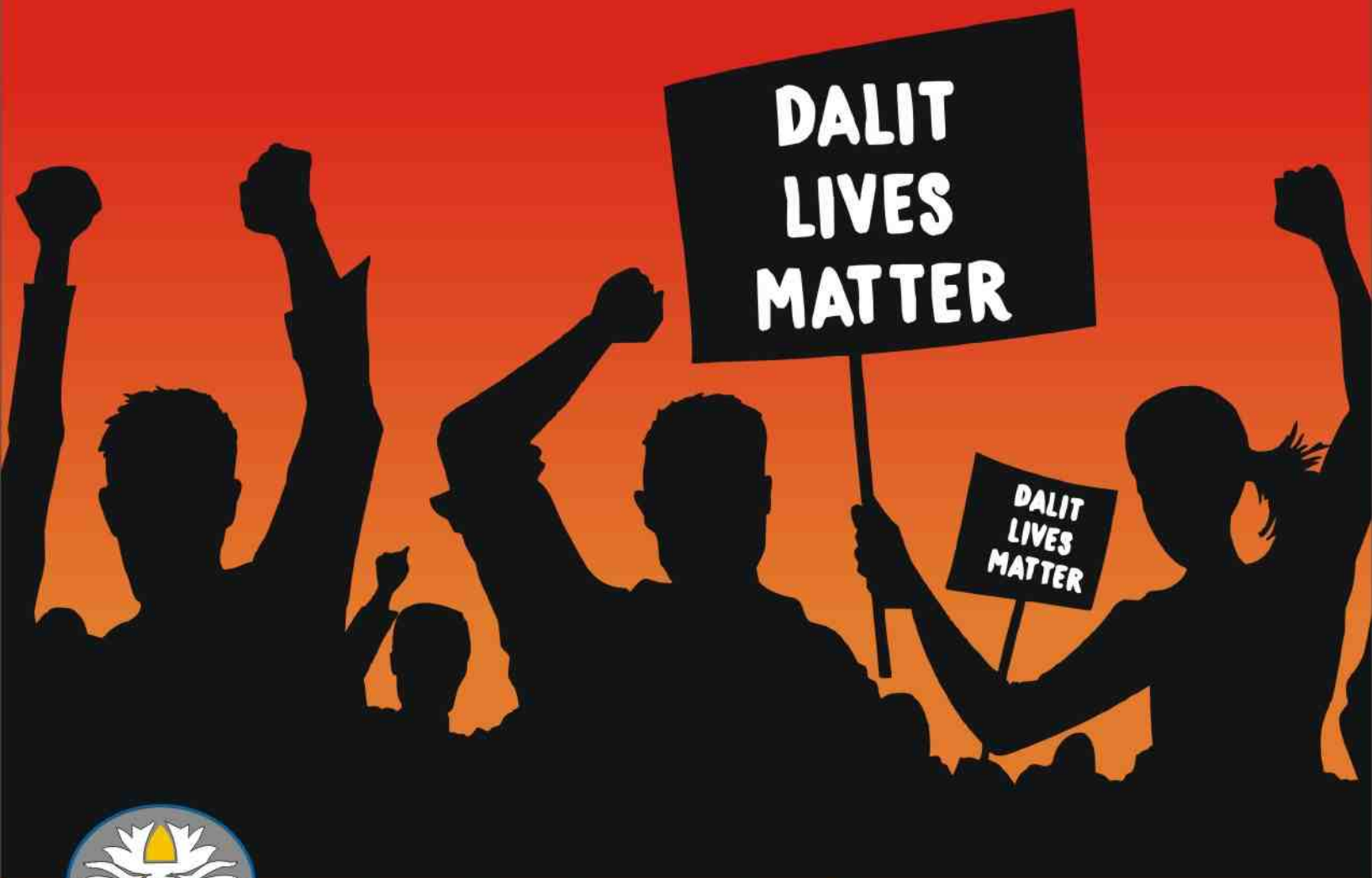




Indians create awareness with **#DalitLivesMatter**

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Editorial

Human society grows and develops in the form of a balanced system of rights and duties. Denial of these basic rights breeds ugly social evils such as oppression, injustice, slavery and inequality. Today, thousands of debates and discussions are taking place in different countries of the world on the protection of human rights. There are many incidents happening around us today that are a question mark for human rights advocates. The United Nations has developed a framework for basic human rights, known as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to promote brotherhood, mutual respect and broader peace among the peoples of the world. Through this UN Charter, its member nations declared themselves committed to working with the United Nations to protect and promote human and fundamental rights throughout the world, both in principle and in practice. For this reason, modern civilization has recognized the promotion of human equality, personal freedom and democratic values as its core principle, in which the protection of basic human rights is the collective responsibility of the state and society. 72 years passed after the proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations, but even the states that have ratified the Universal Declaration of Human Rights have committed the worst human rights violations over the years. Today man is conquering the moon and stars but humanity seems to be being trampled. Recent human rights abuses in India confirm that the world must reconsider its stance on human rights. The NRI Ambedkarite communities from USA, Canada, UK, Germany, France, UAE, Saudia Arabia, Malaysia and other countries demanded that those involved in the Hathras incident must be punished as soon as possible and concrete steps should be taken to protect the honor of Dalits and marginalized. Similarly, more than 30 feminist groups, Dalit organisations and many other diaspora organisations from the UK wrote a letter to UN Human Rights Commissioner Michelle Bachelet for the dismissal of the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh. 10,000 citizens and women right groups from around the world have signed a petition condemning the brutality that led to the death of a 19 year old Dalit girl in Hathras village of Uttar Pradesh. These women are facing gender biasness, uncontrolled sexual violence faced by 80 million Dalit women in India, who are living under the harsh caste hierarchy. The Dalit female belongs to the most oppressed caste discrimination and economic deprivation at the same time, as Suraj Yengde, author of Caste Matters says, "The Dalit female belongs to the most oppressed group in the world, she is a victim of the cultures, structures and institutions of oppression, both externally and internally. This manifests in perpetual violence against Dalit women." The Hathras incident should not be seen in isolation because it is a continuation of structural casteist violence committed against Dalits as a community by upper caste people. It shocked every soul who has some rational senses. The failed criminal justice system of the country helped the culprits to burn all evidences by cremating the body and violating all the constitutional human rights. Dalit have been living for the past 2500 years in imposed castism. Now is the time for international human rights organizations to draw the world's attention to the fact that such violations of human rights in India must be dealt in accordance with the laws enacted by the United Nations.

Editor

Pakistan lauded for promoting minorities rights

LONDON: Dr Peter David, Senior Lecturer at King's College Medical School London, has praised the efforts of the Pakistan government for promoting the rights and welfare of the minority communities and underlined that these efforts must continue.

