

QUARTERLY

AMBEDKAR VISION

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**Remembering
Baba Saheb Ambedkar
on Mahaparinirvan Diwas
and Dalit Experiences
in Indian Academia**

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Ambedkar Society for South Asia

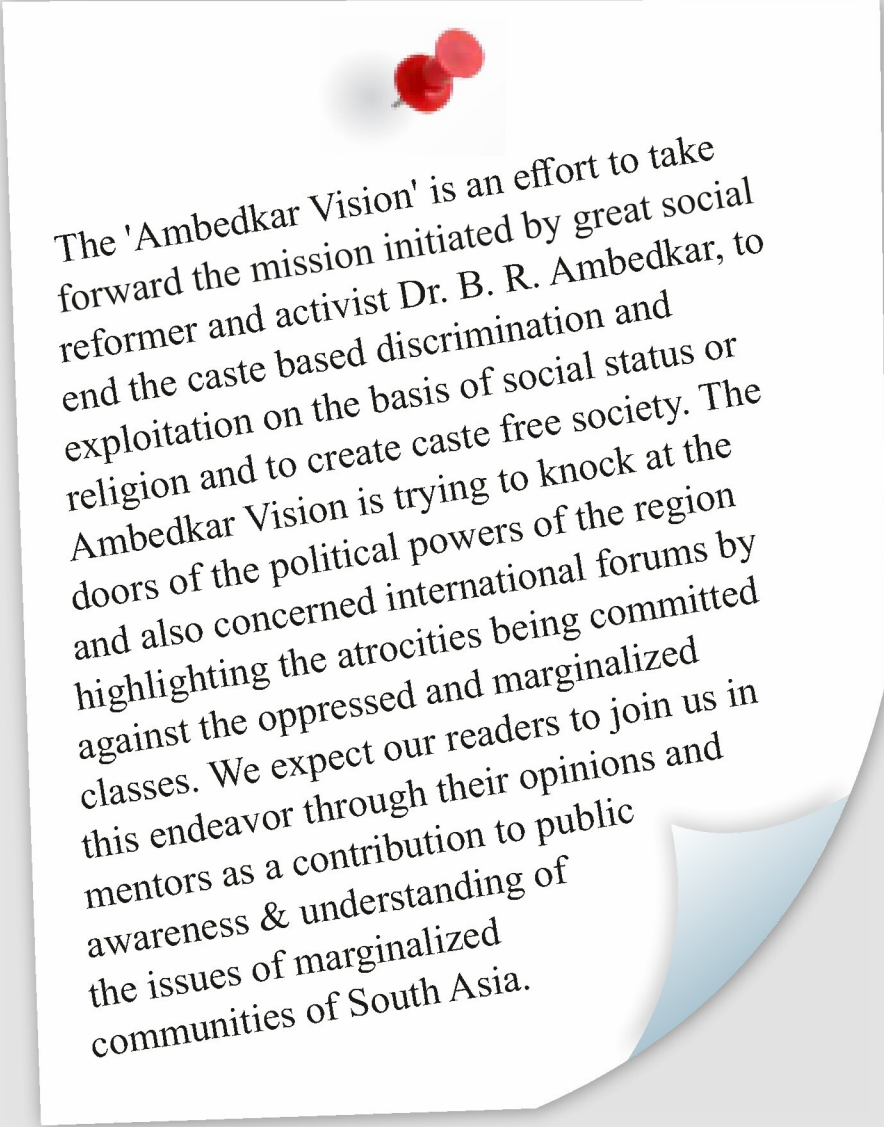
QUARTERLY AMBEDKAR VISION

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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

Welcome to the latest edition of Ambedkar Vision. The tribute to Dr. B.R. Ambedkar on Mahaparinirvan Diwas stands in painful contrast to the lived realities of Dalits and religious minorities across South Asia and beyond. Ambedkar's vision of equality, dignity and institutional justice remains far from realized, as evidenced by persistent caste discrimination in Indian academia, economic exclusion, state-enabled violence and the everyday atrocities faced by marginalized communities from India to Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan and even the United States. In India, caste continues to operate as a deeply entrenched structure of exclusion. Dalits constitute nearly 16 percent of the country's population—over 200 million people—yet studies and reports consistently show that they hold a negligible share of national wealth. The fact that this vast community has close to zero collective net worth underlines the systemic denial of access to land, capital and institutional finance. The human cost of caste oppression is tragically visible in Indian institutions. The suicide of a Dalit government officer, like those of Dalit students and scholars before him, exposes how humiliation, isolation and discrimination persist even within spaces meant to symbolize merit and equality. Indian academia, despite constitutional safeguards, remains hostile to Dalit presence, forcing many to navigate caste prejudice in silence. These deaths are not individual failures but indictments of a system that normalizes caste violence while denying its existence. This structural violence has intensified under the broader climate of human rights erosion during the Modi regime. Civil rights groups and independent reports, including findings by the Association for Protection of Civil Rights (APCR), document a sharp rise in hate crimes against Muslims and Christians. In recent years, hundreds of incidents involving mob violence, church attacks, social boycotts and arbitrary arrests have been recorded, often driven by organized propaganda and enabled by political impunity. Anti-Christian rhetoric, in particular, has translated into physical attacks on worshippers and pastors, shrinking the already limited space for religious freedom in the world's largest democracy. These injustices are not confined to South Asia. Across the border in Pakistan, minorities face parallel but distinct forms of exclusion. The struggle of activist Kalpana Devi against the forced conversion of Hindu girls highlights the intersection of gender, religion and power, where minors from impoverished families are coerced into conversion and marriage with little legal recourse. At the same time, the revelation that only 37 out of approximately 1,800 Hindu and Sikh worship sites are fully functional underscores the alarming neglect of minority religious heritage. These figures reflect a deeper unwillingness to protect equal citizenship. In Bangladesh, caste discrimination manifests through occupation and gender. Dalit women sanitation workers continue to fight for access to clean water, safe working conditions and basic dignity. Confined to hereditary labor and exposed to hazardous environments, these women remain invisible in national development narratives despite sustaining urban life through their work. Their struggle echoes Ambedkar's insistence that dignity of labor is central to social justice. Labour migration, often romanticized as economic mobility, frequently reproduces caste hierarchies, exposing Dalit and lower-caste workers to exploitation and invisibility in both host and home countries. Nepal presents yet another dimension of caste oppression through labour migration. Dalits, disproportionately represented among migrant workers, are pushed abroad due to caste-based exclusion at home, only to encounter exploitation, debt bondage and abuse in foreign labor markets. Migration, rather than dismantling caste, often reproduces it across borders, revealing how deeply social hierarchies are embedded in economic systems. The persistence of caste discrimination among South Asian diasporic communities in the United States, as revealed through groundbreaking surveys and advocacy by Dalit activists, demonstrates that caste travels across borders, adapting itself to new legal and social environments while continuing to marginalize the same communities. Dalit activist Thenmozhi Soundararajan's groundbreaking surveys and advocacy have documented caste discrimination within South Asian diaspora communities and workplaces. Her findings challenge the myth that caste disappears with migration, instead showing how it adapts and survives even within societies that pride themselves on equality and civil rights. Incidents such as the vandalization of Dalit homes in Nepal's Siraha district further demonstrate how caste violence remains normalized, often dismissed as local disputes rather than recognized as human rights violations. Whether through economic exclusion, physical violence, institutional neglect or cultural erasure, the message remains the same: caste and religious identity continue to determine whose lives are valued. Taken together, these realities expose a regional and global failure to confront discrimination as a systemic problem. Remembering Ambedkar cannot be reduced to ceremonial reverence while his people continue to face social death. Human rights, religious freedom, economic justice and dignity must be enforced through institutions, accountability and political will. Until states move beyond denial and symbolism, the promise of equality will remain unfulfilled and the voices emerging from these struggles will continue to remind us that democracy without justice is merely an illusion.



