

QUARTERLY

AMBEDKAR VISION

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**Abolish
Reservations
After 10 Years':
The Illusion of
Merit and What
B.R. Ambedkar
Never Said**




Ambedkar Society for South Asia

QUARTERLY AMBEDKAR VISION

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The 'Ambedkar Vision' is an effort to take forward the mission initiated by great social reformer and activist Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, to end the caste based discrimination and exploitation on the basis of social status or religion and to create caste free society. The Ambedkar Vision is trying to knock at the doors of the political powers of the region and also concerned international forums by highlighting the atrocities being committed against the oppressed and marginalized classes. We expect our readers to join us in this endeavor through their opinions and mentors as a contribution to public awareness & understanding of the issues of marginalized communities of South Asia.

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Ambedkar Society for South Asia



from
the Editor 

In recent years, the world has witnessed a concerning trend of discrimination and violence against marginalized communities, particularly Dalits, across various countries. The articles compiled in this edition of Ambedkar Vision shed light on the challenges faced by Dalits and other oppressed groups, emphasizing the urgent need for concerted efforts to uphold principles of equality and justice. The expression of concern by the US and UN regarding India's religion-based citizenship law underscores the importance of safeguarding the rights of all individuals, regardless of their religious or caste identity. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's vision of a society based on equality and fraternity serves as a guiding beacon in our quest for social justice. It is imperative to debunk misconceptions such as the call to abolish reservations, which perpetuate the illusion of meritocracy while ignoring systemic barriers faced by marginalized communities. The designation of April as 'Dalit History Month' by a Canadian city honors Dr. Ambedkar's legacy and serves as a reminder of the ongoing struggle for Dalit rights worldwide. Tragically, incidents such as the killings of 40 Dalits in Nepal and the rising tide of atrocities against Dalits underscore the pervasive nature of caste-based discrimination and untouchability, even in countries with legislation aimed at addressing these issues. The plight of Pakistan's Christians, still living in fear following violence in Punjab, and the targeting of Hindu temples in Bangladesh by extremists highlight the urgent need to combat hate speech and promote religious harmony. Moreover, the story of a Dalit professor's fight against casteism in India's educational institutions underscores the importance of challenging entrenched prejudices in all spheres of society. As we reflect on the events of 2023, including the government's approach to caste development, we must ensure that policies and initiatives truly uplift the marginalized and address the root causes of inequality. Dr. Ambedkar's vision of social justice demands nothing less than a relentless pursuit of equality, dignity, and freedom for all individuals, irrespective of their caste, creed, or nationality. In conclusion, Ambedkar Vision reaffirms its commitment to advancing the principles espoused by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and calls upon readers to join us in our journey towards a more just and equitable society, both locally and globally. Together, let us strive to realize Dr. Ambedkar's dream of a world free from caste-based discrimination and oppression.

US, UN express concern about India's religion-based citizenship law

Kanishka Singh



The U.S. government and the United Nations expressed concerns about a contentious religion-based citizenship law, in India, with the UN calling the legislation "fundamentally discriminatory in nature."

Rights advocates have criticized the 2019 Citizenship Amendment Act, which the Indian government moved to implement. Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International say it discriminates against Muslims.

Just weeks before Indian elections, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party government has been pushing to implement the law, which makes it easier to get Indian citizenship for non-Muslim refugees from three Muslim-majority South Asian nations: Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Rights groups note the law leaves out, Muslim minority groups like Shia Muslims from those countries while also excluding neighboring countries where Muslims are a minority, like the Rohingyas in Myanmar.

"As we said in 2019, we are concerned that India's Citizenship (Amendment) Act 2019 (CAA) is fundamentally discriminatory in nature and in breach of India's international human rights obligations," a spokesperson of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights said.

He added the office was studying whether the law's implementation rules comply with international human rights law. The U.S. has also signaled reservations.

"We are concerned about the notification of the Citizenship Amendment Act on March 11. We are closely monitoring how this act will be implemented," a U.S. State Department spokesperson said separately.

"Respect for religious freedom and equal treatment

under the law for all communities are fundamental democratic principles," the State Department spokesperson added in an email.

Activists and rights advocates say the law, combined with a proposed national register of citizens, could discriminate against India's 200 million Muslims - the world's third-largest Muslim population. Some fear the government might remove the citizenship of Muslims without documents in some border states.

Modi's government did not implement the law following its 2019 passage as protests and sectarian violence broke out in New Delhi and elsewhere. Scores were killed and hundreds injured during days of clashes.

The Indian government denies the law is anti-Muslim and says it was needed to help minorities who suffered persecution in neighboring Muslim-majority nations. It has called the earlier protests politically motivated.

The Indian embassy in Washington said the normal process of application for Indian citizenship remains available to everyone, regardless of nationality, community or faith and that the CAA was meant specifically for "stateless persons from these persecuted communities who are already in India."

Rights groups allege mistreatment of Muslims under Modi, who became prime minister in 2014. Besides this law, they also point to the 2019 revoking, of Muslim-majority Kashmir's special status, the demolition of Muslim properties, in 2022 and a ban on wearing the hijab, in classrooms in Karnataka when the Bharatiya Janata Party was in power in that state.

Modi's government denies the presence of minority abuse and says its policies aim to benefit all Indians.

Source: Reuters

Abolish Reservations After 10 Years': The Illusion of Merit and What B.R. Ambedkar Never Said

Rajesh Chavda



When a false statement gets repeated time and again, it acquires its own life. People stop questioning its veracity and start accepting that as the ultimate truth.

It was 1994. I was a Class 12 student at a Gujarati-medium state school in a village in Gujarat. My sociology teacher, whose last name was Patel, suddenly started talking about reservations. Until then, although my caste label was that of a Dalit, I did not know what reservations were.

He said that reservations were an unjust system meant to confer unfair advantages to scheduled castes and tribes. It was all a political gimmick aimed at harming the meritorious and more deserving castes in university admissions and government jobs. He also said that these reservations were introduced by BR Ambedkar, the architect of India's Constitution, only for 10 years and they have never been abolished as intended. It was high time to do that, he said.

I was not the only Dalit student in the class. He was aware of our caste labels, but did not care how we might feel about his rant against reservations.

He thought Dalits lacked merit although I, a Dalit boy, was the best performing student at the school and he took pride in being my teacher.

I was reminded of this incident as I read an article by

Tavleen Singh in The Indian Express on December 10 in which she wrote: "When reservations were introduced for scheduled castes and tribes in our Constitution, it was a vital gesture of atonement for the evil done to lower caste Indians for centuries. It was not just necessary affirmative action but something that had to be done for people deprived of the right to education and social equality, often in horrendous ways. But at the time that this affirmative action was introduced, Dr Ambedkar suggested that it should last only for ten years."