Speaking at the National Minorities Day Celebration for the Community, organised by the Pakistan High Commission London, Dr David also thanked High Commissioner Mohammad Nafees Zakaria for listening and always welcoming the Pakistan's minority communities living in the UK and doing his best to assist them, said a statement issued. He also informed about the setting up of Pakistan International Christian Medical Association to help support Christian medical institutions in Pakistan and expressed gratitude to the High Commissioner for agreeing to become its patron.

Speaking on the occasion, the High Commissioner underlined that the Constitution of Pakistan guaranteed fundamental rights for all citizens irrespective of religion, race, caste, colour or creed. "It further gives the right to every citizen to profess, practice or propagate religion and perform their religious customs as per their beliefs."

Zakaria highlighted that the recognition of the rights of religious minorities was manifested in various legislative and constitutional measures. He added the National Commission for Minorities under the chairmanship of minister for religious affairs and interfaith harmony protects and safeguards religious, social and cultural rights of the minorities in Pakistan.



He underlined that inferior elements with outside support were attempting to sow the seeds of discord within the society and were exploiting the situation with ulterior motives. He advised the community and friends of Pakistan to be aware of such tactics. The High Commissioner highlighted that the day was meant to pay tribute to the members of minorities for the

sacrifices they rendered in the independence movement of Pakistan and contributions to nation building and the country's progress in various fields. He said all Pakistanis acknowledge with deep appreciation the role of minorities towards the creation and growth of Pakistan, which was continuing.

On the occasion, Zakaria praised the achievement of a student Nadub Gill and noted that he was able to constructively utilise time during coronavirus lockdown to polish his skills and was able to establish a world record for both Pakistan and Britain. He also felicitated his parents for their role in Nadub's achievement, and as a token of appreciation, the High Commissioner presented him with a gift of a laptop and a certificate.

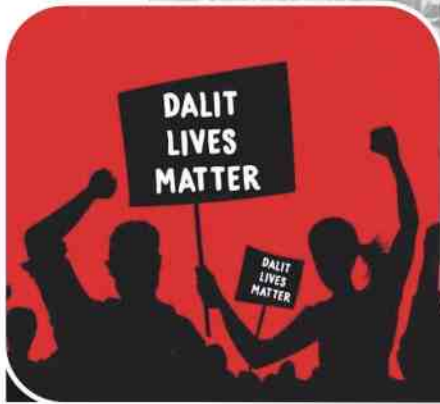


About the situation in held Kashmir, he told the guests that Kashmiris were living under Indian military siege with no communication with the outside world and completely deprived of their fundamental rights. He said with the communication blockade and no media access, the reports of extrajudicial and custodial killings, arbitrary detentions, rapes and sexual harassment and destruction of properties had constantly emerged. "This has prompted Genocide Watch to issue Genocide Alert for Kashmir," he added.

The event was attended by prominent members of Pakistani community of minorities based in the UK, British parliamentarians, academicians, doctors, journalists and artists.

The ceremony ended on a vote of thanks by Michael Massey, who conveyed the message of goodwill from Cllr Dr James Shera, a renowned Pakistani Briton.

Source: The News



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Indians create awareness with #DalitLivesMatter

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Indians are attempting to awaken their fellow citizens with social media action around #DalitLivesMatter, in the fashion of #BlackLivesMatter.

The hashtag was first used in November 2014, shortly after #BlackLivesMatter started trending. But since May 2020 #DalitLivesMatter had more engagement than the entirety of 2019 (engagement measured as the number of posts with 10 or more replies, likes and retweets).

For Dalits, people from lower castes who are considered and treated as “untouchable” in India, the fight against systemic and social subordination by African Americans has long resonated. In 1972 the Dalit Panthers was founded, inspired by the social activism of the Black Panther Party.

In India, Dalits are traditionally excluded from education, land ownership, employment. While the Indian constitution bans caste-based discrimination, untouchability practices are still enforced by more than half of the upper-class households. Minor infractions by Dalits may result in punishment ranging from humiliation to death.

A 2020 article in the Journal of Business Ethics titled “Understanding Economic Inequality Through the Lens of Caste,” authors Bapuji and Chrispal note that: “the caste system influences every aspect of socioeconomic life in the Indian subcontinent and elsewhere, through prescriptions that prohibit and restrict actors in particular social arrangements... maintains socioeconomic inequalities through everyday practices and habits, such as last names, food habits, clothing styles, ceremonies, rituals and relationships.”

When discrimination occurs the recourse available to Dalits is slim. There is ample anecdotal evidence of police bias against people possessing caste markers.

The anecdotes are backed by a 2019 report by the non-profit Common Cause and the Center for Study of Developing Societies that examined police bias in India. The report concluded that 50% of police personnel believe that reported atrocities against Dalits may be false or overblown.

Policing bias is reflected in the reality that more than half of Indian prisoners are from marginalized groups and they are more likely to die in custody, according to a UN Convention Against Torture report.

A total of 1,731 persons died in custody in India during 2019 which comprises almost five such deaths daily and most of the victims belong to the poor and marginalised communities including Dalit, tribal and Muslim. - MuslimMirror #DalitLivesMatter #MuslimLivesMatter

With diminished police protection, Dalits are at the mercy of ancient social mores that see them as “less than” and believe that their place is at the bottom of a stratified socioeconomic system.

The Coronavirus outbreak has exacerbated the situation for Dalits living in crowded conditions with scarce access to medical facilities. In addition to worsening their segregation, there has also been an uptick in violence against Dalits.

Indians who support #BlackLivesMatter have been criticized for supporting African-American struggles while staying complicit in subordinating fellow Indians.

Woke Indians are tackling Dalit subjection with long-term interventions like fostering entrepreneurship and education. As the Dalit visionary Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar said, social reform is difficult, but not impossible.

Source: Global Voices

Dalit women activists highlight caste and gender discrimination at UN hearing



The need for more attention to be paid to intersectional caste and gender discrimination and for transforming mindsets through human rights education and awareness raising, was highlighted at the UN multi-stakeholder hearing 'Accelerating the Realization of Gender Equality and the Empowerment of all Women and Girls' on 21 July.

Dalit women activists from India and Nepal took part in the hearing aimed at taking stock of the outcomes and recommendations of the 25-year review processes, including the sixty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

The hearing was held virtually and brought together representatives of UN Member States and members of specialized agencies, intergovernmental organisations, parliamentarians, civil society organizations, national human rights institutions, academic institutions and the private sector. IDSN International Associate, The International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR), facilitated the participation of several of the Dalit women activists. Judith Anne, of the National Dalit Movement for Justice (NDMJ-NCDHR) spoke at the hearing, highlighting the need for increased awareness of human rights at all levels of society.

“Change is possible when we have a feminist transformative agenda and work with the young girls and boys through the education system in building human rights perspective, addressing diversity, inculcating gender neutral life skill training for all children in school syllabus to order to counter barriers posed by gender stereotypes, castes and other minority issues,” Judith Anne commented.

She also spoke up about the rising cases of gender and caste-based violence in India during the Covid-19 lockdown period, underscoring the discriminatory and patriarchal mindset in her society.

