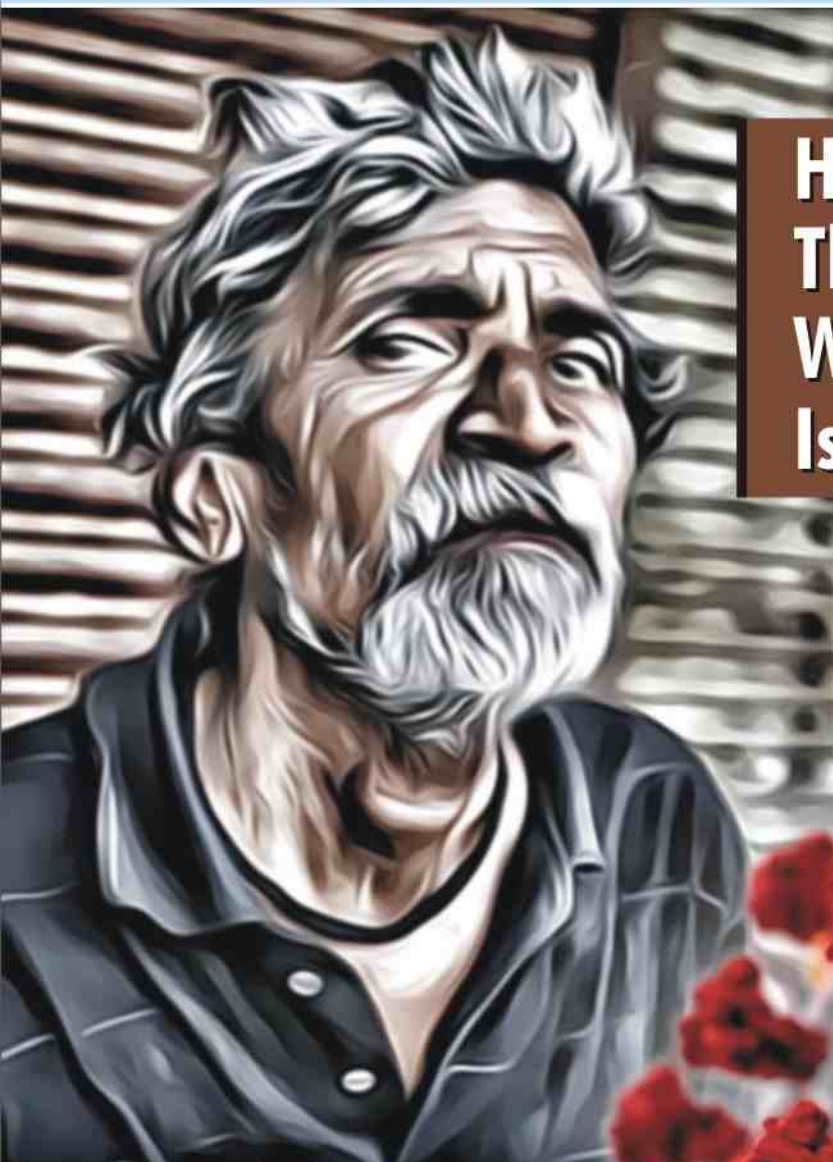


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Voice of Minorities & Oppressed People in South Asian Societies



Hunger Will Kill Before The Virus Does: Why Food Distribution Is A Priority Now

p. 2



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

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Editorial

Welcome to the new edition of Mino-View. Certainly, the novel coronavirus is worrisome for everyone. Many countries of the world are under full lockdown, except for supplies of essential goods and services. But for marginalized populations who live with poverty, health inequities, and other burdens, the outbreak could be especially brutal. Coronavirus itself is most dangerous to those who have underlying health problems, especially lung issues. Marginalized people around the world are more vulnerable to both the pandemic itself and the externalities arising from attempts to fight it. The number of COVID-19 cases have more than doubled in South Asia in the last one month. Health experts warn an epidemic in the region, home to a fifth of the world's population, could overwhelm its already weak public health systems. Minority communities in this region experience a heightened exposure to air pollution, which causes lung-damage and contributes to premature death. Those inequities will only prove further disastrous for the marginalized communities amid this pandemic. South Asian people are up to six times more likely to have Type 2 diabetes. African Caribbean, South Asian, and people of Mediterranean origin are also more likely to have Sickle Cell Disease, which is one of the conditions identified as being at highest risk of mortality relating to COVID19. This public health crisis impacts low-income people from health and financial standpoints. Middle- and upper- class people can self-isolate, which might not be possible for low-income people and daily wagers who often live in densely populated housing and cannot work from home due to their nature of job. The South Asian region, home to 1.9 billion people, appears to have been less badly affected than other parts of the world, but the rate of new infections in Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bhutan & Sri Lanka is increasing at an alarming rate. Most of the minority ethnic people and marginalized communities of this region are living in overcrowded and poor quality housing. India has been worst hit by the coronavirus in South Asia where minorities and marginalized groups are more vulnerable, already deprived of basic human rights, facing caste based discrimination and social injustice. These groups have poor access to healthcare services, including mental health, screening and testing. Health Officials have warned of widespread transmissions which could prove to be disastrous for a country where two to three times more minorities and marginalized communities are living in dense slums, social distancing is almost impossible. Many vulnerable workers in supply chains are already exposed to forced and bonded labour, dangerous work, long working hours, very low wages, discrimination and are without work or income security. The Covid-19 crisis only increases and deepens the negative impact of these conditions on the precarious lives of these workers. Governments and companies must now step up to the plate to protect workers who risk getting ill or dying as a result of their lack of labour and social protection combined with the adverse impacts of measures to stop the spread of COVID-19. The minorities living in South Asia to minimise the risk of fast spread of this deadly disease among the weakest segments of the society. As coronavirus is killing humans without any discrimination of rich or poor, It is the high time for us to overcome the social in-equality and caste based discrimination from the society, allowing humanity to prevail.

Editor



Pakistan: Hindu custodian of Mosque in Karachi

Visitors do not find any architectural attraction towards a mosque situated on Karachi's busiest Faisal Street, but the difference in this mosque -- in the heart of Pakistan's commercial capital -- is that its custodian is a Hindu. A Hindu custodian of a mosque in a Muslim majority country may sound far-fetched. But Pahlaj Rae, a local businessman has been taking care of this mosque over many years.

On a typical Friday, he reaches the mosque, much before worshipers arrive to supervise arrangements. He rolls plastic sheets on the stony floor outside the mosque, to temporarily add to the capacity to house faithful to offer prayers. "We began this [arrangement] nearly three years ago. There was no mosque in the vicinity, where my employees and others working in nearby offices could go and offer prayers," Rae told Anadolu Agency.

When the number of worshipers swelled, he hired a permanent imam (prayer leader) and a muazzin (one who calls for prayer five times a day). He also shuts down his gas station located nearby for two hours to provide space for the Friday prayers. "I have done nothing special. I am not doing this for publicity or advertisement. It was my duty to take care of the spiritual and religious requirements of my employees, and neighbors," said Rae.

Fearing that publicity will wash away his benevolence and invoke religious sensitivities, he refused to be get photographed. Rae said shutting down business for a couple of hours on Friday has never bothered him.

"It does not occur to me that there is any financial loss by keeping the gas station shut for two hours. And even if it does, I do not care. The feeling that you have done something good for your brothers and friends is more precious," he said.

Religious Harmony

Akhtar Shaikh, Muslim business partner of Rae, said that taking care of a mosque by a Hindu reflected the excellent religious harmony between the majority and the minority communities in the city. "It was my idea to

make permanent arrangements for Friday and daily prayers, but later, he [Rae] took it to himself and did everything", Shaikh told Anadolu Agency.