It has been almost 30 years since the first time I heard about reservations. During these 30 years, I have heard so many times the call in different tones and languages for reservations to be abolished.

One thing that has also been repeated often is that Ambedkar was in favour of reservations only for 10 years.

That is blatantly untrue.

The initial time limit of 10 years was imposed only on reservations for scheduled castes and tribes being elected to state and central legislatures. No such restriction was introduced on reservations in education or government jobs.

Further, as shown in the below speech he delivered in the Constitutional Assembly, on August 25, 1949, he



was not in favour of any time limit even on political reservations:

“I personally was prepared to press for a larger time, because I do feel that so far as the Scheduled Castes are concerned, they are not treated on the same footing as the other minorities...it would have been quite proper I think and generous on the part of this House to have given the Scheduled Castes a longer term with regard to these reservations...For the Scheduled tribes I am prepared to give far longer time.

“But all those who have spoken about the reservations to the Scheduled Castes or to the Scheduled tribes have been so meticulous that the thing should end by 10 years. All I want to say to them in the words of Edmund Burke, is 'Large empires and small minds go ill together'.”

Thus, often people have been attributing a wrong quote to Ambedkar to justify their demand that reservations for scheduled castes and tribes should come to an end.

When they demand the ending of reservations for scheduled castes and tribes, they do not provide any justification backed by statistics but a generalised argument that the reservations have been ineffective. Tavleen Singh has also similarly written: “As a tool for bringing social equality for scheduled castes and tribes, reservations have failed.”

She added: “If there is one section of Indians who has benefited most from reservations, it is our politicians...They have also learned the skill of using reservations in government schools and colleges to their own benefit by controlling who gets a reserved seat and who does not.”

The above statement does not make any sense, considering an education institution has no role in deciding who gets reservations and who does not.

Reservations are fixed for scheduled castes and tribes under the executive orders that derive their power from the Indian Constitution. It is their constitutional right guaranteed under the equality code. A person gets the benefit of reservations only if they produce a caste or tribe certificate issued by the relevant government department. Thus, it is a completely independent system which an education institution is merely obliged to obey.

I am again reminded of the same teacher who thought merit was important. Yet, he did not want to carry out his job as expected of him. As I was the top performing student in my school, he once visited me at my house although I lived in a different village. He came to see me as he wanted me to do his job of evaluating the answers sheets of other students. He asked me to go to his home every day and evaluate the answer sheets in the annual examination of Class 12 students on his behalf.

When he visited our home, my father offered him water and tea. He refused to accept any of those as he was afraid of getting polluted as he believed us to be impure by our birth.

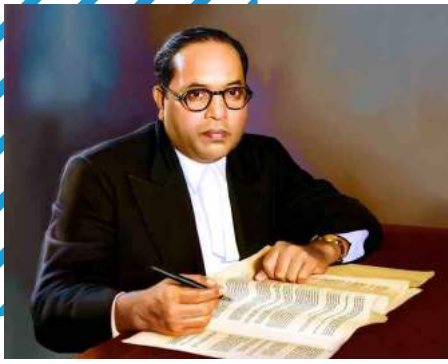
He did not have any problem in getting free labour from me and yet he thought reservations were the evil that harmed the so-called meritorious castes.

That is the crux of the matter when the so-called meritorious castes oppose reservations for scheduled castes and tribes. Their opposition to reservations is a proxy for their caste hatred towards scheduled castes and tribes.

On October 10, 1951, when Ambedkar resigned as law minister from the Indian government, he wrote: “The provisions made in the Constitution for safeguarding the position of the Scheduled Castes were not to my satisfaction. However, I accepted them for what they were worth, hoping that the government will show some determination to make them effective. What is the position of the Scheduled Castes today? So far as I see, it is the same as before. The same old tyranny, the same old oppression, the same old discrimination which existed before, exists now and perhaps in a worst form.”

How much has the condition of scheduled castes improved even after 75 years of Indian independence? On what basis do the so-called meritorious castes oppose reservations for scheduled castes and tribes?

(Rajesh Chavda is a corporate lawyer in the UK. Courtesy: Scroll.in.)



Canadian City Honors Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Designates April as 'Dalit History Month'

Pratikshit Singh

In a testament to the increasing influence of Ambedkarites globally, the city of Burlington in Ontario Province, Canada, has declared April as “Dalit History Month” and the 14th of April as Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Day of Equity.

Dalit History Month, observed throughout April, presents an opportunity to raise awareness about the systemic oppression faced by Dalits and advocate for their rights and dignity. It also seeks to challenge stereotypes and prejudices associated with caste, fostering solidarity among marginalized communities in India and worldwide.

The proclamation issued by Marianne Meed Ward, Mayor of the City of Burlington, reads:

"Whereas April holds significant importance for Dalit communities, encompassing the birth and death anniversaries of pivotal Dalit leaders and social reformers in the movement against systemic discrimination based on caste, such as Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar and Jyotirao Phule. Therefore, I, Marianne Meed Ward, Mayor of the City of Burlington, do hereby declare April 2024 as “Dalit History Month” in the City of Burlington. I commend its thoughtful observance to all citizens of our municipality."

Additionally, Mayor Meed Ward released another proclamation, announcing that April 14, the birthday of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, will be celebrated as “Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar Day of Equity.”

The City of Burlington boasts a sizable population of Ravidasia (SC community among Sikhs) and is home to the Guru Ravidass Gurudwara Sahib.

Last year, the province of British Columbia in Canada made history by becoming the first province in North America to designate April as “Dalit History Month.”

In a similar vein, Burnaby, a city in British Columbia, took significant strides by adding caste to the list of protected categories, effectively prohibiting caste-based discrimination within the city. This move came just two months after the city council of Seattle in the neighboring USA did the same.

In an interview with *The Mooknayak*, Vijay Puli from

SADAN (South Asian Dalit Adivasi Network) said Leena Sharma from the organization Mending the Chasm played an instrumental role in advocating for the observance of 'Dalit History Month' and 'Dr. Ambedkar Day of Equity,' with support from SADAN, Canada.

He further mentioned that the proclamation was issued at the Mayor's office during an event attended by several prominent Ambedkarites of the Ontario province, including Anand Balley from Dr. Ambedkar International Coordination Society (AICS), Nitin Duphare and Vaishali Duphare from Ambedkar Mission Toronto.

South Asians in Canada: Carrying Caste Across Borders

Dalits constitute the lowest stratum of the caste system, an entrenched social hierarchy in India. For centuries, Dalits have endured social discrimination, including the pervasive practice of untouchability. However, Dr. Ambedkar spearheaded their emancipation by enshrining fundamental social, educational, economic and political rights in the Constitution of India. Despite these strides, caste-based practices and atrocities persist in India to this day.