Dalit women activists Aachal Sijapati and Sabitri B K, from the Feminist Dalit Organisation (FEDO) in Nepal, also participated in the hearing and reflected on some of the take-aways.

“‘Gender Equality is not a woman’s issue but a human issue’, is my biggest learning from the event. Getting an opportunity to hear the experience and perspective of distinguished personalities working for the right of women and girls across the world was indeed a brilliant learning opportunity for a Dalit youth like me,” said Aachal Sijapati.

“I believe this platform will definitely help me in contributing to work for gender equality and equal rights and opportunities for Dalit and marginalized girls and young women.”

Her colleague Sabitri B K commented on the importance of Dalit women in leadership roles saying, “Those inspiring people in the panel made me more inspired to work for equality. Women leadership roles in every sector will help to reach equality in the near future. I shared this experience with my team and it led us to work more hard to reach leadership roles in the near future.”

The President of the General Assembly will prepare and circulate a summary of the interactive multi-stakeholder hearing prior to the high-level meeting of the General Assembly.

Source: United Nation

NCRB Data: Higher share of Dalits, tribals, Muslims in prison than number outside



The latest data on prisons released by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) show that Dalits, tribals and Muslims continue to be jailed in numbers disproportionate to their share in the population, unlike OBCs and those belonging to the general category or upper castes.

The data, for the year 2019, also show that among the marginalised groups, Muslims are the one community which has more undertrials than convicts.

At the end of 2019, Dalits made up 21.7% of all convicts in jails across the country. The share of Scheduled Castes among undertrials languishing in jails stood at 21%. The 2011 Census put their share in the population at 16.6%.

In the case of tribals, the gap was equally big. While the Scheduled Tribes made up 13.6% of the convict population and 10.5% of all undertrials in jails, the Census put their numbers at 8.6% of the population.

With a population share of 14.2%, Muslims formed 16.6% of all convicts, but 18.7% of all undertrials. This convict to undertrial ratio was reversed in case of both the Dalits and tribals.

“The data show that our criminal justice system is not only tardy but also loaded against the poor. Those who can hire good lawyers get bail easily and also have a fair shot at justice. The poor also tend to get sucked into petty crimes for lack of economic opportunities,” former chief of Bureau of Police Research and Development N R Wasan said.



The numbers are stark when compared to the share of OBCs and non-marginalised population in the various categories.

While forming 41% of the population as per the National Sample Survey Organisation 2006 data, they represented 35% and 34% of the convicts and undertrials respectively.

The others broadly include upper caste Hindus and non-marginalised sections from other religions. Estimated to form 19.6% of the population, they formed 13% of the convicts and 16% of the undertrials.

Compared to the NCRB data from 2015, the Muslim proportion among undertrials fell in 2019, while rising slightly among convicts. In 2015, Muslims formed 20.9% of all undertrials in jails and 15.8% of all convicts - compared to 18.7% and 16.6% in 2019.

For SCs and STs, the situation has not changed much over the past five years. Dalits formed around 21% of the convicts and undertrials in jails as per the 2015 NCRB data - almost the same as 2019. The tribal numbers have remained almost constant among convicts (13.7% in 2015, 13.6% last year), while falling among undertrials (12.4% in 2015 to 10.5% in 2019).

State-wise, the maximum number of Dalit undertrials in jails were in Uttar Pradesh (17,995), followed by Bihar (6,843) and Punjab (6,831). Most ST undertrials were in Madhya Pradesh (5,894), followed by UP (3,954) and Chhattisgarh (3,471). The maximum Muslim undertrials were in UP (21,139), followed by Bihar (4,758) and Madhya Pradesh (2,947).

A similar analysis for convicts showed the largest Dalit numbers (6,143) in UP, followed by MP (5,017) and Punjab (2,786). Most tribal convicts were in MP (5,303), Chhattisgarh (2,906) and Jharkhand (1,985). At 6,098, the largest number of Muslim convicts were in UP, followed by West Bengal (2,369) and Maharashtra (2,114).

Source: Indian Express



COVID-19 sharpens caste discrimination in Nepal

Across Nepal, it is the already under-served and vulnerable who have been affected by the prolonged lockdowns. But it is the Dalit returnees from India who have tested positive and their families who face double discrimination.

The Ministry of Health issues a daily tally of COVID-19 cases, but no one is counting the poorest of the poor who are dying of hunger or pre-existing diseases, or have been driven deeper into destitution.

Kalpana Nagari, 30, works as a day labourer by the roadside in Godavari Municipality to earn enough to feed her two children. This time of year there are plenty of jobs planting or weeding paddy fields, but she is unemployed because of social stigma after her husband, Tika Narayan, tested positive for COVID-19 last month.

Tika Narayan Nagari had returned from India after he lost his job there on 15 May. He tested positive was quarantined altogether for 50 days first at the border and later because of delays in getting his test result. But even after he got out, the Dalit family has been shunned by neighbours and society.

Her family used to face discrimination even before because they were Dalit, but COVID-19 has added another layer of prejudice. Even that is not what worries Kalpana the most it is not earning enough to feed her family.

“Without work, how are we going to feed our children that is what I am most anxious about,” says Kalpana, who does not have a house of her own and lives with her sister-in-law. Her husband had to go to India to find work to repay a loan he took for his mother's funeral.

“During every meal, I worry about where the next one will come from and I feel faint,” says Kalpana. “The landlords did not give me any work in the rice fields because they said 'your husband has corona, you might also be infected'.”

Kalawati Auji, 40, is also from Godavari and raised her three sons all by herself after her husband died nine years ago. Her eldest son died last year and her youngest has heart disease. Her middle child, Dipak is 22 and worked in Bareilly in India. It was the money Dipak sent home that allowed Kalawati to



pay for food and medicines for her daughter-in-law, son and grandson.

But Dipak lost his job and returned to Nepal on 30 June. He tested positive for COVID-19 and was confined in a quarantine for 34 days where he was ostracised both for being infected and for being a Dalit. After coming home, he quarantined himself in a cowshed for a week.

But even after he recovered, the family has been harassed and humiliated by neighbours. Neither Dipak nor Kalwati can find a job and they owe a neighbourhood provision store Rs50,000.

Says Kalwati: "This pandemic has come to kill the poor like us."

Fifty-year-old Harish B K also returned from Bareilly in the first week of May. Among the 234 people whose swab samples were taken, Harish was among 70 who tested positive only two of them were non-Dalits.

"The non-Dalits in the quarantine used to get hot water, lunch and more food than us. If we asked for more food, they would ignore us," he recalls. Now out of quarantine, but jobless, deep in debt and facing double discrimination and humiliation, Harish says he often has suicidal thoughts.

Godavari Municipality says it has plans to provide farm subsidies to the most vulnerable during the pandemic and lockdown. Deputy Mayor Ratna Kadayat says the plan will give priority to Dalits, women and marginalised communities under the 'Prime Minister's Employment Program'.

