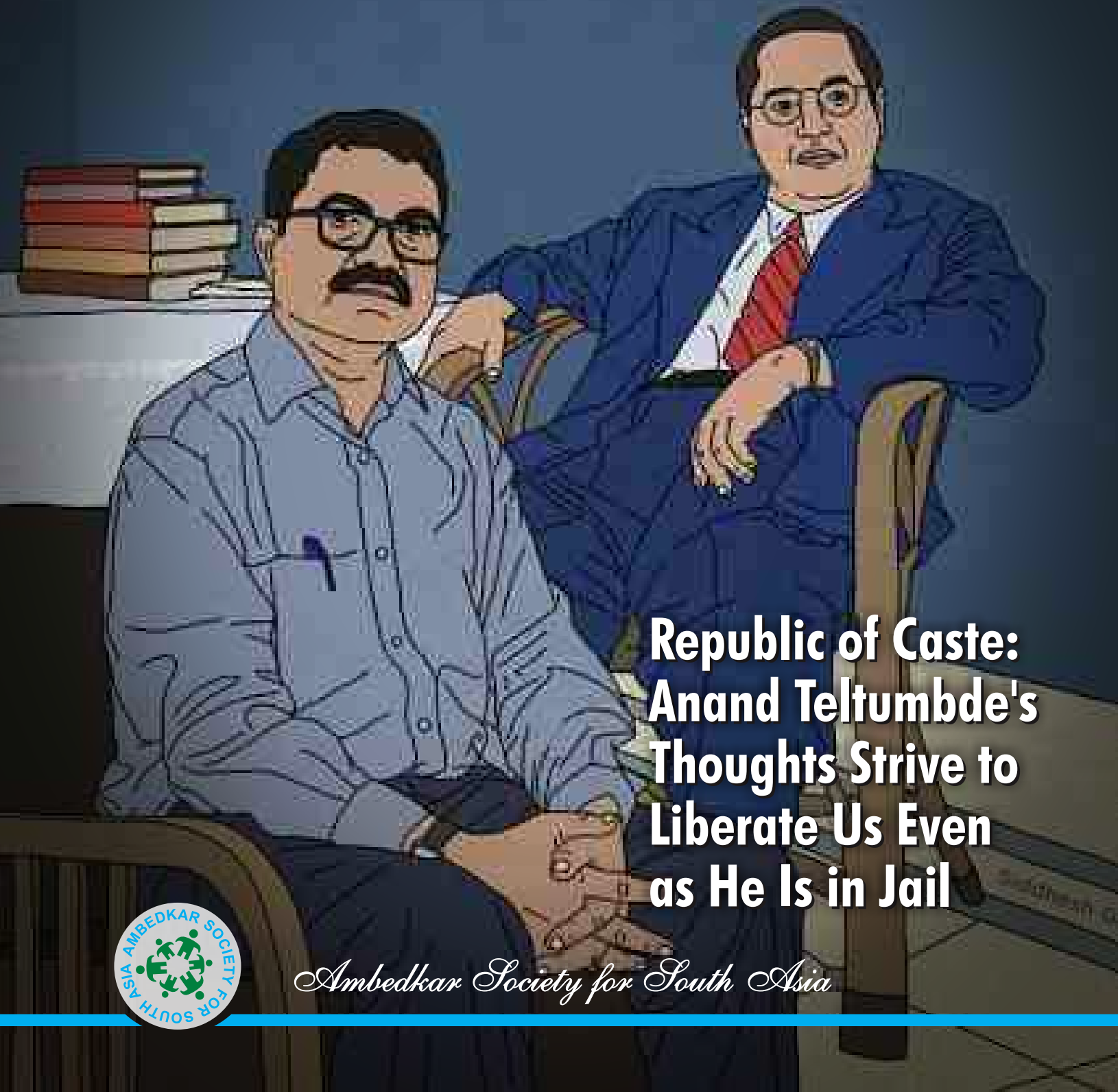


QUARTERLY

AMBEDKAR VISION

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**Republic of Caste:
Anand Teltumbde's
Thoughts Strive to
Liberate Us Even
as He Is in Jail**




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

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from the Editor

Slavery is the oldest and most central form of discrimination. Despite of prohibition slavery is widespread in South Asia in the form forced and bonded labour. Millions of peoples in South Asia live a precarious life because of their ranks as untouchables or Dalits at the bottom of rigid caste system. Slavery is deep-rooted in South Asia which includes discrimination especially against Dalit women who are denied choices and freedom of life. According to UN report discrimination against Dalit child labour, poverty are closely linked in India. The systematic discrimination has profoundly affected and deprived individuals and communities of minorities to live a dignified life and enjoy human rights on equal basis with others .Even after century water is still the marker of India's society. Dalits narratives, autobiographies and testimonies carry painful memories of their experiences of lack of access to water and water resources. This is not the matter of the past it exists even now. Caste has been a prominent factor in water usage in India. For Dalits water is a caste burden and not natural nectar of life or life nurturing agent Dr Ambedkar also faced hardships and deprivation of drinking water in childhood Irrespective of education and financial independence women are still not empowered. Gender based discrimination is still prevalent and this is reflected in higher number of female suicide. NCRB has thrown light on some grim trends as mental health and social status of women. Major suicides are house wives due to family problems, illnesses and marital issues. The problem of female suicide is extensive in India. 1 in every 9 minutes commits suicide. According to NCRB Dalit community is not only victim of caste system but also have to face institutional discrimination and social exclusion. Caste based abuse is also prevalent in Nepal, Bangladesh and several African states. In Nepal the Civil Service Act reserve 45 percent of Public service positions for women, indigenous groups, Advasis, Dalits, people with disabilities and those from backward regions but upper caste Brahmins continues to get recruited in the highest number. In Bangladesh ethnic minorities are missing from census. Looking at the recent escalated number of atrocities against Dalits and adivasis it is the need of the hour to raise questions to the governing bodies and institutions and demand for justice.

Pakistan Church welcomes remission for minority inmates

Kamran Chaudhry

The Church in Pakistan has welcomed remission for non-Muslim inmates upon completing the study of their religious books in Punjab prisons. The response came after the Punjab government announced cutting the sentences of Christian and Hindu prisoners memorizing the Bible and Gita, respectively. A summary has been sent to the Chief Minister to reduce the sentences of such prisoners by between three and six months. An official notification will be issued following approval by the cabinet.

According to the official website of Punjab's prison service, Muslim convicts who memorize the Holy Quran can gain sentence remissions of between six months and two years. Prison ministry officials including Father John Joseph have been demanding a realistic equivalent for non-Muslim inmates. "We demand equal remission. Minority prisoners deserve the same constitutional rights. To make matters worse, they have limited prison visits by Church ministries citing security concerns. Presently we are only allowed visits on Christian feasts. I take this opportunity to bring them food," he told UCA News.

The parish priest of St. Francis' Church in Lahore has been visiting prisons in Punjab since 1997, praying with and counseling the inmates. He visited Lahore's central jail this Easter. "Sindh province has already given education remission. Other provinces should do the same" "I want to reach out to them and have been engaged in meeting with the Home Secretary of Punjab and prison officials. Many prisons even lack common prayer rooms," he said. In 2009, the Central Jail in Rawalpindi became the country's first prison to have a church on its premises. This January, Angel Welfare Trust, an NGO working for prisoners, inaugurated a church in Malir prison in the southern port city of Karachi.