Remarkably, the proliferation of South Asians beyond the Indian subcontinent has extended the reach of this social malady beyond Indian borders. Dr. Ambedkar astutely predicted that "If Hindus migrate to other regions on earth, the Indian caste system would become a global issue." While rooted in Hinduism, the caste system also prevails among people of other South Asian religions, such as Sikhism and Islam.

As per the 2021 census, Canada is home to approximately 2.3 million South Asians, with Indians constituting around 1.3 million of the population. Ontario boasts the highest concentration of South Asians, predominantly Indians, with a significant number adhering to the Hindu faith. The official recognition of Ambedkar Jayanti as Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar Day of Equity, alongside the designation of April as Dalit History Month, signals a promising future for the Ambedkarite movement not only in Canada but also across the globe.

Source: The Mooknayak

40

Dalits killed in 12 years following enactment of Caste-based Discrimination and Untouchability Act in Nepal

Pabitra Sunar

A study has revealed that 40 Dalits have been killed in the 12 years since the enactment of the Caste-based Discrimination and Untouchability Act in Nepal.

The study report on the 'Achievements of the Dalit Movement in Nepal,' published in Kathmandu on Thursday, highlighted this finding. In the report by Heera Bishwakarma, Neetu Pokharel and Som Niraula, it is emphasized that Dalit human rights have not been fully established in Nepal.

Despite the fundamental goal of the Dalit movement to eliminate all forms of discrimination against Dalits, the study indicates only partial success. The report notes that the Dalit community has limited access to housing, education, employment, health and land.

According to national statistics, 17.4 percent of the population in Nepal is below the poverty line. The study reveals that 34 percent of Dalits fall into this category, a decrease from 11 years ago when 42.5 percent of Dalits were below the poverty line. As per this calculation, 1.4 million Dalits still live below the absolute poverty line. The report points out that Dalits, facing low access to means of production, land, education, skills and employment, lag behind

the national average in all development indicators.

Bishwakarma, a researcher, stated that despite inclusive constitutional provisions and laws, the Dalit community has not been fully accepted by society—an accomplishment of the eight-decade-long Dalit movement. The report highlights that 34.4 percent of Dalits have experienced discrimination at public places.

Similarly, the study notes that 27.6 percent of Dalits in Madhesh have experienced discrimination. It is found that 25.9 percent of the Dalit community experienced discrimination while accessing services at public places. The statistics reveal that 12.8 percent of Dalits in the hills and 10.8 percent in Madhesh felt discrimination in the economic sector.

The study recommends that the Dalit movement unites and progresses, as it is evident that Dalits continue to face discrimination and violence, perpetuated through generations. The participants in the report's publicizing program expressed that the contribution of many Dalit/non-Dalit personalities involved in the Dalit movement was overlooked and the role of non-governmental organizations was not adequately mentioned.



Rising tide of atrocities against Dalits

Rehnamol Raveendran



The rising atrocities against Dalits across the states in India are worrisome for any progressive and civilised society. As per the 'Crime in India, 2022' report published by the National Crime Records Bureau, Union Ministry of Home Affairs, the atrocities against Dalits increased manifold in 2022 from the previous years.

Eight states that recorded the highest number of atrocities against Dalits are: Uttar Pradesh (15,368), Rajasthan (8,952), Madhya Pradesh (7,733), Bihar (6,509), Odisha (2,902), Maharashtra (2,743), Andhra Pradesh (2,315), and Karnataka (1,977). This indicates that atrocities against Dalits continue irrespective of the political party in power. Uttar Pradesh under the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Rajasthan earlier under the Congress, and Bihar under the Rashtriya Janata Dal-Janata Dal United alliance could not curtail the increasing violence against Dalits despite their tall claims of social justice. The inference to draw from here is that contrary to popular belief the issues Dalits face cannot be addressed merely in electoral/political terms. Dalit issues are much deeper and entrenched in social, economic, cultural, and structural domains.

Violence against Dalits is on the rise despite the

constitutional safeguards and political representation. Dalit political leadership often remains largely ineffectual in forestalling the atrocities against their community. Then, the question to ask is: Why does violence against Dalits continue to rise despite the constitutional provisions? What are the solutions?

The causes are multifarious. First, the societal structure conditioned by Brahmanical order and caste hierarchies creates superiority and ascribes a psychological ascendancy among upper castes to control the lives of Dalits as they wish to do. The notion of caste superiority and pride has been structurally, systematically, and constantly manufactured, and often turns into violence.

Instances like violence against Dalits for riding a horse, wearing chappals in public streets allegedly controlled by upper castes, and keeping a moustache are some of the manifestations of upper castes' attempts to keep their superiority in virulent ways.

Second, the feudal equations across India are intertwined with caste and gender hierarchies, which create a power structure based on land possession and creates a congenial environment for violence against Dalits, especially in rural areas. Most of the Dalits are

landless labourers, while the upper and middle castes possess large tracts of land, not only as a major source of revenue but also as a manifestation of their caste-class clout.

Due to the land possession, the intermediate castes, in particular, get confined within the rural, feudal, and patriarchal system without having any significant access to education, the service sector, and urban workspaces which in turn structurally leads to barbaric crimes and violence against Dalits. The dehumanising atrocities by upper castes in predominantly feudal areas continue, from urinating on Dalits to making them to drink urine, and forcing Dalits to lick the feet of upper caste people.

Upper caste people who have moved to urban centres have carried along their caste system beliefs while remaining the major beneficiaries of modernity. The caste hierarchy they ensue is largely covert. Urbanisation in India catalysed by globalisation has created new caste power lagoons in urban centres and benefitted upper castes due to the exploitative social structure and the possession of traditional capital.

Consequently, Dalits have become the exploited working class with low wages and minimal respect engaged in all menial jobs in cities facing new forms of caste violence. Manual scavenging is the most prevalent and inhuman form of caste violence that has often been normalised in upper-caste urban spaces.

Third, the power equation between gender and caste explains the violence against Dalit women.

The caste structure through its notions of purity and pollution has made the Dalit woman's bodies to be perceived as impure and polluted. The sacking of a Dalit woman cook for serving the mid-day meal in a school is one of the several instances showing how Dalit women are considered dirty, inauspicious, and impure. Dalit women are considered powerless and, therefore, subjected to atrocities and violence. The innumerable number of rapes of Dalit women and burning them alive is the case in this regard.

Fourth, lower caste positions conflated with lower class status have constantly subjugated Dalits into more vulnerable beings, both physically and psychologically. Subsequently, they are converted into low esteemed individuals with no power and resisting capacity.