But these future plans are a mirage for most Dalit families like the Nagaris, Aujis and BKs here. Their needs are urgent and immediate and they have heard these promises before.

Rights activist Savitra Ghimire at the Dalit Women's Rights Forum (DWRF) says the relief may be too little too late for most Dalit families. Godavari and the Attaria highway intersection are hotspots for a surge in coronavirus cases. In the past month alone, the area got 4,000 returnees from India and of them 349 tested positive and 294 have recovered and gone home.

“ This pandemic has come to kill the poor like us.”
Says Kalwati

However, being virus-free is just the beginning of the struggle for Dalit families here in western Nepal. As more and more districts re-impose lockdown, business is not expected to pick up soon and this means fewer options for employment. And even if jobs open up, Dalit returnees and their families here will be the last to get them.

Source: Nepali Times

Some of the Many Atrocities Against Dalits During COVID-19 The Media Ignored



Social media activists went on an outrage last week over Kangana Ranaut's tweet which falsely claimed that the caste system was no longer prevalent in India. A press release by the National Dalit Movement for Justice (NDMJ-NCDHR) revealed that there have been around 92 cases of violence against Dalits since the lockdown following COVID-19 began (as of June) and that justice for them has been slow. If we were to switch on our television today, we would be immediately bombarded with information that steers our attention away from important issues that are deeply rooted within Indian society. Mainstream channels have always limited themselves from speaking out on the caste system and the violence against Dalits in India.

Ongoing Unrest and Violence Against Minorities

#BlackLivesMatter gained momentum in June 2020 this year, against the brutal killing of George Floyd. Indians were quick to respond to the situation, with many of them taking the protests to the streets in the USA and participating in online activism on social media. However, foreign media was quick to call out this hypocrisy, as violence against minorities has been rampant within the country.

8-Year-Old Dalit Girl Found Deceased in Tamil Nadu

On July 15, her body was found in Kalvilai village in Sathankulam. Initial investigation revealed no signs of sexual assault, however, the parents demanded a further probe into the incident as the child's body had bite marks. The accused named Mutheeswaran was of a higher caste and was arrested by the police. Mutheeswaran claimed that he strangled her in a fitful rage because she threw a stone at him. She used to visit their house to watch television. There have been no updates on how the investigation turned out. According to a report by the Untouchability Eradication Front (CPIM), there have been a total of eighty-one cases of violence against Dalits in Tamil Nadu alone.

Can Kangana Ranaut provide an answer to this?

17-Year-Old-Dalit Boy Shot In Amroha For Entering A Temple

Vikas Jatav from Dhomkera village in UP, which is dominated by upper-caste Chauhans, was killed by 18-year-old Horam Singh while he was sleeping in the temple premises. The family of the victim alleged that the boy was killed because of his caste position, as Singh had assaulted him previously also for entering the temple premises. However, the police have dismissed these allegations and claim that the dispute was over a money issue without further investigation.

20-Year-Old Dalit Man Assaulted Over An Inter-Caste Relationship

On June 7, Viras Vilaj Jagtap was chased and beaten down for having a relationship with an upper-caste woman in the Pimple Saudagar suburb of Pune. Further probe was demanded and the accused were held under murder and other sections under the SC/ST Act. They had also used casteist slurs against the victim while beating him up. No updates have been provided regarding this case too.

A Dalit Woman And Son Assaulted In Gujarat

On August 3, a 55-year-old woman and her 35-year old son were assaulted because the son did not pick up 'cow carcass' from an upper caste home. Sections of the Dalit community have been historically assigned with such an occupation. Reservations were one such reform to remove occupational barriers, however, such discrimination is still evident today. The accused, Surehsinh Chavda, fled the village before he could get booked under the SC/ST Act.

Three Dalit Men Humiliated In Baurali, Lucknow

The men had allegedly stolen a television for which the accused shaved their heads, tied sandals around their necks and made them walk on the streets while flogging them. These accused took justice in their own hands because of a historically warranted authority to inflict violence upon the minority. The accused were booked under the IPC and SC/ST Act.

Source: ED Times



NRI Ambedkarites from USA, Canada, UK, Germany, France among others Demand Justice for the Victim of #HathrasCase

Strong Condemnation of Hathras, Balrampur, Azamgarh, Bulandshahar Caste motivated hate crimes such as rapes/murders in UP, India

NRI Ambedkarites from the USA, Canada, UK, Germany, France, Nederland, Ireland, Spain, Sweden, Japan, Korea, Singapore, New Zealand, Belgium, Hungary, Australia, UAE, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Malaysia.

During this distressing time, the NRI Ambedkarites are seething with rage, pain and sadness at the brutal caste hate crime against a 19-year-old girl from the Scheduled Caste community (also referred to as Dalits/backward castes in media). We offer our condolences to the family of our sister from Hathras, UP. **Our sister lost her life** on September 29th, 2020, in a Delhi hospital, after she succumbed to the injuries because of the hate crime where she was raped, her tongue was slashed, spinal cord broken and she was left to die by some men from the caste Hindu Thakur community. In an alleged attempt to destroy the evidence, her body was **forcefully cremated** by the UP police, which literally caused her **second death**. This happened against the wishes of the family, who were begging in front of the authorities to see their daughter one last time and who were then heckled and locked up. Even before the ashes from her pyre cooled down, there were reports of other heinous rape crimes again on Dalit girls in Balrampur, Azamgarh and

Bulandshahar. What is even more shameful is the age of the victims is as low as 8 years.

We demand immediate prosecution of the criminals under the SC/ST Atrocities Act

As per the IndiaSpend Analysis of the National Crime Records Bureau statistics, the crimes against Dalits rose by 746% from 2006 to 2016. The caste motivated rapes and murders of Dalit women form a major proportion of such crimes against Dalits. The cases pending investigations were up 99% and the police were half as likely to help. The NCRB report is here: **Crimes in India**. The subsequent reports only point to an upward trend in such crimes. This data only shows the reported crimes for which FIR's were admitted. The actual numbers of such crimes against Dalits are much more than these numbers.

Before 2016, the NCRB used to give crimes recorded under POA, 1989 and overall crimes. However, since 2016, the overall figure is not being provided. Thus, there is a visible attempt at hiding the real data. The Dalits have increased vulnerability to such crimes due to the casteist mindset of Caste Hindus, who have a predominant presence in the police force and administration. There have been malicious attempts at obstructing justice, in the form of refusal of the police to file FIR's, refusal to use the POA Act, 1989, threatening of the victim's families by the perpetrators and preventing the victim from seeking justice (For

instance, the 17-year-old Unnao Dalit rape victim was burnt on her way to the court hearing. The convict is a member of the ruling dispensation). Thus, the obstruction of justice often happens with the complicity of the administration and government. The conviction rate for the men accused of raping Dalit women is almost nil. In 2018, the only legal safeguard against the heinous caste crimes and atrocities against the Dalits i.e. The Scheduled Castes and Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, was diluted by the Supreme Court of India **diluted by the Supreme Court of India**, whose independence and integrity has been severely compromised in the recent times.