"Churches are being built in Sindh prisons to facilitate Christian prisoners studying the Bible. Prayers rooms are designated where there is not enough capacity. Sindh province has already given education remission. Other provinces should do the same," said Samina Nawab, chairperson of the trust. In March, Lahore High Court sought a report from the Punjab government about education remissions given to minority prisoners after a local Christian filed a petition seeking remissions for inmates of other religions as are granted to Muslims under rule 215 of the Pakistan Prisons Rules 1978.

Presently 1,188 minority prisoners including Christians, Hindus and Sikhs are in 34 jails in the province. These include 829 prisoners awaiting trial, 320 convicts and 39 condemned prisoners who include a Christian woman. None of them have been granted education remissions in their sentences.

Source: UCA News



Discrimination against Dalits, child labour, poverty closely linked in India: United Nations



Child labour, caste-based discrimination and poverty are closely linked in India, according to a UN report that emphasized contemporary forms of slavery, including severe discrimination against Dalit women in South Asia, leaving their lives in all countries. systematically denied choices and freedoms. spheres of life.

The Human Rights Council's special rapporteur, Tomoya Obokata, said in his report on contemporary forms of slavery, including their causes and consequences, that deep-rooted intersecting forms of discrimination, combined with many other factors, are the main drivers of contemporary forms of slavery. forms of slavery affecting minorities.

They are often the result of historical legacies, such as slavery and colonization, systems of inherited status and formalized and state-sponsored discrimination, he said. Obokata said in a report to the UN General Assembly that child labor (among children ages 5 to 17), including the worst forms, is prevalent in all regions of the world.

In Asia and the Pacific, the Middle East, the Americas and Europe, between 4 and 6 percent of children are

said to be in child labor and the percentage is much higher in Africa (21.6 percent), with the highest percentage in sub-Saharan Africa (23.9 percent).

“In India, child labour, caste discrimination and poverty are closely linked. Child labor among minority and migrant children has also been reported in Angola, Costa Rica, Honduras and Kazakhstan, across various sectors,” the report said.

The report also notes that systematic discrimination has profound effects on the ability of affected individuals and communities to live a life of dignity and enjoy human rights on an equal basis with others.

Marginalized communities remain often overlooked in government policies and national budget allocations and their access to justice and remedies in cases of human rights violations, including contemporary forms of slavery, is generally limited.

It said the stigmatization of some communities is perpetuated by negative stereotypes in the media, textbooks or on the internet, adding to their

powerlessness. An example of this is people who are discriminated against on the basis of work and origin. They are bound by their inherited status and subject to dehumanizing discourses that refer to “pollution” or “untouchability”, without respect for human dignity and equality.

“As a result, such people have limited freedom to relinquish inherited occupations or degrading or dangerous work and are often subject to debt without adequate access to justice,” the report said.

“Additional intersectional factors, such as class, gender and religion, are also influenced by caste reality. Dalit women in South Asia face severe discrimination and as a result they are systematically denied choices and freedoms in all spheres of life,” it said, adding that as a result their access to services and resources is very limited, leaving their risk of being subjected to contemporary forms of slavery.

The report further notes that forced labor continues to exist among people who are discriminated against on the basis of work and ethnicity, such as Dalits in South Asia.

Dalits in Bangladesh are forced to perform certain types of labor as a result of their assigned caste status and work almost exclusively in 'unclean' jobs in urban areas, such as street sweeping and burying the dead.

“Manual scavenging, mainly performed by Dalit women, is widely regarded as forced labor and a contemporary form of slavery, with harsh working conditions that negatively impact mental and physical health.”

Obokata said in the report that child marriages are peaking, particularly among marginalized communities, such as Roma girls in southeastern Europe.

Official data collected by the Forced Marriage Unit of the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland suggest that a large majority of forced marriages involve Pakistan and to a lesser extent, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India and Somalia.

Forced marriages of women and girls are a concern in Asia, including Cambodia, India, Kazakhstan, Sri Lanka and Vietnam.

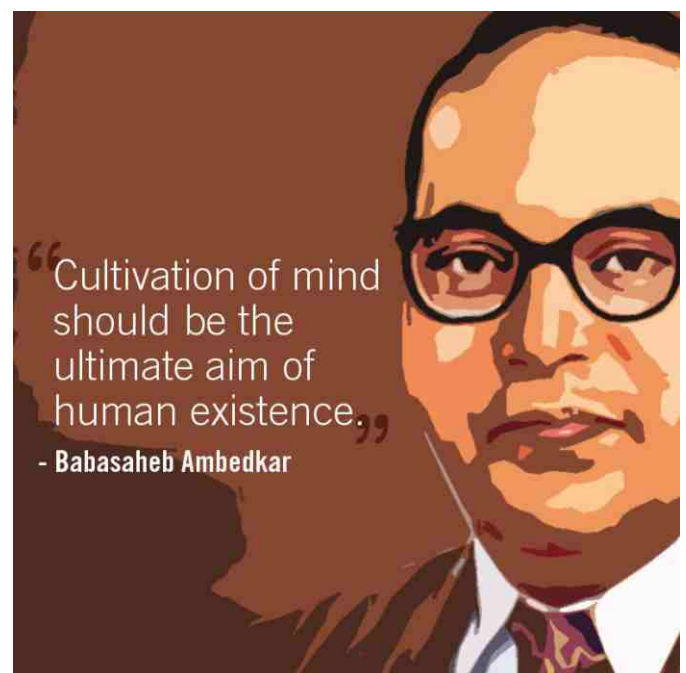
It noted that several states have taken legislative and other measures to address inequality and discrimination against minorities.

In the United States, federal contractors and subcontractors must take positive action to recruit and advance qualified minorities while facilitating other initiatives, including vocational training and outreach. Similar measures have been promoted in Albania, Australia, Belgium, India, Iraq, New Zealand and the United Kingdom to increase the employability of minorities.

Unions also make an important contribution to championing the rights of minorities and migrant workers. It is “encouraging” that unions in Chile, Colombia, Ghana and India are providing dedicated support and services to female workers.

It added that, based on an independent assessment of the available information, including contributions from stakeholders, independent academic research and victim testimony, the Special Rapporteur believes it is reasonable to conclude that forced labor among Uyghurs, Kazakh and other ethnic minorities in sectors such as agriculture and manufacturing took place in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China.

Source: The Bharat Express News



Even After a Century, Water Is Still the Marker of India's Caste Society

Ambika Aiyadurai

On the eve of India's 75th Independence Day, newspapers carried the news of a nine-year-old Dalit boy's death, who was allegedly beaten up by his school teacher for drinking water from a pot meant for the teacher (an upper caste). The teacher has been arrested and booked for murder and under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act. As I was reading this news, I remembered my chat with one of my students a few years ago. I had asked him about his thoughts when he came to know he belongs to the Dalit community. He told me a story of him growing up in a village in Haryana.

