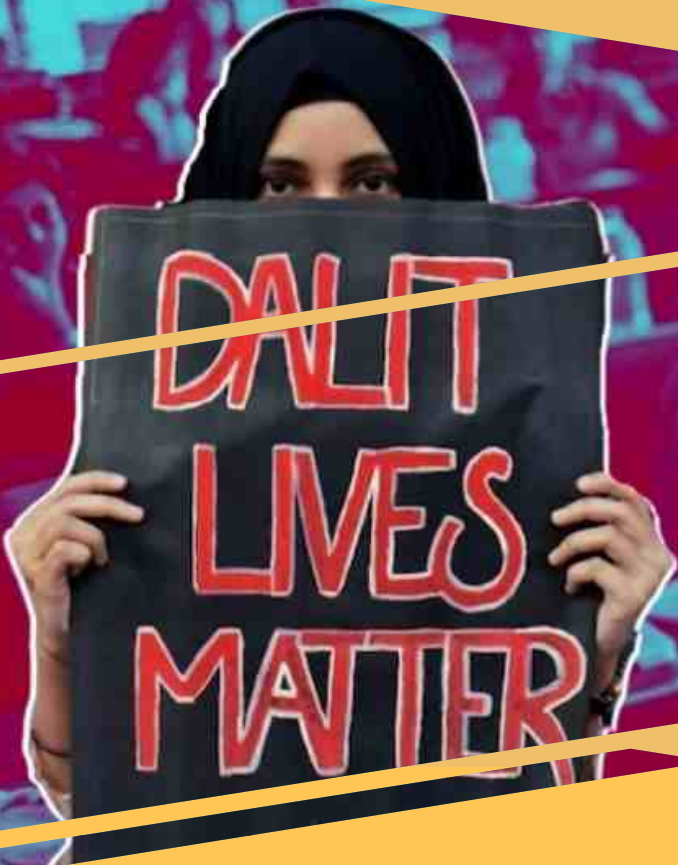


Quarterly MINO-VIEW

Vol: 10 Issue: 02
Apr. - Jun. 2022



Voice of Minorities & Oppressed People in South Asian Societies

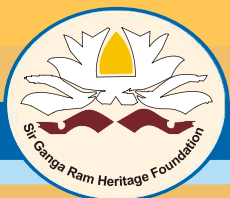


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MINO-VIEW

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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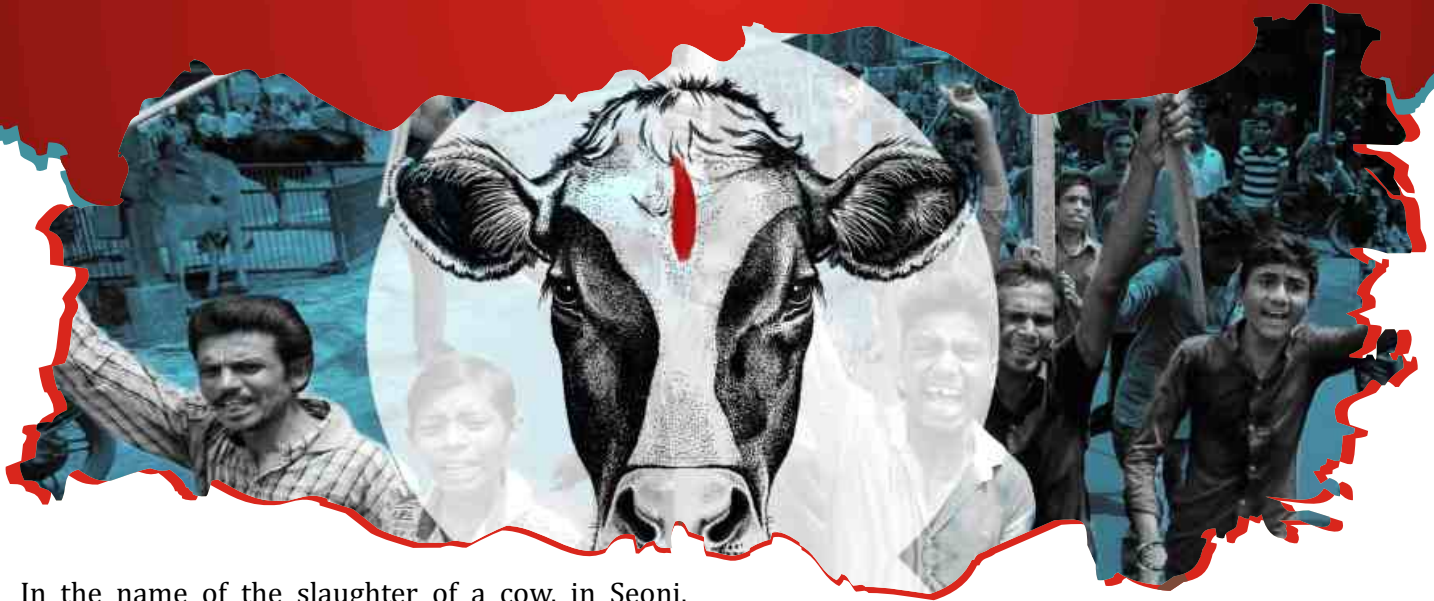
Editorial

We welcome you all to the latest issue of Mino-View. Human rights have been a major issue since its inception. In every era, most human rights laws have been enacted so that basic human rights are not violated and everyone can enjoy fundamental rights irrespective of religion, color and race. In this regard, it is important to mention the efforts of the United Nations to formally protect the fundamental human rights through the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). It is a milestone document in the history of human rights proclaimed by UN in December 1948 which sets out, for the first time, fundamental human rights to be universally protected. Beside this, the worst examples of discrimination on the basis of caste, religion, sex, race and social status are appearing in today's advanced age. South Asia is facing a double challenge where human rights as well as caste-based discriminations stand as a leaden wall between human beings. Efforts to eradicate casteism in the region have been under way for decades, as in Nepal's Civil Act of 1963, which focused on making caste-based discrimination a punishable offense. In line with this, the 2011 Untouchability and Discrimination Act and the Constitution of Nepal ensured the protection of the lower classes, the Dalits. In Bangladesh, too, organizations representing lower caste communities are not accepting the recent Ant-Discrimination Bill 2022 as sufficient for the Dalit community and lower caste Hindus living there. They are demanding the protection of basic human rights for women, Dalits and backward classes in Bangladesh. We hear similar and more intense voices from India, the largest democracy in South Asia, where even today the backward and oppressed classes are discriminated on the basis of caste and they are deprived of basic human rights. Violations of basic human rights are affecting every sphere of life in India. According to a recent report, 94% of the working class in India, including 74% of the Scheduled Caste ST and OBC, has a monthly income of less than Rs 10,000. When it comes to the health sector, only 4% of the backward classes in India benefit from health facilities, while Dalit and Adivasis make up about 26% of India's total population. According to a survey, Dalits and lower class people do not have access to health facilities just because of their lower caste. The report says that a Dalit woman usually lives 15 years less than an upper caste woman due to lack of health facilities. This climate of discrimination has engulfed the entire region. On the other hand, the people who are pointing out such violations of human rights in India through print or social media are continuously being targeted by the Indian authorities. So another basic human right, freedom of speech is also being denied in India. In Pakistan Last year, a Sri Lankan man who was the manager of a sports factory, was lynched and tortured to death by some extremists under the cover of blasphemy. On the positive side, in response to this incident, a Pakistani court sentenced 6 accused to death and 9 to life imprisonment in April 2022. It is possible to protect the basic human rights of every person if the states take immediate action against human rights violators. Legislation and the inclusion of clauses in the constitution will not remove the deprivations of the backward classes, but only practical steps in this regard will teach man to value man.

Editor

Are Cattle Vigilantes Motivated by Love for Cows or Hate for the Weakest?

Kush Ambedkarwadi



In the name of the slaughter of a cow, in Seoni, Madhya Pradesh, cow protectors recently barged into the home of three tribal men and beat them with sticks and axes before terrified women family members. Two of the three men could not survive this attack, while the third is battling for life in hospital.

We have continuously seen so-called cow protection, cow smuggling and cow meat-related issues in the headlines for the last few years. Tribal communities, who are fighting a long battle for their rights for their jal, jungle, zameen-water, forests and land-are being evicted from their forests and homes. And while that goes on, cow protectors have found yet another issue to oppress this already vulnerable community.