Remembering Baba Saheb Ambedkar on Mahaparinirvan Diwas and Dalit Experiences in Indian Academia

above; it must be seized with fierce determination.

“We are because he was.”

On this Mahaparinirvan Diwas, these words echo through our hearts with profound emotion and unshakeable conviction. They are not mere words; they are a testament to the unbreakable bond between a visionary and the millions he liberated. For generations scarred by marginalisation, exclusion and fierce resistance, Babasaheb is far more than a historical figure, he is the bedrock of our dignity, the master builder of our dreams and the eternal flame igniting our path toward true humanity. To reflect on Babasaheb today is to feel the weight of gratitude that wells up from the depths of our souls. Our freedom to speak without fear, to educate ourselves without barriers, to walk with our heads held high, to confront injustice head-on and to dream of a world remade in equality, all these gifts trace back to the courageous path he blazed. His victories were never solitary; they were the collective rising of a people long crushed under oppression.

His struggles burned with a fire that refused to dim, not for personal glory, but for the voiceless millions stripped of agency, respect and basic human worth. In his relentless fight, we found our own strength, our own voice. His legacy endures not as a distant echo from history, but as a powerful, pulsating force alive in our veins. It is the unquenchable fire that warms our spirits in the coldest moments of despair. It is the radiant light that pierces through darkness, guiding us forward. It is the indomitable courage that arms us against the injustices that still linger in our world today.

The Long Journey of Equality: Walking the Path He Opened :

Babasaheb's life was nothing short of a revolutionary upheaval. He exposed caste not as a mere social irregularity, but as a deep-seated moral abomination, one that systematically steals dignity from the oppressed while conferring illegitimate superiority on the oppressors. With unwavering clarity, he proclaimed that education is liberation's most potent weapon. Intellect belongs not to a privileged few but to every human being as an inalienable right. Dignity is never granted from

For communities that were treated as less than human for centuries, Babasaheb's rise from pain to great leadership is one of the most inspiring stories of equality today. His life shows that no chain can hold us if we keep fighting. For many from oppressed families, he feels like a close friend. In childhood, when classmates stayed away or did not share food because of caste, his story gave us power to keep going. When society's contempt tried to crush our spirits, his words became our shield, lifting us to stand taller. When waves of humiliation threatened to drown us, his profound writings became the anchor that held us steady. We do not just remember him in ceremonies. We live his teachings every day. We do not just speak about him. We follow his path. We do not only respect him. We carry his spirit in every fight for justice.

The Academia's Promise and Its Silences

Universities proudly declare themselves as enlightened realms of neutrality, progress and pure objectivity. But for those who carry the scars of caste oppression, these institutions often betray a painful truth: they mirror society's entrenched hierarchies in disguised forms. The physical campus may appear modern and inclusive, but the invisible hierarchies sting with familiar pain. The vocabulary has changed, yet the exclusionary intent remains intact.

Discrimination hides in sophistication, inflicting wounds that cut just as deeply. Scholars from Dalit backgrounds repeatedly confront the same age-old exclusions, now cloaked in academic jargon. The system practices prejudice, It vows equality on paper but fiercely guards inherited hierarchies in practice. This stark contradiction reveals itself most clearly in the politics of knowledge production: whose insights are granted credibility, whose voices are truly heard and whose lived experiences are dismissed as mere caste-bound anecdotes.

Hierarchy in New Forms: The University and the Logic of “Part/Apart”

One of the most poignant revelations in higher education is the invisible line drawn between those who are fully “part” of the institution and those kept perpetually “apart.”



Scholars
from Dalit

backgrounds may occupy the same lecture halls, but their voices seldom command the same authority or space. Their presence is acknowledged superficially, tolerated, scrutinised, but rarely embraced or trusted fully. And yet, in the face of this marginalisation, these scholars rise with extraordinary resilience. Their very entry into forbidden spaces shakes the foundations of old power structures. Their bold arguments disturb the complacent authority of the dominant. Their innovative scholarship directly confronts and erodes the unearned prestige long held by privileged castes. By boldly occupying arenas designed to exclude them, they tear down the walls of “apartness,” asserting that true academia must belong to all who dare to think.

The Violence of Disbelief: Testimonial Injustice as Everyday Reality

Among the cruelest weapons in academic discrimination is testimonial injustice. the deliberate withholding of credibility not because of flawed ideas, but simply because of who dares to voice them. This form of violence does not roar; it whispers poisonously. It does not wound visibly; it slowly erodes confidence from within. It does not bar the door outright; it undermines from the shadows. For scholars from Dalit backgrounds, this injustice strikes repeatedly and predictably. Their passionately researched work is casually dismissed as “too emotional,” even as dominant-caste narratives are exalted as impeccably “scholarly.” Their meticulously constructed theoretical contributions are brushed aside as insignificant “review material,” subtly implying an inherent lack of originality or depth.

Their sharp arguments are labelled suspiciously as “identity-driven biases,” while the perspectives of the privileged are automatically crowned as pure, unbiased neutrality. Solid, evidence-based analyses are downgraded to mere “anecdotes,” and their conference presentations are greeted with scepticism, impatience or outright condescension. At its heart, this is not honest intellectual disagreement, it is premeditated disbelief, rooted in the arrogant assumption that certain backgrounds are incapable of producing truly rigorous knowledge. This modern disbelief recreates an intellectual form of untouchability, stripping away equal epistemic respect. Its pain is both personal and systemic, reverberating with the echoes of historical bans that forbade the oppressed from reading, writing or daring to interpret the world. The Academia, in its refined way,

continues this ancient violence through polished language and subtle gestures.