The 10-year-old boy accompanied his grandfather to someone's house. They were asked to wait outside. After a long wait, he was thirsty, so he drank some water from a pot on the verandah. Seeing this, his grandfather hurled abuses at him for drinking water from the pot. He was perplexed and did not know what wrong he had done. All he did was drink water. Only many years later, he realised that the house where he went that day belonged to an 'upper caste'. The student had tears in his eyes and said, 'I was just a child then, I was thirsty, so I drank water, was that a crime?'

Dalit narratives, autobiographies and testimonies often carry painful memories of their experience of the lack of access to water and water sources. One should not assume that these are matters of the past. Even today, the water narratives of Dalits are informed by caste. Caste has been a prominent, almost inherent factor in water usage in India. The severity of the restrictions on water informed Dalit notions of themselves as human beings and their relationship with water and other natural resources.

In a 2015 article published in the Journal of Comparative Economics, Bros and Couttenier highlight that murders against the 'ex-untouchables' are related to the way water is distributed. Titled Untouchability, Homicides and Water Access, the article examines the case of 'untouchability' rules in India that forbid sharing of water with the 'lower' castes. The report says that homicide rates of 'lower' caste members at the district level are significantly correlated

with the public access to water, showing that access to water, 'untouchability' norms and violence is closely interlinked.

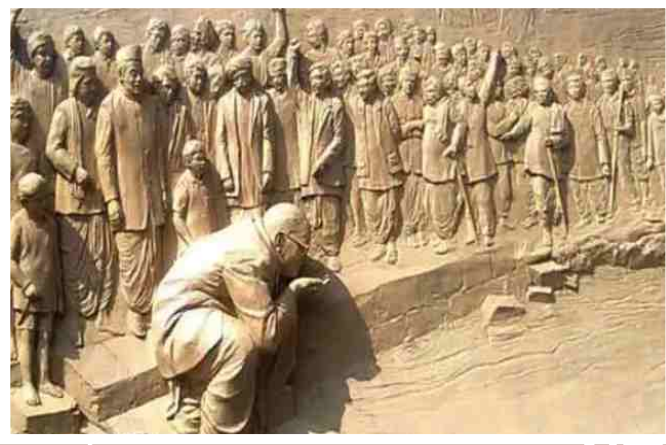
Several stories have been reported of Dalits being beaten up, assaulted and killed because they attempted to collect or drink water.

Stalin's 2007 documentary India Untouched: Stories of a People Apart shows a school in Gujarat where children knew where they can have water and where they cannot. For Dalit children, memories of water are of deprivation and inaccessibility to water sources. Many still live in a state of alienation, with painful memories of punishment.

Images of 'caste-ridden' water, long journeys in search for water and lack of access to clean water are plenty in Dalit writings. In the eyes of the 'upper caste', water encompasses cleanliness, spiritual well-being, an object of worship, holy sanctity, religious rituals and that which washes away impurities and pollutants. Such core beliefs and practices keep Dalits out of bounds of water sources and their systems.

Water, for Dalits, is not a crest of life, but constant pain and segregation. For Dalits, water is not a natural beauty, the nectar of life or a life-nurturing agent, but a 'caste burden'. Prominent Tamil Dalit playwright, K.A. Gunasekaran, in his biography Scar writes: "If thirsty, we would kneel down and drink water from the Thovur canal. We did not know if the right of access to the canal water was reserved for any particular caste. If it was upper caste water, then we would be tied up and beaten for drinking it. So, we just drank quickly and ran away immediately. In the villages... even inert water bodies threaten us in the name of caste. Water, therefore, is the





marker of our caste society, says Mukul Sharma, author of the book *Nature and Caste*. One of the chapters is titled *Dalit Memories and Water Rights* where he notes that in some regions, people are broadly divided into two groups:

- ❑ Pani chalne jati (castes from whom drinking water can be accepted)
- ❑ Pani na chalne jati (castes from whom drinking water cannot be accepted)

Ambedkar's water satyagraha

There have been touching narratives and struggles on water that shaped B.R. Ambedkar. Ambedkar's hardships and deprivation of drinking water began as a child. One summer, he and his brother set out to meet their father. As their father did not receive their letter, he did not turn up at the railway station. After waiting for long hours, they persuaded the station master to get them a bullock cart and started for Goregaon.

Soon the cartman came to know that the well-dressed boys were 'untouchables' and he threw them out on the road. He felt they had polluted his wooden cart and destroyed the purity of his domestic animals. From the evening till midnight the boys travelled with their mouths parched with thirst, but nowhere could they get drinking water on the way. Every time people either pointed to the filthy water or asked them to go away. This was the first rude shock to the young Ambedkar. That day he knew that he belonged to an 'untouchable' family, degraded to drink and eat filthy things. The Mahad Satyagraha in 1927 was one of the defining moments in Ambedkar's political thought and action. He launched a satyagraha to assert their rights to use water in public places. The site was located in the

Kolaba district of Bombay Presidency. Mahad town had a population of 7,000-8,000, of which around 400 were 'untouchables'. The Chawdar tank was an old public tank owned by the municipality. This was the only public tank from which an outsider could get water, though the 'untouchables' were barred from fetching water.

In 1923, the Bombay Legislative Council passed a resolution that the 'untouchables' be allowed to use all public water places, wells and dharmashalas. On March 29, (close to a century earlier), the 'untouchables' for the first time drank water from that tank. The centrality of water for Dalits and the abuse and misuse of public water bodies, became a converging point for democratic agrarianism. In 21st century India, one of the prevailing forms of 'untouchability' practices and discrimination is the denial of drinking water to Dalits. A vast majority of Dalits depend on the goodwill of the 'upper caste' community members for access to water from public wells. This applies to natural resources, food, land and water.

According to Ambedkar, all aspects of people's relationship with the environment, whether water, land or farms, was necessarily mediated through the ties of caste. Even the man-made environment like schools, offices, houses, streets and subways is no different. These places continue to be used for caste oppression. For Ambedkar, nature was shaped by caste. Water, for instance, had a definite caste, as it became 'polluted' as soon as a Dalit touched it.

The death of the Dalit boy recently is a cruel reminder that water still has a caste in today's India.



Ethnic minorities missing from census in Bangladesh



Ethnic minorities have been undercounted in Bangladesh's latest census, Indigenous activists said, with implications for some of the poorest people in the country.

Bangladesh's population is 99 percent Bengalis, with a scattering of ethnic and Indigenous groups -- most of them Buddhists and Christians -- in the Muslim-majority country's northern hill districts.

Census results in July said those minorities amounted to 1.65 million people, one percent of the national total of 165 million. But Sanjeeb Drong, general secretary of the Bangladesh Indigenous Peoples' Forum, said that his organisation estimated there were "around three million" -- almost twice as many. Many ethnic minorities in remote areas had gone uncounted by census enumerators, he said. "If you don't count the indigenous people, it is easy to ignore their demand for self determination, land rights, development budget and also human rights," he said. The census found that Indigenous people were now a minority in two of the three districts of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, where ethnic groups waged a decades-long insurgency for self-rule. The main rebel group signed a peace treaty with Dhaka in 1997, but a low-intensity conflict persists in some areas.

