

India reaches 8th of 10 stage genocide: US Muslim advocacy group raises 'alert'

p. 5

STAGE ONE

CLASSIFICATION

The differences between people are not respected. There's a division of 'us' and 'them', which can be carried out using stereotypes, or excluding people who are perceived to be different.

STAGE TWO

SYMBOLISATION

This is a visual manifestation of hatred. Jews in Nazi occupied Europe were forced to wear the yellow Star of David. In Cambodia the Khmer Rouge forced people from the Eastern Zone to wear blue scarves. From 1991, in north-west Bosnia, all non-Serbian citizens were forced to wear white armbands.



STAGE THREE

DISCRIMINATION

The dominant group denies civil rights or even citizenship to identified groups. The 1935 Nuremberg Laws stripped Jews of their German citizenship, made it illegal for them to do many jobs or to marry German non-Jews.

STAGE FOUR

DEHUMANISATION

Those perceived as 'different' are treated with no form of human rights or personal dignity. During the Genocide in Rwanda, Tutsis were referred to as 'cockroaches'; the Nazis referred to Jews as 'vermin'.



STAGE FIVE

ORGANISATION

Genocides are always planned. Regimes of hatred often train those who go on to carry out the destruction of a people. The Sudanese Government supports and arms the Janjaweed (Arab militia) in Darfur to carry out the violence and killings.



STAGE TEN

DENIAL

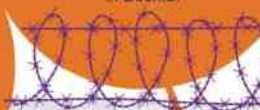
The perpetrators or later generations deny the existence of any crime. Evidence is destroyed and witnesses are intimidated. There has been an increase in Holocaust denial online in recent years.



STAGE SEVEN

PREPARATION

Perpetrators plan the genocide. They often use euphemisms such as the Nazi's phrase 'The Final Solution' to cloak their intentions. Acts of genocide are disguised as self-defence if there is an ongoing armed conflict or civil war, such as in Bosnia.



STAGE EIGHT

PERSECUTION

Victims are identified because of their ethnicity or religion and death lists are drawn up. People are sometimes segregated into ghettos, deported or starved and property is often expropriated. Genocidal massacres begin.



STAGE NINE

EXTERMINATION

The hate group murders their identified victims in a deliberate and systematic campaign of violence. Millions of lives have been destroyed or changed beyond recognition through genocide.

STAGE SIX

POLARISATION

Propaganda begins to be spread by hate groups. The Nazis used the newspaper *Der Stürmer* to spread and incite messages of hate about Jewish people.



Genocide never just happens. There is always a set of circumstances which occur or which are created to build the climate in which genocide can take place. These stages may occur simultaneously or in a different order.

Based on research by Dr Gregory H Stanton: genocidewatch.com



MINO-VIEW

Quarterly Magazine

Voice of Minorities & Oppressed People in
South Asian Societies

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Objectives

The Mino-View, a quarterly magazine, is a humble attempt to cover all dimensions of minority's life and culture not only in Pakistan but in all states of South Asia. It will act as a mirror reflector, reflecting the issues related to the identified minorities and other oppressed classes in the region. The magazine seeks to serve the objective of shedding light on the darkest issues of our social system by voicing the concerns of minorities and other oppressed sections of the South Asian societies. We will welcome feedback from our respected readers and concerned quarter. We invite social forces from all over the region to join hands for adopting a way towards egalitarianism.

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Editorial

Welcome to the new issue of Mino-View. The New Year brings with it new aspirations and new hopes. But for those who are backward and downtrodden sections of the society, the change of year does not mean anything. The caste-based divisions of humanity and the discriminatory attitudes associated with them have spread beyond the borders. With the rise in number of South Asians in the United States, the caste-based discrimination in house rentals are also increasing. A study shows that around 77% of South Asians living in United States are facing different types of caste-based discriminations while going through the process of renting regardless of their religion, profession or nationality. The scenario is more worst in South Asian region .In Nepal, more than 4 million people in the informal sector are forced to live a very vulnerable life. Around 250,000 informal workers, most of them belong to marginalized communities of Nepal were already experiencing a stigma of caste-based discriminations. As far as the human rights of women and girls are concerned, the overall situation was not much satisfactory in the last year as reported by Human Rights Watch in its World Report 2022. According to the report, Nepal has still the highest ratio of child marriages and rapidly increasing rate of rapes in Asia. When it comes to women's rights, the hijab incident in the Indian state of Karnataka cannot be ignored. Where wearing a hijab in educational institutes became a disaster for Muslim students and teachers all over the country. It caused outrage amid intensifying protests over ban on Islamic head scarves in the southern state. Due to this incident, the colors of sectarianism spread all over India and a new wave of panic spread among the minority communities living in the country. While India has already reached the 8th stage of genocide for persecuting the Muslim communities. That is why an American Human Rights Organization 'Justice for all' declared a Genocide Emergency Alert for India in January 2022.It said that over the last eight years, Indian government's policies to aggressively induce Hindutva thoughts have tarnished India's image of pluralism and secularism badly. But even in this darkness of despair, rays of hope seem to emerge. The voices of the backward classes have been rising for centuries all over the world. Particularly in India, such marginalized and downtrodden groups are spreading their voice around the world now through modern internet and social media apps. From entertainment to information, the youth of oppressed societies are looking very active on social media, which is certainly welcome.

Editor

Inside the dangerous world of Hindutva 'Trads' and 'Raitas'



On January 4, the Mumbai police booked the alleged perpetrators of the 'Bulli Bai' app. The two persons arrested - an 18-year-old young woman, Shweta Singh and her friend, 21-year-old Vishal Jha - are symptomatic of a larger disease: a new kind of extremist alt-right majoritarian radicalisation. As in the case of the young man from IIT who posted rape threats against Virat Kohli's daughter, they are not isolated cases of young people gone astray. These individuals are a product of a radical ecosystem that is inspired by the propaganda of a 'Hindurashtra' but which is suspicious of the official purveyors of Hindutva for their 'pragmatism' and supposed 'softness' towards Muslims and Dalits.

In the past few years, a significant number of young men and women in India have been attracted to this dangerous alt-right digital ecosystem called 'trad-wing', in which they serve as self-styled civilisational warriors. Trads view other right-wingers as too liberal and call them 'raitas'. Unlike the trads, the raitas - whose name stems from the phonetic pronunciation of right-wing and a play on the idiom 'raitafailana' or to botch up - supposedly believe in a Hindu nationalism that is more symbolic than theological. For them, the political leadership Narendra Modi provides is enough to further the Hindutva agenda. And as the more 'mainstream' of Hindu nationalists, they're more visible in the public sphere. Conversely, trads believe in a narrow religious supremacy within which there is very little scope to bend the rules to suit political convenience. Raitas are perceived by them as moderates, with little to mark them out from leftists and liberals.

The fault lines between these two subcultural movements within Hindutva became visible during the post-poll Bengal violence and after Modi succumbed to the farmers' protest and repealed the controversial farm laws. Even as the raitas praised his pragmatism, he was viciously attacked by the trads

for what they say was his moderate response. What distinguishes this alt-right movement from the organised hate crime nexus is its self-sustaining and organic nature. This is a movement in which people willingly participate for association, irrespective of what they may gain or lose. In that sense, it is an online army of individuals deeply committed to the movement, with their political engagement expressing itself in twisted forms of "humour." The vocabulary is borrowed from the Western 'alt-right' - the neo-Nazi online ecosystem which is vocally opposed to affirmative action, minority advocacy and liberal values. A section of generally educated 'upper' caste Hindus have appropriated the symbols of the Western alt-right, like Pepe the Frog. The meme originated from a politically unaffiliated cartoon in 2005, burgeoning to cult status by 2015, before being co-opted by white-supremacists in the US. While these spaces do not contain rigid structural organisation, they work as a subculture, developing a visual language that is simultaneously new yet draws on a historic tradition of hateful iconography.

For instance, Shweta Singh, the alleged perpetrator in the Bulli Deals case, shot to notoriety after she posted a Hindutva propaganda poster which directly reconfigured a Nazi propaganda poster exhorting 'Aryans' to have more children. Niraj Bishnoi, the young man arrested in the case allegedly tried to mislead the investigation through his account @giyu44 by constantly sharing false information about the Sulli Deals case. While it is important for us to know the diversity of hatred in the right-wing ecosystem, both online and offline, we need to focus on the enormous criminality of the ecosystem and how young Hindu youths, especially from 'upper' caste communities, are being radicalised to hate Muslims and Dalits en masse.