Yet, rising above this relentless adversity, scholars from Dalit backgrounds forge ahead with unbreakable spirit. They deliver transformative, pathbreaking scholarship that expands the horizons of human understanding and boldly dismantles the myth of inherited intellectual superiority.

Carrying His Caravan Forward

On Mahaparinirvan Diwas, we remember Babasaheb with a depth of gratitude that words can barely hold. The Society and people who were told we were nobody, he became the first person to tell us we were somebody. Because of him we found the courage to speak our truth; because of him we learned to study and claim education as our birthright; because of him we dared to question the injustice that tried to shape our lives; because of him we allowed ourselves to dream, even when the world insisted we had no right to dream.

When we were children pushed to the back of classrooms, when classmates refused to sit beside us as though our presence polluted their place, when children hid their tiffins and teachers disguised cruelty as discipline, it was Babasaheb's life that rose inside us like a quiet flame, reminding us that we belonged, that our humiliation was not our destiny and that our pain would one day transform into power.

When society tried to silence our voices, his words taught us that silence is the first victory of oppression; when discrimination left wounds that felt too deep to heal, it was his courage that stitched us back together. He gave us a language for our suffering and a vision for our liberation. Even today, when we hear yet another story of a young Dalit man beaten, attacked or killed for falling in love, for walking with dignity or for simply existing with confidence, his spirit whispers to us that we are unbreakable, that our story did not begin in chains and it will not end in silence.

His legacy is not a memory, it is a living heartbeat, our struggles, our families, our aspirations. His work is a living manuscript written every day by those who refuse to bow. His thoughts are not frozen in books, they breathe in every protest that demands justice, in every child who enters a school with hope, in every woman who refuses to accept discrimination, in every man who asserts his dignity and in every voice that rises against injustices. We walk forward with his fire in our breath, with his dream in our heart.

Source: The Mook Nayak

AMBEDKAR VISION Oct. - Dec. 2025

Human Rights Violations Under The Modi Regime

Hafsa Azam

India's reputation as the world's largest democracy has been at stake since Narendra Modi's entry into mainstream national politics. For the ninth consecutive year, Sweden's V-Dem Institute has labelled India an "electoral autocracy."

Its Democracy Report 2025 warns of shrinking free expression, growing repression of civil society and deepening polarisation.

Some of the key indicators of India's democratic backsliding under the Modi regime include systematic crackdown on dissent, erosion of civil liberties and persecution of religious and ethnic minorities, including Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Dalits, Adivasis and other caste minorities.

Since coming to power, the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has increasingly relied on draconian laws, such as the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA), Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) and National Security Act (NSA), to suppress dissent.

According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), these laws are frequently misused to criminalise protests and stifle criticism.

The discrimination against religious and ethnic minorities has become institutionalised and authorities often ignore attacks or fail to prosecute the perpetrators. In many regions, demands for constitutional protection are crushed through curfew, internet blackouts, legal intimidation and brute force.

According to the Hate Crime Report (2024–2025) of the Association for Protection of Civil Rights (APCR), "a total of 947 hate crime incidents took place in the first year of Modi's third regime.

Of these 947 hate crimes, 345 were hate speeches and 602 were hate crimes. Out of the 602 hate crimes, 173 involved physical violence targeted at minorities. In 25 of these, the victim died.

All victims were Muslims." Muslim-owned homes, businesses and even mosques have frequently been demolished under anti-encroachment drives, often under vague claims of illegality or unauthorised construction.

The Global Torture Index 2025 has ranked India as "a



high-risk country."

Minorities in India have seen a disturbing pattern of beatings, forced confessions and custodial deaths.

A report titled Status of Policing in India Report 2025: Police Torture and (Un)Accountability by Common Cause found that "Muslims, along with Dalits and Adivasis, are affected by custodial torture."

Manipur has seen violence, widespread displacement, destruction of infrastructure and numerous deaths. Manipur has become a stain on India's already dismal record of minority protection and civil peace.

According to HRW, "from 2023 to 2025, over 260 people have been killed in the ongoing violence. Hundreds of individuals have been injured and approximately 60,000 people have been displaced from their homes."

According to the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), "more than 500 churches and two synagogues" have been destroyed during clashes in Manipur state.

The Modi government's response has been heavy-handed. Authorities imposed curfew, deployed central paramilitary forces and enforced repeated, indefinite internet shutdowns, effectively cutting off communication in Manipur. The state today stands not merely as a conflict zone but as an example of how minority rights are trampled under the weight of a majoritarian and nationalist agenda.

In the northern part of the country, Ladakh has become the latest flashpoint in India's deepening crisis of democracy.

Since the revocation of Articles 370 and 35A in 2019, Ladakh has been administered directly by New Delhi. However, in September 2025, protesters in Leh demanded statehood.

According to HRW, police opened fire on protesters, killing four people and injuring dozens. At least 50 people were arrested. The administration imposed curfew and suspended mobile service and internet in several areas to suppress reporting. Police operations involved lethal force, mass arrests and property damage.

The Indian Home Ministry swiftly revoked the licence of Sonam Wangchuk's NGO Students' Educational and Cultural Movement of Ladakh (SECMOL), cutting off legal and financial protection for dissent.

The authorities blamed Wangchuk, the leading voice of the protest, accusing him of inciting violence and promoting a "Gen Z revolution."

His supporters, however, argue that youth frustration, unmet promises, unemployment and ecological peril were the true flash points. India's pattern of human rights abuses has extended beyond its borders, reaching targets abroad. In July 2025, the UK declassified a report highlighting that India engaged in "coordinated harassment and intimidation" of Sikh activists abroad. The report revealed a "hit-list," monitoring of Sikh institutions and diplomatic pressure on host countries to curb Sikh dissent. In January 2025, the UAPA Tribunal confirmed India's five-year ban on the Khalistani group Sikhs for Justice (SFJ).

US federal prosecutors have accused Indian Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW) agent Nikhil Gupta of conspiring with a former Indian intelligence officer, Vikash Yadav, to carry out a series of international assassinations in the US, Nepal and Pakistan. Gupta attempted to hire a hitman, who turned out to be an undercover US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) agent, to kill a US-based Sikh activist, Gurpatwant Singh Pannun. He agreed to pay him USD 100,000 for the murder and gave him an initial payment of USD 15,000.

The investigation is also linked to the June 2023 killing of Sikh leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar in Canada, indicating a broader and coordinated Indian government campaign against Sikh activists abroad. The US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has placed Vikash Yadav on its wanted list.