The 1.65 million figure was up slightly from the previous total in 2011, but included an additional 23 ethnic groups. According to the figures, the

population of the 27 groups included in the last census had actually declined over the period, said Philip Gain, of the Society for Environment and Human Development. "There is a clear carelessness, neglect and lack of skills on the part of the enumerators and perhaps an ill intention to



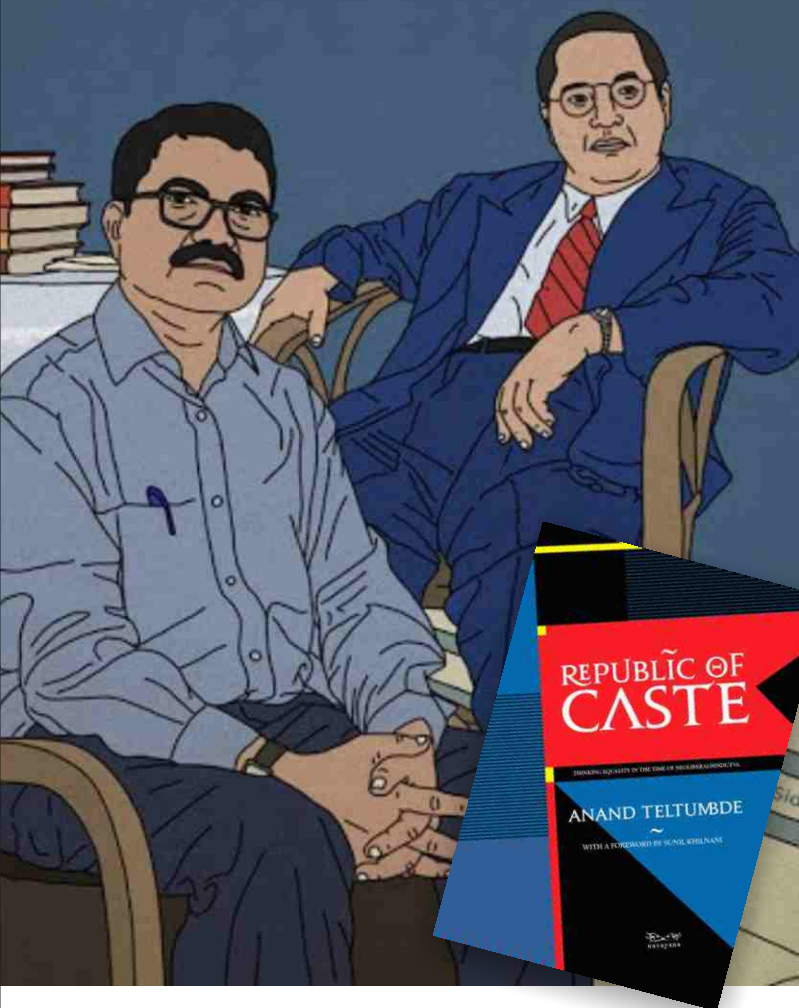
undercount the ethnic communities," he said. Dipankar Roy, a senior official of the state-run Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, which conducted the census, defended the survey and ruled out any possibility of deliberate undercounting. "There will be a post enumeration check by a third party. If there is any undercount and overcounting, it will be adjusted," he said.

Source: The News

Republic of Caste: Anand Teltumbde's Thoughts Strive to Liberate Us Even as He Is in Jail

Jean Drèze

“Turn in any direction you like, caste is the monster that crosses your path.” This powerful image from Dr Ambedkar's *Annihilation of Caste*, published in 1936, still rings true today. That would be obvious enough from the point of view of the oppressed castes, but they are not the only victims of the caste system. India's entire society, culture and politics are also casualties of it.



If you are not convinced, you may wish to read *Republic of Caste*, by Anand Teltumbde. The book is not just about caste - it is a wide-ranging collection of essays that “deal with issues which may be taken as crucial for our collective survival as a democratic republic”, as the author puts it. Still, caste runs through it as it runs through India itself. From communalism to sanitation and elections to economics, Teltumbde helps us to see the pervasive and pernicious role of caste in contemporary India. He restores the centrality of caste to our understanding of Indian society and how to change it.

This is an unsettling book. It is likely to cause you some discomfort at times, whatever your political leanings. Anand Teltumbde is a radical and fiercely independent thinker who is not afraid of departing from the beaten track. For instance, he is critical of India's “status-quoist” Constitution and even holds it responsible for the persistence of caste. The main reason, as he sees it, is that the Constitution laid the foundations of caste-based reservations. Teltumbde presents a rare and provocative critique of reservation from a Dalit perspective.

This critique is in tune with his conviction that the destruction of the caste system calls for renouncing caste-based mobilisation, because it reinforces divisive caste identities. On this, he parts company with some sections of the Dalit movement. “There cannot be a caste-based solution to the problem of inequality,” he argues. Instead, Teltumbde advocates working-class unity on an anti-caste platform, or rather, a platform that includes the annihilation of caste as a fundamental commitment - “class struggle with an anti-caste core”, as he puts it. He does not believe in the Bahujan approach of trying to unite a broad range of castes based on their caste identity, ignoring the conflicts that divide them (for instance, the exploitative relations that often prevail between Dalits and the “Other Backward Classes”). He feels that workers must organise as a class around their collective interests, including the end of the caste system.

That may seem like a natural strategy, since most workers are victims of the caste system in one way or another. One would expect the rejection of the caste system to appeal to them and also help them to unite. Class struggle and caste struggle seem to be made for each other. Instead, the two have diverged and even turned mutually hostile. The Communist movement and Dalit movement in India became rivals if not opponents. There have been some reconciliation efforts in recent years, but the legacy of mutual suspicion is hard to shed. As Teltumbde sees it, “the biggest obstruction to the growth of a politics of change has been the growing divergence between the dalit and left movements.”

In his diagnosis of this estrangement, Teltumbde

reexamines the early days of the Communist and Dalit movements in India. Communist leaders, or ideologues at least, were mainly from the upper castes (“mostly a bunch of Brahmin boys”, as Ambedkar said in one interview) and they failed to take caste seriously. That was partly because Communist ideologues had a simplistic understanding of the Marxist distinction between “base” and “superstructure” (a broad distinction between the mode of production, on the one hand and institutions of a more cultural, ideological or political nature on the other). Caste, they thought, would vanish on its own after the Revolution - meanwhile, it was futile to fight it without resolving class contradictions. Some of them, perhaps, felt that the best way to fight caste is to ignore it. The failure of Communist leaders to address the caste question alienated Dalit activists later on. The alienation was reciprocal, as Communist leaders felt that the Dalit movement was dividing the working class.

Teltumbde's analysis is persuasive, but I suspect that there is a deeper problem. When old-time Communist leaders “feared that confronting the issue of caste might lead to organisational break-up”, as Teltumbde puts it, they certainly lacked courage in overcoming that fear, but the fear itself was perhaps not misplaced. Caste culture is deeply ingrained in India and it is not easy to persuade anyone, even among its victims, that the caste system is wrong in itself - not just untouchability, or caste discrimination or what Hindu nationalists call “casteism”. For many people, caste is a fact of life and the idea of doing away with it does not arise. Further, even those who resent oppression from privileged castes often value the modicum of togetherness and solidarity they feel within their own caste.