Furthermore, the impassiveness of upper caste-dominated State structures including police,



bureaucracy, and judiciary leads to an increase in violence against Dalits. The sense of impunity of the perpetrators emanates from the support they get from their caste being in the power structures. The lack of fear of punishment after committing the crime also promotes violence against Dalits.

Finally, the political apathy and the nominal power positions of Dalits in the political parties and power corridors create a conducive environment for violence against them. Most of the Dalit representatives remain silent due to their submissiveness and loyalty to the political parties run by the upper caste morality.

Considering the above-mentioned multilayered reasons, the strategy to counter the violence against Dalits must be multipronged and long-term. A radical restructuring of the social structure is inevitable. A social transformation driven by the aspirations of a casteless egalitarian order shall start with democratising each family unit.

Social change must be enabled by an anti-caste pedagogy in schools, colleges, and universities. Eulogising caste identities by academicians, scholars, politicians, and celebrities, often interpreted as 'normal' and 'harmless', must stop. There must be a larger consensus on the maxim of 'casting off caste identities'. More importantly, the State must take strong policy measures to educate its citizens to become responsible beings with an anti-caste morality.

The vision of a 'Begumpura; A society without sorrow' will not be a distant dream if every individual pledges themselves to distant themselves from their caste identities and embrace a social life based on mutual respect and maitree.

Source: Deccan Herald

Pakistan's Christians still 'living in fear' after 2023 Punjab violence

Anne Preckel



A decision by Pakistan's Supreme Court recently sparked hope among Christians in Jaranwala, in Punjab province, that attacks against their communities in August 2023 would be further investigated.

The court found an initial report by Punjab province authorities inadequate and requested further information on the mass violence, criticizing the local investigative authorities' lack of determination to bring the perpetrators to justice.

Only a few attacks were registered and documented, leading the court to request a new report from Punjab, home to the majority of the country's Christians.

Bishop Samson Shukardin, chairman of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Pakistan and bishop of Hyderabad, welcomed the Supreme Court's decision, saying it shows the court takes the issue seriously.

He told Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) that the news was "very positive for us Christians."

Christian houses and churches destroyed

Regarding the violence that erupted on August 16, 2023 in Punjab province, Fr. Zafar Iqbal, a parish priest in the area, called it "a black day" for local Christians.

Muslims carried out acts of violence against

Christian communities in Jaranwala following accusations of blasphemy against two Christians.

"These people were so angry they destroyed more than 200 Christian houses, 26 churches, a school, a cemetery and many crosses and burned our holy Bibles," Fr. Iqbal told Vatican News.

"It was a really bad situation," said the priest, who was in Rome for training at the time, adding that no Christians were killed in the attacks.

'Living under shadow of fear'

Even though the situation now seems under control, Christians still feel paralyzed, according to Fr. Iqbal.

"They live under the shadow of fear and cannot move freely, speak freely or work freely. They might not be physically threatened at the moment, but fear dominates our hearts and minds," he explained, noting that most Christians in Punjab are poor and reliant on Muslim employers.

"Women in our community work in Muslim households, men on the lands of Muslim landowners," he said, adding that these Christians



now fear that the tensions could affect their work.

Seeking justice in wake of violence

Several people were arrested after the August attacks, but many suspects are already free, noted Fr. Iqbal.

A Punjab judicial officer made a statement at a Pakistan Supreme Court hearing, saying that after 304 arrests, only 22 cases were registered and 18 chargesheets collected.

Given these statistics, Fr. Iqbal pointed out that the Christian community's trust in local police is low. "We are not very hopeful that we will get justice," he said.

Church representatives and human rights activists in Pakistan say the situation for the Christian minority worsened last year, with false blasphemy accusations, physical assaults, kidnappings, rapes and forced conversions reported.

"The Christian community's stress levels increased in 2023 as their freedoms contracted and the instruments of repression sharpened," UCA News quoted Naeem Yousaf Gill, director of the National Commission for Justice and Peace (NCJP), a legal body of the Pakistani Bishops' Conference.

Potential societal turning point

Some Jaranwala residents, including Muslims, shared details of the violence on social media, spreading the word, Bishop Shukardin of Hyderabad told ACN.

He said these citizens "have shown things cannot continue this way," expressing his hopes that solidarity with Christians would prevail in Jaranwala.

Archbishop Sebastian Francis Shaw of Lahore sees the anti-Christian riots as a potential turning point between Christians and Muslims in Pakistan.

"Many Muslims now feel incidents like Jaranwala should not define the country's image. For the first time, Muslim scholars have sided with us," Archbishop Shaw explained in an interview with ACN at the end of 2023. He also noted signs of Islamic clerics lobbying the government for dialogue and a better society.

Promoting human dignity and mutual respect

In the interview with Vatican News, Fr. Iqbal cited positive examples of Christian-Muslim cooperation in everyday life in Jaranwala.

He stressed that despite discrimination and challenges, Christians in Pakistan aim to continue promoting dialogue and peace.

"We face many difficulties in Pakistan, discrimination against human dignity, a justice crisis, an economic crisis," he said. "Yet despite all this, we Christians witness and evangelize with peace and love. We are not desperate or hopeless but are doing our part to create an atmosphere where every person is shown respect and their dignity is recognized."

Source: Vatican News



Hate Speech in India: How to Promote Amity?

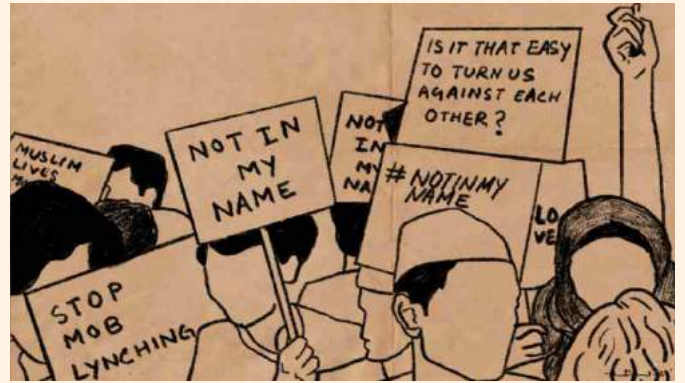
Ram Puniyani

India has been ruled by Hindu Nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party for the last one decade. BJP in turn is progeny of RSS, which has a goal of Hindu Rashtra. It has many progeny, hundreds of associated organizations with lakhs of volunteers (Swayamsevak) and thousands of senior workers called Pracharaks (Propagators). It has been pursuing its agenda of Hindu Nation with double the speed since BJP came to power at the center. Rise of BJP on electoral battlefield is due to intensifying of communal issues, Ram Temple, Cow-Beef and Love-Jihad among others. Communal violence has been a major factor increasing its electoral strength. The violence in turn is founded on the 'Hate minorities'. There are well placed mechanisms to create Hate; hate speech against minorities, the chain of shakhas; Schools, Godi media, social media and IT cell among others. Hate speech, which is a punishable offense, is used with gay abandon, more so when BJP is in power in states and also in Center. Those indulging in Hate speech do know that they enjoy a sort of impunity.