The police have registered an FIR against six people in the case in Seoni, invoking the IPC and the SC/ST Act. The government has announced compensation for the victims and arrests have also started. But the problem is what nobody talks about: Soon, the accused will roam free on bail, evidently enjoying the protection of the State they are sure to get. After all, it has happened in most cases involving violence in the name of the cow perpetrated against the weakest sections of the country.

Nobody knows the modus operandi of cow protectors better than the Muslims across North India, who have borne the brunt of it. Publicly waving

weapons in the name of cow protection, groups of Hindu extremists are fearlessly seen breaking the law in district after district.

Their unlawful activities have become a constant feature of public life ever since the BJP came to power in 2014. Groups of so-called cow protectors fearlessly roam the countryside, threatening people in the name of saving the cow. First, they wreaked violence against the Muslims, accusing them of eating beef or slaughtering cows. Then they reached the homes of the Dalits with the same accusation. And now, they have started attacking and killing tribals in the name of the cow.

A part of Hindu society reveres the cow 'as a mother', but in today's perspective, the cow has also become a medium of sustenance for those who do politics in the name of religion. For them, any controversy over cow slaughter is only a means to create hatred between the Hindu and Muslim faiths and scoring political points. No one has any concern for the cow; and cow protection is just politics to cultivate hatred in order to collect votes and build majorities.

A report of the central Ministry of Animal Husbandry shows that the number of cows is decreasing in regions where the maximum number of cow protection cases take place. However, in a state like West Bengal, where there is no scope for cow

protection gangs to come up, the number of cows has risen. There was always a politics in the name of the cow, but ever since the BJP has come to power, the issue has gone to extreme levels. Now people are killing human beings in the name of cow protection.

Where Muslims were the target of Hindu mobs for years, now their targets include the Dalits and the Adivasis. Since the BJP's rise to power at the Centre and states, there has been a rapid rise in reports of attacks on Dalits and tribals over this issue. The brutal flogging with sticks of Dalit men tied to the rear of a vehicle in Una in Gujarat attracted the attention of the whole country. The Dalit community threw dead animals outside the collector's office in protest after this incident. They said that if someone sees the cow as their mother, then they must cremate or bury the cows that die because they, the Dalits, will no longer pick up dead animals and dispose of them. This protest shook the foundations of the so-called protectors of religion at the time. It also made it clear that they only love the cow until it is beneficial to them.

If cow protectors consider the cow their mother, why does their heart not weep when they see cows wandering on the streets, eating garbage? Why do not those who profess great affection for the cow and concern for its well-being keep cows in their homes and serve them? How many self-proclaimed custodians of religion in power, the MLAs, MPs and ministers who do politics in the name of the cow, cradle cows at their own residences? They do not rear cows because their love for them is just a pretence.

Even in mythology and religious accounts, it is recorded that Hindus would consume cows. The compositions of the Rig Veda testify to this, as Babasaheb Ambedkar had written in his 1948 book, *The Untouchables: Who Were They and Why They Became Untouchables?* He writes, "Among the Kamyashtis set forth in the Taittiriya Bramhana, not only the sacrifice of oxen and cows are laid down, but we are even told what kind and description of oxen and cows are to be offered to what deities." Babasaheb writes it is clear from the descriptions of yagya in the Buddhist sutras that "no one can doubt there was a time when Hindus-both Brahmins and non-Brahmins ate not only flesh but also beef". That is why Babasaheb used to call out the hypocrisy of Hinduism. What would you say about a religion in

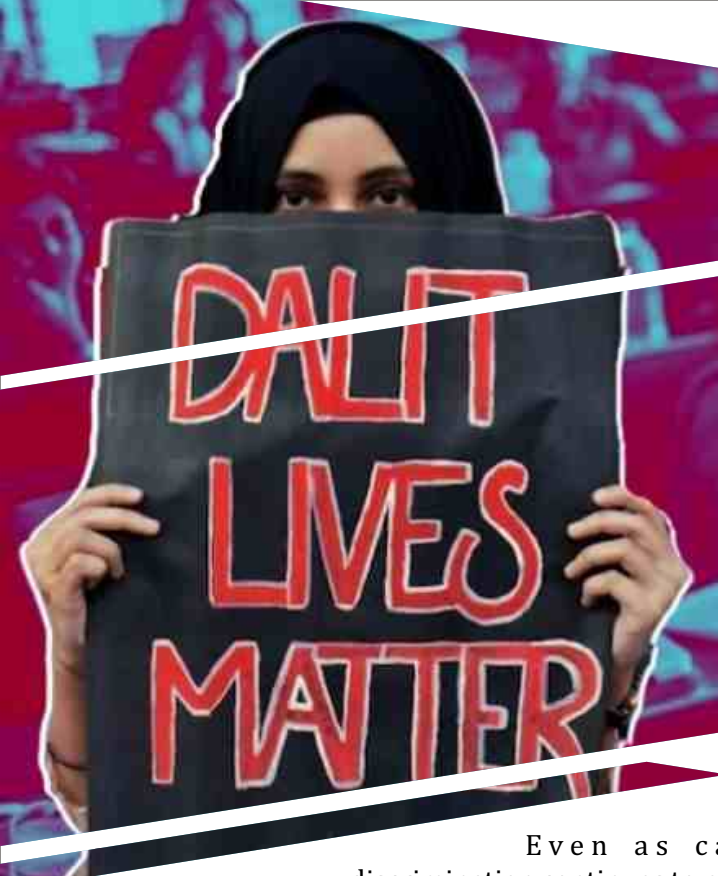


which human beings are discriminated against based on the varna system, while its followers privilege animals over human beings? When a Dalit family in a village in Gandhinagar's Mansa taluka refused to accept the carcass of a cow [to dispose of, as dictated by the traditional caste-varna system], hypocritical fundamentalists entered their house and attacked mother and son. Those who cannot even carry away the dead body of their cow mother-what is their so-called love worth? Whether it is the cow or the river Ganga, whenever the hypocrites declared someone their mother, they ruined them with their own hands.

Can the leaders of the ruling party, who pretend to be on a mission to make India a Hindu nation, tell us whether attacking and killing people in the name of cow protection will make a Hindu Rashtra? And if such a Hindu nation is formed, what will be the condition of the Dalits and tribals? Is it going to follow the same pattern wherein a Dalit or Adivasi is beaten or killed for riding a horse in a wedding procession, for entering temples, sporting a moustache or marrying someone from an elite caste?

The mere thought of such a Hindu nation is frightening. Dalits no longer want to clean up anybody else's filth. They want to leave all labour imposed on them through the form of caste. They will no longer pick up dead animals on behalf of those who oppress them and torture them. Dalits and tribals want to educate themselves, not pick up garbage and clean the streets enjoined on them by the caste-varna hierarchy. So, those who profess to care about society can pick up their own garbage, sweep their homes, clean their gutters, dispose of dead animals and build their own Hindu Rashtra.

Source: News Click



How should Western universities combat caste discrimination?

Pola Lem

Even as caste discrimination continues to plague Indian higher education, debate about the best way to tackle the issue in universities abroad - and even over its very existence - continues to polarise academia.

India's caste system traditionally grouped people by four major castes based on their ancestry, with the lowest class, Dalits - formerly known as "untouchables" - traditionally barred from many types of work. In 1948, negative discrimination based on caste became illegal, but decades later, Dalits still struggle with access to education and jobs.

At Indian universities, it is not uncommon for them to encounter discrimination. The 2016 suicide of a Dalit student at the University of Hyderabad provoked public outcry, casting a spotlight on the issue.

Abroad too, there continue to be reports of prejudice targeted at lower caste Indian students. In January, the California State University system, covering 23 public institutions, specifically included caste in its non-discrimination policies.

While caste discrimination is more ubiquitous and explicit in India, it also exists overseas, said Suraj Yengde, a Dalit activist and a research associate in Harvard University's department of African and African American studies. "People might not call you names, but the things they might do are tantamount to

caste discrimination," he told Times Higher Education. Dr Yengde recounted his experience of a higher caste Indian colleague who would "casually" make jokes and "infantilise" him, even though they would "pretend it was not intentional". Still, the colleague would invite him to social events to "show me off as a token to other people", he felt.