Similar 'digital hate communities,' where hatred works as the basis for a social identity, have been

noted in the West in the case of 4chan in the US, and its New Zealand equivalent 8chan. Neither space was considered to host activities more dangerous than 'trolling,' but both built up to horrendous real-world terrorist acts. In the US, the alt-right movement took responsibility for the attack on the Capitol and continued to use the event for further recruitment. In New Zealand, it led to the Christchurch attack by Brendon Tarant, who issued a digital manifesto marked with references to right-wing meme culture, saying, "I have provided links to my writings below, please do your part by spreading my message, making memes and shit posting as you usually do." In the case of the deadly El Paso shooting, a hate-filled racist manifesto linked with the shooting surfaced on popular messaging forum 8chan minutes before the event. The four-page manifesto had chilling messages including: "I'm probably going to die today." Closer home, we saw young men open fire at Jamia and Shaheen Bagh, and at former JNU student leader Umar Khalid. One of them broadcast similar suicidal messages on his social media right before the attack. He was live-streaming before the attack. One of his posts read: "Shaheen Bagh, the game is over." When The Wire investigated the men and women involved in the North East Delhi communal violence of 2020, it found the social media handle of Ankit Tiwari - one of the youngest men who confessed to brutally attacking Muslim during the riots in a chat with an undercover reporter - filled with similar messages for Kashmiris and Muslims.

Elliot Higgins, founder of the Bellingcat website and one of those who has analysed Tarrant's manifesto, noted, "We have this alternative media ecosystem that is driving a lot of disinformation." "It is not understood by journalists or anyone really beyond a very small group of people who are really engaged with it. I doubt that even the alt-media ecosystem really understands its own nature and how it grows organically rather than being an organized space." Tarrant's final words before he began the shooting spree were: "Subscribe to Pewdiepie" leaving journalists clueless as to how to interpret it. The propensity for physical violence is also something the Indian trad has in common with their Western counterpart, with online Hindutva communities regularly putting out calls to purchase weaponry, and setting up WhatsApp and Telegram channels by which to purchase arms. Here, the pages push out memes, religious iconography, political speech and commercial calls to purchase arms with equal



regularity. This becomes particularly concerning when viewed within the context of the calls made by larger clutch of Hindutva leaders to mobilise to violence - 'to kill or be killed.'

Hindutvatrad accounts, just like the western neo-Nazi alt-right, operate in packs, unafraid to attack even right-wing Hindus who defend Muslims. Even many prominent right-wing accounts distance themselves from the trads. We found that many raita accounts were celebrating the arrest of trads whom they described as a hurdle to the Hindutva cause. Right-wing accounts often complain about abuse and hate by trads.

When Alt News and The Wire monitored raita right-wing groups to see their reactions to trads, they described trads as neo-Nazis. This is a loose ecosystem, an organic pipeline directing ordinary Hindu youth into radical hate speech. They could be much more dangerous than the organised lynch mobs and militant Hindutva groups, because fundamentally, for these groups, hatred and genocidal calls to action are considered fun. In her paper 'The Nationalism in the Digital Age: Fun as a Meta Practice of Extreme Speech,' Sahana Udupa, foregrounds "fun" as a salient aspect of right-wing mobilisation, positing that this sort of activity develops into "group identification and collective (if at times anonymous) celebration of aggression." TradS are therefore not just an extreme fringe to be ignored - they are simultaneously the byproduct of and contribute to the normalisation of extreme hate speech, genocidal jokes and a social camaraderie built around hate, for no other purpose than hate itself.

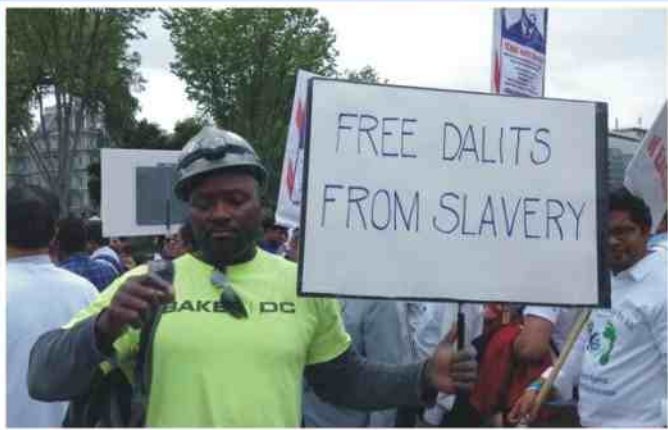
Source: The News Minute

Caste bias 'more frequent' in South Asian diaspora: Renting in US amidst Covid

The International Commission for Dalit Rights (ICDR) and civil rights groups are concerned about increasing “caste-based” housing discrimination, harassment and intimidation in the United States. In 2021, ICDR received more than 150 complaints from across the country alleging housing discrimination due to caste while attempting to rent or renting a house or apartment. The ICDR received more than five calls each month from victims across the country complaining about caste-based discrimination in housing or renting processes. The ICDR advocacy team reviewed each complaint and verified the facts of the incidents. The findings demonstrate that South Asian house owners, master tenants and landlords often discriminate by asking renters about their caste while engaging in the negotiation. We found this occurred with victims in California, Colorado, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Texas and other parts of the country. The risk of caste-based housing discrimination in the United States is an ongoing problem and has likely increased as the population of South Asians in the United States has increased; there are currently almost 5.4 million people of South Asian descent in the United States. In a 2021 study, 77% of South Asian descent respondents reported experiencing some form of caste discrimination when being processed for housing. Even outside housing negotiations, ICDR and other civil society groups have substantial documented evidence of dominant caste people discriminating against subordinate caste people, many of them “Dalits,” in every section of American society regardless of religion, nationality and profession.

On August 18, 2021, Sanjeev Bimali, a Nepali descent and a San Francisco, California landlord, denied renting an available unit to another Nepali descent on account of caste. Bimali initially agreed to rent his available unit for \$900 per month to a renter (“the victim”), who was also a Nepali descent living in the same location. Bimali asked for a \$500 security deposit, which he received immediately from the victim through an electronic money transfer app. Both the victim and Bimali exchanged their phone numbers and agreed on a move-in date of September 1, 2021. About six hours later, Bimali contacted the victim to





inform him that the unit was no longer available because family is coming from Nepal and current two renters would be disturbed, despite previously stating that the unit was available and the current renters would not have any problem. The victim was shocked by the sudden change and asked Bimali what had happened? Bimali stated that his other renters threatened to leave if the new renter moved in. The victim felt “discriminated against, humiliated and disturbed.” While asking “why are you not renting available unit for me?”, Bimali responded without mentioning caste and noting there was no reason to discriminate and that the victim was overthinking the incident. Bimali returned the security deposit and sent a screenshot of the transaction as a proof. This testimonial is one example of the caste-based housing discrimination and harassment in the United States that ICDR and civil rights groups have observed. Clearly, Bimali refused to rent an available unit because of the victim's caste.