"Now, he [Rae] is managing everything, from utility bills to salaries [of imam and muazzin] and other expenses", he added. Rae said religious harmony in the city has turned better since he saw mobs attacking Hindu temples, following the demolition of the 16th-century Babri Mosque, in neighboring India in 1992.

Rae himself had taken shelter in the house of his Muslim neighbors when a charged mob, calling for revenge, was marching towards the country's famous Shri Swami Narayan temple in 1992. In Pakistan some 30 temples were attacked, 25 of them across the southern province of Sindh, home to 85% of the Hindus in Pakistan. Since then all these temples have been either rebuilt or repaired.

In India, then Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao had also pledged to rebuild the Babri Mosque, in a televised address to the nation. However, the Indian Supreme Court last November handed the site of the historic mosque to Hindus for the construction of a temple following a prolonged legal battle.

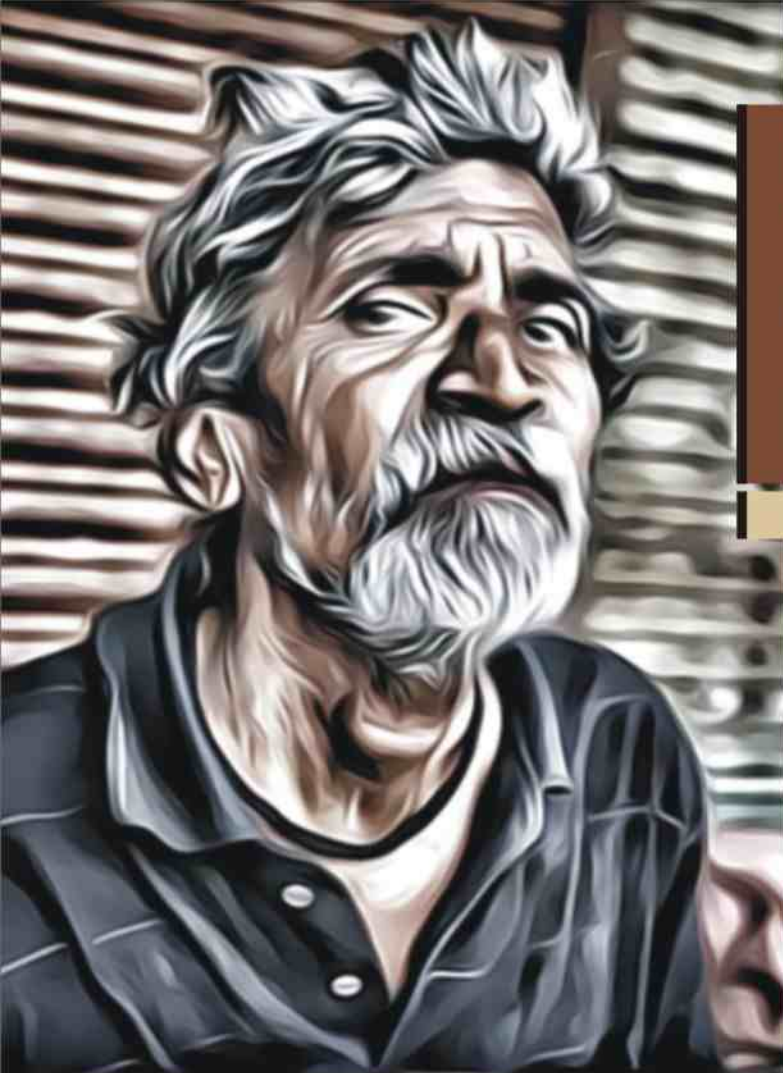
"There is no comparison between the situations in 1992 and Nov. 2019. I had to leave my home and take shelter to save me and my family, but in Nov. 2019, I stayed at my home without any fear," added Rae.

Hindus, the largest minority in Pakistan, make up 4% of the country's more than 200 million population.

Pakistan is home to several sites revered by Hindus. The Katas Raj temple in the northeastern Chakwal district and Sadhu Bela temple in southern Sukkur district are the two most visited rites by Hindus across the world.

According to local media, the government plans to reclaim and restore 400 temples, which have been illegally occupied by land grabbers, to Hindus across the country.

Source: Asia Pacific



Hunger Will Kill Before The Virus Does: Why Food Distribution Is A Priority Now

Meenakshi Ravivanshi

Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan have performed better.

Who Suffers The Most?

Food supplies over the world will be “greatly upset” by the coronavirus and unless governments take prompt actions, the number of individuals enduring incessant yearning could increase twofold, a portion of the world's greatest food companies have cautioned.

In this present scenario, the government is suggesting measures to safeguard ourselves from the virus. But we need to focus here that even if the market is supplied in abundance with these precautionary kits, poverty in India would not allow the marginalised to buy them. It is a mere luxury of riches to wash hands three times a day. The people who live in hunger do not have such luxury and they continue to suffer the most. Lack of healthy sustenance debilitates people's immune systems. Children who are malnourished face long haul well being and subjective results. Indeed, even individuals and families who don't get the infection will be affected by the loss of work and wages.

Migrant Workers: Without Work, Money, Food and Shelter

It was widely seen across the nation especially in north India that migrant workers had a hard time coping with a nationwide lockdown situation. There are around 470 million workers in India where 80 to 90 percent of them are in the informal sector, having neither proper contracts nor protected by labour law of the country. 100 million migrant workers are currently present in India working as construction workers, textile workers, street vendors, domestic help, rag pickers, sanitation workers, etc. Most don't approach any additional benefits, sick leave/paid leave or any sort of protection. Many don't have financial balances, depending on daily wages to meet their day by day needs.

In an interview with The New York Times, Ramchandran Ravidas, a rickshaw driver of Delhi told them that on a hard-working day he can earn 450 rupees. He lives

The world is living through unprecedented times. The Coronavirus (COVID-19) is causing anxiety, uncertainty and disruption. Many countries of the world are under full lockdown, except for supplies of essential goods and services. Announcement of lockdown in India happened on 24th March at 8 pm by PM Narendra Modi and came into effect at 12 am on 25th March, leaving more than 130 Crore Indian citizens with only 4 hours to get prepared for lockdown. Public transports like trains and buses were already suspended a few days back due to fear of the spread of this pandemic across the nation. Due to this immediate imposition of lockdown people across the nation started assembling basic needs like dry foods, medicine etc., so that they don't get into trouble during this lockdown. But this preparedness for the lockdown was directly proportional to the resources one carries, most importantly economic resource but also a political and social resource to meet these basic needs. In this unequal world, with increasing disparities, hunger still exists as a major issue in India and this lockdown has further triggered the problem of hunger even more.

The latest Global Hunger Index that has classified India at Rank No.102 among 117 nations. It is, in fact, discouraging to realize that India has slipped seven scores from No.95th in 2010 and that our prompt neighbors like

outside the garage he borrows rickshaw from and stressed that he will be chased out soon as he has had no earning since the lockdown. He doesn't have a house to stay and considering his work is his home, he stated that he is not afraid of getting infected by Coronavirus but fearing from hunger and finds death will be an end to his miserable life.

Another daily wage construction worker in Delhi who comes from Uttar Pradesh told BBC's Vikash Pandey that he already knew that there will be no one to hire us in this lockdown but couldn't resist coming. He will be running out of food and money in a few days and even though he understands the risk of coronavirus, he can't see his family starving. They are stuck in between nowhere, they neither have food to eat nor transports to go to their village.