Sipra Mukherjee, associate professor of English at West Bengal State University, who teaches Dalit literature, said that the subtle nature of such incidents was part of what makes tackling the issue so tricky. "Caste discrimination is extremely difficult to fight both within and outside India despite mechanisms here to address it. This is because much of the caste violence is quiet, routine violence which is difficult to pin down in concrete terms."

She said that academics have a responsibility to promote the issue. "We have to keep working on trying to make the evil visible - the more we talk about it and teach about it, the more it will be recognised, condemned and resisted." Saikat Majumdar, professor of English and creative writing at Ashoka University, said that both abroad and at home, institutions must call out and "shame" such behaviour.

"It's bad enough that caste discrimination is practised in poor and remote villages in India, but it is absolutely appalling that wealthier, supposedly more 'enlightened' Indians who go abroad for higher studies also possess these prejudices," he said. Professor Majumdar welcomed steps taken by universities abroad to address such discrimination.



“Westerners have no idea of the immense degree to which bastions of knowledge, education and white-collar labour have been historically monopolised by upper caste Hindus. It is worse than the old boys’ network in academic and professional circles,” he said. While several scholars told THE that such discrimination is often subtle when encountered abroad, there is still disagreement over how widespread it is - and whether it is an issue at all. “We don’t see ‘caste-based’ discrimination at UK universities,” said Kishore Dattu, a national committee member of the country’s Indian National Students Association (Insa).

Mr Dattu said that Insa believed policies targeting caste discrimination were the wrong approach. “Since caste discrimination does not exist in UK universities, introducing caste-based legislation based on misinterpreted and misunderstood caste structures in the West will only inflame ruptures and dampen brotherhood among Indian students,” he said. He worried that intervention by Western institutions, however well meaning, could muddle things further.

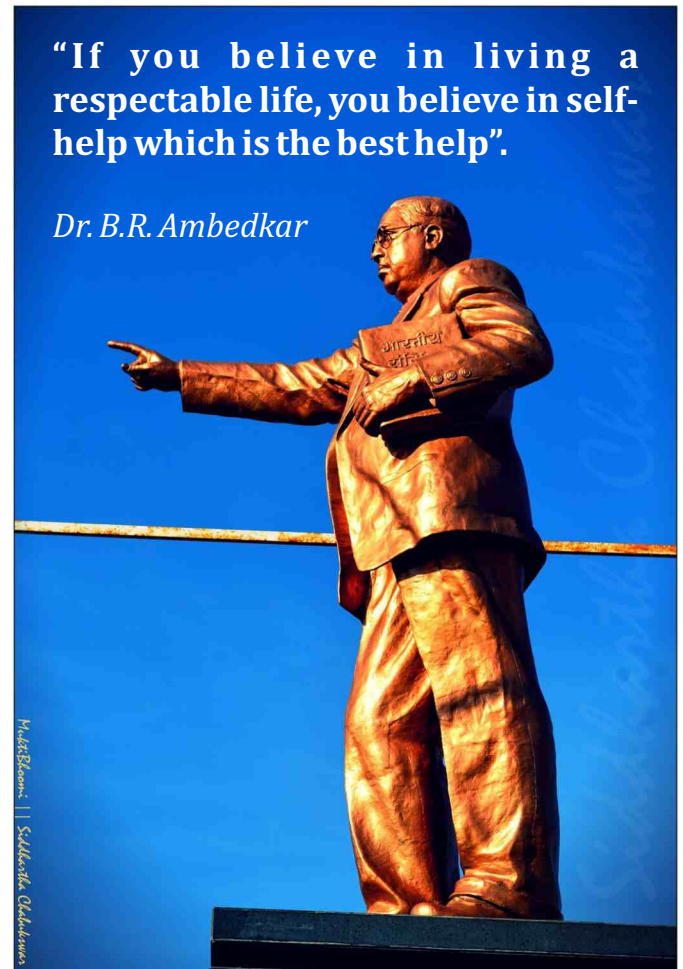
“There is a tendency for caste discussions to be very myopic in nature and generally by outsiders who don’t understand India or have hidden agendas, so when Indian students refute them, they aren’t taken seriously by the authorities.” Dr Yengde, who strongly supports policies on caste, also cautioned against an ill-considered approach.

“The universities have got to do something, but the point is how and what are they going to do,” he said. He believed that for meaningful headway, institutions should start with what they do best: research the problem. Dr Yengde also cautioned that institutional policy should be informed by the people it is meant to be serving. “Without an active Dalit footprint on the

policy I don’t think it will create as much of an effect as we’re anticipating.” They could also set caste diversity as a criterion in their hiring practices, he said.

“I have not seen any institution in the world that has actively reached out to hire a Dalit academic and give them a mandate to work on this. That would be a better way to go about it than making resolutions or laws.”

Source: Times Higher Education



“If you believe in living a respectable life, you believe in self-help which is the best help”.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar

Six sentenced to death for lynching Sri Lankan national



A court in Pakistan has sentenced six people to death after convicting them for their roles in last year's vigilante killing of a Sri Lankan factory manager accused by workers of committing blasphemy.

The six men sentenced to death were convicted of murder of Priyantha Kumara Diyawadana in a case that outraged many Pakistanis. The Anti-Terrorism Court in Lahore, set up inside a high-security prison, also gave life sentences to nine people, five years' jail to one and two-year sentences to 72, according to a statement from the public prosecutor. Eight of those sentenced were juveniles.

Diyawadana was killed in December by workers at a sports equipment factory in Pakistan's eastern Sialkot district where he was a manager. Few issues are as galvanising in Pakistan as blasphemy and even the slightest suggestion of an insult to Islam can supercharge protests and incite lynchings. "The prosecution team worked very hard to present its case to the court and to reach this judgement," Abdul Rauf Wattoo, the

lead public prosecutor, told AFP news agency.

"We are satisfied with the outcome." The special anti-terror court was established to speed up justice in high profile cases that can otherwise spend years being processed. Hafiz Israr ul Haq, lawyer for one of the men sentenced to death, called the verdict "unfair". "This was a case of mob violence and in such cases no individual's role can be ascertained with certainty," he told AFP. At the time of the killing, local police officials told AFP that rumours spread that Diyawadana had torn down a religious poster and thrown it in the dustbin.

Several gruesome video clips shared on social media showed a mob beating him while chanting slogans against blasphemy. Other clips showed Diyawadana's body set ablaze.

Many in the mob made no attempt to hide their identity and some took selfies in front of the burning corpse. Rights groups say accusations of blasphemy can often be wielded to settle personal vendettas, with minorities largely the target. In April 2017, an angry mob lynched university student Mashal Khan when he was accused of posting blasphemous content online.

A Christian couple was lynched and their remains burned in a kiln in Punjab in 2014 after being falsely accused of desecrating the Quran. The Centre for Social Justice - an independent group advocating for the rights of minorities in Pakistan - says at least 84 people were accused of committing blasphemy last year. Since 1990, at least 82 people have been murdered over alleged blasphemy in Pakistan, according to an Al Jazeera tally. Five of those killings took place last year alone, including mobs stoning and burning victims to death.

Source: Aljazeera

Rights of women restricted in all spheres: NHRC study

Neeraj Chauhan

This study has recommendations for all the enlisted gaps to guide the law-making and law-implementing agencies. In the first such study of the Constitution, legislation, schemes, policies, etc, vis-à-vis the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has concluded the rights of women remain restricted in all spheres of life in India, including social, economic and political.

The CEDAW, adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 18, 1979, gives all member states a template to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women. India ratified CEDAW in 1993.

NHRC ascertained the status of implementation of CEDAW in India and gaps between its articles and Indian provisions that ensure the protection of rights of the women. It examined 33 articles of the Constitution, 54 legislation, 63 policies, reports, schemes, programmes, advisories, memorandums of understanding, rules and regulations, etc. "This study gives various recommendations for all the enlisted gaps to guide the law-making and law-implementing agencies and is expected to be of value to the lawmakers, executives, civil society, academicians and students of gender studies, human rights and related disciplines," said an official, requesting anonymity.

NHRC has identified major gaps in the realisation of equality and non-discrimination towards women, their abysmal representation in upper echelons of law-making, poor employment and education opportunities and unfriendly laws. On women's participation in key roles, the study said that "despite reservations for women as Independent Directors under the Companies Act, 2013, there are only a few women in leadership positions, especially at the board level and many positions are lying vacant."