The difference between rape, murders and other forms of atrocities against the Dalits and similar crimes against other people, is that the crimes against Dalits are caste **hate crimes arising out of casteist mindset of Caste Hindus**. Such crimes are a reflection of jealousy, hate toward and intolerance of the little progress the Dalits have been achieving.

The NRI Ambedkarites strongly demand the Central government and the UP government, who have already been served **NHRC notice** to stop perpetuating such violence against Dalit women and stop protecting the perpetrators of such crimes. The NRI Ambedkarite community demands strong punitive actions against the perpetrators of the crime and strong protection measures to safeguard the dalits, especially the women and take steps to prevent such caste-related hate crimes from happening in the future. The Scheduled Castes and Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, needs not just to be brought back in its original form but also given more teeth to tackle the rising **caste hate crimes against Dalits** and offer protection to the Dalit women and child victims. The Indian government must take initiatives along with the community leaders to eradicate caste, restore law and order in the State of UP and country and create a safer space for women and provide equal opportunities to all its citizens along with additional safeguards for the Scheduled Castes and Tribes.

Our brave daughter will be in the hearts of all Ambedkarites.

Justice shall be served!
#Harthas, #HathrasCase,
HathrasHorrorShocksIndia;
#JusticeForHathrasVictim

List of endorsing organization

- ❑ Ambedkar Association of North America (AANA)
- ❑ Ambedkar Buddhist Association of Texas (ABAT)
- ❑ Ambedkar Buddhist Society of Spain
- ❑ Ambedkar International Mission (AIM)-USA
- ❑ Ambedkar International Mission (AIM), Japan
- ❑ Ambedkar International Mission (AIM), Australia
- ❑ Ambedkar International Mission, London
- ❑ Ambedkar International Center (AIC)
- ❑ Ambedkar International Coordination Society (AICS)
- ❑ Ambedkar International Mission Society, Canada
- ❑ Ambedkar King Study Circle -USA (AKSC)
- ❑ Ambedkar Mission Toronto, Canada
- ❑ Ambedkar Times, USA
- ❑ All India Samata Sainik Dal -SSD
- ❑ Anti Caste Discrimination Alliance (ACDA), UK
- ❑ Ad Dharam Brotherhood USA
- ❑ Awaaz India
- ❑ Begumpura cultural society of New York USA
- ❑ Boston Study Group, (BSG), USA
- ❑ Bheem International USA
- ❑ BAMCEF International Network (BIN)
- ❑ Bhim Patrika Media
- ❑ Coalition of Seattle Indian-American
- ❑ Dr Ambedkar Mission Society, Europe (Germany)
- ❑ Desh Doaba
- ❑ Dalit Dastak
- ❑ Equality labs
- ❑ Federation of Ambedkarite and Buddhist, (FABO), UK
- ❑ Indian Association of Minorities New Zealand
- ❑ International commission of Dalit rights (ICDR), USA
- ❑ Indian Civil Watch (ICW)
- ❑ Indian American Muslim Council -IAMC
- ❑ Jaibhim Atlanta, USA
- ❑ Periyar Ambedkarite Study Circle (PASC)
- ❑ Periyar International, USA
- ❑ Shri Guru Ravidas Sabha of New York, USA
- ❑ Shri Guru Ravidas Sabha of Bay Area, USA
- ❑ Samaj Weekly of United Kingdom
- ❑ The Asian Independent of United Kingdom
- ❑ Babasaheb Ambedkar International Association for Education, Japan

Source: Valivada

The indigenous communities of the plains need urgent social protection



The indigenous communities of the plains of Bangladesh, including those in the tea gardens, are excluded and marginalised for their identity, occupations, casteism, culture, geographical locations and various other reasons. A large percentage of them are deprived of equal opportunities and face wide-ranging social, economic and political disadvantages. According to the Small Ethnic Groups Cultural Organisation Act 2010, last updated in March 2019, the number of small ethnic communities in Bangladesh stands at 50-11 in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) and 39 in the plains (before revisions, their number was 27). However, according to independent research, there are a large number of small ethnic groups (no less than the number seen on the official list) in the tea gardens and other areas outside the CHT who are not included in the official list. Before the March 2019 revision, only nine of the tea communities were on the official list, an indication that a large number of tea communities still remain invisible.

The 2011 population census enumerated the ethnic communities at 1,586,141, which was 1.1 percent of the population back then. Of them, the ethnic population was 845,541 in the CHT and 740,600 in the plains. There are no government statistics on communities added to the official list in 2019. What is unique in these communities is that they are diverse in ethnic, religious and occupational identities and fulfil many of the criteria of being "socially excluded". The state has programmes to provide social protection to the ethnic, excluded populations and marginalised people who do not get the equal benefits of the economic progress the country has made. It is for their history, ethnic and religious identities, occupations and colonial legacy that they have fallen behind.

Now, the challenge is how quickly these communities—who are deprived of equal opportunities, true education of their children and development of capabilities and life skills—can catch up. Many of these communities, particularly in the tea gardens and those in other poverty pockets around the country, are so cut off from social relations and deprived of equal opportunities that occasional financial support is not enough. They are in need of special attention and in many instances,

they deserve positive discrimination to get out of their current situation. However, because these communities are not uniformly poor and because their difficulties are not uniform, there is no single solution for all of them. Each community or group of communities faces some common difficulties; but they also face difficulties unique to their groups of communities. For example, tea communities of about half a million people are among the most marginalised, excluded and extreme poor of Bangladesh. The foremost of the key difficulties they face is wage deprivation, with a tea worker's daily cash pay being Taka 102 (USD 1.7) only. Needless to say, a tea worker's family income (cash pay plus fringe benefits) is far below the poverty level income, causing further deprivation from access to education, health services and nutritious food. Social protection for the non-Bengali tea communities, who are "tied" to the tea gardens and still seen as "aliens", is not just a matter of some occasional financial support from the government. They are a labour class and one can imagine the effects of discrimination of the country's labour law and the non-implementation of some of its key sections. One of the discriminations in the labour law is that the tea workers can only unionise at the national level. An example of non-implementation of the labour law is that they get no gratuity that the labour law provides for. The most appalling for the tea workers, who are descendants of indentured workers brought by the British tea companies to work on the tea gardens, is that they don't own any land. They also do not own the houses they live in. It is only the state that can consider distribution of land to these landless people. It should be a top policy matter in order to introduce real social protection of the tea workers.