The caste-based mobilisations that Teltumbde deplors reflect the tendency of collective action in India to coalesce around caste or community (block voting on caste lines is a prominent example). Even Ambedkar's visionary appeal for mass conversion to Buddhism failed to resonate much beyond his own community, the Mahars. To put it another way, the destruction of the caste system perforce includes the destruction of one's own caste - that is a little bit like asking people to go around without clothes.

It is, thus, no wonder that inciting workers against the caste system per se is often difficult. This is not to deny that it may still be the way forward. After all, there have been vibrant anti-caste movements in at least some parts of the country, notably Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu. Teltumbde's vision of working-class unity with an anti-caste core may or may not be easily realisable, but it is an important line of thought and action at the very least.

The failure of Indian democracy

As mentioned earlier, this book is not just about caste. It is

also a larger reflection on Indian society and politics. Many sections of the book are gems in their own right, from the author's incisive analysis of communalism to his astute profile of Kanshi Ram and his critical appraisal of the Aam Aadmi Party. If there is an overarching message in these essays, other than the ubiquitous monstrosity of caste, it is the failure of Indian democracy - a “charade” as Teltumbde calls it.

Indian democracy tends to appear in a rosy light to the privileged classes because democratic institutions work quite well for them. But the same institutions (elections, parliament, courts, media, education system and so on) often work in a very different if not diametrically opposite manner for the underprivileged. A prime example is the so-called justice system, which is more likely to look like an injustice system to the victims of arbitrary arrests, fabricated cases, gratuitous incarceration and other forms of judicial harassment - a routine way of preventing people from stepping out of line. Teltumbde himself is a victim of this injustice system, incarcerated as he is today under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act, or UAPA, a draconian law that has no place in a real democracy.

The health of Indian democracy looks even poorer if we think of democracy not just as a method of government but also as a way of life based on liberty, equality and fraternity. In terms of these constitutional values, “there is not an iota of improvement”, as Teltumbde aptly puts it. In fact, right now the country seems to be going backward on each count.

There is one curious omission in the book - the absence of any discussion of gender issues. This is not a criticism (the author is free to write on what he likes), but a disappointment. Just as communalism and class conflict are entangled with caste, as Teltumbde argues, so is patriarchy. Caste reinforces men's obsession with the subjugation of women, especially among the privileged castes, because a free woman is a threat to the purity and unity of the caste. The connection between patriarchy and the caste system has been well recognised by a long line of anti-caste and feminist thinkers. Teltumbde's thoughts on gender issues would have enriched this illuminating book.

Republic of Caste is an invaluable introduction to the essential ideas of Anand Teltumbde, one of the most important thinkers of our times. The book is all the more engaging as it is written in a clear and lively style. Teltumbde is a master at going to the heart of complex matters and putting them in simple, powerful words. Few books have made a deeper impression on me since 2002, when I stumbled on Annihilation of Caste in a dusty library of Allahabad and read it in one sitting.

*(Jean Drèze is a freelance development economist.
Courtesy: Scroll.in.)*



Dr Ambedkar - The Architect of India's Labor Reforms

Great Dr Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar was not only the maker of the Indian Constitution but was also the visionary architect of India's labor law reforms. He was the savior of the Indian labor, and not a mere Dalit leader. Many of the important labor law initiatives in India were made by Dr Ambedkar himself, being the first Labor Minister of India in the Viceroy's Executive Council during the four years from 1942 to 1946. Those four years can be termed as the golden period of Indian labor.

-Saji Narayanan C.K.

After completing his studies with flying colors from Columbia University and London School of Economics, he returned to India and became Professor and Principal of the Government Law College in Bombay. But for ten years the 'untouchable' Barrister and Professor could not get sufficient place to reside and had to live in one of the 'chawls' of Bombay Development Department at Parel meant for the lowest level of workers.

Each floor was having a single lavatory and single tap for bathing, washing and cleaning cooking utensils. Most of the tenants were mill workers. Living under these conditions, the professor acquired a first-hand

experience about the hardships in the lives of the workers. He had occasions to visit some of the mills and see how the workers were working there. This has created a passion in him to work for the welfare of workers. He thus gained the confidence of many workers and rose to their leadership. This life experience created the background for him to become India's architect of labor law reforms.

As a Labor and Political Leader

In August 1936, he founded a new political party called the Independent Labor Party. He drafted an action program to address the grievances of the landless, poor tenants, farmers and workers. In the initial election itself, fifteen out of seventeen candidates put up by the party succeeded including Dr Ambedkar. He got established as a reputed labor leader.

In 1938, the Congress Government presented the Industrial Disputes Bill with many anti-worker clauses in the Bombay Legislative Assembly. Dr Ambedkar accused the bill as "bad, bloody and bloodthirsty" since it restricted the right of the laborer to strike and made the strike illegal as well as impossible.

The bill also enabled the employer not to disclose his budget and sought to use police force against the



workers. Still, the Congress Government went forward with the bill. As a part of the campaign against the law, a one day strike was also held.

As Labor Minister

Dr Ambedkar took over the Labor portfolio as the Labor Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council in 1942. In a reception, he said in humility that the high office held no charm for him and that he would be the first to quit if his efforts as Labor Member were unsuccessful in improving the conditions of workers of the country. Regarding the Government's commitment to labor, Dr Ambedkar based his views on the recommendations of the Royal Commission, 1930 and the various Conventions of the International Labor Organization (ILO).

Dr Ambedkar was the Champion of real tripartism in India. In 1942, he called the 4th Tripartite Indian Labor Conference (ILC) in New Delhi. Before that, only the Government representatives were there in the ILC. In his address, Dr Ambedkar said: "It is for the first time in the history of these labor conferences that the representatives of the employers and employees have been brought face to face within the ambit of a joint conference".

The objects of the ILC 1942 were the formulating of a procedure for the settlement of industrial disputes and the discussion of matters of all-India importance as between Labor and Capital. Joint discussions in the ILCs brought fundamental changes in the outlook of the Government, employers and employees on labor issues.

Initiatives on Labor Rights and Welfare

Dr Ambedkar for the first time brought in the 8-hour working per day to India, bringing it down from 14 hours. He brought it in the 4th session of Indian Labor Conference held in New Delhi in 1942. He proposed

holidays with pay for factory workers. He followed the English pattern of working hours of 48 hours per week in India.

For fixing minimum wages for labor, Dr Ambedkar drafted the 'Minimum Wages Act' in 1942 though it was enacted into law in 1948. Dr Ambedkar moved the Payment of Wages (Amendment) Bill in 1944. 'Dearness Allowance' (DA), 'Leave Benefit', 'Revision of Scale of Pay', extra payment for Overtime, subsidized food etc. are the contributions of Dr Ambedkar.

Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar formed an Advisory Committee to advise on matters arising out of the Labor Welfare under B. P. Agarkar. As a labor Minister, he invited Mr V.V. Giri, the then president of the AITUC, to head the commission on 'Forced labor'. Among East Asian countries, India was the first nation to bring insurance for the well-being of employees through the Employees State Insurance (ESI) Act.