While 48.5% of the Indian population is women, only 27.4% are in the workforce. Similarly, women hold only 10.33% of seats in Lok Sabha and 8.8% in Rajya



Sabha. In 2021, 8.5% of lawmakers in the state legislative assemblies were women. "The data shows that there is a continued low representation of women in the upper echelons of law-making," said the study. Only a few women get a chance to represent the country at international levels or to work for international organisations. "The women representing the State at the international level, including in delegations, postings, assignments, committees, commissions, multi-lateral agencies are also very low." The study added India has had a sole woman member of the CEDAW committee for 30 years. CEDAW's Article 2 (f) says member states are supposed to take all appropriate measures to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs and practices which constitute discrimination against women.

NHRC found several customs and practices that perpetuate discrimination against women in India are out of the purview of the legislative framework. It said there are no scientific reasons for the age of marriage for women to be 18 and for the men 21. NHRC has recommended a uniform age for both. A bill brought in December 2021 to fix 21 as the uniform age of marriage for women and men was referred to a parliamentary standing committee.

NHRC noted only the father is the natural guardian under the Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act. It said the mother should also be a natural guardian as is the father under the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act.

The study found violence against women, particularly community-sanctioned, is still prevalent in rural areas and targets mainly women belonging to Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes. NHRC also noted that it is "a prevalent practice in private sector organisations to terminate pregnant women to avoid giving maternity benefits to them."

Source: Hindustan Times

Healthcare Continues to Remain Inaccessible for Dalits and Adivasis, Says Study



Health outcomes have remained grossly unequal, with India's alits and adivasis living shorter lives of poorer quality, as per a recent paper published by Oxfam India. Private infrastructure now accounts for nearly 62% of India's health infrastructure. However, only 4% adivasis and 15% dalits utilise private facilities. According to the 75th round of the National Sample Survey for inpatient care, Out of Pocket Expenditure (OOPE) in private facilities is 524% higher than in public facilities. This is unaffordable for a large section of the marginalised communities, as 45.9% of adivasis and 26.6% of dalits are in the lowest wealth quintile. Dalits and adivasis together constitute 25.2% of India's population.

"Both communities have faced systemic discrimination and have been denied access to basic services. Persistent structural and deep-rooted poverty and deprivation among dalits and adivasis manifest in all aspects of their lives," the paper said.

On average, a dalit woman lives 15 years less than an upper-caste Hindu woman. About 65% of scheduled tribe (ST) women suffer from anaemia compared to 47.6% of non-ST women. They miss out on access to healthcare. While 15% of upper-caste women did not receive prenatal care, such care was not received by 26% of dalit women. Only about 61% of ST mothers received tetanus vaccination, compared to 81% of non-SC/ST women. "They also face direct discrimination in the healthcare system," the report added. "One study found that 94% of dalit children surveyed faced discrimination in the form of touch (where they were touched sympathetically when accessing healthcare), dispensing of medicines (91%) and the conduct of pathological tests (87%); 81% of dalit children were not given as much time as other children."

In India, only 37% of the population in the rural areas has access to public health care services within a five-km radius and only 68% of the population has access to a basic outpatient health facility. Therefore, a large share of dalits and adivasis, particularly women, consult private

medical practitioners in their locality and many of these may be quacks, highlighted the paper. One study of dalits in Rajasthan found this proportion to be 74% and another in Bihar at 84%. Even in an urban settlement like Delhi, 48.9% of dalits/ adivasis sought help from unqualified practitioners for episodic illnesses.

"However, when it comes to chronic illnesses or hospitalisation, the role of private hospitals becomes more prominent," the paper said.

A Delhi study found that private hospitals account for 30.8% of hospitalisations and 42.6% of sites for the treatment of chronic illnesses. Incidents of refusal or denial of health care based on casteism and discrimination in government hospitals against dalit and adivasi patients force them to rely on unregulated private hospitals resulting in financial exploitation and even more grave abuse of their rights. The average expenditure incurred for private hospital hospitalisation is six times more than government hospitals (Rs 4,452 compared to Rs 31,845).

According to the 75th round of NSSO for OPD care, OOPE in private facilities was 114% higher than in public facilities. For in-patient care, OOPE in private facilities is 524% higher than in public facilities. For dalit patients, the average medical expenditure/hospitalisation is Rs 11,315 and Rs 18,380 in rural and urban areas, respectively. For tribal patients, it is higher Rs 14,857 in rural areas and Rs 19,492 in urban areas. The paper highlighted that this is unaffordable for dalits and adivasis, who are disproportionately likely to be poor. As per the National Family Health Survey 2015-16 (NFHS-4) data, 45.9% of the adivasi population and 26.6% of the dalit population are in the lowest wealth bracket. Five out of six multidimensional poor

people in India belong to either STs or SCs. Around 83% of SC households have their highest-earning members' income at less than Rs 5,000.

"This places very real constraints on the capacity of marginalised community households to pay for healthcare out of pocket," it said.

The paper pointed out that the high healthcare costs were expected to be addressed through the introduction of health insurance. The Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Aarogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) was launched in 2018 and became the Union government's flagship scheme to make healthcare accessible to the poor and marginalised. However, the paper said, it covers less than 30% of hospital charges leaving a heavy financial burden on the poor. In a study done in Chhattisgarh, it was found that 95.1% of insured private sector users still incurred costs during hospitalisation. Dalits and adivasis were specifically inadequately covered. Only 4% of private hospital admissions under PMJAY were from dalits; the figure was even lower at 1.6% among adivasis. This contrasts with a projected eligible 19.7% dalit and 15.4% adivasi population. "Besides, most health insurance schemes only cover hospitalisation expenses, not OPD expenses which include most costs," it said.

"India's current substantial reliance on the private healthcare sector is a reason for grave concern for India's dalits and adivasis. Due to extremely weak and ineffective mechanisms for accountability and regulation, the private healthcare sector's quest for profit maximisation often results in unwarranted treatments, exorbitant healthcare bills and a commercialised approach towards patients, especially those from marginalised communities," the paper said.

Source: News Click

Discrimination against Dalits continues to stain Nepal's social fabric

Elisha Shrestha & Aditi Aryal



Asmita Rijal first experienced caste-based discrimination when she was 15-years-old and in tenth grade. Her teacher told her, very casually, that she was different from her peers because she was a kaami. This incident stuck with her, leading her to become wary of revealing her caste to anyone.

“I was too innocent to hide my caste from my teacher who used it to humiliate me,” said Rijal. “My family always taught me to never reveal my caste as a kaami or sunar when others asked. We always lied about our caste.” Rijals can be either Brahmins or Dalits and according to Rijal, she almost always identified herself as a Brahmin, only revealing her caste when she got close to someone.

This discomfort continued well into her adulthood and as a working professional, Rijal, now 21, reports feeling intimidated whenever her colleagues brought up the subject of caste. She has even been rejected by romantic partners for her caste, she says. Rijal lives in Kathmandu and contrary to assumptions of caste-based discrimination as being limited to the rural hinterlands, her experiences testify to the fact that such prejudice remains alive and well even in educated, middle-class circles.

Rem Bahadur BK faces this bigotry each time he looks to rent a room in Kathmandu.

“Every house owner that I met would deny me a room as soon as I mentioned my caste,” said BK, president of the Jagaran Media Center, a Dalit media organisation based in Kathmandu. “Even now, it's painful to recall those incidents not only because of the way I was discriminated against but because even today, people continue to believe in high and low castes.” As the

world combats the Covid-19 pandemic, measures taken to limit the spread of the coronavirus-social and physical distancing, isolation, lockdown-are reminiscent of the centuries-long discrimination that Dalits and other ethnic and religious minorities have had to go through. The nationwide lockdown, in force since March 24, has not stopped Covid-19 and it has not prevented acts of violence against Dalits from taking place.

According to BK from the Jagaran Media Center, there have been 31 documented cases of physical violence against Dalits during the lockdown period. Two recent cases, however, have galvanised the public-the killings of six men in Rukum (West) and AngiraPasi in Rupandehi. These killings have sparked a conversation around caste-based atrocities, with a number of protests by political parties and civil society. The United Nations and Human Rights Watch have both condemned the killings and called for a free and fair investigation. The hashtag #DalitLivesMatter is being widely promoted on social media as part of a campaign to give voice to stories of discrimination and ways to combat prejudice.