The Tk 5,000 or equivalent benefit given to a worker's family every three years from the Programme for Livelihood Improvement of Tea Garden Labourers, a social safety net programme (SSNP) directly targeted at the tea workers, is a drop in the ocean of impoverishment. They, of course, get some benefits from other SSNPs, but those are also very inadequate. There are also a great number of other ethnic communities, who are on as well as outside the government list. Those excluded from the official list include-Bhuiya, Bindumondol, Buna, Chowhan,

Ghatual/Ghatuar, Hajra, Hari, Kadar, Kairi, Kalwar, Karmokar, Koda, Kshatriya, Lyngam (a group among the Khasi) Modok, Noonia, Pal (also known as Kumar), Rajbhar, Rajbongshi, Robidas and Tanti. There is a strong indication that one-third of around 650,000 Kshatriyas in nine districts in the Northwest-Bogura, Dinajpur, Joypurhat, Kurigram, Lalmonirhat, Nilphamari, Panchagarh, Sirajganj and Thakurgaon-are Koch. Some of these communities are found both inside and outside the tea gardens.

While just a few of the plain land ethnic communities such as the Garo, Khasi and Monipuris are doing well in attaining education and living a relatively dignified life, most of the others live hand to mouth and many are considered social outcasts. As landless farmers, labourers, porters, fishers, craftsman, rickshaw and van drivers, small traders, etc, they need scaled support from the state-financed social protection programmes. While the National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) approved by the cabinet on June 1, 2015 guides social protection, there are at least 125 social safety net programmes administered by 25 ministries and divisions. The budget for these programmes for the fiscal year 2019-2020 was Tk 74,367 crore, which was 2.58 percent of GDP and 14.21 percent of the budget. However, the largest shares of SSNPs go in pensions for retired government employees and freedom fighters (Tk 26,395.05 crore in 2019-2020). In the fiscal year 2020-2021, the budget for SSNPs has been raised to Tk 95,574 crore.

In the list of SSNPs, just one of the 125 Lump Sum Provision for Development of Special Areas (except Hill Tracts) is directly devoted to the plain land ethnic communities. This provision was started in 2013-14 and the budget goes to Development Assistance for Small Ethnic Communities Living in Plain Land, an initiative of the prime minister's office to provide development assistance to the plain land ethnic communities. Starting in 1996 with a budget of Taka five crore, the initiative has gradually scaled up financial support, with Taka 40 crores allocated for 2018-2019 and Taka 50 crores for 2019-2020. The initiative provides financial support for income generating projects. From 2016-2017, a few other marginalised groups such as the Dalit and tea workers have been included as recipients of benefits from this initiative. But given the population size of the plain land ethnic communities, the budget for this programme is still very small. The beneficiaries, apart from development assistance, want the prime minister's office to provide support to deal with land disputes, human rights abuse and *khas* (public) land distribution to the ethnic communities. There is of course national legal aid

services organisations (NLASO) that provide legal assistance to the poor. However, there is very little awareness about NLASO and its outreach is limited. The ethnic communities also access benefits from some other major SSNPs such as Food for Work, Work for Money, Vulnerable Group Development, Vulnerable Group Feeding, Open Market Sales, Cash for Work, Gratuitous Relief, Test Relief Food, community based healthcare, stipends (primary, secondary and higher secondary), old-age allowance and allowances for widows and distressed women. In the absence of disaggregated data, it is difficult to say how the ethnic communities benefit from these programmes.

At the end of the day, what the indigenous communities and tea workers really want for their social protection goes far beyond some financial benefits. The first and foremost of their demands is the recognition of diverse ethnic communities and their common identity as "indigenous". For the ethnic communities not to be excluded from SSNPs, there is a need of robust databases on their household income and asset situation. Special attention should be given to education for the children of the tea plantation workers and ethnic communities in particular. For instance, the government primary schools in the tea gardens outside Sreemangalupazila can be counted on fingers. The company schools (run by the owners of the tea gardens) are in very bad shape. Schools run by NGOs are also not stable. Enough access for the children of the tea and ethnic communities to the government schools can be instrumental in pulling these communities out of darkness.

At the same time, improving conditions for health and hygiene is an urgent need, particularly in the tea gardens where defecation in the open is still widespread. The single most important issue of the tea and ethnic communities is access to land. Resolving land rights issues and distribution of *khas* land to these communities is an urgent concern and high level policy matter. Granting customary land rights to those who live in forest villages is a long-standing issue. To resolve this issue, the government needs to sign the ILO Convention 169 that awards customary land rights to the communities who have been living on forest land for generations and do not have title deeds. Implementation of the Labour Act, 2006 and its amendment to end discrimination for the tea workers, is a timely demand of the tea workers. Passing of the anti-discrimination law by the parliament is no less important for the tea and ethnic communities, many of whom are considered social outcasts.

Source: The Daily Star

“Black Day” protest against discrimination of India's Dalit Christians

India's Christians observed “Black Day” on 10 August, reminding people that Dalits who embrace Christianity, have been facing a constitution-based discrimination. The word “Dalit”, derived from Sanskrit, meaning “broken” or “downtrodden”, is a word used to signify former “untouchables, who are so low in social status that they are considered outcasts or outside the rigid caste system of Hindu society. As a result, through centuries, Dalits have been subjected to extreme exploitation, inhuman treatment, atrocities and poverty.

To help their socio-economic uplift, the Indian Constitution reserves for them special privileges and benefits such as quota in government jobs and educational institutions. However, the Constitution (Scheduled Caste) Order (Paragraph 3) that India's first President Rajendra Prasad signed on August 10, 1950, initially stated that “...no person who professes a religion different from the Hindu religion shall be deemed to be a member of a Scheduled Caste.”

When Sikhs demanded these privileges, the Order was modified in 1956 to include them. The Buddhists too were granted the benefits in 1990. But Muslims and Christians of low caste origin continue to be excluded despite their demands. The “Black Day” protest by Christian Dalits is against this Presidential Order of August 10, 1950.

India's Catholic Church for Dalits

Dalits form about 60 per cent of India's Christian community, which makes up about 2.3 per cent of the country's largely Hindu 1.3 billion population. Muslims form some 14 per cent. The Catholic Church of India has very much at heart the cause of Dalit Christians. This concern of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) is largely carried out by its Office for Scheduled Castes/Scheduled classes, through actions such as lobbying, advocacy, memoranda, court petitions, movements and protests.

First observed in 2009, Black Day is organized annually by the CBCI, the National Council of Churches in India and the National Council of Dalit Christians.

Dalit Christians' plight under Covid-19



On the occasion of this year's Black Day, Archbishop Felix Machado of Vasai Diocese said the cause of Dalit Christians assumes an added poignancy under the impact of Covid-19 and the closedown.

Listen to Archbishop Felix Machado of Vasai Diocese

Speaking to Vatican News, he said the “first victims of all the effects of coronavirus are poor people like Dalits”. They are doubly and triply poor because they are not just deprived economically and have no essential means of livelihood but they are regarded as the “useless of society”, despised, neglected and discriminated against.

Even though Covid-19 strikes anyone who comes in its way, the Bishop of Vasai said, the Dalits, in many ways, are the first and biggest victims of the pandemic. This is why the action of the Catholic Church of India is particularly focused on the Dalits.