On 17 October 2025, the Indian government suddenly changed lawyers and sought to delay Nikhil Gupta's trial in the US Department of Justice on 3 November 2025. The trial could reveal direct evidence linking Modi's office and National Security Advisor Ajit Doval's role in a plan to kill Sikh activist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, exposing the operational chain of command behind R&AW's global assassination programme.

In October 2024, Canada expelled six Indian diplomats, including High Commissioner Sanjay Kumar Verma, for involvement in the murder of a Sikh national, Hardeep



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Singh Nijjar, in Canada. Canada's national police department concluded that the Indian Ambassador had links to murders, threats of death and intimidation in Canada. Canadian authorities revealed that Indian Home Minister Amit Shah had authorised attacks against Sikhs in Canada. In 2024, a New York District Court had also issued summonses to many Indian government officials, including Ajit Doval.

Owing to these developments, the USCIRF has recommended sanctions against India's external spy agency for its involvement in plots to assassinate Sikh activists.

India, therefore, has been exposed at the international level as a state-sponsoring terrorism. The international community must take note of India's reprehensible actions, as they pose a serious threat to international and regional peace and security.

Source: The Friday Times

Caste Discrimination in US: Dalit Activist Thenmozhi Soundararajan's Groundbreaking Survey and Advocacy



In 2015, Thenmozhi Soundararajan, a young activist, scholar and co-founder of Equality Labs — a Dalit civil rights organisation — spearheaded the first nationwide survey on caste discrimination in the US.

The survey found that one in four Dalits had faced physical or verbal assault, one in three reported discrimination in education, two in three encountered workplace bias and more than half lived in fear of being 'outed'. It emerged from repeated testimonies from Dalit Americans even as dominant-caste South Asians insisted caste “was not an issue”.

“These numbers showed what many denied: caste isn't confined to South Asia. It exists in 21st-century America,” says Thenmozhi, who was conferred the Vaikom Award last month, which recognises contributions to caste justice and Dalit civil rights.

“Dalits faced slurs, physical threats and even organisational crises from those who didn't want us to ask these questions,” says Thenmozhi, who wrote about it in 'The trauma of caste', published in 2022.

Born to parents from Coimbatore, who later migrated to the US, Thenmozhi says she was driven by the suffering she witnessed in her family and among caste-oppressed communities. “It wasn't one moment. It was the weight of intergenerational trauma in our diaspora and the silence that allowed caste harassment to be recreated in our homes, schools and workplaces,” says the US-based activist, who also co-founded 'Dalit History Month', celebrated globally.

The 'Lakireddy Bali Reddy' case in the early 2000s in Berkeley shook her, she says. Reddy, a wealthy landlord, brought dalit women and girls from India on fake visas, exploited them for labour and sexually abused minors.

The crimes surfaced after a 13-year-old victim died in one of his buildings, leading to federal charges, a prison sentence and reforms in California's anti-trafficking laws. “I recall letters from dominant-caste supporters asking for leniency. The impunity was devastating. We deserve a diaspora that heals together, stands with survivors and refuses to repeat the injustices we inherited.”

'We must de-brahminise technology and prevent a digital apartheid: Thenmozhi'

What were some of the other findings of your caste in the US report?

We found 60% experienced caste-based slurs and derogatory comments; 40% felt unwelcome at their place of worship; 20% reported discrimination at a place of business. More than 40% said they had been rejected in a romantic partnership because of caste. In 2015, many US academics did not support this work.

When working on the report, we were met with caste slurs. One organisation convened a board meeting to debate whether sharing our survey would “divide the community”. The truth is, the community was divided by caste; the survey revealed what had long been hidden.

Your advocacy triggered support for anti-caste legislation across US cities. Our caste report, initially dismissed by many academics, mainly from dominant castes, became a foundational text for congressional briefings, institutional reforms and the legislative fight for SB 403, a bill in California to ban caste discrimination.

In 2023, Senator Aisha Wahab championed SB 403, a bill that sought to add caste to California's existing anti-discrimination laws, making it illegal to deny someone

In that sense, we still won: Californians who are denied housing, harassed at work, or subjected to physical or verbal abuse because of caste have clear pathways to redress and our communities have stronger tools to live together with respect.

Your work focuses on the tech industry.

Tech companies are not neutral meritocracies; they are powerful corporate institutions that often protect dominant-caste networks. They benefit from public subsidies while funding anti-democratic political agendas.

We must regulate tech, not worship it. Companies should explicitly include caste in anti-discrimination, vendor and harassment policies; provide caste-awareness training for HR, managers and staff; and audit datasets and algorithms to identify caste-coded biases.

Just as earlier generations fought to de-brahminise access to public space, we must now de-brahminise technology and prevent a digital apartheid.

Why must caste be considered in conversations about AI?

If datasets, training corpora and annotation labour are marked by caste bias and they often are, then AI will reproduce caste discrimination at scale. Caste must be included in algorithmic auditing, dataset review and ethical governance. The future must be built with caste-oppressed engineers, researchers, linguists and ethicists at the table.

Where is the anti-caste movement today?

Dalit art, literature, music, film and political thought are shaping global culture. Our voices are visible. But visibility is not enough. This moment calls us to look to our ancestors such as Periyar, Iyothee Thass, Savitribai and Jyotiba Phule and Ambedkar.

The next phase of our movement is about institution-building, not just reacting to harm, but designing the world that comes next.

Source: Sarim Watch



housing, employment or educational opportunities because of their caste.

While SB 403 passed both houses, the governor, under pressure from dominant-caste Hindus, vetoed the bill. However, while vetoing the bill, the governor confirmed that caste discrimination is already against the law.

Kalpana Devi's struggle against all odds to end **Forced Conversions** of Hindu Girls in Pakistan



Additional Advocate General of Sindh High Court Kalpana Devi is member of the PPP.

She was banned by her own Hindu Panchayat from contesting elections, but she challenged the decision in court which lifted the ban allowing her to take part in elections

Vowing to follow the path of her mentor Asma Jahangir, she talks about the incident when she was attacked in 2015. "It was strange how we became Hindu from being Sindhi in one day and the mob burnt down our shivala and then they came for my house" she recalled.

She advocates that the bill to criminalize forced conversions of Hindu girls should be passed by the Sindh Assembly.

In October this year, much to the disappointment of many, in the Sindh Assembly, the PPP retracted from its stance of criminalizing forced conversions after religious parties threatened to protest against the legislation

"The pending bill in Sindh Assembly to criminalize forced conversions of Hindu girls will be amended and tabled soon," hopes Kalpana Devi.