Unfortunately, this victim is not alone in his experience; caste-based discrimination in the housing/renting process is something we've been seeing more frequently within the South Asian descent in this most difficult time of pandemic, probably because there has been more attention paid to this issue and more victims are coming forward when they are faced an unfair housing discrimination, particularly when the South Asian descendants rent their available unit to another South Asian descendants. Caste discrimination is a form of ancestry, national origin and racial discrimination. The concept of national origin, ancestry and race discrimination are defined and embedded in US law and are sufficient grounds to protect individuals from caste-based housing discrimination. On December 22, 2021, California Attorney General Rob Bonta issued an alert reminding tenants of their fair housing rights and protections. In a 2021 study, 77% of South Asian descent respondents reported experiencing some

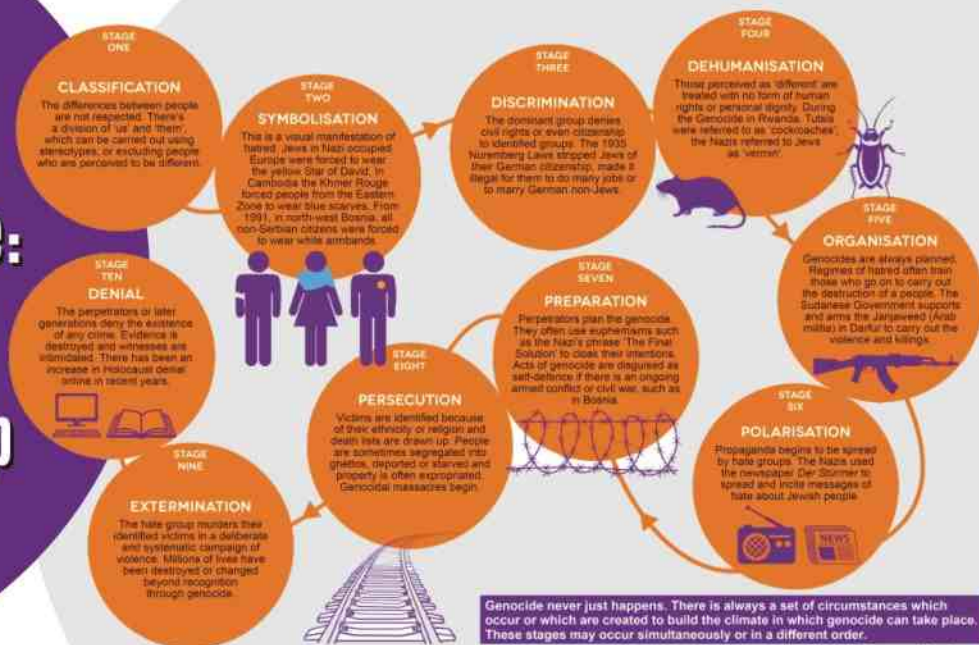
form of caste discrimination when being processed for housing. A number of state and federal laws prohibit discrimination in housing based on a person's race, ethnicity, religion, national origin, ancestry, sex, gender, sexual orientation, disability and other protected characteristics. It is illegal to be denied rental housing or to be treated differently based on caste/race, ancestry/ethnicity or the color of your skin. The federal Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination in housing and housing-related services. The Fair Housing Act legally ensures that lies in the fact that brokers, sellers, lenders and insurers cannot adopt discriminatory policies against people in the protected class. It seeks to ensure that nobody is discriminated against in property transactions on the basis of his or her protected class.

Despite these legal protections, “We must acknowledge that discrimination in housing continues today and that individuals, including people of color [caste] and those with disabilities, continue to be denied equal access to rental housing and home ownership,” said Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, Marcia L Fudge, in a press statement on June 25, 2021. The ICDR has been gathering information for litigation against caste-based housing discrimination and harassment imposed by home owners and landlords who refuse to show or rent available properties to prospective tenants because of his or her caste, race, ancestry or national origin. In such litigations, ICDR seeks an injunction against homeowners and landlords in order to stop their deceptive, unlawful and discriminatory practices, as well as restitution and penalties for violating Fair Housing and non-discriminatory laws. The victims and communities should not be silent but file a complaint with ICDR and the local, state and federal agencies, such as the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Source: Counter View

India reaches 8th of 10 stage genocide: US Muslim advocacy group raises 'alert'

Hena Zuberi*



India has reached the 8th stage of genocide with the persecution of the Muslim community. Stating this, Professor Greg Stanton, who heads Genocide Watch, declared a Genocide Emergency Alert for India today at Justice For All online briefing.

Justice For All is an American human rights organization led by Muslim Americans. It had earlier issued a genocide alert for Assam and Indian held Kashmir. Responding to ground realities manifested in the declarations of hate-laden violence from Dharam Sansads, or Hindu Religious Parliaments, served as the background of the January 9, 2022 leadership briefing organized by Justice For All, anti-genocide human rights organization, said. It was attended by four hundred community and interfaith leaders from around the United States, Canada and other countries. Justice For All asked for and endorsed the genocide emergency alert announced by the leading watchdog Genocide Watch. Nadine Maenza, Chairperson of the bi-partisan United States Commission on International Religious Freedom said, "India has a beautiful history of pluralism... but with the BJP leading the government since 2014, we have seen it erode secular principles by aggressively advocating for a pure Hindu state". Referring to the recent Hindu religious parliament as "beyond troubling", she further said, "The US Congress must raise religious freedom concerns in US-India bilateral relationships."

Prof Stanton, founder of Genocide Watch and

developer of the 10 Stages of Genocide, reminded the audience that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "political base is the base that is held by the RSS..." and that the RSS is "filled with hate ever since it was founded, it is basically a Nazi organization and in fact admired Hitler". Stating that India has been taken over by an extremist party, he disclosed that his research organization believes that India is at Stage 8 of genocide, Persecution, just one step away from conducting extermination, and warned that Modi "will be very happy to just watch it happen".

Reiterating an appreciation of India's culture, Imam Abdul Malik Mujahid, CEO of Justice For All said that the "well-being of Indias' pluralism and democracy is good for the whole world. So it is in the interest of the world to work together to save India from fascism." Director of Save India From Fascism project, Zahir Adil, implored the silent majority, Hindu friends and allies, "Muslims have fought and condemned extremists from our faith, it's your turn, fight yours!" he stated. At the briefing, Justice For All released a plan for all interested in preventing genocide in India. Actions can be taken at an individual level as well as for mosques and churches, it was suggested.

Justice For All is an international human rights organization with Consultative Status at the United Nations.

Source: Counter View

Fistful of rice: A food bank formed by women from minority communities



Around 5,000 women, mostly from the minority communities, are finding self-sufficiency with every passing day. Under an initiative formally known as "Food Bank", the women set aside a fist-sized portion of rice every day. With some logistic support and supervision from national and international NGOs, this MustiChal (fistful of rice) practice is helping out women at 90 villages in two upazilas under Naogaon -- Sahapar and Niamatpur -- since 2015. After enough rice is saved, the women then sell it and use the money for income-generating activities, like buying cattle, cultivating fish in Khas ponds, running community businesses and helping people from their communities. Many of these landless women have also bought land, opened shops, started business, bought land for funeral rites and even built their own temples. In a recent visit to Niamatpur and Sapaharupazila, this correspondent found that in the past, the women used to undertake the same activities by taking out loans from local Mahajans, entrepreneurs, village arbitrators, NGOs, local clubs and more at higher rates. But as MustiChal has gained in prominence, they have stopped going for such expensive loans. This is how the process works: a group of 20-30 women band together and set aside a fistful of rice whenever they cook a meal for seven days. The rice is kept in pots, which is then gathered inside a big drum. At the conclusion of the week, they sell the rice and use the money to fund their income-generating activities of choice. In Niamatpur's Kamaspur village, 30 women have been collecting MustiChal for the last seven years. So far, they have sold rice worth Tk 1 lakh and are now cultivating fish in

three Khas ponds, rearing three cows and helping the people of the village with the money.

Maniza (30), of Kulmodanga village under Sapaharupazila, bought six decimals of land by taking money from their 30 member-group practicing MustiChal. Like Maniza, there are 14 landless families who bought at least five bighas of land in the upazila by getting financial help from their MustiChal-collecting groups. One of the groups bought a shop at the Sapahar new market worth of Tk five lakh, said ShamsulHaque, senior programme officer of the Borendro Development Organization (BDO), a local NGO which monitor the groups. This economic empowerment is also helping the women grow in confidence. In the past, many of them were shy to speak publicly. But after finding self-sufficiency through the project, they're growing in power. Five women from these are contesting the ongoing UP elections as independent candidates. "When the Covid started in Bangladesh, many of our neighbours were out of work. Back then we lent them rice from the food bank," said Minoti Pahan of Sirajpur village. Rekha Rani Ray (30), of same village, said, "The best part about MustiChal is that if anyone in the village runs out of rice, they can always get it from us and return it later." There are three NGOs; Action Aid Bangladesh, Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) and Andheri HILFE which are running three projects; CLIMATE, REEAL and SOLID, to supervise the MustiChal initiatives.