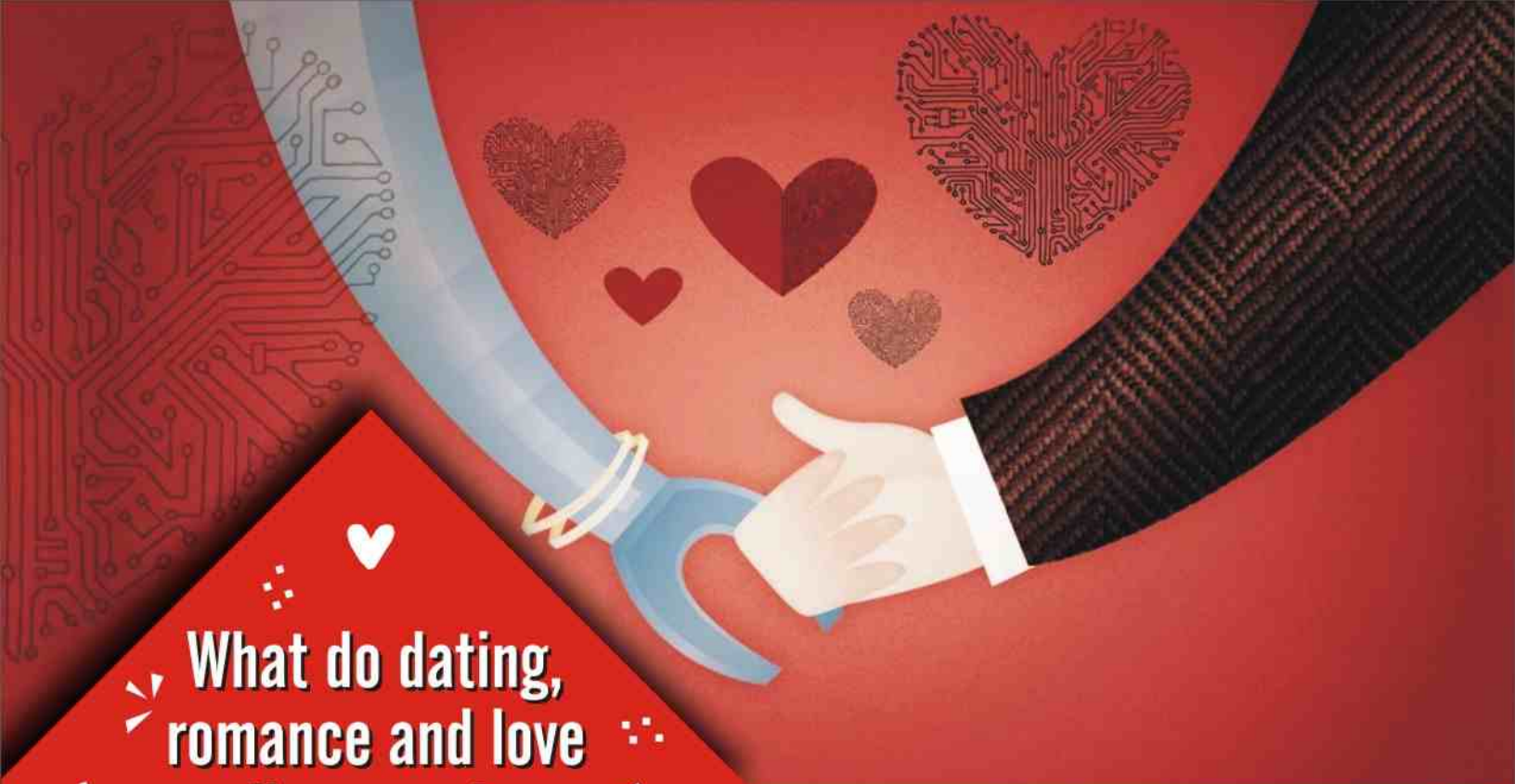
Church fights caste system

Indian Cardinal Oswald Gracias, the president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI), the apex body of the Catholic Church in the country, has also called for equal rights for India's marginalized Dalit Christians.

“Today there is a great consciousness because of what happened in America of the importance of equality for the weaker people,” the Archbishop of Bombay told the Crux news website, July 27, in the wake of the Black Life Matters protests across the US and the world.

“In our own country: The question of Dalits. The Church is shouting from the rooftops that we can't discriminate against them and is fighting against the caste system,” he said. “God has treated everybody as equal,” he added.

Source: Vatican News



What do dating, romance and love really mean for a Dalit woman in India today?

An excerpt from 'Swipe Me Left, I'm Dalit', by Christina Dhanaraj, from 'Love is Not a Word: The Culture and Politics of Desire', edited by Debotri Dhar.

There is also a steady stream of discourse dedicated to how Indian women are gaining sexual agency, in that they are no longer hesitant when it comes to casual sex, being with married men, or having an open relationship. Hook-ups and casual dating, via an app or otherwise, are perceived to be creating a sex-positive culture for Indian women who may otherwise be inhibited from experiencing unbridled sexual pleasure inside or outside of a relationship.

Unsurprisingly, this mainstream feminist discourse is predominantly led by women from upper-caste/bourgeoisie locations. Not all Dalit women (cisgender, heterosexual, urban and educated), who consider dating as a possible route to finding romantic partners, necessarily share the same experience.

At the heart of a good, intimate relationship is the understanding that those involved in sustaining that bond are of value. But how is this value determined and who in the relationship determines it? The highest value, as defined by Hinduism, has traditionally been ascribed to the Brahmin woman, followed by the Kshatriya, the Vaishya and the Shudra. The modern-day ideal is also a savarna or a savarna-passing woman, who is typically light-skinned and able-bodied, belonging to a family that has monetary and social capital and embodying qualities considered to be feminine.

The farther one is from this ideal, the more undervalued she is perceived to be. Within relationships, this perception, albeit external, translates into an unhealthy power imbalance, leading to a potential compromising of one's rights, desires and authenticity.

Dalit women who carry the double burden of gender and caste and are one of the most socially undervalued in India, are therefore under constant pressure to project an acceptable version that mimics the savarna ideal. In a romantic pursuit or a partnership, we are expected to operate along a behavioural band that is far narrower than what is required of a non-Dalit woman.

Needless to say, the existence of this ever-present

mandate to be something one is not, so as to constantly prove one's value or romantic potential, even in the most personal of spaces that is ideally supposed to feel like home, is unfair at best and cruel at worst. And the price that is asked of us, in return for a semblance of normalcy, is our safety, dignity and mental health.

Seeking love when Dalit and woman

While I do not know of every Dalit woman's experience, I can say (based on mine and that of my friends/ acquaintances) that dating in India overall is nowhere close to the rosy picture characterised by the absence of caste or the prominence of female sexual agency. Dalit women are repeatedly stereotyped as:

Victims: We are primarily viewed as victims and survivors of various kinds of violence. Reification of the Dalit identity has led to the boxing of our existence, whose dimensions are solely defined by the savarna gaze. Our self-assertions of identity are commodified to create a warped limiting of our lives, in effect creating an image that is helpless and voiceless in the minds of our potential suitors. We are not seen as being capable of desire, love, or happiness; we don't seem to exist as individuals outside of violence.