Rights group and Hindu community continue to protest over the alleged abduction and forced conversions of young Hindu girls in Sindh. They question why only Hindu girls convert and get married, why not men or older women?

Source: Voice PK



Anti-Christian propaganda driving attacks in India, says group

Christine Rousselle

Attacks on Christians in India have increased in number by 500% over the last decade, the United Christian Forum (UCF) said in press conference in New Delhi on November 4.

The UCF is an inter-denominational Christian group and is based in New Delhi, India.

"Between 2014 and 2024, incidents of violence against Christians rose sharply—from 139 to 834—a staggering 500 percent increase," said A.C. Michael, UCF's national convenor, at the press conference.

There have been nearly 5,000 attacks on Christian "individuals, families, communities and institutions across the country" over the last decade, Michael told the Asian Catholic outlet UCA News.

In the nine months of 2025, there were 579 attacks on Christians reported throughout India, said Michael. Only 39 — less than 10% — resulted in any sort of police case, he added. Michael credited "anti-Christian propaganda, false allegations of religious conversions and politically driven hatred" for why the number of attacks on the faithful has increased in recent years.

Converting to Christianity is illegal in 12 of India's 28 states. Most of these states are ruled by the Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP), the Hindu nationalist political party. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who has served as India's prime minister since 2014, is a member of the BJP.

Even the accusation of a religious conversion is "used as a political weapon before every election by the current government," said UCF President Michael Williams to UCA.

Christians of any denomination make up about 2% of India's population. India is a majority Hindu country.

India in the spotlight for religious freedom violations

The 2025 Religious Freedom Report, published by the organization Aid to the Church in Need, listed India among 24 countries where "persecution" was occurring.

In India, said the report, the forces behind the persecution of religious groups include "a combination of authoritarianism and ethno-religious nationalism."

In 2024 and again in 2025, United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) recommended that India be designated one of the "Countries of Particular Concern," (CPC) indicating more persecution than its previous "Special Watch List" status.

The CPC label is the highest designation the U.S. Secretary of State can put on a country for religious freedom violations. It is reserved for countries with governments that have either engaged in or tolerated "particularly severe violations of religious freedom," says the State Department's website. These "particularly severe" violations include torture, prolonged imprisonment with no charges filed, "forced disappearance," as well as "other flagrant denial of life, liberty, or security of persons."

Conversely, the "Special Watch List" or "Watch List" label means a country is not nearly a CPC, "but which require close monitoring due to the nature and extent of violations of religious freedom engaged in or tolerated by the governments."

The State Department does not presently list India as either a CPC or SWL country.

Source: Aleteia





Bangladesh: Dalit Women Sanitation Workers and the Fight for Water and Dignity

Rachel O'Brien

A new report, 'Left Behind in the Storm: Dalit Women Sanitation Workers and the Fight for Water and Dignity', documents the huge barriers faced by Dalit (sometimes called “Untouchable”) women sanitation workers on Bangladesh's south-western coastal belt, in accessing safe drinking water and adequate sanitation.

It also highlights their vulnerability and exclusion in climate change relief programmes. These workers are largely invisible in government policies on climate change, water and sanitation due to their caste, gender and occupation, despite being among the most affected by these policies.

Bangladesh's authorities must uphold the rights of Dalit sanitation workers, who face economic marginalization and entrenched gender- and caste-based discrimination, vulnerabilities that are only deepening amid a global climate crisis.

“As one of the most climate-vulnerable countries in the world, Bangladesh must address the deep-rooted caste inequalities that have left economically excluded and marginalised coastal Dalit communities bearing the brunt of the climate emergency,” said Isabelle Lassée, Deputy Director Research for South Asia at Amnesty International.

The report is based on interviews with 20 female and two male sanitation workers from Dalit communities in Khulna and Satkhira, located in low-lying, flood-prone areas that are highly exposed to the climate change related impacts of rising sea levels, cyclones, droughts

and flooding.

“We low caste are forgotten”

Sanitation workers reported having no household water connections for drinking, washing, cooking and cleaning.

Instead, many are forced to either purchase and carry water from distant treatment centres or to collect rainwater or use public wells or pond water – with unsafe water causing a range of health problems.

The cost of buying safe drinking water was another barrier, especially for families earning as little as 3,000 to 8,000 taka (£20-£50) a month.

“There is no water infrastructure, no tankers or machines ... I think we low caste people are forgotten,” one sanitation worker told Amnesty International.

Dalit women sanitation workers face challenges specific to their gender.

As women, they bear the burden of water collection, an unpaid and labour-intensive chore, which limits their economic opportunities.

Toilets that sanitation workers can afford to build offer no privacy, are difficult to access and are not resilient to weather and climate events.

Many women sanitation workers delay using the toilet due to a lack of safety or privacy, leading to infections. Others struggle to manage their menstrual hygiene.

Vulnerability to climate change

The report documents how extreme weather events, made more frequent and severe by climate change, further magnify existing inequalities, trapping sanitation workers in coastal regions in a cycle of vulnerability. With 18 cyclones over 17 years, entire settlements have been caught in cycles of rebuilding they cannot afford. Urgent interventions are needed to strengthen climate resilience policies and to address loss and damage through the lens of caste and gender. Bangladesh's adaptation frameworks must not continue to reinforce systemic inequalities and exclusion.

Neglected by assistance programmes and excluded from decision-making

Dalit sanitation workers have an essential role in maintaining public health and sanitation infrastructure and in post-disaster recovery efforts. Yet they are seldom included in decision-making related to these areas and are denied access to the very services they help sustain.

After, Cyclone Remal, government assistance programmes in Khulna and Sathkira failed to prioritise Dalits and to account for barriers to inclusion. This includes entrenched systemic caste-based discrimination and the lack of documentation for land settlement in areas prone to flooding. This often leaves frontline workers unprotected and forgotten.

Bangladesh is obligated under both the UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), to ensure marginalised groups' right to water and sanitation and the UN International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) to adopt proactive measures to eliminate structural discrimination and guarantee equal access to all human rights. The authorities must collect and monitor caste-disaggregated data, establish a National Action Plan to eliminate caste-based discrimination and ensure substantive equality and meaningful participation of Dalit women in decision-making processes including with respect to water and sanitation planning.

The Bangladeshi government must adopt a comprehensive anti-discrimination law that includes caste discrimination, applies to both public and private sectors, recognises direct and indirect discrimination and provides for accessible

independent complaint mechanisms and effective legal remedies.

Amnesty International Statement

“Caste and gender-based discrimination, lack of inclusive infrastructure, economic marginalization and climate vulnerability have converged to entrench cycles of exclusion and indignity,” said Isabelle Lassée. “The findings by Amnesty International reflect a deeper national failure to uphold the rights of Dalit sanitation workers.”