For decades, Nepal has struggled to abolish caste-based discrimination and untouchability. When the Civil Act 1963 was introduced, its biggest focus was to make caste-based discrimination a punishable offence. The Untouchability and Discrimination Act, promulgated in 2011 and the Constitution of Nepal both provide clear protections for Dalits, who make up 13.12 percent of the country's population. Despite these legal provisions, acts of violence against Dalits have continued across the country. Occasionally, these incidents have even escalated into murder, with at least 16 caste-based killings reported since the

Untouchability and Discrimination Act came into force in 2011. Cases of discrimination rarely get to court and even if they result in convictions, the offenders are given small fines or minimal jail time of a few months.

Home Minister Ram Bahadur Thapa, on May 26, had told Parliament that a five-member probe team led by a joint-secretary from the ministry has been formed to look into the Rukum (West) killings. But even lawmakers doubt the ability of the investigation team to produce anything tangible. A number of Dalit parliamentarians, including Nepali Congress lawmaker Man Bahadur Bishwokarma and Nepal Communist Party (NCP) lawmaker Asha Kumari BK, have demanded the formation of an all-party parliamentary probe to look into the killings.

“We won't stop raising our voices until a high-level parliamentary committee is formed,” said Anjana Bishankhe, a ruling party lawmaker and rights activist. “How can we trust a committee composed of bureaucrats? We've seen what happened with the Nirmala Pant case.”

The National Dalit Commission, formed in 2015 by the new constitution, to oversee Dalit issues and hold the state accountable, has remained toothless, with no chief commissioner or office bearers. Legal protections might be robust but the problem once again lies in implementation, say rights activists, which is to be expected when the country's leadership is composed almost entirely of Brahmin men. “The political parties claim to be guided by the principles of Mao and Lenin or socialism but they are led by 'upper-caste' individuals who do not consider issues of caste to be of importance,” said Shailendra Ambedkar, an advocate and Dalit rights activist.

According to Shailendra, it is ironic that the recent killings of six Dalits took place in Rukum, which was the heart of the Maoist insurgency. “Even with the Maoists in power, we saw a heinous caste-based brutality take place in the area,” he said. “The state has failed Dalits one more time.” A lot of discriminatory behaviour, like not letting Dalits enter the house or eat together, continues to be normalised and even practised by political leaders and government officials, according to Shailendra. Dalits, for decades, have the lowest level of political participation (3.03 percent in the hills and 1.16 percent in the Tarai) compared to other ethnicities, according to research published in 2019 in the Asian Journal of Political Science.

There was some improvement in the representation of Dalits at local level after the 2017 elections. Among the 35,041 representatives elected across 753 local federal units in 2017, 7,737 (22 percent) were Dalits. That improvement in Dalit representation, however, was largely because of quota.

Of the 7,737 Dalit representatives, 6,567 (18.7 percent) were from Dalit woman ward member quota. Outside the quota, Dalit representatives accounted for just 3.3 percent of the total representatives (1,170). And even elected representatives are not spared caste-based bigotry. Tulasa Sunar, deputy chief of Gaumukhi Rural Municipality in Pyuthan district, has stated that people still deny her entry into their homes and refuse to eat with her. “We are not allowed to enter some houses or eat together with non-Dalits. Whatever the legal provisions, the practice of untouchability is very much alive,” she told the Post in June, last year. Laws and affirmative action policies might have facilitated more representation but attitudes on the ground have remained unchanged.

“Earlier, I used to think that Dalits were discriminated against because we were a marginalised group suffering from poverty and a lack of education. But, when I saw how Dalits who've become successful still got bullied for simply being Dalits, I realised that untouchability has been embraced by the 'upper castes' to maintain the gap between them and us,” said BK of the Jagaran Media Center. But BK doesn't believe that the caste system will go away anytime soon as it is a cornerstone of Hindu ideology. Twenty-one-year-old Rijal, who is now more vocal about her caste, believes that change must start with the education system, which should include detailed curricula on caste structures.

“One reason I refrain from mentioning my caste is because of the awkward silence that follows when I tell people I am a sunar and not bahun,” she said. “Schools should include courses on caste that go beyond 'upper caste' and 'lower caste'.” While the recent outpouring of support in the wake of the killings in Rukum have been heartening for many Dalits and rights activists, many still believe that it will take a long time for attitudes to change and such discriminatory behaviour to go away completely.

“Until we stop gauging people's abilities on the basis of their surnames,” said Shailendra, “we will never move ahead as a society.”

Source: Kathmandu Post



India: Authorities Should Stop Targeting, Prosecuting Journalists and Online Critics

Indian authorities are increasingly targeting journalists and online critics for their criticism of government policies and practices, including by prosecuting them under counterterrorism and sedition laws, ten human rights organizations said on World Press Freedom Day.

The Indian authorities should respect the right to freedom of expression and release any journalists detained on trumped-up or politically motivated charges for their critical reporting and stop targeting journalists and muzzling independent media. The authorities' targeting of journalists, coupled with a broader crackdown on dissent, has emboldened Hindu nationalists to threaten, harass and abuse journalists critical of the Indian government, both online and offline, with impunity, the groups said.

The organizations are Committee to Protect Journalists, Freedom House, PEN America, Reporters Without Borders, International Federation of Journalists, CIVICUS, Access Now, International Commission of Jurists, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.

Amid growing restrictions on media freedom, Indian authorities have arrested journalists on spurious terrorism and sedition charges and have routinely targeted critics and independent news organizations, including raiding their workplaces. Journalists and online critics also risk prosecution under the Information Technology Act and IT Rules of 2021 for

content critical of the authorities. Indian authorities have been implicated in using the Israeli-produced spyware Pegasus to target journalists. In addition, the authorities' frequent internet shutdowns hamper the ability of journalists to do their work, including accessing and disseminating information online.

These restrictions on media freedom come amid an escalating crackdown on civil society by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led government, which is using sedition, counterterrorism and national security laws to target and prosecute human rights activists, students, government critics and peaceful protesters. Journalists from minority groups and those in Jammu and Kashmir are particularly at risk, the groups said.

In April 2022, at least five journalists covering an event organized by Hindu nationalist groups in Delhi were attacked. Delhi police subsequently opened a criminal investigation into one of these journalists, Meer Faisal, accusing him of inciting hatred through a tweet, in which he alleged that participants in the event attacked him and a photojournalist because they were Muslim.

In March 2022, airport authorities in Mumbai prevented Rana Ayyub, a prominent Muslim female journalist and an outspoken critic of the BJP, from flying to London to address a journalism event. The authorities said they did so because of an ongoing investigation into money laundering and tax evasion, allegations Ayyub has denied. Independent United

Nations human rights experts have alleged that Indian authorities have harassed Ayyub for years. Government supporters and Hindu nationalist trolls have repeatedly abused and threatened Ayyub on social media.

The Committee to Protect Journalists found that at least 20 female Muslim journalists, including Ayyub, had been listed on a fake “auction” app as “for sale” to humiliate, degrade and intimidate them. All of these journalists have reported critically on how the BJP government's policies have affected religious minorities. Many women journalists in India, especially those who are critical of the government, face a growing backlash on social media that has included rape and death threats. The abuses often come from account holders who identify themselves as BJP supporters.

Siddique Kappan, another Muslim journalist, has been in prison since October 2020, when Uttar Pradesh police arrested him on baseless charges of terrorism, sedition and promoting enmity between groups, among others. At the time of his arrest, Kappan had been on his way from New Delhi to Hathras district in Uttar Pradesh to report on a gang rape and murder case of a young Dalit woman that had sparked nationwide protests.

Authorities in BJP-led Uttar Pradesh state have repeatedly filed false charges against journalists for publishing content and social media posts critical of the government. Since 2017, after BJP leader Yogi Adityanath became the state's chief minister, the authorities have filed criminal cases against 66 journalists. Another 48 journalists have been physically attacked, according to a February 2022 report by the Committee Against Assault on Journalists. Journalists in small towns and villages reporting in Hindi language media are at even higher risk of being targeted and prosecuted by authorities.