All this becomes ratified in the latest report released by 'India Hate Lab', a Washington DC-based group that documents hate speech against India's religious minorities. The report with title 'Hate Speech Events in India', notes that while 255 events took place in the first half of 2023, "the number rose to 413 in the second half of the year, a 62% increase. The details

are very revealing. As per the report nearly 75% of the events of the total (498), took place in BJP-ruled States, Union Territories (administered by the BJP-led Central government) and Delhi (here police and public order comes under the Union government's purview). While 36% (239) of the events "included a direct call of violence against Muslims" and 63% (420) of incidents include references to "conspiracy theories, primarily involving love jihad, land jihad and population jihad". About 25% (169) featured speeches calling for targeting Muslim places of worship."

The resulting events are very well known by now. We remember the addition of use of bulldozers and demolitions by BJP ruled states. These are done mainly against prosperities of Muslims. The demolition of the Mosque here and there is no more a big deal. Boycotting the Muslim hawkers and traders are occasionally propped up. Partiality done by the motivated administrative machinery is the order of the day. The impact on the Muslim community is an increasing sense of insecurity and ghettoization. The walls of Hatred are becoming stronger by the day. The Hate speech signals begin from the top when the Prime Minister, lately being called as the reincarnation of Lord Vishnu, when he gives these hints like, they can be identified with their clothes, Shamshan-Kabristan and Pink revolution. The next



layer of Hate spreaders further intensifies the language and when it comes to Dharma Sansads, the Holy one's; like Yati Narsinghnand, the message of violence becomes more direct and very despicable.

One of the peaks of this was witnessed in the Parliament itself when Ramesh Bidhudi used expletives of the worst kind against Danish Ali, 'Mullah', 'terrorist', 'anti-national', 'pimp' and 'katwa' (a Hindi slur against Muslims). Ramesh Bidhudi in turn was given additional promotion-responsibility. This makes it clear the way of going in the upward direction of hierarchy in the BJP-RSS combine is Hate speech. As Ramesh Bidhudi was let off by the Lok Sabha Speaker by saying that if he repeats it again, action will be contemplated.

We have seen the horrific Bulli Bai and Sulli deals to humiliate prominent Muslim women, celebrities. The culprits went away without any serious punishments. Lately the Haldwani mosque issue also disturbed the peace at the ground level. The absence of an impartial media is the worst thing in the present scenario. The anchors of the big channels find the ways to blame the Muslims for every insinuation against them.

Apart from leading to acts of violence against Muslim community the present trajectory of events is leading to gradually intensifying Islamophobia. We can see a teacher Tripta Tyagi asking the class students to slap a Muslim boy one by one for not doing homework. Another teacher Manjula Devi told two Muslim students, who were bickering over a minor issue, that this is not 'their country'. We also witnessed a bus conductor Mohan Yadav being sacked as he stopped the bus for a brief while during which some passengers eased and few Muslims offered Namaz during that time.

Hate speech was identified by our leaders as a curse

for our society. In the aftermath of murder of Swami Sahajanand by a Muslim, Gandhi correctly identified the problem when he wrote in Young India, calling for "...purging the atmosphere of mutual hatred and calumny", by "boycotting papers which foment hatred and spread misrepresentation". Here Gandhi is talking about the negative role of Newspapers at that time. Later Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel in the aftermath of murder of Mahatma Gandhi in a letter to Golwalkar directly indicted RSS for spreading hatred, "All their speeches were full of communal poison. It was not necessary to spread poison and enthuse the Hindus and organize for their protection. As a final result of the poison, the country had to suffer the sacrifice of the valuable life of Gandhi."

The clock has moved full circle. The same RSS has created layers and layers of Hate creating mechanisms. Apart from its own vast army of swayamsevaks, Pracharak and network of schools, the large section of media has totally surrendered to those in power and unabashedly using their influence to intensify Hate. The social common sense created through these mechanisms leads to Bulli Bai and Sulli deals. It is this which creates Tripta Tyagi and Manjula Devi who take it to the young children. Things are becoming difficult for Muslim children in mixed schools.

Today the Hate other has become the very antithesis of our Constitution's value of Fraternity. It is also against the tolerance of the values of morality of Hinduism as practiced by the likes of Gandhi. This is the very aggressive attack on the dictum of Vedas, 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbkam' (World is a family), this is not only intimidating the religious minorities it is an attack on the values of our Constitution. To combat hate speech, Gandhi's Hinduism, Vasudhaiva Kutumbaka and Fraternity of Indian Constitution are needed more than before.

Islamists Target Hindu Kantajew Temple in Bangladesh

Aditi Joshi

Islamists have set their sights on the hallowed grounds of the Kantajew Temple in Dinajpur, Bangladesh. Despite its status as a revered place of worship dedicated to Lord Krishna, recent reports have exposed a sinister plot. They usurped the temple's land for the construction of a mosque. The involvement of Mohammed Zakaria Zaka, a local Parliamentarian from the ruling Awami League party, has only added fuel to the fire. Protests from the Hindu community fall on deaf ears.

Taking Over the Kantajew Temple

Behind the facade of legality lies a web of deceit and forgery orchestrated by Islamist groups. They were intent on seizing control of the Kantajew Temple's land. The Kantajew temple administration's put diligent efforts to uphold their rightful ownership with updated legal records. However, the Islamists resorted to concocting fraudulent documents purportedly from the office of the District Commissioner.

Nighttime Encroachment of Kantajew Temple

Under the cover of darkness, the Islamists launched a clandestine assault on the Kantajew Temple. They defied the sanctity of the holy site and the rights of the Hindu community. Reports of nighttime construction prompted urgent calls for intervention to halt the sacrilegious encroachment.

There is an urgent need for decisive action to preserve religious

freedoms and cultural heritage.

Chandranath Temple Follows Kantajew Temple

The desecration of the Chandranath Temple in Chittagong serves as a chilling reminder of the growing threat posed by Islamist extremism to Bangladesh's pluralistic society. Once revered as a sacred pilgrimage destination, the temple has become a battleground for competing ideologies, with Islamists brazenly hosting secular events on its premises in a blatant display of disrespect for Hindu beliefs.