Not only does this make us seem unattractive, especially in the context of dating where confidence is generally regarded as an attractive trait, but it also has further implications in an actual romantic or sexual relationship. Because it is assumed that we do not have the power to protect ourselves, our bodies and our labour are grossly undervalued. Intimate violence may follow, whose magnitude is further aggravated by a real (or perceived) lack of monetary and social support in the case of under-privileged Dalit women.

While traditional discourses, most often authored by savarna voices, have concluded that we face intimate violence only at the hands of Dalit men (which in turn has led to the unfair criminalising of Dalit men and boys), our lived realities today speak of another truth. Non-Dalit male partners are far more likely to inflict violence on us both physically and sexually, for the reason that they face far less legal and social consequences when reported.

Unfeminine: The Dalit woman is perceived mostly in comparison to her non-Dalit counterpart: the lighter-skinned savarna woman who is pure, quiet and delicate, versus the dark-skinned Dalit woman who is

polluting, loud and tough. Pop culture through the ages has helped propagate this dichotomy.

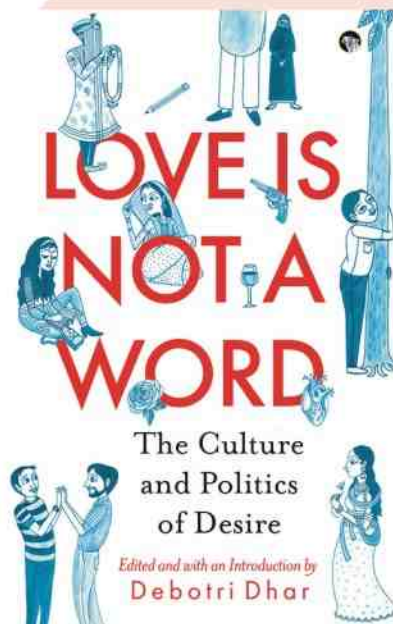
By casting only light-skinned savarna women as love interests of the male protagonist, it has implied that the one deserving of love and a happily ever-after will need to have a certain set of physical

attributes and come from a certain social location. Even in the case of Dalit male protagonists, the one who catches his eye or steals his heart is most often not a Dalit woman (Sairat, Thalapathy, Kadhal), who when represented, is often depicted as loud-mouthed, angry, and verbally abusive.

In the real world, this translates into an angry Dalit woman stereotype, which lacks femininity and therefore cannot evoke the feeling of romantic love in a heteronormative sexual setting. Particularly in the case of a politicised Dalit woman who is active on social media and the digital space, this stereotype is repeatedly used against her in an effort to invalidate her political critiques.

The mere voicing of her opinions and the vocalising of her lived experiences invites a barrage of accusations from both Dalits and non-Dalits. If such a woman does succeed in finding a heterosexual romantic partner, she is expected to maintain certain behaviours so as to sustain the relationship. These include subscribing to the ideals of a traditional wife/girlfriend, finding ways to integrate herself into the partner's social circle and leaving her "identity politics" outside the door.

Thus, in most cis-hetero relationships, the price paid by a Dalit woman (stereotyped as angry and unfeminine) towards its success is far higher than that required of a non-Dalit woman. The latter can retain her political self and still be perceived as feminine, while the former will have to keep proving her femininity by choosing to not voice her political opinions, which are typically deemed as irrational. Voicing of these opinions, either publicly or privately,



means the potential end to a relationship.

Promiscuous: The dichotomy of the Dalit vs Non-Dalit woman also shapes how the former is perceived and treated sexually. As Rowena points out, the upper-caste woman's body is regarded as sacred, protected by the men in her family, based on notions of chastity, virginity and docile femininity. But the Dalit woman's body has traditionally been regarded as a site of sexual pleasure and entertainment without the need for legitimacy.

She says, "upper caste women are constantly imagined and represented as chaste and sexually controlled, in opposition to lower caste women who are repeatedly portrayed as sexually loose, hyper and 'immoral,' a process that starts right from the differences in the representations of Sita and Shoorpanakha in the Ramayana."

Today's urban Dalit woman navigating the modern dating/matrimonial space is not spared this stereotyping. What the sexually liberated non-Dalit woman does and articulates is accepted as a credible political response, while what the Dalit woman does is perceived as shameful.

Casual sex, being with married men and having open relationships, which are touted as sexually liberating and indicative of a sex-positive culture does not hold the same meaning for Dalit women. Particularly in the case of men having savarna women as partners, their interest in Dalit women outside of the legitimate relationship is only an urban/modern version of upper-caste men sexually exploiting disadvantaged Dalit women that work in their fields/houses. In most cases, the savarna partner is not threatened by this arrangement; she continues to be the legitimate entity in the equation while the Dalit woman is relegated to the task of satisfying the man's unconventional sexual desires.

Where do we go from here?

The stereotyping that Dalit women face when navigating the modern dating space is likely to be far more sinister than what I have described above. And the more aware she becomes of the dynamics, the tougher it becomes for her to trust a key ingredient needed in finding and sustaining a loving relationship.

She is constantly under pressure to project an acceptable version that should be sexy but not loose, docile but not weak, confident but not too strong, lest

she be stereotyped, only to be further exploited or victimized. Lack of social capital or support, in the form of friends or family, also makes it difficult when dealing with break-ups or legitimising social unions.

Although this subject requires more in-depth articulation in terms of what we can do as individuals, allies, families and communities, I believe it is important to start with the following:

1. Rethink the discourse around polyamory, open relationships and casual sex in the context of modern heterosexual relationships. Although these are, by definition, sex positive and may work as liberal alternatives for mainstream feminists who come from privileged social locations, it could potentially be exploitative for Dalit women.
2. As progressive communities, it is important to love and cherish Dalit women for who they are and what they are becoming. Constantly prioritising the fragility of non-Dalit women or choosing to perceive them as the ones worthy of romantic love or legitimacy are typical ways in which Dalit women are undervalued in private spaces. This must stop.
3. Have a serious discourse on the politics of desirability within the Indian context. Who we choose to have sex with, be 'friends with benefits' with and then go on to have committed, exclusive relationships with, are political. This cannot be downplayed as personal preferences. Social location by virtue of caste, race, class, religion, ethnicity and other markers plays a huge role in determining our romantic and sexual choices.
4. Actively challenge the dominance of the savarna and the cis-hetero male gaze, which continues to propagate the Madonna/Whore dichotomy in its various cultural manifestations, desires only certain types of bodies and pigeonholes Dalit women as irrationally angry women or other stereotypes as described above.
5. We are a long way off from creating a world that values Dalit women in both the public and the private space. Modernity has not ensured an egalitarian world for everyone. Unless we are willing to seriously question our privileges across every space, our role in holding up negative stereotypes of Dalit women and our personal choices in love and sex, what we do in the name of anti-caste politics will only be performative.

Source: Scroll In