In Jammu and Kashmir, the government has intensified its crackdown after it revoked the state's special autonomous status in August 2019 and split it into two federally governed territories. Since then, at least 35 journalists in Kashmir have faced police interrogation, raids, threats, physical assault, restrictions on freedom of movement, or fabricated criminal cases for their reporting. The authorities have ramped up raids on homes of journalists and activists and confiscated their cell phones. In June 2020, the government announced a new media policy that gave more power to the authorities to censor news in the region.

Authorities in Kashmir are also using preventive detention under the Jammu and Kashmir Public Safety Act against journalists, which allows them to arbitrarily

detain people without evidence and thorough judicial review. In 2022, the authorities rearrested Fahad Shah, Aasif Sultan and Sajad Gul under the Public Safety Act after they had been granted bail separately in other cases filed against them in retaliation for their journalism work.

Journalists in Kashmir have also struggled to do their reporting work because of frequent internet shutdowns by the authorities in the region. According to Access Now, India shut down the internet at least 106 times in 2021, “making it the world's biggest offender for the fourth consecutive year.” Within India, Jammu and Kashmir was the worst affected, with at least 85 shutdowns.

The government is increasingly using technology to curtail human rights and stifle freedom of expression online. In February 2021, the Indian government published the Information Technology Rules, which imperil freedom of expression and the right to privacy. These rules empower the government to summarily compel the removal of online content without any judicial oversight. They also jeopardize encryption, which is crucial for ensuring privacy and security online and routinely used by journalists to protect their sources and themselves from being targeted. The Editors Guild of India said the rules undermined media freedom. Three UN human rights experts have expressed concern that the rules do not conform with international human rights norms.

The Pegasus Project found that over 40 Indian journalists appeared on a leaked list of potential targets for surveillance. The Indian government has repeatedly stalled attempts to investigate these allegations. This perpetuates an environment of surveillance impunity that results in a chilling effect on free speech and media freedoms, the groups said. The groups urged the Indian government to protect the right to freedom of expression, including by immediately releasing journalists who are arrested for their critical reporting, ending broad and indiscriminate internet shutdowns, withdrawing the media policy in Jammu and Kashmir and repealing the Information Technology Rules.

“The authorities should also conduct prompt, thorough, independent and impartial investigations into allegations of threats and attacks targeting journalists and critics, including from government officials,” the groups said. “Journalists should not have to risk their freedom and their lives to do their work.”

Source: Amnesty International

Lower caste Hindu orgs demand modification of Anti-Discrimination **BILL**



Leaders of some lower caste Hindu organisations demanded modifications of some sections of the Anti-Discrimination Bill 2022, which was tabled in the parliament on April 5.

At a press conference at the Dhaka Reporters Unity, Bangladesh Joy Bhim Chhatra-Juba Federation president Prosenjeet Das Malay in his written speech said that the Anti-Discrimination Bill 2022, if enacted, would not remove discriminations to lower caste Hindus.

On behalf of five organisations, he demanded formation of a commission led by a retired justice of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court for finding which sections of the bill were contradictory to the proposed law's purpose.

They also demanded judicial power of the commission and ensuring rights of the women, dalits and indigenous people in the proposed law.

Minority Rights Forum, Horizon Human Right Foundation, Bangladesh Maha Dalit Parisangh and Pakhik Foundation of Bangladesh were among the organisations demanding the modifications.

The press conference was followed by a protest rally in front of the National Press Club, where its leaders Hemonta Das, Utpal Biswas, Aninda Das Robi and others spoke.

Source: New Age BD

Violence against Christians on the rise in India, says religious rights body



Nithya Pandian

It was on November 26 last year that a section of church-going Christians in Karnataka's Belagavi received a 'friendly warning' from the police, urging the faithful not to conduct prayer meetings because the "right wing groups may attack them and the police will not be able to give them protection". The police's request was to avoid such meetings until the end of the Winter Session of the Karnataka Assembly, which was scheduled to be held from December 13 to 24 and expected to table the controversial anti-conversion Bill.

Less than a month later, on December 11, a Christian priest in the area was chased by a sword-wielding man, with the incident being caught on CCTV cameras and shared widely on social media. On December 28, a group of Hindutva vigilantes barged into a Dalit household in Tumakuru in a bid to stop them from celebrating Christmas and on the very next day, another mob attacked a Dalit family residing in Tukkanatti village of Belagavi after accusing them of converting their neighbours to Christianity. On the night of January 23 this year, the Trinity Church in Ramanathapuram of Coimbatore in Tamil Nadu was vandalised by two people, who pelted stones at the building, shattered the glass and damaged a statue.



As many as 207 incidents of violent crimes allegedly targeting the Christian community have been registered in the country so far this year, according to a report released on June 13 by the United Christian Forum (UCF), a Christian rights protection body. The UCF recorded 40 such incidents in January, 35 in February, 33 in March, 40 in April and 57 - the highest number yet this year - in May. Similar to last year, Uttar Pradesh tops the list with 48 incidents, followed by Chhattisgarh (44). Jharkhand recorded 23 such cases of violence and Madhya Pradesh 14.

The report comes at a time when attacks on minority communities in India are on the rise, from the houses of Muslim families being torn down and men being beaten up for consuming beef, to conversion-related disputes and lynching. Besides the obvious violence against the Muslim community, the country has also been witnessing a sharp rise in attacks on churches, educational institutions, mass gatherings and against religious heads, furthering the strain on India's secular fabric. The UCF had come out with another report on April 15, which included the data up until April 13, stating that Christians were at the receiving end of at least 127 incidents of religious violence so far in the year. As per the report, 82 of these incidents comprised mob violence, 89 pastors were beaten for conducting prayers and 68 churches were attacked. In a report in December last year, the Forum had referred to 2021 as the "most violent year" for the community, recording 486 such incidents. The reports are based on the information collected by the UCF helpline, a toll-free number that was launched in January 2015 to help people with legal remedies if they have been traumatised by incidents of religious disharmony.



Speaking to TNM, AC Micheal, former member of the Delhi Minorities Commission, pointed out that ever since the very first anti-conversion law was enacted in 1967, there has not been a single conviction against pastors or any Christians for forced and fraudulent conversion. "It has been more than 50 years now and no such forced conversions have been reported so far. But recently, there has been increased attacks on the Christian community over false allegations of forced religious conversion. A propaganda is underway to make it seem like several such conversions are happening in the country, based on which churches are being attacked, church houses being vandalised and women and children being beaten up," he says.

The first anti-conversion law ever to be passed in India was by Madhya Pradesh, with the Madhya Pradesh Dharma Swathanthra Adhiniyam, 1967, which banned conversion from one religion to another by the use of force, fraud or allurement. This was followed by Odisha, which passed the Orissa Freedom of Religion Act, 1968. This Act too penalised conversion by use of force, fraud, allurement or inducement in the state.

"Last week, the Delhi High Court observed that conversion, unless forced, is not prohibited.

Rather, it is an individual choice guaranteed by our Constitution of India. While hearing the petition seeking directions to frame laws to prohibit religious conversions, the High Court bench had asked advocate Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay to come up with data to back the Hindutva groups' claim that many forced and mass conversions were happening in the country. But this is not the case," said Micheal, who has submitted a memorandum to the National Commission for Minorities highlighting the increased violence against Christians. "We have asked the Commission to look into the matter and direct the police to take these concerns seriously," he said.

When asked how southern India fared on this matter, Michael pointed out how Karnataka had also introduced the anti-conversion law, but no case has been registered under this legislation yet. "Unfortunately, incidents of violence against Christians have been going up in Tamil Nadu too," he added. In fact, when it comes to numbers, Tamil Nadu was right next to Karnataka on the UCF list, recording 20 cases of violence against Christians. From 2014 to 2022, around 250 such incidents have been recorded through the UCF helpline in Tamil Nadu.

Source: The News Minute

The Indianisation of education: Education with a not-so-hidden agenda

Dr Ram Puniyani

In the name of rationalization of curriculum, many topics have been removed from the CBSE (Central Board of Secondary Education) syllabus (April 2022) in India. From the 10th standard syllabus the topics excluded are democracy and diversity, rise of Afro-Asiatic Islamic states, history of Mughal Courts, the non-aligned movement, impact of globalization on agriculture, popular struggle movements, poems of Faiz in the section of communalism and challenges to democracy.