Source: The Daily Star

Retracing Fa-Hien in the land of the Buddha

Suraj Yengde



Sakyamuni Gautama Buddha attained enlightenment on his own accord. He became fully immersed in the bliss of Nirvaan - free from craving, greed, aversion and fallacies. The perfect embodiment of humanity, the Buddha, the most compassionate being, did not keep the secrets of the path of liberation to himself but shared them with the world. His single purpose was to free humanity from suffering because everyone was born into the inescapable circles of pain and suffering. Buddha identified this as the "Noble Dukkha (suffering)" - the truest experience shared by all living beings. Suffering ties us all and the path to overcome makes us all seekers. Different faiths and doctrines administer their own path of liberation. The Buddha's was one of such, which based human being and their experiences as a path towards the final goal. This message spread without the assistance of a sword. The Wheel of Law-the Dhamma - spread wide. Monks from India carried the word of the Enlightened One to China around 150 CE. It received the patronage of kings, invited curiosity among people in the far land of Han.

Thus, a Buddhist monk from China, Fa-Hien, decided to come to the land of the Buddha in 399/400 CE. Authorised by the Han dynasty, Fa-Hien, he took the difficult journey while recording the experiences of a flourishing Buddhism from Central Asia to South Asia. Fa-Hien reported with great detail all the Buddhist sites and symbols that he encountered. Fourteen hundred years later, Alexander Cunningham, the father of India's archaeology, followed Fa-Hien's trails to uncover the sites.

Fa-Hien reported with details how the Buddhist kingdoms venerated the Buddha. Fa-Hien also wrote about the important moments in Buddhist history. Buddhism was a State religion across the plains of India. Kings vied to make offerings and patronise monasteries. The places Buddha visited were revered.

The information Fa-Hien documents is crisp, yet has detailed precision. Fa-Hien learned new languages and transcribed alien cultures filled with Buddhist lores. The purpose of Fa-Hien's travels to the Buddha's lands was to take with him the Vinaya-Pitika - the code for

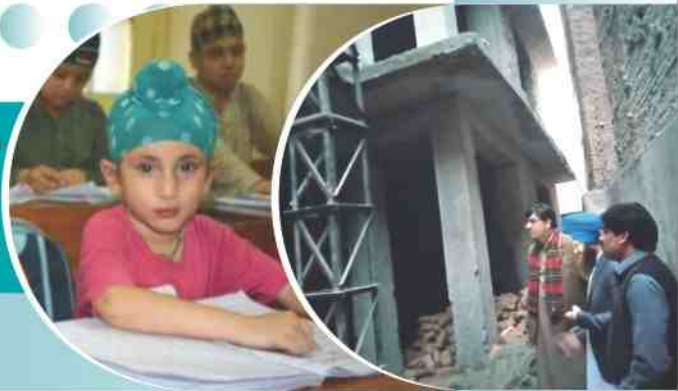
good governance. That is why his travelogue became known as "A Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms", translated from old Chinese to modern English by Scotsman James Legge in 1886.

Legge identifies the existing religious beliefs at the time of translation, as Christianity, Confucianism, Brahmanism, Mohammedanism and Taoism. Notably, there is no mention of Hinduism because there didn't exist a faith as such. Fa-Hien notes of Brahmins as jealous and angry people who believed in a "false doctrine" that was contrary to the Buddhas. Brahmins attempted to root out any evidence of Buddhist past by cutting down the trees which were believed to be planted by the Buddha. He also notes meticulously how a "heretical Brahmin" went to the limits of murdering a woman so as to put the blame on the Buddha. Fa-Hien's travelogue also records the royal past of the Mallas of Kushinagar, now condemned as untouchables, who at one point were the rulers who patronised Buddhism. It also honourably notes the Kashyapa Matanga who carried the Buddha's message to China. Fa-Hien is one of our most spiritual-scholarly connections to China who preserved Buddha's Dhamma. It is to the credit of Fa-Hien that we have records of our glorious history. Fa-Hien's ethnography has brought us closer to the vast Indian past. Indo-China relations have to be built on similar lines of mutual cooperation and strong history that don't promote jingoistic nationalism but humanitarian universalism.

Buddha is common to humanity. We should promote Buddha and Buddhist values. The Buddha's revolution was unacceptable to the Muslim and Brahminic invaders who collectively wiped off the treasures that Fa-Hien and another traveller of the seventh century Hsüan-tsang recorded. I wish to follow the trails of Fa-Hien. It was an uncomfortable and arduous journey. However, it was worth all the sacrifices. Today, we must honour Fa-Hien as a great chronicler of medieval India. He should be included in the pantheons of Bahujan society and India's national history.

Source: Indian Express

First public school for Peshawar Sikhs nears completion



The first public school for Sikhs in Pakistan is nearing completion in Peshawar as "90 per cent construction work" has been concluded. The work on the project practically started two years ago after a piece of land was purchased in the Jogan Shah Mohalla situated in the old city.

The project will be the first of its kind and provide an opportunity for the children of the Sikh community and other minorities to get an education in a better environment. A school in Peshawar had been a long-standing demand of the Sikhs from the province and the tribal areas.

Previously, about 300 children from the Sikh community were studying at an NGO-run school in Dabgri. The school operating in a rented house had to be shut down after the landlords asked the administration to evacuate.

However, after demands by the Sikh community for a new school, Atif Khan, the former provincial education minister and current food minister, announced the project for the first government school for the Sikh community. The government tasked the Sikh community with purchasing space to make the construction of the school practical. After the purchase of land, the K-P government started work on the site six months ago. Commenting on the nearing completion of the first Sikh school, Rajveer Singh, 12, told The Express Tribune that his family had moved to Peshawar due to the law and order situation in the tribal district of Khyber. "I studied in a school in a rented building from kindergarten to fifth grade," he said, adding that while education standard was good at the school, it barely had any space.

On the other hand, the administration of the school had to deal with the demands and evacuation notices of the landlord. At times when they returned from vacation, they would even encounter the sight of locked school premises.

"Thanks to the efforts of our community," Rajveer said, adding that it is for the first time Sikhs will have a government school in which we will be able to get education in a better environment under one roof.

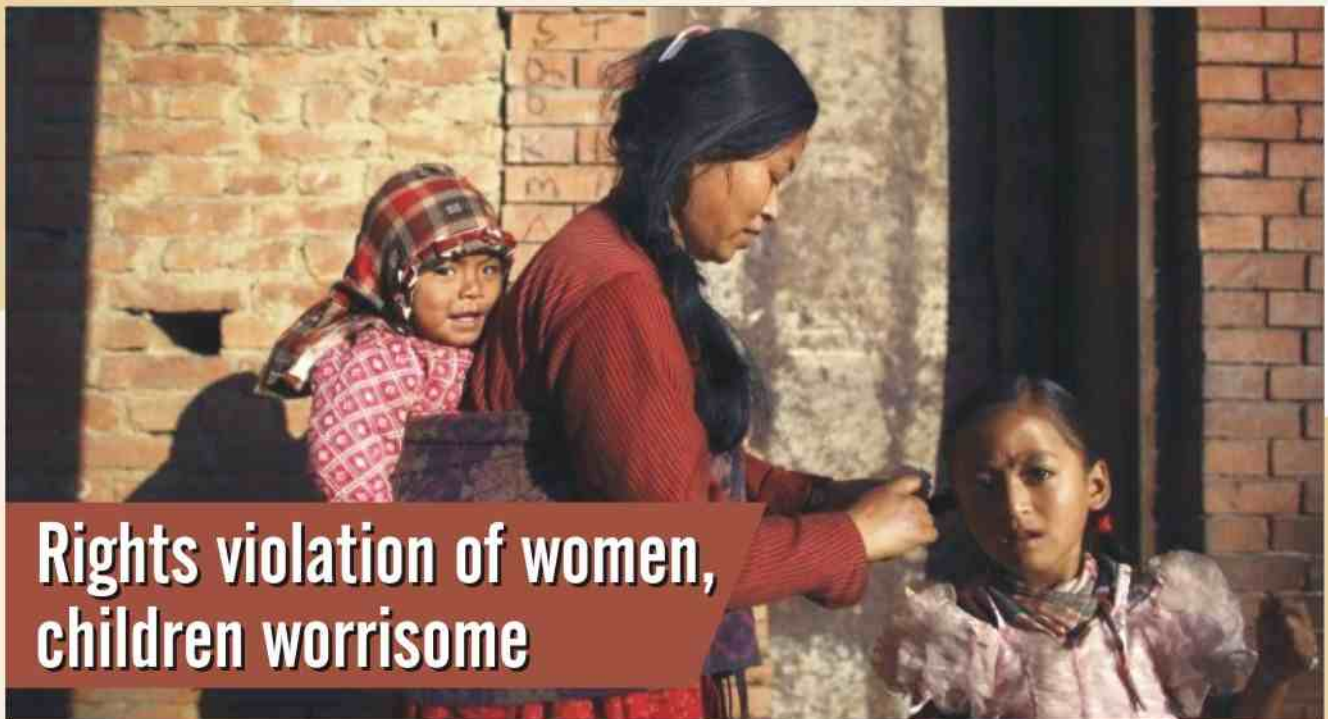
Baba Gural Singh, a committee member of the first Sikh school in Pakistan and a social worker, told The Express Tribune that IDPs from Orakzai, Khyber and Kurram districts were forced to move to Peshawar.