Dalits

The working class is economically poor and mainly comprises Dalits and other backward social groups of the Indian population. Many Dalits work as domestic workers and sanitation workers. In the period of this nationwide lockdown, many Dalit migrant workers and other workers from informal sectors lost their job and hunger clinched their life. But at the same time domestic workers especially women in big cities like Delhi or Mumbai are doing their work because most of them can't afford to take leave as it will lead to loss of job or pay.

Some of them are doing their jobs because of the urgency of their work in many urban households. Few of these domestic workers spoke to National Herald stating that they are the only bread earner of the family and hence, it has become a compulsion for them to work during lockdown even at the risk of their and family's life. As like domestic workers, vegetable, fruit vendors whose lives depend on daily income are also at their work, providing needs and essentials at the doorstep of middle-class urban families.

Sanitation workers are also at their work right now during the lockdown. India already lacks in protective equipment for sanitation workers even if there was no globally spread Coronavirus but this pandemic leaves them most vulnerable as they are exposed to all kind of wastes including used masks and gloves and other medical waste which could be one of the most possible dangers for spreading this COVID-19 virus.

Sayaba Kunchikorwe, a sanitation worker of Mumbai while speaking to Al Jazeera stated that he spends his day collecting garbage consisting of rotting food items, broken glasses, plastic bags, medical waste and few face masks. He adds up saying that when they threatened to strike, the contractor provided them with poor quality masks and gloves which did not last for more than two

days and left them with no choice but work bare hands as they feared to lose the job if they don't work. Even though many higher authorities have tried to assure that no one will lose their salary or job in this lockdown period, these communities are not able to assure their jobs without risking their life.

The case is very much paradoxical for Dalits, where many have lost their jobs and are left rely on philanthropists, other social workers and individuals who are taking all measures in their capacity to ensure food to mitigate the hunger of these marginalized people. Whereas some of these Dalit workers are still working because of the nature of their work which accommodates their work in this situation, but this doesn't assure their safety from the COVID-19 virus and leaves them vulnerable during this pandemic. In both above cases, there is the loss-loss situation and to save themselves and their family from hunger they are ready to take the risk of getting infected.

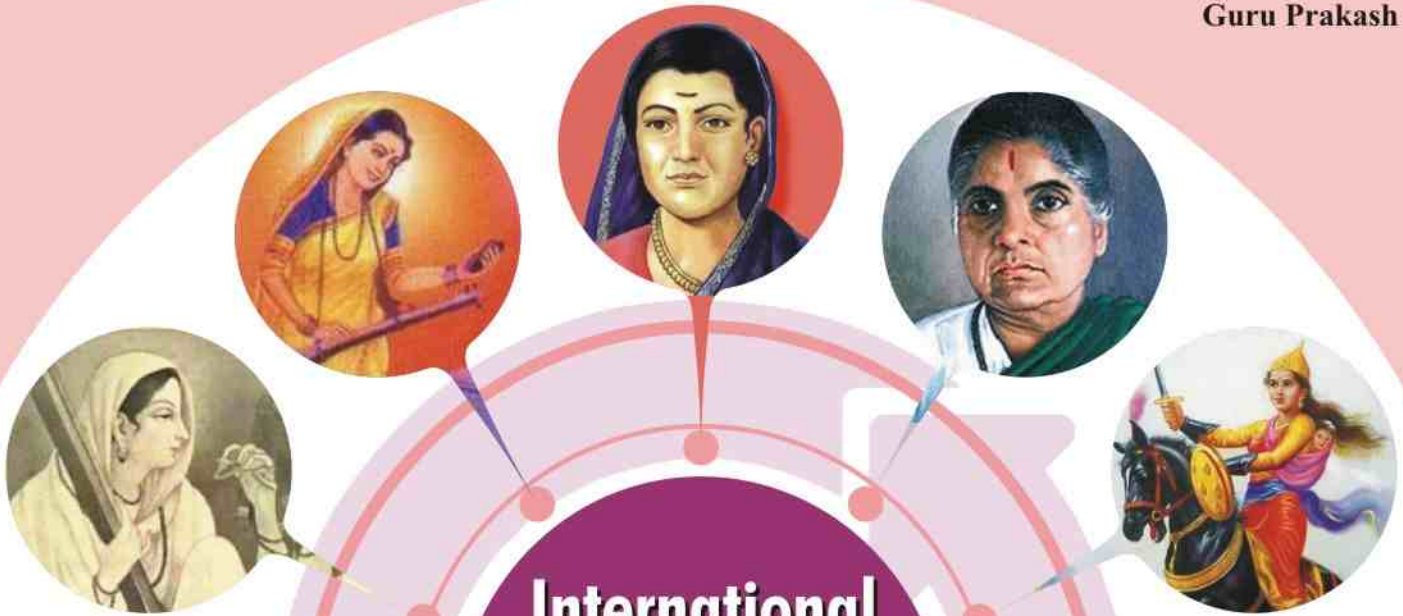
Possibilities of Mitigation

There are many relief packages that have been announced by the central government and many state governments India announced a 23 billion relief package to help the working-class comprising migrant workers, Dalits and other marginalized communities. The question is how this money will reach the needy as many of them are from the informal sector and have barely an official record. There are many organizations local as well as national who are passionately working to help these workers and providing them with food and other essential needs.

The government must take some assured steps to reach out to their needs, as many officials have suggested setting up of community kitchens in those localities where these working populations live. These areas should be more regulated and hygienic. There should also be a probability of direct cash transfer in the bank account of these workers, as not all these workers carry bank accounts but those who do be benefited at the least.

India lacks the supply of protective equipment even for doctors and others who are working on the forefront during this pandemic. So the government and other organizations that are capable of helping must increase the supply of the protective equipment and assure that workers who are still working during lockdown must get this equipment to reduce risk on their life. These are the immediate remedies to reduce the misery of these working-class, where one can argue for redistribution of wealth across the nation at least if not across the globe as a long-term solution to reduce this misery among the working-class for future.

Source: Feminism in India



International Women's Day:

THE FORGOTTEN STORY OF THE DALIT WOMAN

Women's day and other such days serve as a reminder to slow down and view things in perspective. A category of women who have consistently been ignored in the popular imagination is the Dalit woman. Rarely are they a part of national conversations and public discourse around modern feminism and the gender justice demagoguery.

We don't know much about Dalit women beyond the oft-repeated adage that they 'suffer from the double jeopardy of both gender and caste'. This reflects the collective failure of our society.

The feminist school of thought in India has created an inordinate amount of scholarship around the likes of Rajia Sultan and Chand Bibi. Dalit women like Savitribai Phule, Rani Jhalkari Bai and others also did phenomenal work in their lifetimes.

Sadly, the established academic architecture has systematically ignored their contributions.

It is indeed a great disservice to the scholarship around feminism to exclude the monumental initiatives of these women who confronted the prevailing supremacy of caste and gender.

Kalavve

She is probably considered the first-ever Dalit woman poet in the known history. Inspired from the legendary

Basavanna who gave a call for struggle against regressive social conventions in Karnataka, Kalavve whose full name was Urilinga Peddigala Punya Stri Kalavve went on to become a leading voice of reform against caste discrimination and degenerating position of woman. Her commitment and strict observance of vows are recorded in vachanas. In her observations, one common thread is the purity of heart through faith in spiritual declarations.