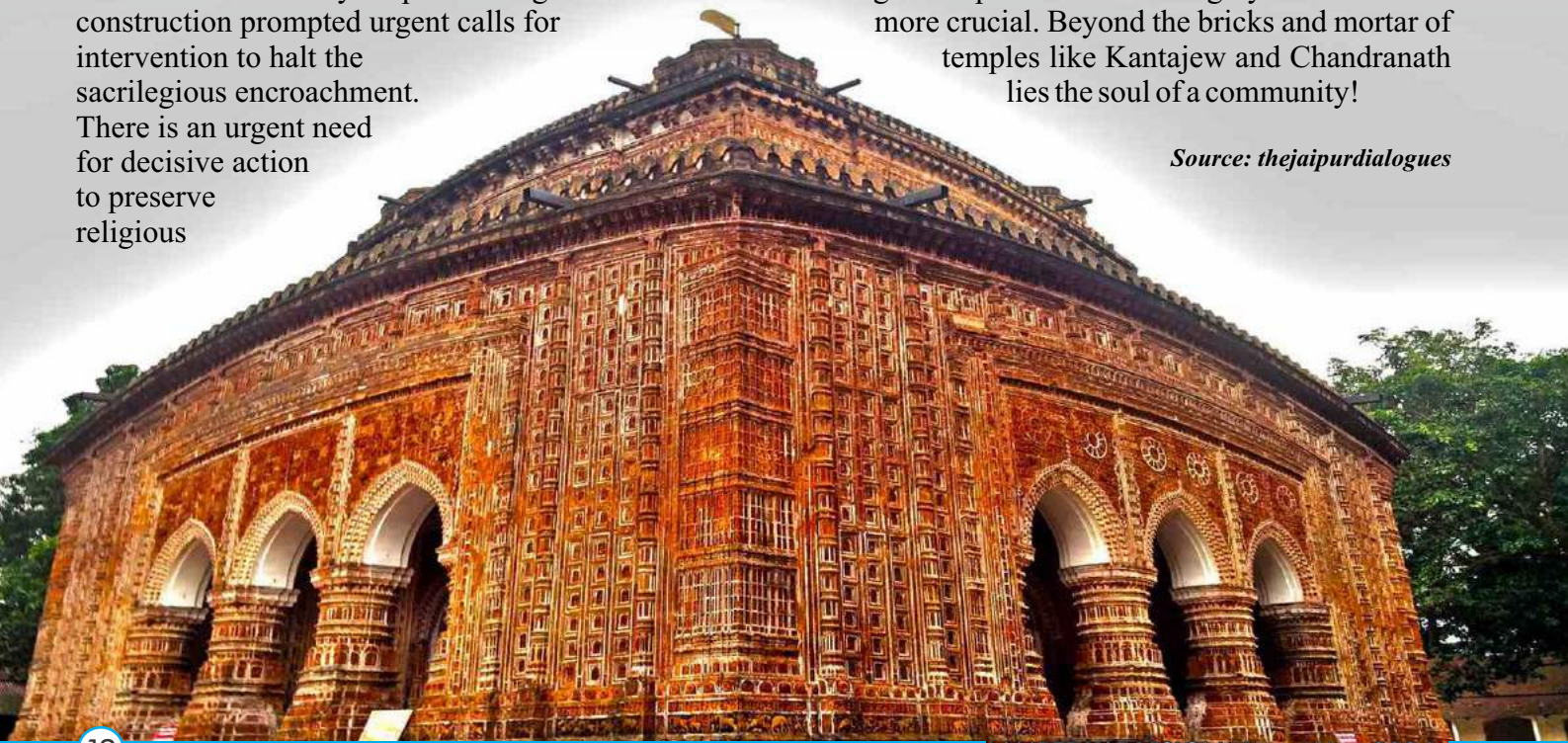
Urgent Intervention Needed

Amidst the turmoil and turmoil engulfing Bangladesh's historic temples, the Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council has sounded the alarm. They have called for immediate action to halt the relentless assault on religious freedom and cultural heritage. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's intervention urgently sought. The fate of these sacred sites hangs in the balance!

Protecting Hindu Heritage

As Bangladesh confronts the specter of religious extremism, the battle to protect Hindus cultural heritage and uphold their sovereignty has never been more crucial. Beyond the bricks and mortar of temples like Kantajew and Chandranath lies the soul of a community!

Source: thejaipurdialogues



'I want justice, not job': How a Dalit professor is fighting against casteism in DU

Aditi Joshi

Two sides of the slogans - Jai Shri Ram versus Jai Bhim - echoed in the air and Delhi Police stood like a wall between them. On one hand, the country was busy preparing for the construction of Ram Temple, while on the other hand, no one paid attention to the growing protest in a corner of Delhi. This was the 148th day of the fight of the former Dalit professor of Delhi University (DU) against the principal of Daulat Ram College. Holding the Constitution in her hands and filled with the spirit of Baba Saheb Ambedkar, Phule and Savitri Bai, Ritu Singh is fighting a battle that now seems bigger than her own cause - she alleges that the university canceled her appointment in 2020 Did it because she was a Dalit.

From Azad of the Bhim Army to farmers in Punjab, laborers working in a hut in Delhi to DU students and small children with their parents, Ritu Singh's opposition has come from a cross section of colleagues, comrades and even leaders. It has resonated with Congress leaders, including Congress leader Srinivas, former Delhi minister Rajendra Pal Gautam and former MP Udit Raj and BSP MP Girish Chandra.

Advocate Mahmood Pracha, representing the professor in the Delhi High Court, had said during the protests at Jantar Mantar two years ago, "Dr. Ritu Singh is today's Ekalavya. Like Ekalavya, his thumb is being chopped off."

Singh said, referring to the Delhi Police's action in which it tried to break up the protests on January 10 by putting up a poster calling for the imposition of Section 144, "We were lathicharged, Blue flags removed... why am I being treated like this? Why is exploitation happening? In a democracy, the people and the streets are the strongest. The most powerful voice is that of the people." However, Singh's supporters said that no such order was passed when hundreds of people had gathered at the celebratory ABVP event in Ayodhya on





January 22.

A moment of Bhim Army

An ad-hoc psychology professor, Singh joined Daulatram College in 2019, but within a year she was removed and her contract was not renewed. “The university VC is not suspending Savita Roy (principal) even after the charge sheet has been filed in the Delhi High Court,” Ritu, wearing a black muffer as a symbol of protest, told ThePrint. We are fighting for his suspension and we will not step back even an inch. His slogan is justice, not job.