Their children left their homes in the tribal areas and dropped out of school and education, he said, adding that children could not be sent to other areas due to security. He expressed gratitude to the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa government for providing Rs23 million for the school. The school will have 15 classrooms where about 500 children will be able to study from nursery to middle school. Gural Singh further said that children of any minority community including Sikh, Hindu and Christian communities will be able to get education at the public school. In addition, the doors of the school will also be open for Muslim children. The educational facility will be open to everyone, he said. Harpreet Singh, a sixth-grade student, while talking to The Express Tribune maintained that only through education can we achieve a better place in society.

Rory Kumar, a member of the Standing Committee on Minority Affairs in the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Assembly who belongs to the Hindu community, said that Pakistan's first Sikh government school was a long-standing demand of the community. "About 90 percent of the work has been completed at the site and only 10 percent of the construction work is left. The school will open soon. It will not only be an educational institution but also a testimonial of the state's commitment to the rights and religious freedom of minorities in Pakistan," Kumar said. He thanked the government for this historic step.

Dr Sahib Singh, chairman of the National Commission for Peace Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, told The Express Tribune that the development of the special Sikh school would also send a message to those across the border.

Source: Tribune



Rights violation of women, children worrisome

The situation of women's and girls' human rights was worrisome during 2021, but the authorities did not pay heed to address this issue, says the New-York based Human Rights Watch in the World Report, 2022. As per the report published Nepal has one of the highest rates of child marriage in Asia, with 33 per cent of girls marrying before 18 years and 8 per cent by age 15. In the case of boys, 9 per cent marry before the age of 18. This situation worsened during the pandemic as children were pushed out of education and families faced increased poverty.

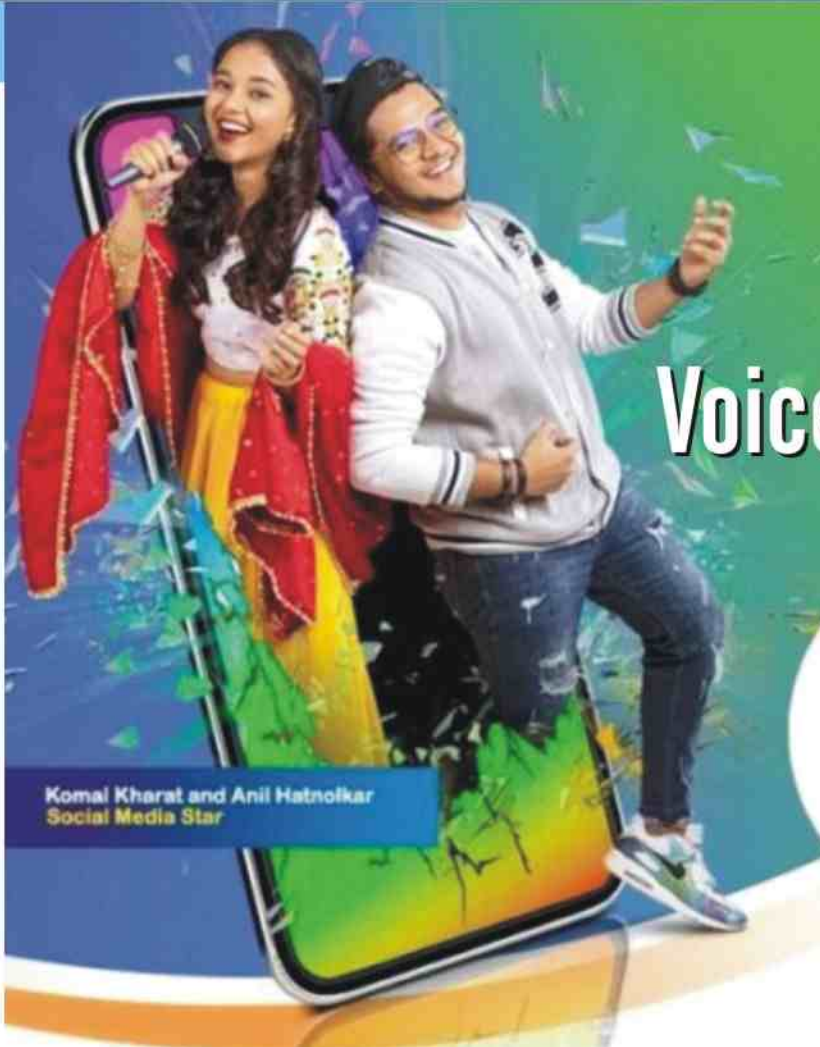
Similarly, Nepal's 2006 Citizenship Act, as well as the 2015 constitution, has provisions that discriminate against women. A draft bill to amend the act, first presented in the Parliament in 2018, retains several discriminatory provisions. In September 2020, three UN human rights experts wrote to the government raising concerns that 'the bill would continue to discriminate systematically against women regarding their ability to transmit citizenship through marriage to their children.' Due to flawed citizenship laws, an estimated five million people are forced to live without citizenship and are at risk of statelessness. Reported cases of rape continued to increase sharply in 2021, but the police were often reluctant to register cases and investigations were frequently ineffective, resulting in widespread impunity for sexual violence, warned the 752-page report that has reviewed human rights practices in nearly 100 countries.

Following Nepal's Universal Period Review, the government began consultations to update the criminal code to better safeguard the recognised right to abortion. The bill to amend the Citizenship Act also contains a clause that would require transgender people to provide proof of their transition to access citizenship documents according to their gender identity, which violates international human rights law and a 2007 Supreme Court judgment mandating that gender identity be recognised on the basis of "self-feeling." While Nepal was among the first countries in the world to protect social and political rights of LGBT people, including legal recognition of the third gender, cases of discrimination and police abuse continue unabated, it said. The Human Rights Watch also reported that caste-based violence and discrimination against Dalits were rarely investigated or prosecuted despite the adoption of the Caste-based Discrimination and Untouchability (Crime and Punishment) Act in 2011.

Two emblematic cases of caste-based killings committed on 23 May 2020 are yet to be prosecuted. One incident involved the death of a 12-year-old Dalit girl a day after she was forced to marry her alleged rapist and another the killing of six men in Rukum (West) after a young Dalit man arrived to marry his girlfriend from another caste.

Source: The Himalayan Times

The Rise of Dalit-Bahujan Voices on Internet



The entertainment business in India, especially the cinema industry is more than 100 years old now. Cinema, as the mass entertainment medium, has often been criticised for its lowbrow popular cultural values and looked down on by the intellectual class as an art form that serves the entertainment demands of the average pedestrian. Though it performs under the taglines of mass-entertainment or popular cinema, it hardly depicts the social realities or presents the cultural values of the majority, especially the socially marginalised groups. Instead, mainstream cinema has often offered its audience mediocre dramas that revolve around an upper-caste hero. The hero is often shown as performing rowdy dances on misogynist songs, uttering sexist dialogues or doing machoistic action scenes. The Dalit-Bahujans are merely the passive spectator and consumers of such banal entertainment material created by the ruling classes.

It was imagined that such an exclusive cultural industry may be democratised by the arrival of new social media innovations. The digital divide is reduced significantly in India as families with low-income groups can also afford cheaper smartphones and internet data. It was imagined that the average person will take the cradle of information and entertainment

into their own hands and may create an alternative? original? content with their active participation. Social media was a revolutionary innovation in this direction. The new medium of entertainment media, especially the short video applications (remember Tiktok) had simply diversified the entertainment sector as it invited new talents and artists from different locations to showcase their abilities without much fear, prejudices and hurdles. In India, with massive Dalit-Bahujan viewership TikTok soon became a heavily popular app and generated more than two hundred million subscriptions in a very short time. It formed tie-ups with thousands of brands and generated a revenue of 100 crores per year in India.