Janabai and Soyarabai

Both belonged to the socially disadvantaged communities in Maharashtra and followed the ideas propagated by the Bhakti movement. During the thirteenth and fourteenth century, they raised voices against social orthodoxy and the inherent cleavages in the social order that attributed a substandard way of life to the marginalized communities. One of the poems of Soyarabai is worth quoting here where she says,

You say some bodies are untouchable.
Tell me what you say of the Soul.
You say defilement is born in the body.
If menstrual blood makes me impure,
Tell me who was not born of that blood.
This blood of mine fertilizes the world.
Tell me who was not sprung from this source.
Soyara says: this impurity is the cornerstone of your world.

If this is not forward-looking and progressive enough than what is? In our quest to seek western validation, we never made an effort to turn the searchlight inwards and explore the endless treasure that our civilization had to offer.

Savitri Bai Phule

Savitri Bai Phule was born in Maharashtra and dedicated her life to the cause of education of girl child and the rights of the widows. Coming from the socially backward community as her name indicates 'Phule' comes from 'Phul' that means flower in English and her community engaged in gardening activities. One of her significant poems is Arise and Learn, where she says:

We will educate our children and teach ourselves as well.

We will acquire knowledge of religion and righteousness.

Let the thirst for books and learning dance in every vein.

Let each one struggle and forever erase our low caste stain.

Even she does not find a notable mention in the plethora of work around women's studies programs in our universities.

Rani Jhalkari Bai

Rani Jhalkari Bai was born in Kori community near Jhansi in 1830 and later went on to become one of the closest confidantes of Rani Lakshmi Bai who is popularly known as Jhansi ki Rani after her territory's heroic confrontation with the British forces. One of the British Generals after witnessing the ferocious battle led by Jhalkari Bai commented that "one per cent of Indian women were like Jhalkari; the British would soon have to leave India."

Dakshayani Velayudhan

She was the sole Dalit woman member of the Constituent assembly who played an active role in shaping the rights and privileges of the Dalit women in the Constitution of India. In one of her many debates, she said, "I submit that a Constituent Assembly not only frames a Constitution but also gives the people a new framework for life. To frame such a Constitution is an easy task because there are many models for us to imitate...but to renew a people on a new foundation requires the synthetic vision of a planner...what we want is not all kinds of safeguards. It is the moral safeguards that give us real protection..what we want is the immediate removal of our social disabilities. Our freedom can be obtained only from Indians and not only



The feminist school of thought in India has created an inordinate amount of scholarship around the likes of Raja Sultan and Chand Bibi. Dalit women like Savitribai Phule, Rani Jhalkari Bai and others also did phenomenal work in their lifetimes. Sadly, the established academic architecture has systematically ignored their contributions.

from the British Government. "

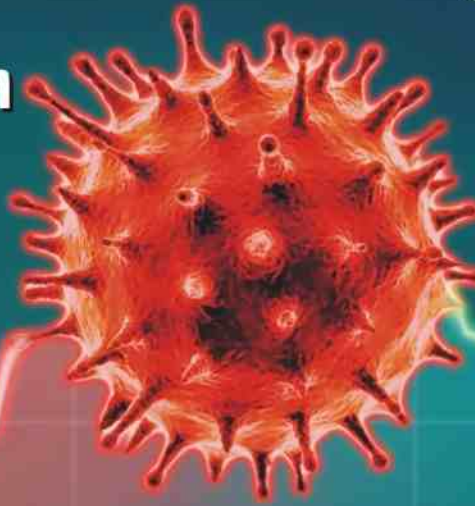
Some of us may be aware of Durga Bai Deshmukh another woman member of the Constituent assembly as many public places like metro stations and conference halls are named after her. A Dalit woman also deserves to stay in public memory as others.

The likes of Ramvilas Paswan, Mayawati and the newbie Chandrashekhar Ravan who are indulging in Dalit politics in pursuance of power must try to read and commemorate figures like these whose lives were a message of social integration and harmony through spiritual endeavours

We need our own version of feminism that is inclusive of everyone regardless of caste and community. The feminism that does not shy away from celebrating the social diversity of the movement for gender justice and equality. Such inspirations are still at large from Kashmir to Kanyakumari and from Surat to Silchar. This Women's Day let us try and identify the Savitri Bai's and Jhalkari Bai's in our community and neighbourhood and pay respect to the lady who is a repository of strength, wisdom and beauty at the same time.

Source: India Today

Vulnerable workers in supply chains need urgent protection to survive impact of covid-19



IDSN Statement - We strongly urge governments and companies with supply chains in South Asia, to take measures to urgently protect migrant and informal workers, including Dalits, against a loss of income, social benefits, shelter and a means to feed themselves and their families, as Covid-19 measures and repercussions threaten their lives and livelihoods.

These workers often have no social protection schemes, are paid by the day or piecemeal and at so low rates that they have no savings or other means of supporting themselves, when they lose their jobs from one day to the next. In addition, Dalits, as well as other marginalised communities, often suffer discrimination in access to resources and relief when disaster strikes in their countries and companies. Governments therefore need to pay special attention to these groups in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka.

In India, these communities make up the majority of the 120 million migrant workers who in enormous numbers and next to no notice, lost their source of income because of the Covid-19 lockdown and are now heading, often by foot, to their native villages where they may face starvation with severe impacts for their health and immune system.

According to the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Companies, both, content-wise, based on the UN core human rights treaties and ILO fundamental conventions, globally operating companies have the responsibility to ensure the rights of all workers in their supply chain. Governments have the duty to ensure that companies abide by these norms. Together they have to provide remedies in cases of violations of these rights. Moreover, extraterritorial obligations of States imply the protection of rights of workers involved in the Asian supply chains of these States' parent companies.

Many vulnerable workers in supply chains are already exposed to forced and bonded labour, dangerous work, long working hours, very low wages, discrimination and are without work or income security. The Covid-19 crisis only increases and deepens the negative impact of these conditions on the precarious lives of these workers. Governments and companies must now step up to the plate to protect workers who risk getting ill or dying as a result of their lack of labour and social protection combined with the adverse impacts of measures to stop the spread of Covid-19.

The impact of Covid-19 goes far beyond initial emergency aid and healthcare alone, though they are crucial, but also relates to the rights of all workers as agreed by nations in the International Labour Standards of the ILO. The Migration for Employment Convention (revised) No. 97 e.g. obliges governments to maintain appropriate medical services for migrants, including medical testing (e.g. for Covid-19) and good hygienic conditions. They also have the right to accurate information and prevention of health risks.

We therefore urge globally operating companies to:

1. Commit to pay orders of already produced goods or goods in production and to continue the relationship whenever possible, as well as show maximum flexibility if suppliers cannot deliver the contracted orders (in time) because of Covid-19;
2. Make sure that wages or adequate severance payments continue to be paid by suppliers to all workers, including migrants and other contract and informal workers, especially when local governments are unable or unwilling to step in;
3. Support - when needed - the provision of health care, food and other basic necessities as well as health and safety measures - including soap and clean water - by or in cooperation with suppliers for all victims of

- Covid-19 and other workers in your supply chain;
4. Support the implementation with your suppliers of the WHO's recommendations and health and safety guidance to protect workers from Covid-19;
 5. Make sure - including through social dialogue with representatives of Dalits or other migrants and informal workers - that they are not discriminated against in any of the measures taken to alleviate the present conditions of migrant workers;
 6. Work in close contact and dialogue with your suppliers on measures to alleviate the concerns of all affected workers, in line with all relevant ILO International Labour Standards;
 7. Encourage and support targeted policies aimed at stopping the spread of Covid-19 to the particular housing and living conditions of communities where many Dalit workers live. Since Dalit communities and living quarters are densely populated without basic facilities such as water and sanitation, sourcing companies should contribute to regular health camps for treatment and screening purposes and access to clean water, especially now;
 8. In the context of the OECD Guidelines and UN Guiding Principles, the new ETI Guidance on Caste in Global Supply Chains and the Ambedkar Principles and Guidelines to address Caste Discrimination in the Private Sector are tools that can be used to assess if the rights of Dalits and other minority groups are being violated.