The first document on social insurance was 'Report on Health Insurance' submitted to the ILC of 1942. Dr Ambedkar has contributed the 'Coal and Mica Mines Provident Fund' and the 'Mica Mines Labor Welfare Fund, 1946'. He has also contributed to the making of Employees Provident Fund Law. He brought an amendment to the Workmen's Compensation Act of 1923. In 1944, Dr Ambedkar initiated the amendment to the Factories Act of 1934 with several modifications. It was Ambedkar again, who introduced canteen and medical facilities inside the factory etc. Before coal mines maternity law was presented, Dr Ambedkar, as a Labor Member, went to the coalfields in Dhanbad to study the working conditions. He inspected both surface and underground conditions of work and went 400 feet underground.

It is because of Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar that workers

can go on strike for their rights. In 1943, Dr Ambedkar introduced the 'Indian Trade Unions (Amendment) Bill' for compulsory recognition of trade unions. The Industrial Disputes Act, which is the basic labor law of the country, was passed in 1947 and ESI Act passed in 1948; but were introduced in the Viceroy's Council by Dr Ambedkar years back. Chief Labor Commissioner, Provincial Labor Commissioners, Labor inspectors etc. were first appointed during his tenure. The Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Bill was introduced in the central assembly by Dr Ambedkar and came into force on April 23, 1946. 'Employment Exchanges' were created by Dr Ambedkar in the name of 'National Employment Agency'.

Ambedkar was instrumental in the establishment of the Reserve Bank of India in 1935. His 'Industrial Statistical Act, 1942' was enacted for assessing labor statistics in the matters of labor disputes, wage rates, income, inflation, debt, housing, employment, deposits and other funds.

Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar initiated many laws for women workers in India. They include 'Mines Maternity Benefit Act', 'Women Labor Welfare Fund', 'Women and Child Labor Protection Act', 'Maternity leave Benefit for Women Labor', as well as 'Restoration of Ban on Employment of Women on Underground Work in Coal Mines'.

Dr Ambedkar took steps to amend the Maternity Benefit Act. When the maternity benefit bill was introduced in the House, he said: "I believe that it is in the interest of the nation that the mother ought to get a certain amount of rest during the prenatal period and also subsequently and this Bill is based entirely on that principle." He advocated for equal pay for equal work and he got success in the field of coal mines.

Ambedkar was a pioneer in India's skill development initiatives. He was instrumental in setting up the best Technical Training Scheme for Workers in India. On August 24, 1944 while in Calcutta he said: "This is the age of the Machine and it is only those countries in which technical and scientific training has risen to the highest pitch that will survive in the struggle.....The Technical Training Scheme not only maintained but extended all over the country and became a permanent part of the country's educational system". The current draft New Educational Policy also gives thrust to vocational education.

Dr Ambedkar has shown his brilliance by including Philosophy of social justice and labor rights in the

Constitution. Dr Ambedkar wanted the subject of labor to be in the Union list as he stressed the need for uniformity of labor laws. But it could not be achieved.

A Strong Critic of Communism

Dr Ambedkar was amazed by the sight of equality between different castes in an RSS camp in Pune. On the other hand, he was a staunch critic of Communism. He said "I am the number one enemy to both Communism and Communists who exploited the laborers for their political ends". He said class conflict is the cause of misery. He opposed Marxism with Buddhist ideas.

Dr Ambedkar said human beings are not living for bread alone; they have a heart. He said hatred and struggle could not be the basis of any change. Thus, he opposed Marxism. The Communist Party of India, becoming angry with his sharp criticism of Communism, declared that Ambedkar is an enemy of laborers. They attacked him as the 'divider of the working class', 'misleader of Dalit masses', 'opponent of the nationalist movement' and a 'stooge of imperialists'. CPI founding member S.A. Dange appealed to voters: "Spoil your votes but don't vote Dr Ambedkar".

Later, as usual, Communists took a U-turn and claimed Ambedkar was a proponent of class struggle. During his last days, when both Congress and Communists rejected Ambedkar and opposed him, his solace was RSS workers, which is described in Dattopant Thengdiji's book on Dr Ambedkar. Thengdiji explains the circumstances in which he himself being an RSS pracharak became the election agent of Ambedkar in his last contesting of the election.

Great Vision about Labor

He cautioned that without social and economic freedom of all, there will not be any meaning of political freedom. Dr Ambedkar declared: "Labor is not content with securing merely fair conditions of work. What labor wants is fair conditions of life." He criticized those who use the word "cheap labor" and pointed out that it is a shame to the industry as well: "It had been said that India's monopoly was based on cheap labor. If this was true, it was not a matter of complement either to the industry or to labor."

This was an answer to all those who at that time propagated that industrial progress at a cheap labor cost is the national goal. It is relevant even today.

Courtesy: News Bharati



NEPAL: Caste system still dogging bureaucracy

Despite the Nepalese Government reserving 45 per cent of Public Service positions for minorities, women and disabled people, upper caste Brahmins continue to get recruited in the highest numbers.

The Central Bureau of Statistics has yet to make public the population structure based on ethnicity and caste from the 2021 census, but according to the annual report of the Public Service Commission, 47.83 per cent of candidates recommended by the Commission for recruitment were Brahmins.

However, Information Officer at the Commission, Devi Prasad Subedi said the recommendations did

not give a true picture.

“Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we could not recommend many candidates who could be recruited in the Civil Service under the inclusion quotas,” Mr Subedi said.

“Had all the candidates under the inclusion quotas been included, the share of Brahmins in total recommendations would have come down.”

The Civil Service Act reserves 45 per cent of Public Service positions for women, Indigenous groups, Madhesi, Dalits, people with disability and those from backward regions, while open competition is held only for 55 per cent of seats.

“More Brahmin candidates joined the Civil Service in the last fiscal year because only results of the open competition category were released during the year,” Mr Subedi said.

“They have a longstanding tradition of joining the Civil Service and applicants from the group are always high.”

Atrocities against Dalits, Adivasis rise amidst 'tall claim' of India open defecation free

The Dalit civil rights networks, National Coalition for Strengthening SCs and STs (PoA) Act (NCSPA) and National Dalit Movement for Justice (NDMJ), have claimed that despite explicit constitutional provision and guidelines, the suffering of Dalits and Adivasi communities across India have continued to increase.

Based on an analysis of the latest data published by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), it says, the Dalit community is "not only the victim of the scourge caste system, but also face institutional discrimination and social exclusion."

In a statement, the civil rights groups note, "India make tall claims of open defecation free (ODF) nation, "but still a Dalit minor girl gets gang-raped and murdered when she goes to defecate and never returns" and "a small Dalit boy loses his life, just because he touches the pot of the school principal, to quench his thirst."

"These are the cases which got the attention of mainstream media. However, the number is huge", they insist, adding, "Caste-based discrimination and caste-based human rights violations, denial of access to the legal system and stigmatisation prevailed for centuries in India."

Looking at the "recent escalated number of atrocities" against Dalits and Adivasis, in an analysis of the NCRB 2021 report, they assert, "It is the need of the hour to look into the figures and raise questions to the governing bodies and institutions and demand for justice."