Interestingly, TikTok had also ruptured the hegemony of the social elites over the social media platforms, as many participants on it belonged to the small cities or rural areas. Many of the TikTok? influencers? and? viral video makers? belonged to the poor strata, low-class migrant workers, school dropout youths, housewives or the unemployed men. It became a source of entertainment to the wide subaltern and Dalit-Bahujan mass, for whom there was no exclusive content created by the mainstream entertainment industry. The participants also found TikTok more

accessible and egalitarian compared to other applications. Dalit-Bahujan groups utilized it to promote their local talents, creativities, and other social and cultural issues frequently and attracted lot many viewers. Many of these talented youngsters became national influencers, won rewards and gained local popularity. However, because it was owned by a Chinese company and was dangerous for India's internal security, it was suddenly banned by the government. It put the users and influencers in disarray. The Indian alternatives to TikTok (like Takatak, Mauj, Chingari, etc.) entered into business with a loud noise but it is yet to make a groundbreaking impact on its viewers and users. Ironically, it soon became another extension of the elite-driven media culture.

The entertainment based short-video apps (like the Youtube shorts) has a huge viewership and mostly the Dalit-Bahujan mass were the prime consumers of its content. However, here too, the artistic content is not morally responsible or socially connected but mimics the mainstream cinema logic. Often, we witness content that is regressive, communal, misogynist, and full of hatred is also allowed without much scrutiny. Interestingly, the artists and content builders that challenge such banal entertainment values, especially the entertainers from the socially marginalized groups, face discrimination or trolling on these platforms. The Dalit-Bahujan participants often feel alienated here as their content and creativity often invisibilized or deleted as they promote content that challenges the hegemonic cultural values of the social elites. The Dalit-Bahujan artists have to operate under the fear of backlash, offensive trolls and casteist slurs and their creativity is mocked with abusive trolls, slurs or demeaning slangs. Further, even the app administrators block or downsize the content made by Dalit-Bahujan groups as inflammatory, unworthy, poor taste or distasteful towards the civic moralities (remember the? Brahmanical Patriarchy? controversy on Twitter).

Often the platform reprimands, censures or ban the user for hurting the social sentiment or for not following the media regulations. The? troll? trends also discourage many users to avail these platforms freely and fearlessly. Such restrictions and offensive cultural trends discourage the Dalit-Bahujan social activists to participate on these platforms with equal freedom. Though the social network platforms appear free and fair, however for the marginalized communities it is unwelcoming. Here too, the cultural

tastes of the social elites dominate the environment. The conventional platforms in India, though connected with diverse people, it operates under the hegemonic cultural values of the social elites and devalue the intellectual and creative content by the Dalit Bahujans. Against these odds, there is a small but influential Dalit-Bahujan groups on internet that spreads alternative version of mass media culture.

On occasions, it tried to break the cultural hegemony of the social elites and has floated their own newspapers (Bahishkrit Bharat, Bahujan Nayak, Samrat, etc.) news channels (Lord Buddha, Awaaz India, National Dastak, Kanshi TV, etc.), web portals (Roundtable India, Dalit Camera, Velivada, Ambedkar Caravan, etc.) and news feeders (Dalit Dastak, Bahujan TV, Ambedkar org, etc.). Though these initiatives are impressive, they mostly cater to the political and social news and are restricted to communitarian issues. Further, it also lacked the necessary entertainment quotient that connects a large number of internet users. It shows that there is no media channel, portal or app that can serve the Dalit Bahujan demands for entertainment. The need to develop alternative media portals or infotainment apps emerged from such facts.

More Dalit-Bahujan interventions on social network platforms, especially over the segment of entertainment would bring the digital world closer to the idea of social justice. The recent launch of a new short-video app named? Jai Bheem? is the right step towards making the entertainment industry more democratic. This app is mandated to serve not only the communitarian values and socio-political interests but will provide enhanced space to the creative and artistic talents of diverse social groups. The entertainment industry will now have new creators, content builders and performers that can challenge the conventional domination of social elites over this field. Importantly, it also promises the artists? hand-holding? support for developing their entrepreneurship skills in the entertainment market.

Alternative platforms like this would also reduce the anxiety of the Dalit-Bahujan artists and would help them to showcase their artistic talent and creativity without fear and discomfort. It will connect them with other social groups that struggle to find a comfortable space in the digital world. It is an apt time for the Dalit-Bahujan and other marginalized groups to stake a claim on the internet and utilize it for their social emancipation and economic prospects.

Source: Mid-Day



How Gujarat 2002 Turned India Into a Nation of PATHOLOGICAL LIARS



2002-2022. It has been 20 years; in a nation's life, that is a short span of time. But for us mortal humans, it means the passing away of a generation, taking their memories with them to their graves; the coming of age of a generation with memories they don't know what to do with; and the birth of a new generation, growing up with no memory of it at all. We are, of course, talking about Gujarat in 2002; about the pogrom against Muslims. But while we talk about it, we have to also remember 1992 and the destruction of the Babri Masjid.

1992 fathered 2002. The demolition of the mosque was condoned as a spontaneous emotional outburst of Hindus which the mosque could not withstand; a reaction to some perceived action from medieval times. The action? The building of a mosque by Babar or his men, by demolishing a temple on the spot where Ram was purportedly born. Similarly, the 2002 pogrom against Muslims in Gujarat was sought to be legitimised as a reaction to a perceived action by Muslims in Godhra. The action here was the burning of coach number 6 of the Sabarmati Express, carrying 'Ram sevaks' who had gone to Ayodhya, to visit the site where the rubble of the demolished mosque lay surrounding a makeshift Ram temple. Fifty-nine of them died in the fire in the coach.

No investigation was needed to reach the conclusion that the coach was burnt by Muslims. A meticulous plan was hatched to use the deaths of the 59 Hindus in the fire to launch mass violence against Muslims. The bodies of the dead, instead of being handed over to their families, were given to Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) leaders, to be paraded around in a procession in Ahmedabad. And then, what was anticipated turned into reality. Muslim localities, houses, business establishments started getting attacked, looted, burnt, destroyed. Muslim women raped; Muslims maimed and killed. And then came their mass displacement. This pattern was to be repeated in 2007, in the faraway land of Kandhamal in Odisha. The action? Unknown assassins shot dead Lakhmananand Saraswati, a hate-monger masquerading as a monk. His body was,

again, handed over to the members of the VHP, paraded through the villages of Kandhamal. The reaction? Looting, burning, destruction of houses of Christians and churches; Christians slaughtered and then, again, the mass displacement of Christians.

What was the government of Gujarat doing when the Gujarat massacre was taking place? Two years after the incident, the Supreme Court, in its 2004 judgment, wrote: "Modern-day 'Neros' were looking elsewhere when Best Bakery and innocent children and women were burning and were probably deliberating how the perpetrators of the crime can be saved or protected." That 'modern-day Nero' was to graduate from the chief ministership of Gujarat to the prime ministership of India 12 years after the carnage. He, who had justified the pogrom by propounding the theory of 'action and reaction'.

At that time, no questions were asked as to how and why the chief minister was allowed to visit the burnt coach, when it should have been cordoned off as evidence to be kept safe for forensic investigation. Why was a spectacle made of this burnt coach? Why were the people of Gujarat, especially Hindus, not interested in knowing the truth about the burning, which required investigation? Why did they prefer to believe in a truth that was given to them: that it was burnt by Muslims and that these Muslims had to be taught a lesson for having committed this crime. Gujarat was already living in the post-truth era, much before the world started using this term.

Five years later, in 2007, I found that this culture of truth-making had become all-pervasive in the state. A much-decorated senior writer tried to persuade me to believe that the Muslims were so devious that they even conspired to send their handsome men on motorcycles to lure gullible Hindu girls into their 'love-trap'. He, who is known outside Gujarat for his humanism, was convinced that Muslims needed to be punished for this crime. His theory, later termed as 'love jihad', was widespread in Gujarat. There was a man called Babu Bajrangi who dedicated his life to the mission of saving 'poor Hindu girls'. A friend gave me a

leaflet in Gujarati by Bajrangi which said, "In every home, there is a live bomb. It can explode any moment. Who is this live bomb? Our daughters!" The leaflet also asked parents to keep an eye on their daughters. If your daughter was missing, you could depend on Bajrangi's services, which are absolutely free. "If you save one girl, you save a hundred cows," the leaflet ends, exhorting the Hindus to start saving these bombs.