We urge governments to:

1. Urgently demand that companies implement the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Companies and the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, with an extra focus on the provisions relating to the Covid-19 crisis;
2. Reinforce the commitment to comply with their obligations arising out of the UN core human rights treaties and ILO fundamental conventions, including if emergency measures are to be applied or consider the ratification of one or more of these instruments;
3. Request companies to work with their suppliers to



- mitigate the impact of the crisis on migrant, contract and other vulnerable informal workers, the majority of whom are Dalits, indigenous people and other marginalised groups. Focus your request on the above-mentioned recommendations to companies;
4. Take an effective gender perspective in all policies relating to the Covid-19, labour and supply chains;
 5. Encourage and support that high-risk communities such as migrants, including Dalits, are included and addressed in global, national and local responses to Covid-19 aimed at workers in supply chains. This can save millions of lives;
 6. Initiate and support national and international financial commitments to take care of the immediate food, clean water, shelter and health needs, income support and safe places for migrant and/or other workers in the supply chains of globally operating companies;
 7. Put in mandatory human rights due diligence requirements establishing a corporate duty to respect human rights and requiring companies to identify, prevent, mitigate and account for abuses and harm in their domestic and global supply chains and operations
 8. Make clear to companies under their jurisdiction that the protection of human rights in the context of implementing the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the UN core human rights treaties, should also deal with the structural violations of the rights of Dalits in global supply chains;
 9. In the spirit of the SDGs, take an inclusive approach towards Dalits and other minorities in the national recovery efforts, by reinforcing relevant treaty ratification and observance of the UPR recommendations, improving legislation and monitoring of instances of labour abuses, combating the worst forms of labour and effectively implementing a decent work agenda, in close consultation with these groups;
 10. In the spirit of the SDGs, consider Dalits and other minorities as agents of change in order to improve their labour standards vis-à-vis their situation before the Covid-19 pandemic, through the formalisation of labour agreements, the reinforcement of social security systems and safety networks, the combating of stigma and stereotypes in the context of work, vocational education and training, union representation and other forms of participation of Dalits in the formulation of labour norms and standards.

Source: International Dalit Solidarity Network (IDSN)

Bangladesh: Analysis of Harijan inclusivity in Bangladesh

CASTE based discrimination is one of the most serious human rights issues in the world today, affecting more than 260 million people worldwide. Caste systems and prejudice against so-called 'untouchables' are traditionally regarded as part of traditional practices and originate from Hindu scriptures; also in Bangladesh, these traditions and practices have also been adopted by sections of the Muslim majority.

In Bangladesh, members of the 'low castes' increasingly refer to themselves as Dalits or Harijans as the restrained people to emphasise the fact that they have been exploited, oppressed and excluded through generations. The Harijans in Bangladesh are largely identified with their traditional occupations such as fishermen, sweeper, barber, washer men, blacksmiths, goldsmiths, cobblers and oil-pressers et cetera. Their traditional occupations are stigmatised due to economic, social and cultural exclusion as a continuance of traditional apartheid like 'caste system'. Recently the widely circulated photo of a girl in social media asking 'why can't the children from Harijan community get admission in the Gaibabndha Sadar Upazila Model School' demands for a review of current socio-legal practices in Bangladesh regarding Harijan community.

Articles 27, 28, 29 and 31 of the constitution of Bangladesh seek to establish equality and non-discrimination. Therefore the state owes the responsibility of ensuring basic human rights of the Harijans and protecting them from all forms of discrimination. As a party to the major international human rights treaties such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights, Bangladesh has the obligation to promote and protect human rights for all, including those discriminated on the grounds of caste, occupation and descent.

However, approximately 5.5 million Harijans in Bangladesh continue to suffer from multiple forms of discrimination and 'untouchability' practices due to the lack of sufficient protection which leads to political-economic-social exclusion. The constitution of Bangladesh advocates for the realisation of the principle of non-discrimination under Article 28(1). Nevertheless a recent study shows that the Harijans in Bangladesh are discriminated on the basis of social status, economic strength and cultural orientation. On the other hand, the

grounds of non-discrimination under Article 28(1) of the constitution are limited and specific in numbers such as religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth;

while, in practice, we have many instances of discrimination based on occupation, age and descent.

Though constitutionally discrimination is prohibited in Bangladesh, it is difficult for an individual to have legal remedy from the judiciary since there is no specific anti-discrimination law. Nonetheless, responding to the persistent and widespread discrimination against Dalits in Bangladesh, in 2013 the National Human Rights Commission of Bangladesh and Bangladesh Law Commissions engaged with Dalit human rights defenders to introduce a draft anti-discrimination legislation.

The draft includes a broader expression of the word 'discrimination', where it occurs when any individual or community on the grounds of race, caste, occupation, place of birth, ethnic minority identity, sex, religion, sexual orientation, disablement, age, pregnancy and maternity or for any other reasons faces different or gets less favourable treatment and less facilities in the same situation than any other individual or community faces or would face. The Anti-discrimination Bill was submitted to the ministry of law, justice and parliamentary affairs in April 2013 but returned to the NHRC, four years later, for further review. It has no progress till then. Therefore absentia of enabling legal framework seeks to formulate a process by which any policy or activity can be identified as discriminatory against any citizen or marginalised community.

Lastly, Bangladesh needs to take pragmatic policy and legislative initiatives to improve the living standard of the Harijans and ensure their dignity and worth as human beings. We have constitutional pledge to emancipate people from social and economic exploitation and gear up the pace of development towards building an inclusive society which cannot be achieved leaving behind the Harijan community.