28-year-old Singh, a resident of Tarn Taran district of Punjab, has done PhD in Psychology from Delhi University. On August 10, 2020, when Singh went to join Daulatram College, she was not given the joining letter. Singh claims that Savita Roy wanted to expel him because I had talked about Ambedkar and Dalits. After Ritu Singh took the matter of her dismissal to the Delhi High Court, Savita Roy submitted a letter in her defence, which was signed by 35 students expressing their dissatisfaction with Singh's teaching methods.

Amid allegations of poor teaching practices and caste discrimination, Ritu Singh's case has reached the High Court and has given a boost to DU's fledgling Bhim Army student federation. This is their first major protest, on January 22, more than 50 people were sitting on a dharna outside Gate No. 4 of DU Arts Faculty. This is their first mobilization in a campus dominated by All India Student Union (AISA), Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) and National Students Union of India (NSUI). This protest is also giving Azad a much needed inspirational moment. The Dalit student movement in DU - Bhim Army Student Federation (BASF) - has been active since 2019.

While placing Jai Bhim blue flags on trees and flower pots near the protest site, BASF President at Delhi University Ashutosh Boudh said, this is not a normal fight. He said, “This is the first time that a Dalit professor in Delhi University is demanding justice for herself and that too in such a fearless manner. Their fight is the fight of the entire society.”

And Singh is also making sure that this fight is not just about her own rights. She sees a larger theme in her tragedy and has taken it upon herself to educate and equip others - she turned the protest site into a university classroom, with blue flags on the perimeter and refreshments for visitors/supporters - peanuts. and namakpare - available. She conducts Constitution classes here every day and reads the Preamble of the Constitution to the people who come to support her and the supporters sitting on the ground, ranging from the elderly to the youth, repeat it after her.

His tutorials are fascinating, people often ask him to repeat them if they do not understand an argument. Once she finished reading the introduction, one of the protesters asked her to repeat the line because she was speaking too fast. Unlike JNU professors Nivedita Menon and Ayesha Kidwai, who held open quiz sessions with students on campus, Singh's approach appears to be more direct and engaging and those not paying attention face a rebuke - “Don't beat around the bush. See. Look at your sister who is talking about the Constitution. You all are Ambedkar's children.” In between, she also lashes out at Delhi Police.

Outside the university's metro station, Singh tells students about her incident and gives them posters of her protest. Ambedkar, Phule, Savitri Bai and the Constitution are mentioned repeatedly in Singh's speeches. She says, “We got our rights because of Ambedkar. Is it a crime to talk about your rights? Is this rebellion? If this is rebellion then I will do it again and again.”

30-year-old Jamwant works as a daily wage laborer living in Ashok Nagar, Delhi. When he reached the faculty on January 22 to support Singh, he had books on Ambedkar which he had bought from Jantar Mantar. Like Jamwant, dozens of young and old people gathered and demanded justice for Ritu. However, most of them were men. Jamwant, sitting under a tree near the protest site, said, “This is the

fight of our community (Dalits). The administration has done wrong to our sister. They have fired him from his job, it is our responsibility to support him. That's why I have come here.”

Police and university's eyes

The local police and university are constantly monitoring their protests. SHO of Maurice Nagar police station, Bijendra Chhillar said, “We have removed them several times, but they keep coming back. These people are demonstrating without permission. Because of them, security has to be maintained here.”

Teachers at Daulat Ram College agree that Singh has been vocal on social issues. A professor, on condition of anonymity, said, “Even when she taught here, she was very vocal and expressed her views without any fear. The fight they are fighting is legitimate. It is everyone's right to demand their rights.”

His fight with Daulat Ram College is not his first fight. Singh has been vocal on social issues and has previously participated in several protests at Jantar Mantar. She has also opposed the three agricultural laws of the Modi government. On January 31, he took part in the EVM Hatao rally at Jantar Mantar.

Even in religious politics, Singh gives a vocal challenge to the current Modi government. Holding the Constitution in his hand, he said, “The state should keep itself separate from religion, but what is the situation today? State sponsored politics and riots are taking place. As long as Ambedkarite people are alive in India, we will not allow the Constitution of India to be destroyed.”

The university administration is constantly monitoring this protest and the police informs the VC about the protests every day. Citing that the matter is pending in the court, the university did not give any statement on this issue. Abbi, who has been the mayor of Delhi from BJP, said, “The university will accept the decision given by the court. We are bound by the court order. The matter is still under consideration, so it would not be right to say much.”

Online access

The movement has also received support online, with 'Justice for Ritu' trending on X on several occasions over the past few months. On Facebook, Singh has added 'The Activist' before his name along with a



picture of him addressing a rally as the cover photo.

With 1.46 lakh followers on Facebook and over 43,000 followers on Instagram, Singh is popular on the online platform. He has around one lakh followers on Instagram and his bio reads, “Activist, thinker, scholar and Ambedkarite”. Singh posts regular updates about her protest videos, including live streaming. One of his recent WhatsApp statuses read, “Thousands of difficulties will be seen, but the scene will be very beautiful when the struggle will make noise.”

?Highlighting Dalit identity is a big part of their online presence. “We are constantly hearing propaganda of hatred and division,” he said at the protest site in DU on January 22. Therefore, it is my responsibility to express the words of Ambedkar.”

His protest site is also attracting YouTubers from small towns who are impressed by Singh's oratory skills and personality. They take selfies with Singh and post them on their social media accounts. Singh also enjoys these fan moments. With her eloquence and patience, she is gaining somewhat of a star status among the protesters and is fast becoming the poster child of Ambedkar's fight against the ongoing churning at Delhi University.

But amidst all this, they are focused on their fight for justice. Singh said that she is standing here only because of Ambedkar. Ritu declares, “I will run the university from the road because a criminal did not allow me to teach in the college.”

Source: Justice News

2023 Recap: Tracking the Development of Castes According to Modi- Poor, Youth, Women, Farmers



Ayanabha Banerjee

According to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, there are 4 “primary castes” whose development is of utmost importance to him. While there is no doubt that the communities require a social push, ignoring the intersectionality among the factors sets a precedence for wrong measures. As a new year begins, The Mooknayak analysed how the 4 “primary castes” fared:

Poor

According to Global Multidimensional Poverty Index of 2023 released by United Nations Development Programme and Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, over a third of all poor people live in South Asia- which is 389 million people. According to a report by Forbes published in December 2023, India contributes significantly to this number, accounting for almost 70 percent of the increase in extreme poverty.

About 18.7% of the Indian population is classified as 'vulnerable' to multidimensional poverty by the UNDP. This group includes individuals who are not considered poor but experience deprivations in 20-33.3% of all weighted indicators. The three major areas of deprivation among Indians are related to cooking fuel, housing and nutrition, affecting approximately 13.9%, 13.6% and 11.8% of the population, respectively.