Bajrangi made it his life's purpose to "rescue" these misguided and fallen Hindu girls from the clutches of the badmash (mischievous) and the lafange (the lumpen). After my visit to Gujarat, I wrote in Tehelka in April 2007, "You'll find large posters in the colleges of Ahmedabad bearing Bajrangi's warning. The stories of very rare cases of Hindu-Muslim marriages have been woven into a pattern. The thought that their own girls are being used to increase the tribe of the badmash, that is, Muslims, makes the Hindu blood boil." Bajrangi was to be jailed for life for having participated in the massacre of 97 people in Naroda Patiya - an Ahmedabad locality which was part of the 2002 pogrom; a crime for which Maya Kodnani, a minister of the Gujarat government then headed by the present prime minister of India, was also sentenced to 28 years in jail. Both of them are now out of jail; Kodnani's conviction was overturned. Not surprising, as the man then described by the highest court as a modern-day Nero was to be hailed as a 'visionary' by another lordship of the same court.

Gujarat then was what India was to become. After the 2014 election results, a Gujarati friend remarked, "You thought only we Gujaratis were so intellectually impoverished that we chose him as the leader. See, you have come down to our level. He is now your prime minister." India's response to 2002 came in 2014; the 2014 election result would not have been possible without 2002. Why do I say so? Because there was something dramatically different about the violence of 2002 and the other instances of mass violence India had witnessed against Muslims and Sikhs before. Never had the leader of the state sounded so brazen about it. The violence was called a shame for Gujarat. As a retort, Narendra Modi led a Gujarat gauravyatra; apparently to restore the honour that was sullied by the 'enemies of the state'. "What was there to be ashamed of?" he asked his people, leading them into active denial of the violence. In his speeches during the yatra, he made his people believe that the story of violence was a conspiracy of enemies who wanted to tarnish the image of Gujaratis. Gujaratis loved this brazenness; this lie. They had discovered their 'Dear

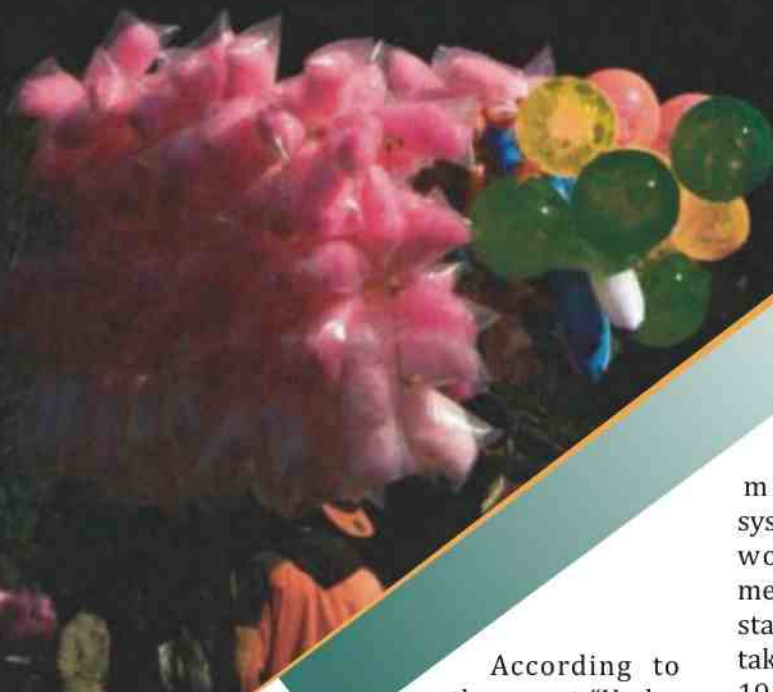
Liar'. A decade later, we had to accept him as our own. Modi had made Gujarati Hindus complicit in the crime; they knew about it, many of them had participated in it, and he was telling them that they had not done it. Their fate was tied. One lie led to the other. In 2007, the devastating flood in Surat was much talked about outside Gujarat for its mismanagement by the government. In my old notes, I found my conversation with a Gujarati Hindu about it. "Was not Surat flooded a few months back and did not the people of Gujarat suffer?" I asked my driver.

"No, Narendra bhai was there to take care of everything," he replied. "How can anything go wrong when Narendra bhai is keeping watch?" The lie of 2002, of 2007, helped the liar conjure up even bigger lies; this time, beyond Gujarat. In 2013, a claim was made that Modi had rescued 15,000 Gujaratis stuck in the devastating flood in Uttarakhand in that year. The lie was debunked immediately, but it lived as a truth in the minds of his believers. The lie about the train burning at Godhra or about the pogrom against Muslims thereafter; the lie about terrorists gunning for the life of Narendra Modi; about the encounter operation that killed Ishrat Jahan; the lie about a vibrant Gujarat, about the development model of Gujarat, led to bigger and bigger lies. It is a cruel coincidence that the anniversary of the 2002 pogrom is preceded by the anniversary of yet another pogrom directed against Muslims; one done much later, in 2020, in Delhi; this time with Modi leading the entire country, not just the state. As the Gujarati Hindus were led into denial about 2002 by the then chief minister, so too are Indians being led into denial about the 2020 Delhi violence; by blaming it on Muslims.

We are in 2022 because we wanted to move on from 2002; we did not want to dwell on it. We were exasperated and angry with Bilkis Bano, who would not relent in her pursuit of justice. She fought from 2002-2019, from Gujarat to Bombay to Delhi, forcing the Supreme Court to recognise the enormity of the injustice done to her. We feel annoyed that Zakia Jafri has still not relented from her demand for justice and wants to put the man on trial for the conspiracy which led to the killing of her husband, Ehsan Jafri, and scores of Muslims in the Gulberg Society in 2002. We ran away from 2002 too soon. However, it will not leave us. Without dealing with it collectively, we will not be able to understand why we did what we did in 2014 and repeated in 2019 and why we have now turned into a nation of pathological liars.

Source: The Wire

Over 4.4 million people involved in informal sector face vulnerabilities



According to the report “Under the Shadows of Informality: A Vulnerability Assessment of Informal Sector Workers of Nepal” asserted by the Centre for Social Change, workers in the informal sectors are disproportionately vulnerable as compared to formal sector workers. About 1.5 million workers are informally employed. The report shows a growing involvement of women (66.5%) in informal employment in Nepal. However, women are reported to be devoid of minimum wages, decent working conditions and any kind of social protection coverage as compared to 59.7% of male informal workers. Informal workers have been facing economic, occupational and social and political vulnerabilities. The majority of the informal workers interviewed report that their income barely covered basic necessities and does not leave much for future savings. “There is no sense of savings for us. We earn today. We eat today. Many times, only one member earns in the family who faces a great deal of pressure to manage day-to-day expenses. Forget about savings.”- Female construction worker said, the report quoted.

The study derives that low familiarity and access to

measures of banking systems majorly drive informal workers to use unreliable methods of savings. “I was only starting to pay off previous loans I had taken from my contractor when Covid-19 hit. The first lockdown restrictions made life difficult for me, my wife and three kids. The loan that I took was barely enough for food and rent. Now, the second lockdown has brought more money problems. It’s like I can never come out of this debt cycle,” the report quoted a male construction worker. However, the government of Nepal has ensured a minimum wage of NRs.15,000, an increment from the previously set number of NRs.13,450.¹² The recently reformed Labour Act (2017) and Social Security Act (2018) have also taken strides in ensuring the welfare and wellbeing of both workers and employers.

However, these reforms target workers in the formal sector and have made little to no impact on informal sector workers. Informal sector workers often working with low and unstable pay, face greater risks of working in risky and hazardous conditions and occupational vulnerabilities than formal sector workers.