Source: New Age BD

Pakistan Minorities rights top priority of government

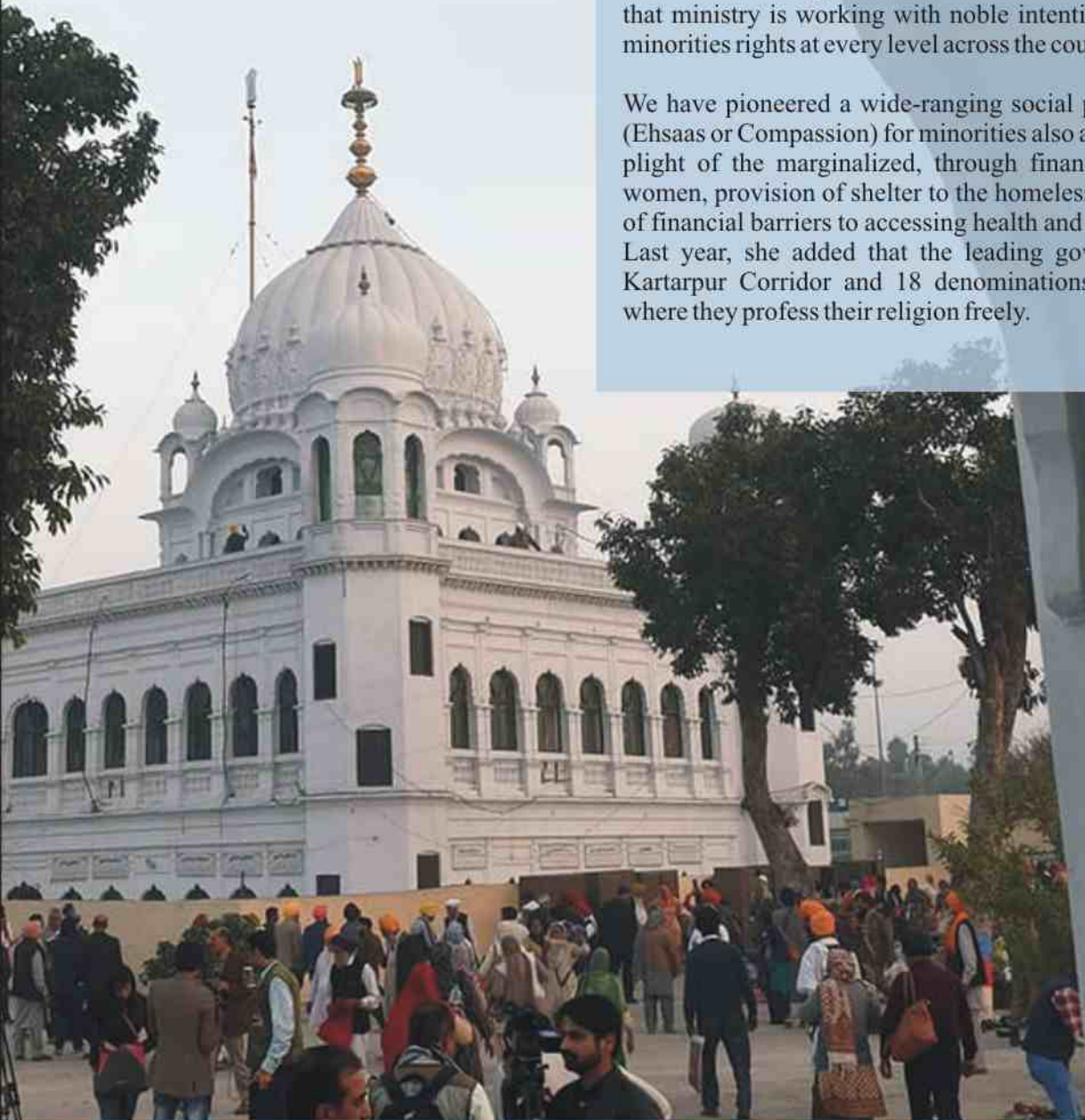
Ministry of Human Rights (MoHR) was giving top priority to the protection of rights of minorities in the country. Talking to APP, Federal Secretary of Ministry Rabia Javeria Agha lauded the contributions of minorities towards the collective objective of attaining truly developed Pakistan. She said that present government is committed to ensure equal opportunities for all the communities in the country.



She said that government had reopened Kartarpur corridor to facilitate Sikh religion followers from around the world. She added that ministry is working with noble intention to end violation in minorities rights at every level across the country.

We have pioneered a wide-ranging social protection programme (Ehsaas or Compassion) for minorities also aimed at alleviating the plight of the marginalized, through financial empowerment of women, provision of shelter to the homeless and through removal of financial barriers to accessing health and education, she added . Last year, she added that the leading government had opened Kartarpur Corridor and 18 denominations of Christian church where they profess their religion freely.

Source: The Pakistan Post





What Mooknayak was for Ambedkar, YouTube is for Dalits today



YouTube channels run by Dalits have millions of subscribers. Is this a new segregation in India or the emergence of a much-needed diversity in media ownership?

Here's a surprising fact: there are at least 10 YouTube channels posting videos just related to Dalit-Bahujan issues and have at least more than five lakh subscribers each.

The largest among them, National Dastak, has around 35 lakh subscribers. Bahujan TV has 17 lakh and National India News (NIN) has more than 13 lakh subscribers. Other YouTube channels in the five lakh-plus list are Awaaz India TV, Dalit Dastak, Mulniwasi TV (MNTV), Samta Awaz TV, Dalit News Network (DNN), SM News and Voice News Network. Individual vloggers like Activist Ved are also running popular YouTube channels. Videos on National Dastak have over 88 crore views.

This data tells us that something is happening below the surface of Indian society, which is not visible to media analysts (or perhaps they just don't want to see and report it).

Why are Dalits and people from 'lower' castes subscribing to this interesting phenomenon of Dalit-Bahujan media outlets? In the 21st century, is this another kind of segregation or should we see it as the emergence of a much-needed diversity in media ownership?

Need for 'Dalit media'

That Dalits have their own media platform is not at all a new thing. In 1920, B.R. Ambedkar started his own fortnightly publication Mooknayak. Last week, Dalit Dastak organised a grand ceremony at Delhi's Ambedkar International Centre to celebrate the centenary year of Mooknayak. Ambedkar went on to publish four more

periodicals - Bahishkrit Bharat, Janata, Samata and Prabuddha Bharat. His most successful disciple Kanshiram also ran a media house and published his own newspaper - Bahujan Sangathak.

Ambedkar had his reasons. "I know the Congress Press well. I attach no value to its criticism. It has never refuted my arguments. It knows only to criticise, rebuke and revile me for everything I do and to misreport, misrepresent and pervert everything I say. Nothing, that I do, pleases the Congress Press. This animosity of the Congress Press towards me can to my mind not unfairly, be explained as a reflex of the hatred of the Hindus for the Untouchables," he had said.

From 1920 to 2020, the world has changed a lot and so has the media landscape. It has seen changes in terms of content, medium and technology. But the quest of the Dalits to have their own media is something that still exists, maybe with more fervor now.

Let's look at what these platforms say about themselves and why they exist.

1. National Dastak says that "the mainstream media caters only to the requirements of the elites and it ignores the needs and aspirations of the marginalised sections of the society like - SCs, STs, women, minorities, farmers and laborers."
2. Bahujan TV, with a total of 16 crore views, claims that it will propagate the ideas of Jyotiba Phule, Shahuji Maharaj and Ambedkar and at the same time also strive to end superstition and irrational beliefs.
3. National India News, with 21 crore views, asserts that the mainstream media silences the voice of struggling masses. It claims that Indian media functions as the enemy of the Bahujans. It says there are some benevolent voices in the mainstream

media, but adds that they work only as camouflage to push its 'upper' caste agenda.

Digital Dalits

I have observed some common traits in this emerging phenomenon of digital Dalits running their own media outlets. These will be useful for those interested in pursuing a systematic study or those with an interest in learning the intersections of social and communication processes.

There has always been a separate category of Dalit literature, at least since the early 20th century. Hundreds of book publishers and distributors deal exclusively in this domain. In north and central India, Dalit literature is more popular in Marathi, Hindi and Punjabi languages.

Prior to the digital revolution, running a media house was a mammoth exercise and involved big money. With the democratisation of technology, it has become easier to start a media venture, especially in terms of finances.

In the digital era, one only requires a smartphone, a tripod, a freely-available editing app and an internet connection to run an audio-visual channel. The total capital expenditure to start such a channel is less than Rs 10,000. This has created an opportunity for Dalit-Bahujan youth to start media outlets.

Caste bias in media

Newspapers and TV channels are largely run by 'upper' caste Hindus and they decide what will be published and what will be the tone and tenor of the content. This sociological structure of the Indian newsroom has been a subject of regular scrutiny and it has been proven, with empirical facts, that SC/STs and OBCs are almost missing in the newsrooms, especially in decision-making positions.

As the Indian media is advertisement-driven, there exists a bias to produce content that is suitable to the consumption-friendly upper strata, because it is this group that the advertisers want to have in their media plan.