Source: Amnesty International



What the Suicide of a Dalit Government Officer tells us about India's Controversial Caste System

Fatima Munir

In October 2025, Y Puran Kumar, a 52-year-old senior police officer in India's Haryana, ended his own life at his residence in the city of Chandigarh, leaving behind a wife and two daughters. But what initially appeared as a personal tragedy has evolved into a larger debate about caste oppression in India: Kumar belonged to the country's Dalit community. According to his suicide note, he ended his life after years of persistent caste-based harassment and humiliation in India's police force. His case is an example of how deep-rooted caste oppression and the culture of scapegoating in one of the world's largest democracies spares no one, even at the top.

Dalits suffer from caste-based discrimination

Caste is an ancient system of rigid social hierarchy in India and it determines many aspects of Indian life and politics. It can be used to dictate someone's job, the education and opportunities they receive and even their dietary requirements. According to tradition, whatever caste one is born into is the one they will stay in until the day they die; it is not commonly acceptable to marry outside of it. Nestled comfortably at the top are the Brahmins, traditionally the priestly caste charged with learning, rituals and scriptural authority. Below them are the Kshatriyas, the warrior and ruling caste; then the Vaishyas, the merchants and traders; and the Shudras, the labouring class, at the bottom. The Dalits are outside the caste system, deemed so low that they are called the 'untouchables' – and they make up around one-sixth of the population. A substantial number of Dalits continue to be forced into menial work such as manual scavenging, cleaning dry latrines, sewers or septic tanks because the jobs are considered “unclean” by upper-caste standards. In social and public spaces, Dalits may be barred from sharing the same water sources, utensils or dining arrangements.

A tragic sequence of events



Kumar's wife, Amneet P Kumar, a senior Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer herself, said her husband had repeatedly complained about caste-based harassment, humiliation and institutional discrimination by senior officers, including the Haryana director-general of police and Rohtak superintendent of police, who were named in his eight-page-long suicide note. In the note, recovered from his pocket, he detailed several instances of discrimination. He wrote that a senior IAS officer did not sanction his earned leave in time, which meant he could not visit his father for his final rites. He also said his official vehicle was withdrawn in November 2023; his housing and posting entitlements were ignored and his annual appraisal report was loaded with biased comments. Anonymous and pseudonymous complaints were generated against him to tarnish his reputation, Kumar wrote, adding that senior officers conspired to assign him “non-existent” posts, delay promotions and arrears and isolate him professionally. But Kumar's repeated complaints were ignored. His family has since challenged the state government legally, demanding accountability and punishment for senior officials accused of perpetuating a hostile work environment. The saga took a complex turn when a low-level police officer, closely associated with Kumar's case, also took his own life some days later. In a twist that appears to have come out of a Bollywood flick, this second officer alleged that Kumar was corrupt, complicating the narrative and fuelling rumours that powerful interests are manipulating the truth to protect themselves while blaming the vulnerable.

Political firestorm

The case has drawn widespread condemnation in India. Indian opposition leader Rahul Gandhi met

Puran Kumar's family, calling the death a “wrong message to Dalits” that “no matter how successful, intelligent or capable you are, if you are a Dalit, you can be crushed, trampled and thrown away”. He urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Saini to take strict action, emphasising that the issue reflects systemic caste discrimination and affects all Dalits. Regional politicians and Dalit rights advocates have also demanded a transparent investigation and accountability for senior officials implicated in the harassment, denouncing the Haryana government for protecting senior officers instead of delivering justice. Punjab Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema called the death of Y Puran Kumar “a national shame,” saying it showed “that even the highest echelons of public service are not spared from caste bias and injustice”.

Legal safeguards remain weak

“The suicide of IPS Officer Mr Puran Kumar clearly shows the deep-rooted caste-based discrimination that persists within our institutions,” Dr VA Ramesh Nathan, the executive director of the Social Awareness Society for Youth (SASY), an organisation in India that promotes social justice, youth awareness and the rights of marginalised communities, tells TRT World. “He was subjected to severe forms of institutional discrimination, mental harassment, humiliation and caste-based atrocities during his service,” he says. He says that despite legal safeguards for marginalised communities, their effective implementation remains weak across states. While a special investigation team has been formed to probe Kumar's case, key legal protections under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Act, a law that aims to prevent hate crimes, harassment and discrimination against Dalits and indigenous groups, were not properly applied, experts say. The absence of a systematic mechanism to prevent caste-based discrimination has led to blatant atrocities, largely due to a lack of political will and accountability, says Dr Nathan.

Caste: the silent underpinning

Experts say Puran Kumar's death is emblematic of a broader reality: caste continues to shape careers and social status in India despite constitutional guarantees of equality and New Delhi's attempts to project an image of a rising regional power. “Suicides among marginalised caste members are a stark and tragic consequence of deeply ingrained caste prejudice,” says Dr Anderson Jeremiah, a visiting professor on religion and politics at

Lancaster University. “Despite upward mobility, individuals from Dalit backgrounds are relentlessly subjected to psychological harassment and a pervasive sense of inferiority, driving some to take their own lives,” he tells TRT World. The Dalit officer's suicide, he says, along with overt caste-based killings, proves that casteism remains profoundly entrenched in Indian society, stubbornly resisting decades of efforts toward equality and justice. Beena J Pallical, general secretary of the National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR), working to eradicate caste-based discrimination in India, says there is a high level of impunity. “Numerous instances have occurred where high level officials have faced harassment because of their caste,” she tells TRT World.

Low representation

Even within India's vaunted merit-based bureaucracy, Dalits and other marginalised groups remain severely underrepresented in positions of authority. While government data suggest that caste-based quotas are met at entry levels, senior roles continue to be dominated by upper castes, revealing a persistent “glass ceiling.” A parliamentary panel found that among 928 director-level posts and above, only 13% were held by SC/ST officers and at the top secretary level, only 4.8% of posts were occupied by officers from marginalised communities.

Recruitment patterns reinforce the imbalance.

Between 2017 & 2022, only 7.7% of newly appointed Indian Administrative Service officers and 3.8% of Indian Police Service (IPS) officers were Dalits or from indigenous communities known as Adivasis, well below their mandated share, National Herald reported. At the senior bureaucracy level: of 322 senior bureaucrats in India, only 16 were Dalits. That's only 5% of seats whereas Dalit make up approximately 17% of India's population. Even where quotas exist, promotion and posting practices often limit upward mobility, leaving many Dalit officers isolated within their own institutions. The disparity extends beyond bureaucracy. As in higher education, elite research institutions such as the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi have low Dalit representation. Recent data shows that only 3.1% of faculty (20/642) are from SCs and just 1.2 % (8/642) from STs. Puran Kumar's death is a stark reminder that laws alone cannot undo the weight of caste. As Bina says, “the only way to stop it is if such cases are brought before courts and a fair judgment is passed to hold the perpetrators accountable.”