The All India Democratic Students Organization has launched a signature campaign against it. As such when the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) comes to power, one of its major goals is to modify and change the education policy and curriculum to tune it to its version of sectarian nationalism. Its focus is on faith-based knowledge away from scientific temper and rational approach to social and historical issues.

One recalls when the BJP-led NDA came to power in 1998, Dr. M.M. Joshi was the education minister. He changed the history books to introduce a communal angle to historical events. Accompanying this was the introduction of 'paurohitya' (priestcraft) and 'karmakand' (religious rituals). In contrast to scientific astronomy, astrology started being taught. There was an interesting paradox.

Astrology vs science

In astrology, Saturn is the trouble maker while in astronomy Saturn was taught as a planet of the Sun. In opposition to the biological understanding that the sex of the child is determined by the X or Y chromosome coming from the father, the Putrakameshti Yagna (ritual to get male child) was being taught as the method for getting the much sought-after son.



The pattern continues. The RSS has already formed Shiksha Sanskriti Uthan Nayas, an RSS affiliate, to campaign to influence the education ministry. It has been pressurizing NCERT for the removal of English, Urdu and Arabic words, the thoughts of Rabindranath Tagore; extracts from painter M F Husain's autobiography; references to the Mughal emperors as benevolent, to the BJP as a "Hindu" party, an apology tendered by former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh over the 1984 riots; and a sentence that "nearly 2,000 Muslims were killed in Gujarat in 2002". (25th July 2017) As such these recent recommendations to NCERT are a continuation of the same agenda which is working for its goal of Hindu 'Rashtra' (nation).

It had also been putting pressure to undertake 'Bharatiyakaran' (Indianisation) of education. Under its pressure many publishers have buckled. The major example is Penguin pulping the book 'The Hindus' by Wendy Doniger. This was an academic work that looked at various aspects of Hindus, particularly the plight of women and Dalits. One RSS leader Dinanath Batra has been very active in this area and has produced a number of books for school children. In Gujarat, 42,000 schools introduced his books after their translation to Gujarati.

Falsifying history

The pattern of the curriculum presented in these books spells things like Qutub Minar - the 13th-century minaret built by Muslim rulers - was a Hindu monument, called Vishnu Stambh, built by Hindu emperor Samudra Gupta. These books totally bypass the syncretic traditions and present the kingdoms through the eyes of the king's religion. The focus is to present the view that foreign Muslim rulers were doing atrocities on native Hindus.

It is through this lens that kings of the Mughal dynasty are presented. Now in the new scheme of things the Mughal courts and their pattern will be totally eliminated. Even the much-maligned Mughal period the Mughal kings had Hindu associates (Akbar+Mansingh, Aurangzeb+Raja Jaising) to give just a small sample.

In these books, Muhammad Ghazni and Ghori are the key villains. Ghazni had many Hindu generals (Tilak, Sondhi, Harzan, Rai and Hind) in his army. Shivaji and Rana Pratap are presented as the main heroes. Incidentally, Shivaji's confidential secretary was Maulana Haiser Ali and Rana Pratap had Hakim Khan Sur as one of his generals.

The disturbing changes brought by BJP are an attempt to construct a history to suit its narrative of Hindu nationalism. Mahatma Gandhi (Hind Swaraj) and Jawaharlal Nehru (Discovery of India) gave the history of India, which was inclusive and reflected the emerging national movement and underlying concept of Indian nationalism.

Saffronization

The changes brought in by the BJP in education were called "saffronization" by its critics. Initially, the BJP and company responded to this criticism by ignoring the phrase. Later they aggressively said that the syllabus needs to be "saffronized". Even present Vice President M. Venkaiah Naidu asserted that the syllabus needs to be saffronized.

The current changes which are seeing are in tune with the political requirements of RSS combine. Mughal court was an example of Hindu-Muslim unity, so it can't have a place in the BJP scheme of things. Faiz Ahmad Faiz, who was a democrat and secular and was also nominated for Nobel Prize for Literature, is an icon for literature for progressive



democratic values. Having a poet with a Pakistani identity will surely be a 'big no' for the present ruling dispensation.

Currently one of the aims of the government is to undermine the first prime minister of India, the architect of modern India, one who stood tall for his commitment to democratic and secular values, Jawaharlal Nehru. His major contribution to the global scene was to evolve and work for the non-aligned movement. This movement gave a new direction to global alignments. It also helped India to develop taking advantage of the collaboration of different camps in the world despite the Cold War. But the chapter on the Cold War era and non-alignment have been kept out of the syllabus.

Sectarian India?

The present ruling party and its ideology want to push the country towards an authoritarian sectarian state, where democracy has no role, so that chapters on pluralism and diversity are out. India's pluralism and diversity have a major role to play in the culture and strength of India. India's freedom movement and the Indian Constitution respect our diversity. But uniformity in language, religious traditions and other cultural aspects is what is being aimed at.

Overall the changes proposed in the country's education system are in tune with the concept of nationalism and culture that sectarian nationalists want to impose on the country. These need to be opposed and ensure that our syllabi are in tune with rationalism, scientific temper of pluralism of India.

Source: Southasia Monitor

Under-reconstruction Jain Mandir in Lahore all set to reopen

Sheharyar Rizwan

The city's historic Jain Mandir located at a busy intersection, aptly named after the temple, is going through a well-deserved reconstruction and rehabilitation. One of merely handful of Jain temples in town, it was attacked and damaged in 1992 - along with many other temples in Lahore - a couple of days after hordes of right-wing Hindu activists razed to the ground the 16th century Babri Mosque in the Ayodhya city of India. The historic mosque was one of the structures built during the rule of the first Mughal emperor, Babur.

The temple's canopy was the only piece of the original structure that survived. Its ruins lay neglected for the next over two decades, until in 2016 it was enclosed behind a boundary wall and the remaining site given away to the Orange Line Metro Train (OLMT). In Dec 2021, a day before the 19th anniversary of the Babri Mosque demolition, the then chief justice of Pakistan Gulzar Ahmed ordered immediate restoration of the temple, as well as the one in Neela Gumbad. Punjabi author Iqbal Qaiser, who researched the forgotten remains of Jain heritage in Pakistan and compiled more than 20 of the important temples in the country in his book, titled Ujray Daran De Darshan (A Peek into the Deserted Doors), told Dawn the Jain Mandir near Anarkali had been constructed by a woman with her own resources in 1940. It remained active till the Partition and had been lying abandoned since then until it was destroyed in 1992.