With the government being the biggest advertiser in India, media houses try not to antagonise the establishment on most occasions, even if it results in publishing something that is not in the interest of the masses.

The progressive section of the media produces only a small part of the content that is available for public consumption, which mostly has pro-elite biases.

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Content for the mainstream

These factors create a void in the media landscape, because it is simply not possible for media houses to cater to the needs of the subaltern. This happens because of the structure of their business. And since the 'upper' caste-dominated newsrooms also have an agency of their own, they can't focus on the issues of the marginalised.

This existing matrix of structure and agency has resulted in a strong upper-caste bias in media content. This is more visible whenever there is news involving caste, like reservation, caste census or SC/ST Act.

All politics of this era is driven by shareable content and virality. If you can control how content is created, published and distributed, then you can shape politics. Instead of sending press releases to mainstream media and waiting for them to publish it, the Dalit-Bahujan media owners now publish the content themselves and have the 'upper' caste media chase those leads.

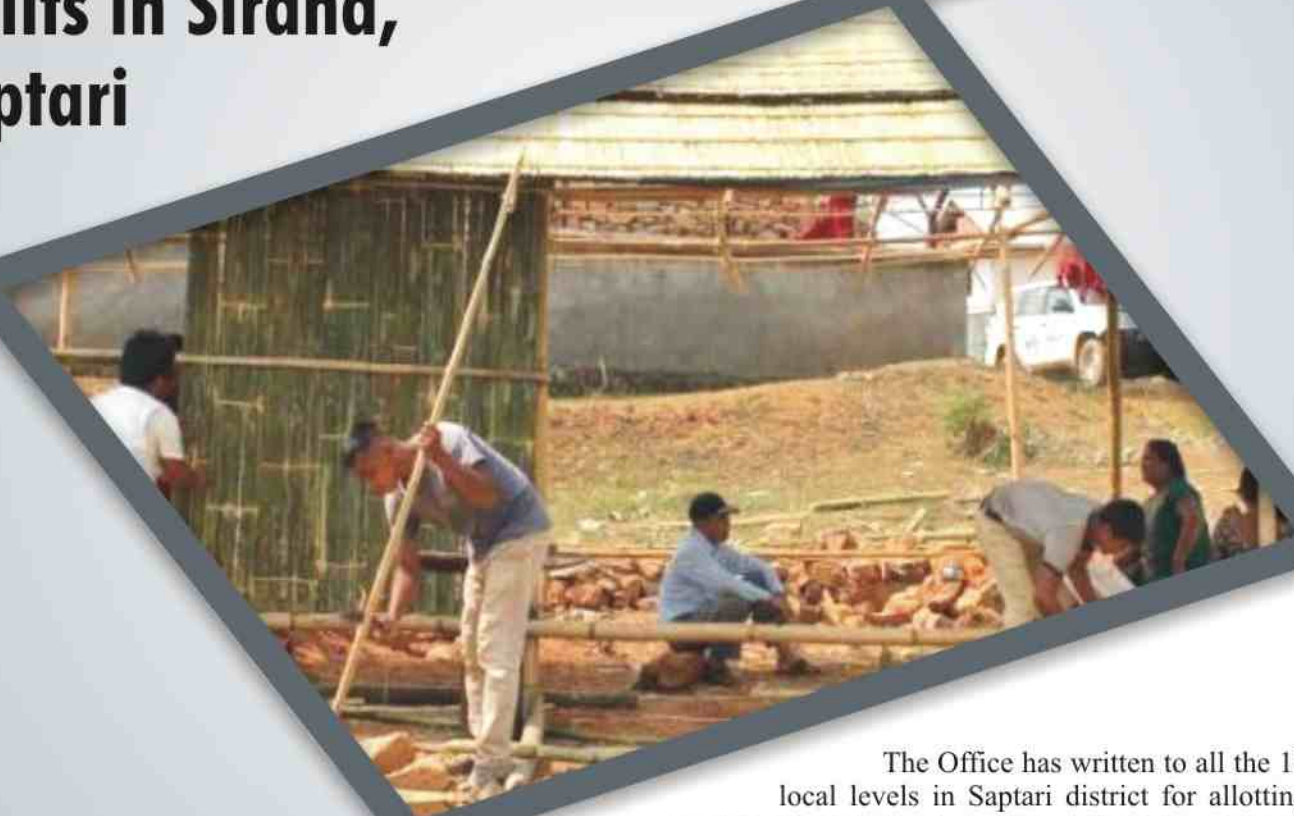
It is not that that the mainstream media is not aware of these things. They too are trying to come to terms with this reality. But it will not be an easy task for them to create an all-encompassing, inclusive content that suits the need of all social groups with conflicting interests.

Moreover, media houses are not yet ready for the diversity debate, which the US did 50 years ago. In the US, media houses embraced diversity with a conviction that it is good for the business. In India, that idea is yet to sink in.

Until that happens, we can all watch Dalit channels for their side of the story.

Source: The Print

Nepal: Over 1000 shelters to be constructed for Dalits in Siraha, Saptari



Saptari: Houses are to be constructed for around 1,500 dalit families in Siraha and Saptari districts under the People's Housing Programme.

One thousand four hundred and thirty-two shelters are being constructed within July 15, 2020 of the current fiscal year from the budget allocated by the federal government, the Urban Development and Housing Office Rajbiraj stated.

Office Chief Krishna Dev Jha said 666 houses would be constructed for the needy people belonging to the Dom and Mushahar communities in Saptari district and 766 houses in Siraha district.

According to him, the government has earmarked Rs 332,500 for construction of two-room house with veranda with an additional Rs 10,000 for construction of toilet.

The Office has written to all the 18 local levels in Saptari district for allotting land for the construction of these shelters as most of the people from these communities are landless and have been found living in public land or others' land.

The People's Housing Programme has been started with the goal of constructing 20 thousand shelters every year for the homeless people and people from the marginalized, endangered, dalit and



helpless Muslim communities. About 20 thousand houses have been constructed under the Programme in the last 10 years. The Programme was launched 10 years back from Siraha, Saptari and Kapilbastu districts with the goal of constructing one thousand houses each year.

The Programme is expanded to all the districts in the country at present.

Source: Rising Nepal Daily



India: Gujarat reported five atrocity cases a day in 2019



Dalits seem to bear the brunt of caste-based violence in the state with 1,500 cases of atrocities reported in 2019. These include 32 murder cases, 81 assault and 97 rape cases. This indicates that on an average nearly five cases of atrocities were reported last year.

Figures between 2001 and 2019 suggest a rise in cases till 2018. In 2019, there was a nominal decrease of 45 cases than 2018, however, in 2019 the state saw three Dalit youths being stopped from riding horses in marriage processions in Arvalli, Sabarkantha and Mehsana districts by upper caste people. Recently, a Dalit youth was beaten for riding horse in his marriage in Palanpur town of Banaskantha.

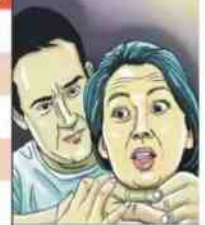
In 2019, Ahmedabad reported the highest 164 cases followed by Junagadh where 102 cases were reported. Ahmedabad city also reported six murders, 16 rape cases of Dalit women and 10 cases of grievous injuries. Police committed a goof-up in invoking the atrocities act in 2019 against the director of the national award winning film 'Hellaro' who is himself a Dalit.

These figures have been obtained from an RTI plea filed in Gujarat DGP office by a civil rights activist Kaushik Parmar. Parmar said that the cases have increased as Dalits are still not being given equal treatment in society.

