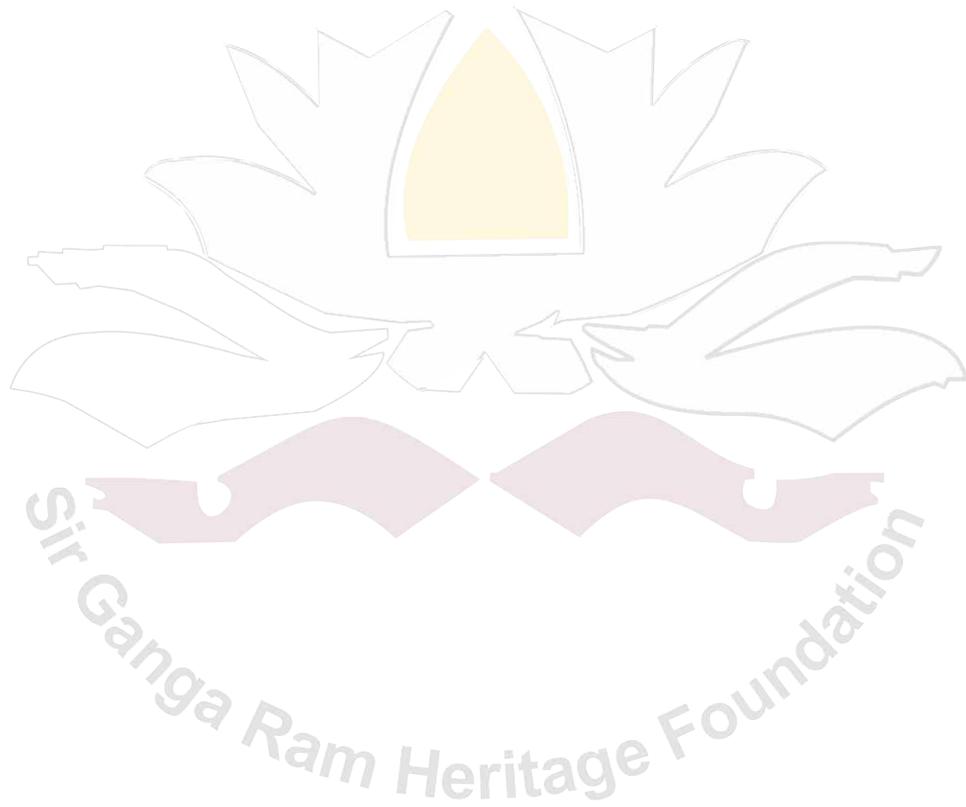
This protest was led by senior members of Pakistan Minorities' Movement. PMM's Zia Khokhar, Chaudhry Iqbal, Aslam Bhatti and many others. These leaders were accompanied by Christian residents of NA 120. The protesters maintained that the concerned authorities have completely disregarded the maintenance of the cemetery.

They detailed that owing to lack of cleanliness and maintenance; the graves are almost covered by grass while the graveyard has become home to snakes and mongooses. The graveyard is also inhabited by dengue mosquitoes which have added to the problems of the Christians visiting the graveyard. They urged the authorities to take efficacious action and ensure that the graveyard is kept clean and an in order.

While protesting, Christians said that the feast of Marry is approaching and the congregants assemble at this graveyard, for this reason government must pay attention to their demand. We call upon the government to make arrangements for the immediate cleaning of the cemetery, they demanded. On this occasion, a police official called the protesters to police station so as to chalk out solution to their problem.

Source: Christian in Pakistan





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