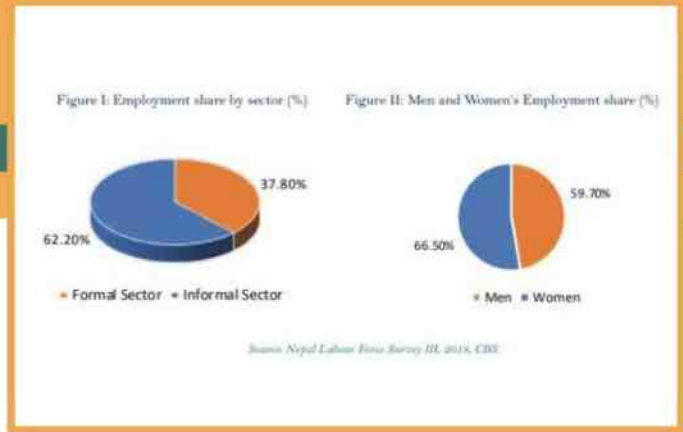
“I am very scared of working in tall buildings. I have a small baby. If I fall from a height and break my bones, I don’t know what will happen to my baby. I try to request upfront with employers or my workmates to give me tasks at ground levels,” a female construction worker said. In addition, factors such as social stigma,



extreme economic vulnerability, overall lack of awareness about relevant legal mechanisms, made more vulnerable to workplace violence and harassment. “There are instances when male passengers insist on taking the front seat of the tempo and sit too close. There was one time when I had to call a female traffic officer to make a passenger step down from the vehicle. I just did not feel safe at that time,” a female Safa tempo driver has been quoted in the report.

The study suggests that discrimination and stigma against informal workers go beyond workplaces to societal hostility. Mostly belonging to marginalized groups, informal workers were already subjected to discrimination in terms of gender, caste, ethnicity and poverty and the nature of their jobs makes them further vulnerable to social prejudices, exploitation and inhumane treatment from society, employers and authoritative bodies. According to the reports, there are more than 250,000 domestic workers in Nepal.

Lack of legal employment contracts makes domestic workers vulnerable to the burden of overwork and underpays. A female domestic worker said, “I am hired to massage the baby twice a day. It is not feasible for me to go home and come back in the evening again. So, I stay at a nearby tea shop for a few hours, eat something and come back for the second massage. My job is actually to massage newborn babies and the mother, but it automatically includes making fire for the massage, washing dirty napkins and occasionally washing dishes. I don't get paid extra for that.” The study also finds that construction workers face grave issues of physical vulnerabilities at the workplace. Due to unsafe working conditions, exposure to dust and chemicals, lack of safety guidelines and protective gears, construction workers of Nepal are relatively more vulnerable to physical injuries, illness and even fatality as compared to other sectors. Similarly, The



public transportation sector of Nepal includes about 400,000 public vehicles and employees close to 1 million people including load carriers, ticket personnel, drivers, vehicle conductors and helpers. The study suggests that the absence of fixed salaries and the additional burden of vehicle loan installments increases their economic vulnerabilities and excludes them from workers' benefits.

Safa tempo owner said, “What we do is important. If we stop driving public vehicles for even one day, public lives will be unsettled. But we are not treated with that kind of respect. Workers in other sectors get fixed salaries, holidays, sick leaves but we get none of those privileges. Despite that, we are in the transportation sector because we want to be able to stand on our own feet, but the way government and the public discriminate against our jobs, is really demotivating at times.”

Similarly, The study derives that dependency on natural systems increases agriculture workers' vulnerabilities to disasters, natural calamities and adverse effects of climate change. Similarly, lack of safe and sanitary workplace increases Street vendors' vulnerabilities to harassment and discrimination by regulatory bodies and adverse effects of poor sanitation and extreme environmental conditions (harsh weather, pollution, etc.). Additionally, the informal sector is not only shaped by economic or institutional mechanisms but social systems as well and social and economic shocks and emergencies can have disproportionate effects on them. This qualitative study was hence conducted to address this vital concern with a total of 98 people (80 informal workers and 18 experts and stakeholders) from five sectors affected by the COVID- 19 pandemic, to gain a deeper understanding of their existing risks and vulnerabilities.

Source: Khabar Hub

Outrage after hijab-wearing woman heckled by Hindu mob in India

A video posted on Twitter showing a hijab-wearing Muslim student being heckled by a Hindu far-right mob at a college in Karnataka state has caused outrage amid intensifying protests over ban on Islamic headscarves in the southern state. Muskan Khan was surrounded by men wearing saffron scarves as she arrived at her college in Mandya, the viral video showed, as she confronted the protesters, many of whom, she said, were outsiders. The ban on Islamic headscarves has outraged Muslim students who say it's an attack on their faith enshrined in India's secular constitution, while Hindu right-wing groups have tried to prevent Muslim women from entering educational institutions causing communal tension.

"I was just there to submit an assignment; that's why I entered the college. They were not allowing me to go inside just because I was [wearing] the burqa," Khan later told India's NDTV news channel.

"After that, they started shouting the slogan 'Jai Shri Ram'. (Hail Lord Ram). Then I started to scream 'Allah Akbar' (God is the greatest)," she said, adding that she would keep fighting for her right to wear the hijab. "Ten percent [of the protesters] were from the college but [the rest of them] were outsiders," Khan said.

Fears among Muslims

The Karnataka government run by the right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Tuesday announced shutting down of educational institutions for three days. The standoff in Karnataka state - home to India's IT hub of Bengaluru, has galvanised fears among the minority community about what they say is increasing persecution under the Hindu nationalist government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.



Demonstrations saw police fired tear gas to disperse a crowd at one government-run campus, while a heavy police presence was seen at schools in nearby towns. Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai from Modi's BJP appealed for calm after announcing all high schools in the state would be closed for three days. "I appeal to all the students, teachers and management of schools and colleges ... to maintain peace and harmony," he said. Students at a government-run high school were told not to wear hijabs last month. Since then Hindu far-right groups have tried to prevent hijab-wearing Muslim women from entering educational institutions in the state. The government of Karnataka, where 12 percent of the population is Muslim, said in an order on February 5 that all schools should follow dress codes set by management. Muslim students and members of Muslim Students Federation (MSF) protest against the recent hijab ban at Karnataka's colleges, in New Delhi, India.

Escalating confrontations between Muslim and Hindu students

BC Nagesh, the education minister of Karnataka who tweeted the order, said school dress codes



had been set after reviewing court decisions from across the country to ban the hijab at educational institutions. Campuses have seen escalating confrontations between Muslim students condemning the ban and Hindu pupils that say their classmates have disrupted their education. Local media reported last week that several schools in the coastal city of Udupi had denied entry to Muslim girls wearing the hijab citing an education ministry order, prompting protests from parents and students. "All of a sudden, they are saying you are not supposed to wear hijab ... why did they start now?" said Ayesha, a teenage student at the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial College in Udupi. Ayesha said a teacher had turned her away from her chemistry exam for wearing the garment. "We are not against any religion. We are not protesting against anyone. It is just for our own rights," she told AFP. Tensions have frayed further in recent days in Udupi and elsewhere in majority Hindu Karnataka as students with saffron shawls - typically worn by Hindu far-right wing groups - thronged into classrooms to show their support of their schools' hijab ban.

Fellow student Amrut, standing nearby among a crowd of Hindu boys wearing saffron shawls, said the dispute had unfairly prevented him from

attending class. "We had ... requested them not to wear hijab," he said. "But today, they are wearing hijab. They are not allowing us to go inside." Pakistani education rights icon Malala Yousafzai called the hijab ban for students "horrifying". "Objectification of women persists - for wearing less or more. Indian leaders must stop the marginalisation of Muslim women," Yousafzai said on Twitter. Critics have said Modi's election in 2014 emboldened Hindu supremacists who see India as a Hindu nation and are seeking to undermine its secular foundations at the expense of its 200 million-strong minority Muslim community. Opposition parties and critics accuse the BJP government at the federal and state levels of discriminating against religious minorities and running the risk of stoking violence. Modi has defended his record and says his economic and social policies benefit all Indians. A case filed by one of the students, who said in her petition that wearing the hijab was a fundamental right to religion guaranteed by the constitution, was heard in the Karnataka High Court in state capital Bengaluru on Tuesday. While no final order was passed, the judge appealed for peace and calm and will continue hearing the petition one of the lawyers for the petitioner told Reuters.

Source: Al-Jazeera