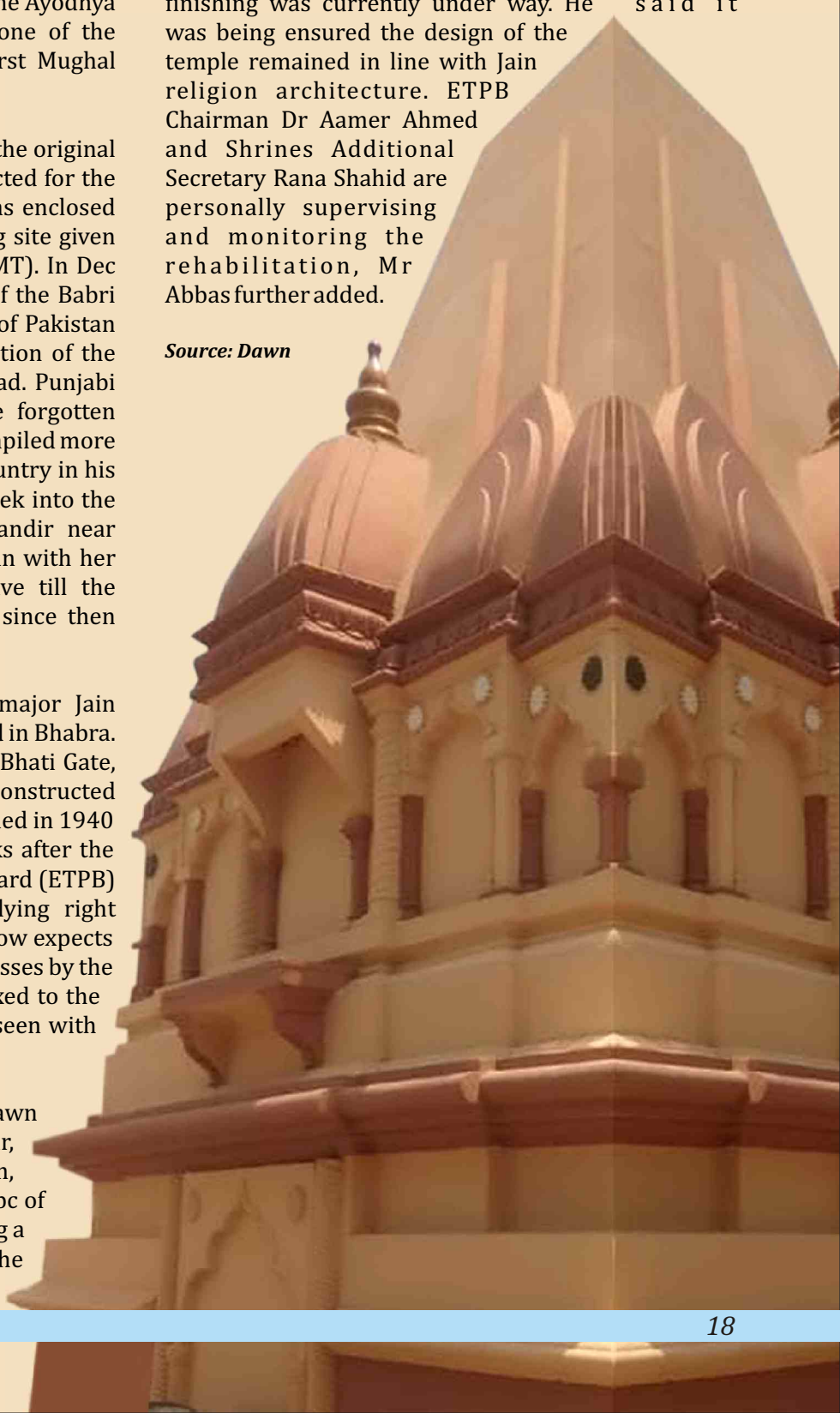
Mr Qaiser also pointed out two other major Jain temples in Lahore, one of which was located in Bhabra. The second existed in the narrow lanes of Bhati Gate, Lahore, built by Emperor Akbar and was reconstructed during the British era. It was later demolished in 1940 where now stands the Jain Hall. Just weeks after the SC's orders, the Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB) initiated reconstruction of the temple, lying right opposite an enormous OLMT station and now expects to complete it in just over a month. If one passes by the under-construction temple, scaffoldings fixed to the top of its cone-shaped structure could be seen with labourers busy reconstructing it.

ETPB Deputy Secretary Faraz Abbas told Dawn that the ongoing rehabilitation of Jain Mandir, being undertaken with approximately Rs5m, will take around a month or so, as over 70pc of the work has been completed. After creating a foundation, the surviving portion of the

temple was lifted through a crane and placed on three-four feet high platform."

Elaborating on the work undertaken, the official said a sewerage line had been laid, CCTV cameras set up, new gates installed on the premises, walls plastered, landscaping done, pigeon holes restored and the finishing was currently under way. He said it was being ensured the design of the temple remained in line with Jain religion architecture. ETPB Chairman Dr Aamer Ahmed and Shrines Additional Secretary Rana Shahid are personally supervising and monitoring the rehabilitation, Mr Abbas further added.

Source: Dawn




Income Of 94% Registered Informal Workers At Rs 10K Or Below; 74% Belong To SC, ST, OBC

Over 94 per cent of 27.69 crore informal sector workers registered on the e-Shram portal have a monthly income of Rs 10,000 or below and over 74 per cent of the enrolled workforce belongs to scheduled castes (SC), scheduled tribes (ST) and other backward classes (OBC), according to the latest data. The proportion of informal workers getting a monthly income of Rs 10,000 or below was 92.37 per cent in the middle of November 2021 when total enrolments on e-Shram portal were a little over 8 crore. Those belonging to SC, ST and OBC who enrolled on the portal were 72.58 per cent in the middle of November 2021.

The experts are of the view that as the enrolments progress on e-Shram portal towards the ultimate goal of enrolling all informal sector workers estimated at 38 crore in the country, the data would show sharp disparities in the society. e-Shram portal is aimed at building a comprehensive National Database of Unorganised Workers (NDUW) in the country. The aim of the portal is to boost the last-mile delivery of the welfare schemes for over 38 crore unorganised workers in the country. It was launched on August 26, 2021. The experts are of the view that almost all targeted informal sector workers should be registered on e-Shram portal during this calendar year only, which would give a big opportunity to the political leadership to draft an evidence-based policy for the large section of deprived classes in the country.

According to the latest data, as many as 27.69 crore informal sector workers are registered on the portal and show that this unorganised workforce is living under extreme poverty and a majority of those belong to socially backward communities.

The data showed that 94.11 per cent of the registered informal workers have a monthly income of Rs 10,000 or below, while 4.36 per cent have a

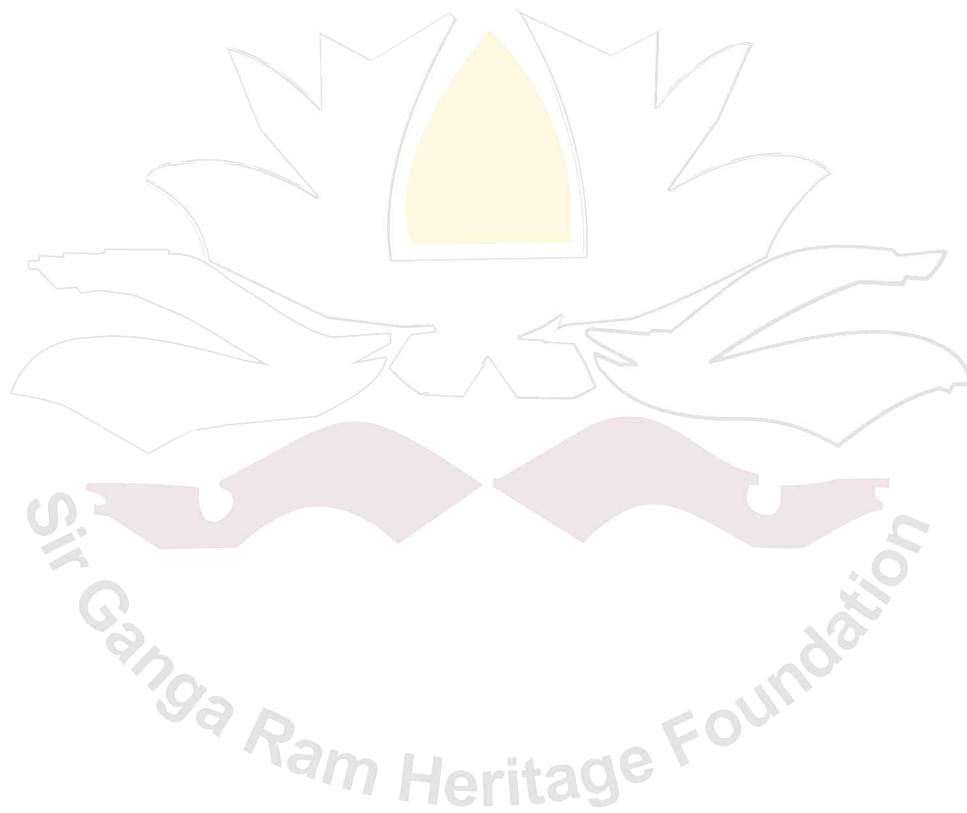


monthly income between Rs 10,001 and Rs 15,000. The social category analysis of the data shows that 74.44 per cent of registered workers are below the socially backward classes, including 45.32 per cent OBC, 20.95 per cent SC and 8.17 per cent ST. The proportion of the General Category workers is 25.56 per cent. Age-wise analysis of the data show that 61.72 per cent of the registered workers on the portal are of the age from 18 years to 40 years, while 22.12 per cent are of the age from 40 years to 50 years. The proportion of the registered workers aged above 50 years is 13.23 per cent, while 2.93 per cent of workers are aged between 16 and 18 years.



Gender analysis shows that 52.81 per cent of registered workers are female and 47.19 per cent are male. Top-5 states in terms of registrations are Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha. Occupation wise, agriculture is at the top with 52.11 per cent of enrolments done by those related to the farm sector followed by domestic and household workers at 9.93 per cent and constructions workers at 9.13 per cent.

Source: Business Today



Sir Ganga Ram Heritage Foundation