National Coalition for Strengthening SCs and STs (Prevention of Atrocities [PoA] Act (NCSPA), a platform of more than 500 Dalits and Adivasis civil society organisations, communities, leaders and activists welcomes the release of Crime in India 2021 report. Data on crimes against Dalits and Adivasis draws a distinct pattern of similarity between rural and urban spaces.

The latest data published by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) also captures some anomalies and interesting trends. Every year there is an increase in atrocities against Dalits and Adivasis. Even the 2021 Crime data shows the similar trend of upsurge in

violence; with large proportion of crimes against Dalits and Adivasi women and children. The Crime in India Report 2021 data has revealed that:

Atrocities/crime against Scheduled Castes have increased by 1.2% in 2021 (50,900) over 2020 (50,291 cases). Uttar Pradesh (13,146 cases) reported the highest number of cases of atrocities against Scheduled Castes (SCs) accounting for 25.82% followed by Rajasthan with 14.7% (7524) and Madhya Pradesh with 14.1% (7,214) during 2021.

The next two states in the list are Bihar accounting for 11.4% (5842) and Odisha 4.5% (2327). The above top five states reported 70.8% of cases of atrocities against Scheduled Castes. The recent incidents of atrocities against Scheduled Castes in Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana reflects the harsh realities of caste based violence against SCs and STs.

Atrocities/crime against Scheduled Tribes have increased by 6.4% in 2021 (8,802 cases) over 2020 (8,272 cases). Madhya Pradesh (2,627 cases) reported the highest number of cases of atrocities against Scheduled Tribes (STs) accounting for 29.8% followed by Rajasthan with 24% (2121 cases) and Odisha with 7.6% (676 cases) during 2021.

Maharashtra was next in the list with 7.13% (628 cases) followed by Telangana at 5.81% (512 cases). The above top five states reported 74.57% of cases of atrocities against Scheduled Tribes.

Violence against Dalit women: Cases of rape against Schedule Caste women, (including minors) account for





7.64% (3893 cases), with 2,585 cases of rape against Dalit Women and 1,285 cases of minor rape, of the total cases reported. Cases of rape, attempt to rape, assault on women to outrage her modesty and Kidnapping of women and minors cumulatively stood at 16.8% (8570 cases).

Violence against Adivasi women: Cases of rape against Schedule Tribe women stood at 15% (1324 cases) of the total cases reported. Cases of rape, attempt to rape, assault on women to outrage her modesty kidnapping cumulatively stood at 26.8% (2364 cases).

Cases of murder, attempt to murder and Grievous hurt were reported as 967, 916 and 1,286 respectively against Scheduled Caste. Similarly for Scheduled Tribes, cases of murder, attempt to murder and grievous hurt were reported as 199, 148 and 114 respectively.

A total of 70,818 cases of atrocities against Scheduled Castes were pending for investigation at the end of the year 2021, including previous year cases. Similarly, 12,159 cases of atrocities against Schedule Tribe were pending for investigation.

A total of 52,159 cases of atrocities against SCs and 8825 Cases of atrocities against STs were disposed off by police. Charge sheeting percentage for the atrocities against Scheduled Castes ended with 80.0% and 81.4% for Scheduled Tribes.

A total of 2,63,512 cases of atrocities against SCs and 42,512 cases of atrocities against STs came for trial in the court. Out of these cases, trials in 10,108 of atrocities against SCs were completed and 1947 cases for STs. Conviction percentage under the SCs and STs (PoA) Act in conjunction with IPC remained at 36.0% for SCs and 28.1% for STs.

The cases acquitted (includes acquittal as well as the cases where the accused is discharged) is 5,628 cases for

SCs and 1399 for STs. At the end of the year 96.0% of cases of atrocities against SCs were pending for trial, whereas for STs, the percentage stood at 95.4%.

Even after the amendments came in force in year 2016, which generated a hope to the Dalit and Adivasis victims in accessing speedy justice, the implementation of the amended SCs and STs (PoA) Amended Act 2015 remains a challenge.

With the audacity with which crimes are conducted it is very much evident that there is complete absence of fear and lawlessness. Apart from violence, being perpetrated on Dalits and Adivasis, there has been an increase in untouchability practices in schools, access to drinking water, access to education, healthcare and dignity remains a challenge.

We, on behalf of Dalit and Adivasis communities call on the Union and State Governments, political parties elected representatives to take a stand against the rising caste based in the country. We call upon the Government of India to robustly, enforce and implement the new provisions of the amended Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989 (2015).

Take swift and robust action against the dominant caste perpetrators violating the human rights of Dalits and Adivasis. Conduct an open and transparent investigation under the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Amendment Act, 2015 and prosecute those Government and police officials who are found to have aided and abetted criminals.

Robustly implement the Exclusive Special Courts mandated in the amended act for speedy trials. We demand immediate action to end atrocities against Dalit and Adivasis and we will not be appeased by mere promises.

Source: Counterview

BALUCHISTAN GOVT TO ESTABLISH DIRECTORATE FOR MINORITIES' AFFAIRS



Balochistan government has initiated a plan of setting up directorate for minorities' affairs in Quetta during the current financial year to ensure their (minorities) inclusion in the provincial and national development by providing them equal opportunities in socioeconomic and political sphere.

The government had allocated Rs 50 million for the establishment of endowment fund for minorities to provide them financial assistance in case of any emergency, a senior official of Balochistan government said. He said that the provincial government had also provided financial assistance amounting to Rs 89 million to 10,136 poor people of minority communities of the province.

Moreover, the provincial government had also allocated five per cent job quota for minorities in different government departments to enable them to play an important role in progress and prosperity of the country, he added. The Balochistan government, during the last three years, had

renovated and repaired a total of 213 worship places of minority communities at a cost of Rs 240 million.

According to a senior official of Balochistan government, the provincial government has provided four well equipped ambulances worth Rs 6 million each for the welfare of minority community living in the province. He said the provincial government had awarded some 1,618 scholarships to minority students studying in various educational institutions with the cost of Rs 89 million. Students from various minority communities of the province would be awarded hundreds of scholarships every year, he said.

He also mentioned that the provincial government had expended Rs 105 million to provide medical assistance to the poor and needy patients suffering from different chronic diseases.

Source: www.app.com.pk

1 Every 9 Minutes: NCRB Data Bares India's Female Suicide Problem

Saadhya Mohan

As many as 45,026 women died by suicide in India in 2021; nearly 1 every 9 minutes.

Over half of them - 23,178 - were housewives. On an average, 63 housewives died by suicide every day in India in 2021.

While more men (1,18,979) than women died by suicide in India in the past year, a deviation from the pattern was observed in those aged below 18, where the incidence of suicide was higher in females. The top causes - family problems, love affairs and failure in exams, among others.

The latest annual report of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) has thrown light on some grim trends, fuelling concern over mental health and social status of women in India.

India's female suicide burden is enormous. Indian women make up 36 percent of all global suicides in the 15 to 39 years age group - the highest share of any nation in the world.

“Irrespective of education and financial independence, women are still not as empowered as we would like to believe. Gender-based discrimination is still prevalent and this inherent bias is reflected in the high number of female suicides,” Dr Rakhi Dandona, Professor at Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI), told The Quint.