Source: Justice News

TOP-FIVE ATROCITY ZONES

Place	Murder	Grievous injury	Rape	Total cases
Ahmedabad	6	10	16	164
Junagadh	2	2	6	102
Banaskantha	2	1	3	93
Bhavnagar	0	3	7	92
Amreli	0	3	5	68



Atrocity cases in Gujarat in last five years

Year	Total cases
2015	1,046
2016	1,355
2017	1,515
2018	1,545
2019	1,500



Saiban Pakistan launched in inter faith Moot at IIU

Islamabad: The 'Saiban Pakistan', a project of 'Paigham-e-Pakistan' narrative focusing on the role of minorities, was launched at the Islamic Research Institute (IRI) of International Islamic University (IIU) in an international conference on inter-faith dialogue and national cohesion. A declaration of 22 points has been jointly drafted by 'Paigham-e-Pakistan' Centre for Peace, Reconciliation and Reconstruction studies of IRI and Council of Islamic Ideology, Government of Pakistan. The conference was jointly organised by IRI and Nazarbayev Centre for development of interfaith and inter civilisation dialogue, Kazakhstan.

The participants of the conference agreed that constitution of Pakistan is guarantor of the rights of minorities. They said educational institutions must play a role for creating awareness for minorities' rights. It was noted that the society needs an atmosphere of unity, mutual respect and patience. They opined that latest tools such as social media must be used to aware masses about rights of minorities and dissemination of peace.

The conference was addressed by Asad Qaiser, Speaker National Assembly who said government had been a staunch supporter of protection of minority rights. He continued that since PTI government was pursuing the model of Madina, therefore, maintaining peace, discouraging violence and promoting interfaith harmony were the leading objectives of the ruling party. He vowed that lower house will soon witness a debate on promotion of peace and rights of minorities. The NA speaker added that culture of dialogue is a salient feature of a sound society and universities can be of vital role in this regard.

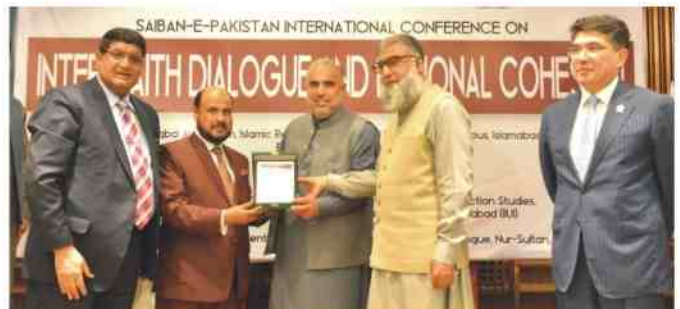
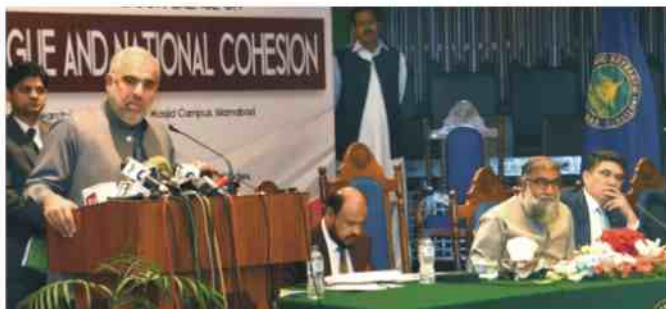


Altay Abibullayev Chairman board of Nazarbayev Centre for development of interfaith and inter civilizational dialogue addressed the conference. He said dialogue is the key to maintain global peace. He pointed out youth as most meaningful source for promoting dialogue and peace. He also highlighted importance of the ties between Pakistan and Kazakhstan adding that Feb 24th was the day when Pakistan and Kazakhstan had commenced bilateral ties officially.

Rector IIU Dr Masoom Yasinzai stressed the need for imparting modern education based on critical thinking and characterization integrated with the blend of Islamic character. He added that there was no place for terrorism in Islam and added that IIU took the responsibility to provide a narrative to the nation to remain clear about Islam, its teachings and dissemination of message of peace. He urged for the promotion of the attitude of peaceful co-existence.

President IIU, Dr Yousif Al Draiveesh said Islam was the only religion which gives complete rights to minorities.

Source: The News



India: Second Dalit literature festival welcome authors from country and abroad

New Delhi: The first day of the Second Dalit Festival was successfully concluded. This year's theme of the festival was "Literature will create a new world". Famous personalities like Mamta Kalia, Balli Singh Cheema, Chauthi Ram Yadav, Vimal Thorat attended the festival. Apart from this, artists, writers and litterateurs from various states and countries also participated in the program. The festival began with the folk performance by a renowned artist Ramjhol from Hyderabad. The special feature of this enchanting folk singing was its style and the use of the ancient instrument Rabab in it. Famous poet Balli Singh Cheema recited his poems on destruction in the name of development and Jal, Jangal, Jameen.

After that, Dr. Hemlata and Dr. Promod Mehra duly announced the commencement of the program. The audience along with Dr. Neelam and Dr. Seema Mathur participated in the reading of the preamble. Dr. Vibha Singh Chauhan, Principal Kirorimal college emphasized the linkage between public institutions and the society. A 2-minute silence was observed in remembrance of the Dalit writers who have passed away recently. Dr. Naam Dev, the convener of the Ambedkarwadi Lekhak Sangh (ALeS), emphasized on the establishment of an equitable society while talking about Ambedkar, Marx and Phule. Suraj Badtya, founder member of ALeS said that we will soon take this festival to international level. Well-known writer Mamta Kalia said that there are many similarities between the Dalit and women culture. He said that literature should not be given its rights even from politics. He reminded the underprivileged, that the deprived class has the maximum cultural capital. Chetnarayan Rasaili, who came from Nepal, praised the constitution of India and talked about the role of literature of both countries in addressing the issue of caste. Chauthiram Yadav said that it is our misfortune that only those who fight the caste war are called casteist. Professor Kalicharan Snehi said that the symbols of Dalits should now be adopted with pride at the pan-India scale. Prominent historian Manmohan Bawa thanked the visitors and the organizers for this much-needed

programme. Prof. Vivek Kumar, gave a sociological point of view on Dalit Discourse, environment, cultural capital etc in detail. The program also had a book launch event where Rhythm magazine and Books by Dr. Neelam, Dr. Nam Dev, Sudesh Kumar Tanwar, Suraj Badatya and Sujit Kumar were released. Hemant Bauddh concluded the inaugural session by singing the mesmerizing song "Karma Hai Baba Ka".



Apart from this, in parallel sessions, the topics of 'The Society of Dalit, tribal, minority, women' Dalit Literature: The Song of Liberation of Past, Present and Future' were discussed. They were presided over by Vimal Thorat and Prof. Vivek Kumar respectively. The sessions had discussion on how Dalit women are the victims of triple oppression due to their class, caste and gender. While women of tribal society have lesser gender inequality, they are subject to the plunder of their forest land by the government and corporations. All the speakers thanked the organizers and the audience for successfully organizing this event. A book fair was also held during the festival at Kirori Mal College in which students and visitors enthusiastically took part in. Many well-known publishers participated in it.

On the second day of the festival i.e. 17th February, the issues of Dalit, women, LGBTQI and minorities etc. will be discussed in different sessions. Four parallel sessions, Kaavya Goshthi (poetry recitation event) will be held and the programme will conclude with staging of the Play "Thakur ka Kuaan". It will also have social activist Medha Patkar along with prominent Dalit authors and poets.

Source: India Education Diary