Dalit Homes Vandalised in Siraha.

5 Questions Answered

Binay Aazad

What happened?

On September 17, coinciding with Bishwakarma Puja, an orchestra reached Gudri Bazaar in ward 8 of Kalyanpur Municipality, Siraha.

According to the victims, a group from the local Rajput community, led by Prabhas Singh, verbally abused Raj Kumar Paswan while seating people. The disagreement escalated and Prabhas's group later threatened the Dalit families with eviction.

On September 19, the victims filed a complaint at Mirchaiya Police Station. Despite multiple delays, those named in the complaint agreed to a discussion only for October 7.

A 50-strong group destroyed the homes of Raj Kumar Paswan, Rasalal Paswan, Ashok Paswan, Binde Paswan and Sobhit Paswan. They looted food, clothes, jewellery and cash from the houses, according to Raj Kumar Paswan.

What action has followed?

Police filed a complaint against 13 individuals on Saturday. The complaint names local figures, including Ram Kishor Yadav, ward chair from Nepali Congress and others such as Prabhas Singh, Nitesh Singh, Shailendra Singh, Raj Kumar Singh, Kailash Singh, Ganesh Kamati and Mustafa Rayen. Yadav, Ganesh and Kailash have been arrested; others are being sought.

All suspects are held at Mirchaiya Police for investigation. Police say more names could be added during ongoing investigations.

How is the ward chair allegedly involved?

Preliminary police findings indicate ward chair Yadav allegedly incited the attack. On September 21, he wrote to Kalyanpur Municipality, requesting the eviction of Dalits from the land they occupied. The municipality ignored the letter since the families were squatters. Police say Yadav then played a covert role in planning the attack on the Dalit homes.

What is the current situation of the victims?

State agencies have responded to provide legal support, but daily life for the victims remains harsh.

Officials, including the Chief District Officer, security heads and municipal teams, visited the families, providing food and tarpaulins. Still, the victims are forced to spend nights under tarpaulins.

Sanjudevi Paswan said, "We have no place to live or cook. Small children are with us and at night, only one of us stays awake." Binde Paswan added, "We are poor and cannot rebuild homes ourselves. We need a long-term solution."

What have Dalit leaders said?

Dalit leaders who visited the site on Sunday demanded a thorough investigation and strict action against the perpetrators. Social activist Manoj Kumar Paswan warned that repeated inaction by state authorities emboldens attacks on Dalits. "Such incidents happen repeatedly, but officials fall under the influence of perpetrators instead of punishing them.

If any manipulation occurs in this case, we will strongly protest and take action," he said.

Source: Kathmandu Post

APCR report exposes alarming surge in anti-Muslim and anti-Christian hate crimes across India

A new report published by the Association for Protection of Civil Rights (APCR) has sounded the alarm on the escalating climate of religious hatred in India documenting a sharp rise in targeted attacks against Muslims and Christians over the past year.

The comprehensive study details a disturbing pattern of violence ranging from mob lynching, public hate rallies to assault on places of worship, highlighting how hate crimes have not only become frequent but also more organised and openly justified.

According to the report, this research reflects a deepening culture of intolerance fueled by extreme rhetoric, institutional inaction and the normalisation of speech in public discourse.

India recorded 141 incidents of hate crimes and 102 of hate speeches according to the 'Hate Crime Tracker' published by the (APCR) between June and August 2025.

The report states that mob violence and attacks on religious sites are no longer isolated incidents; they have become a “routine” in the country.

The highest recorded number with 36 cases out of 141 head crimes occurred in Uttar Pradesh. Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra follow the list with 17 and 14 cases reported respectively.

The report mentions that 19 attacks were carried out on religious structures like Mosques, churches and shrines.

In the span of 3 months 7 Muslims were lynched to death.

The APCR report highlights that mobs are accused in 115 hate crime incidents reported across India.

These moves often forced their victims to chant religious slogans and subjected them to physical assault and humiliated them publicly.



Hindutva organisations like Bajrang Dal are linked to 126 incidents while VHP to 16 and members associated with the ruling BJP to 12. Shockingly in around 20 cases police were also found to be complicit or biased towards the accused.

The report details how Muslims in particular became the target of hate speech during election rallies.

Derogatory terms were used against Muslims bhai BJP leader terms like Jihad, infiltration etc were commonly heard.

Out of 102 incidents of hate speech reported only for where registered under an FIR. 70 such speeches were delivered by BJP leaders during their election campaigns.

The report warns India about the rising hatred against Indian minorities, highlighting that such incidents make hatred more routine and promote stereotypes about vulnerable communities and urges India to act before irreparable damage is done to the social fabric of the country.

Source: Muslimmirror





Only 37 of 1,800 Hindu, Sikh worship sites functional in Pakistan, minority caucus told

Kalbe Ali

Pakistan has 1,285 Hindu worship sites and 532 gurdwaras, but only 37 are currently functional, mainly for two reasons including the negligible population of Hindu and Sikh communities in those areas and the lacklustre performance of the relevant authorities in maintaining these places of worship.

The data was presented before the first meeting of the Parliamentary Committee on Minority Caucus held here.

Convener of the meeting, Senator Danesh Kumar, stated that the caucus would work to ensure that constitutional guarantees for non-Muslims are translated into practical safeguards and policy reforms. Addressing the meeting, Dr Ramesh Kumar Vankwani criticised the Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB) for failing to maintain properties, especially the places of worship belonging to Hindus and Sikhs.

The committee recommended that the chairman of the ETPB should be a non-Muslim and stressed the restoration of all worship sites to safeguard religious heritage and ensure equitable access for non-Muslim communities. The members expressed confidence that the forum would ensure that the rights of minorities were effectively tabled, discussed and resolved.

Meanwhile, responding to a query by Dawn, MNA Kesoo Mal Kheal Das said that most temples and gurdwaras were abandoned as local communities had left

the area in 1947. However, he added that the government should maintain them as heritage sites and for visits and worship by Hindus and Sikhs from other parts of the country.

The committee stressed the need for a revision of educational policies to ensure scholarships for minority students, the removal of hate speech and discriminatory content from English and Urdu curricula and restricting religious viewpoints to the relevant religious syllabus only. It was also discussed that the existing 20-mark quota for students of Hifz-i-Quran may be extended to minority students in an equivalent form. The members demanded an increase in the employment quota for non-Muslims and stressed that senior officials, not below the rank of additional secretary, must attend caucus meetings.