Housewives Die in 14% of All Suicides in India: How Is Profession/Economic Status of Women Linked to Suicide?

A total of 1,64,033 suicides were reported in the country during 2021, showing an increase of 7.2 percent in comparison to 2020. Housewives constitute a major chunk of these deaths - accounting

for 14.13 percent of total suicides in 2021 - second only to daily wage earners.

Table 1: Number of Women from Various Groups

Who Died by Suicide in 2021

| | |
|--------------------------|--------|
| Housewives | 23,178 |
| Students | 5,693 |
| Professionals / Salaried | 1,752 |
| Daily Wage Earners | 4,246 |
| Women Engaged in Farming | 653 |
| Self Employed Persons | 1,426 |

Data Source: NCRB

Explaining the worrying statistic, Dr Rakhi Dandona noted that the proportion of housewives is higher within women in India, naturally leading to higher numbers of suicide cases within the group: “Housewives is documented under 'occupation' in the NCRB; and what this means is that occupation of 51 percent of the cases reported in the NCRB was housewives. This has to be seen in relation to the rate of suicide and the distribution by marital status as well, in which 'currently married' women account for the majority of suicide deaths. Most women in India are married during the age when suicide deaths are more and hence you see more housewives in the data.”

A seminal Lancet Public Health study (2018) on suicides in Indian women speculates that the increasing number of female suicides may be related to a conflict between women's increasing education and empowerment and the persistence of their lower status in Indian society.



Notably, the number of suicides reduces as women become more financially empowered:

Table 2: Number of Women Who Died by Suicide in 2021

Across Various Income Levels

| | |
|----------------------|--------|
| Less than 1 lakh | 32,397 |
| Rs 1-5 lakh | 10,973 |
| Rs 5-10 lakh | 1,234 |
| More than Rs 10 lakh | 422 |

Data Source: NCRB

“Social and economic security is naturally lower for individuals with low income. Access to healthcare is also less,” Dr Yogesh Jain, paediatrician and founder of Jan Swasthya Sahyog (JSS), said while speaking to The Quint.

A 1.17 percent rise in female suicides has been observed in 2021, when compared with the number of cases in 2020 (44,498).

Family Problems, Marital Issues, Illnesses: Top Factors Behind Female Suicides

Family problems, illnesses and marital issues are the principal contributors behind female suicides in India, as per the NCRB report.

Table 3: Cause Wise Distribution of Female Suicides in 2021

| | |
|---------------------------|--------|
| Family Problems | 15,769 |
| Illness | 9,426 |
| Marriage related issues | 4,069 |
| Failure in Exams | 682 |
| Love affair | 2,894 |
| Impotence / infertility | 222 |
| Bankruptcy / Indebtedness | 482 |

Data Source: NCRB

1,503 of the marriage-related suicide deaths were over dowry, while 217 were linked to divorce. Nearly 67.5 percent - 2,757 - of female suicides over marital issues were below the age of 30.

A large chunk of female suicides are happening at an age when women are entering marriages, when a large proportion of them are becoming housewives, notes Dr Dandona.



Of the 9,426 female suicides due to illnesses, 43.25 percent - 4,077 - were due to mental illness.

More Suicides in Girls Under 18: What Leads to Suicide at Young Age?

5,655 girls below the age of 18 died by suicide in India in 2021 - a figure slightly greater than the 5,075 male suicides in the same age group. This marks an anomaly in the pattern seen in other age groups, where the number is higher for males.

In 2020 as well, the number of girls under 18 who had died by suicide was higher (6,004) than the figure for boys (5,392). In fact, the same variation has been observed over the past few years - and has indeed become the norm for the particular age bracket.

Family problems, illness, love affairs and failure in exams emerged as the chief causes behind suicide deaths of girls in India last year.

Table 4: Cause Wise Distribution of Female Suicides in Under-18 Girls in 2021

| | |
|-------------------------|-------|
| Family Problems | 1,603 |
| Illness | 812 |
| Marriage related issues | 126 |
| Failure in Exams | 397 |
| Love affair | 910 |

Data Source: NCRB

The high number of deaths due to failure in examinations is symptomatic of the larger problem of student suicides plaguing India. As many as 13,089 students killed themselves due to 'exam stress' in 2021 - highest in five years.

“Going by the data, we can say that gender does not play a significant role and is not a major risk factor below the age of 18,” Dr Yogesh Jain, who has

researched on suicide in rural India, said.

“Unlike the western world, where 90 percent of the suicides are a manifestation of a psychiatric disorder, in India, many young people's deaths by suicides do not have psychiatric comorbidities. They are rather related to social insecurity - poverty, unemployment and so on. These issues of social security can effect impulsive decisions in the youth, a group which is more prone to take spur-of-the-moment decisions,” said Dr Yogesh Jain, who is a paediatrician and Founder of Jan Swasthya Sahyog (JSS)

“Fear of joblessness, fear of not clearing examinations are also factors linked to suicides in this age group,” he added.

Do Marriage & Education Play a Role?

While one would expect that incidence of suicide would lower with education, data shows that is not necessarily the case. Female suicides exhibit an increase as the level of schooling goes up and then chart a drop after higher education.

“We have seen that even while literacy is higher in some southern states, the suicide rate is also quite high there. We can hypothesize that higher awareness that comes with education may be leading to more sui or psychiatric comorbidities may be more common with higher education. The aspirations of getting a job or opportunity of a particular kind also rise with education,” as per Dr Jain.

Marriage is also not a protective factor - Indian women in marriages appear to be much more vulnerable to suicide than their unmarried or divorced counterparts.

The NCRB report reveals that nearly two-thirds - 63.69 percent (28,680) - of women suicide victims were married. Unmarried women constituted 24 percent of the total, 0.6 percent were divorced and 2.2 percent were widowed.

Where Do We Go From Here?

Evidently, the problem of female suicides in India is extensive and multifaceted. The data points to no clear solution to the issue - education, income, marriage singularly do not seem to offer protective advantage.

Dr Dandona, who had co-authored the 2018 Lancet



study on female suicides in India, opines that more qualitative research is required to understand the efficacy of approaches to ameliorate the problem of suicidal deaths.

“We simply do not have research or data that can allow us to answer this question specifically. For example - if education was the solution to reduce suicide deaths in females, then the south India should have lower death rate, but it does not. We need sound qualitative research to understand “why of suicide deaths in India,”” the public health expert said.

Dr Jain, too, makes this point: “The NCRB records do not mention cases of attempted suicides. There is no mention of these numbers. These cases, the factors behind them need to be picked up and looked at.”

Experts concur that intervention is necessary at the school and early college level. Counselling possibilities should be available on each portal for the youth and helpline centres should be set up for young people. here needs to be more conversation about depression and suicide and it needs to involve both men and women. Support systems - at family level, community level and at the level of the state - are also essential.

We need to better the systems for tackling suicides in general in India. And we need to push for more research-driven, gender-specific strategies to address the mammoth issue of female suicides.

Janata Weekly does not necessarily adhere to all of the views conveyed in articles republished by it. Our goal is to share a variety of democratic socialist perspectives that we think our readers will find interesting or useful. -Eds.

(Courtesy: The Quint.)



Ambedkar Society for South Asia