Adding a caste lens to the data: The research article titled "Poverty, Wealth Inequality and Financial Inclusion among Castes in Hindu and Muslim Communities in Uttar Pradesh, India" explores the social and educational status of Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and Dalit Muslims in Uttar Pradesh during 2014–2015. The study, authored by Chhavi Tiwari, Srinivas Goli, Mohammad Zahid Siddiqui and Pradeep S. Salve, uses data from a primary survey conducted by the Giri Institute of Development Studies (GIDS).

The findings reveal that Paasi, a caste, exhibits the lowest mean per capita expenditure, indicating the persistence of caste-based hierarchy in economic activities. The study emphasizes the enduring impact of caste-based social

stratification on poverty levels in India. According to caste-based rural poverty estimates, Muslim Dalits and Hindu Dalits have the highest poverty rates, while Thakurs exhibit the lowest levels among sub-castes.

Youth

Globally, the youth population is increasing and India is projected to contribute significantly, adding approximately one-fifth of the incremental youth population over the next two decades. The demographic shift, known as the "greening" of India's population and workforce, which commenced in the late 1970s, is expected to result in the addition of nearly 200 million working-age adults to the country's population by the year 2040.

World Bank data, disclosed in September 2023, affirms the persistent issue of youth unemployment in India. The youth unemployment rate in the country was reported at 23.2%, surpassing neighboring countries such as Pakistan (11.3%), Bangladesh (12.9%) and Bhutan (14.4%) in 2022. Despite a slight decline from 23.9% in 2021, India's youth unemployment rate remains marginally higher than the 22.9% recorded in the pre-COVID year of 2019.

Simultaneously, on September 20, 2023, Azim Premji University's Centre for Sustainable Employment released "The State of Working India 2023" study. The report reveals that unemployment among graduates under the age of 25 reached a concerning 42.3% in the period of 2021-2022, while the overall joblessness rate stood at 8.7%.

Adding a caste lens to the data: The latest employment data from the NSS-PLF survey for 2018-19 indicates higher unemployment rates for Scheduled Caste (SC) workers at 6.4%, compared to the national average of 5.8%. Notably, the impact is most significant among non-farm workers, with around 70% being informal wage workers lacking job and social security. Among non-farm workers, SCs have the highest proportion of informal workers at 84%, exceeding figures for Scheduled Tribes

(STs), Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and high castes.

Furthermore, 63% of SCs engaged in regular salaried non-farm work, a group notably affected, compared to figures for high castes (50%) and OBCs (60%), contributing to the national average of 59%. Additionally, scholarship schemes for Dalit and Adivasi students face challenges such as a lack of information, underutilization of funds, delayed disbursement, non-payment, technical glitches and fund diversion. As a result, the future of these students, especially women, is uncertain.

Women

The latest National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) annual report reveals a distressing 4% surge in crimes against women in India in 2022, encompassing cruelty, abductions, assaults and rapes. The reported cases rose from 3,71,503 in 2020 to 4,45,256 in 2022, indicating a troubling increase from 4,28,278 in 2021. Major offenses include cruelty by husbands or relatives (31.4%), kidnapping and abduction of women (19.2%), assault with intent to outrage modesty (18.7%) and rape (7.1%).

The crime rate per lakh women population increased from 64.5 in 2021 to 66.4 in 2022. Disturbing trends were observed in cities like Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru. Uttar Pradesh reported the highest number of cases (65,743), followed by Maharashtra (45,331) and Rajasthan (45,058), each with varying chargesheet rates. Adding a caste lens to the data: Over the past four fiscal years, there has been a consistent reduction in budget allocations for SC and ST women. In FY 2022-23, Rs. 11,958.95 crore was allocated for SC women and Rs. 5,744.20 crore for ST women. The Gender Budget for FY 2023-24 indicates further cuts, with Rs. 7,543 crore allotted for SC women and Rs. 2,658 crores for ST women.

Challenges persist in ensuring justice and equality for SC and ST women, especially in terms of livelihood and employment opportunities where discrimination and exploitation are prevalent, particularly among manual laborers. Women engaged in manual scavenging face obstacles in accessing the Self-Employment Scheme (SRMS) for alternative livelihoods. Unfortunately, none of the schemes under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MSJE) have fully benefited SC women. The allocation for Dalit women has seen a decline from 1% in 2021 to 0.97% in FY 2022-23 and for FY 2023-24, there is an additional reduction by 0.53%. These trends highlight persistent challenges faced by marginalized communities in securing adequate support and resources.

Farmers

The most recent data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) for the year 2022 indicates a troubling

surge in suicides among individuals engaged in farming in India. With 11,290 reported cases, there is a 3.7% increase from 2021 and a 5.7% rise compared to 2020. This data suggests that, on average, one farmer died by suicide every hour in India in 2022. The trend of farmer suicides has been consistently growing since 2019, when the NCRB recorded 10,281 deaths.

The challenging agricultural conditions in 2022, marked by factors like drought and untimely rainfall, have intensified the struggles faced by farmers, contributing to this unfortunate pattern. According to the latest NCRB 2022 annual report, approximately 154 farmers and daily-wage laborers die by suicide in India daily, primarily attributed to "family problems" and "illness". In 2021, this figure stood at 144. Maharashtra reported the highest number of farmer suicides, followed by Karnataka andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Madhya Pradesh.

Adding a caste lens to the data: According to 2011 census, 71% of Dalit farmers are agricultural labourers and only 29% are cultivators. Census of India highlights that while the majority of Indian farmers own the land they cultivate, Dalit farmers predominantly work for wages. The census categorizes farmers as either cultivators, who own the land or agricultural laborers, who work for wages on land they do not own. Dalit farmers are more likely to fall into the category of agricultural laborers, although regional variations exist. In states with larger tribal populations, such as those in the north and northeast and to a lesser extent in Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Dalit farmers are less inclined to work for wages.

What did Narendra Modi Say?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi asserted that he regards the poor, youth, women and farmers as the "primary castes." During an interaction with beneficiaries of the Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra on 30th November, he emphasized that the development of these four groups is pivotal for the progress of the country. This came amid the Opposition's call to conduct a nationwide caste census.

Expressing his perspective, the Prime Minister stated, "In my view, there are four major castes in the nation. The foremost caste, in my eyes, is the poor. The most significant caste, according to me, is the youth, followed by women and farmers." He emphasized that the advancement of these four castes is integral to making India a developed nation.

He further elaborated, saying, "The upliftment of these four castes will lead to the development of India. If progress is achieved for these four, it implies progress for everyone."

Source: The Mooknayak



Ambedkar Society for South Asia