The caucus adopted the TORs unanimously and reaffirmed its commitment to advancing the rights of non-Muslims in accordance with constitutional mandates and national values of equality, justice and religious freedom.

Those who attended the meeting included Poonjo Bheel, Khalil Tahir Sandhu, Dr Mahesh Kumar Malani, Nelson Azeem, Ramesh Lal, Naveed Aamir and Sanjay Perwani.

Source: DAWN

16%

Dalit Population but Zero Net Worth!

The harsh truth of caste inequality in India's economic structure has come to light. Rajratna Ambedkar, great-grandson of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and National President of the Buddhist Society of India, revealed that according to the 2011 census, the Scheduled Caste (SC) community, which constitutes 16.6% of the population, has zero net worth in the cooperative sector. Meanwhile, smaller communities like Brahmins, Sikhs and Parsis have net worths in the thousands of crores compared to other communities.

To address economic inequality, Rajratna Ambedkar launched the 'Dr. Established the Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar Multistate Cooperative Credit Society Limited (AMSC), the country's first Scheduled Caste and Buddhist cooperative credit platform. Branches are operational in Nagpur and Thane. The goal is to transform it into a cooperative bank within the next two years and move towards becoming a fully nationalized bank within five years. This initiative not only symbolizes economic empowerment but also attempts to realize Dr. Ambedkar's vision of a self-reliant economy. Rajratna Ambedkar said, "The net worth of 16.6 percent of our population is zero because our money is lying in other people's banks."

Citing 2011 census data, Ambedkar presented a comparative analysis of the population of different communities and the net worth of their cooperative banks, which are as follows:

- Muslim population: 14.2 percent (approximately 172 million).
- Christian population: 2.3 percent.
- Jain population: 0.4 percent.

Baba Saheb's SC-Buddhist Bank will now bring the dream of self-reliance to life.

Geetha Sunil Pillai

- Parsi population: Exactly 0.006 percent. Their cooperative net worth was estimated to be around ₹10,000 crore.
- Scheduled Caste (SC) population: 16.6 percent (approximately 200 million), but the net worth in the cooperative sector is zero. Ambedkar clarified that the recently established 'Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar Bank' (2024-25) has been considered zero due to the unavailability of its audit report.
- Brahmin population: Estimated 4 Percent, whose Saraswat Bank has a net worth of over Rs 59,000 crore.
- Sikh population: 1.7 percent. Khalsa Credit Society has a net worth of \$75.7 million (approximately Rs 6,300 crore).

Ambedkar stressed that funds worth over Rs 5,000 crore belonging to the Dalit community are deposited in the Brahminical system (like Saraswat Bank, HDFC, SBI), but are not being utilized due to lack of access. "How will an 80-year-old person leave the house? So, I am hiring missionaries who go to his house and fill his shareholder form and fill his FD, RD, current account forms, savings account forms. We need missionaries who will go door to door and fill out forms." Missionary Recruitment: Not a Job, a Call to Mission Ambedkar stated clearly that he was looking for missionaries, not employees. "This is not a 10-to-5 job, but a 24×7 mission. Like Kanshi Ram ji, we need to go from village to village on a bicycle and build an independent economy. Just as Honorable Kanshi Ram ji formed his government four times in this country and elected his own Chief Minister by traveling on a bicycle, we need similar people who will go to villages and create their own independent economy." Applications for recruitment are due by November 21st at jobs.amsc.co.in. Interviews will be held at the headquarters, where dedication to the mission will be assessed. Currently, the customer base at the two branches is growing rapidly, necessitating a staff increase.

Source: Justice News



Caste and Labour Migration

Ayushman Bhagat & Ankita Shrestha

The government of Nepal recently released its Labour Migration Report, 2024. The objective of the report was to provide a comprehensive overview of labour migration from Nepal. In the words of the Secretary for Labour, Employment and Social Security, the report provides “a clear and honest look at the state of Nepali labour migration for the fiscal years 2022/23 and 2023/24.”

This report offers disaggregated data on where Nepali citizens migrate to (destination countries) and where they migrate from (districts and provinces), as well as their gender, age and skill profiles. It also covers Nepali migrant workers' health and safety conditions, recruitment processes, access to justice, reintegration of returnee migrants and skill training aspects. It even provides information about foreign workers employed in Nepal. It highlights institutions, policies and laws and frameworks responsible for protecting the rights of Nepali citizens abroad, ensuring that their labour migration is safe and dignified.

Yet, caste, which influences the safety, dignity and working conditions of Nepali citizens whether at home or abroad, is never discussed in the report. This omission is not a mere oversight. Rather, it is a political choice. By ignoring the caste of Nepali labour migrants, authors of the report signal that caste identity has no bearing on migration in Nepal. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Caste has always shaped labour and migration in Nepali society. From the historical varna system to its legal codification in the Muluki Ain, caste has structured labour relations, economic opportunities and social hierarchies.

Whilst caste discrimination has been abolished in Nepal, the legacy of caste-based hierarchy still strongly reverberates across and beyond Nepal. It is evident in the

everyday oppression, untouchability and exploitation still experienced by Dalits. It is also reflected in the stereotyping of indigenous communities as alcohol drinkers or less intelligent, which normalises microaggressions, stigmatisation and abuse in the society. This can be seen in the difficulties the state faces in reintegrating Nepali citizens freed from the Kamaiya/Kalamari, Haliya and Harwa-Charwa systems. Caste-based discrimination continues to occur in housing, health, employment and political representation.

Restrictions on land ownership, education and, most importantly, labour have historically pushed millions of Nepali citizens into cycles of poverty. Poverty has often been identified as the 'root cause' of migration among migrationists of Nepal. Yet, migration is deeply intertwined with centuries of social hierarchy and persistent oppression and has never been caste-neutral.

Whilst historically caste dictated who could migrate and where, today labour migration also offers a means to challenge caste hierarchies and ongoing caste-based oppression in Nepal.

Several scholars have emphasised the significance of caste in migration. For example, Ramesh Sunam, through ethnographic research, demonstrates how international labour migration alters migrants' economic and social space in their places of origin. He also highlights how Dalit citizens use financial, human and symbolic capital accumulated abroad to contest casteist institutions.

Likewise, Mitra Pariyar explores caste-based discrimination within Nepali diasporas, illustrating that migration does not erase hierarchical social structures. Mihwa Wi shows how labour migration reduces dependency on upper-caste elites in Nepal. Sita Mademba highlights how the Nepali anti-trafficking

industry reinforces caste-based oppression in Nepal by restricting the migration of poor indigenous, Dalit and so-called lower-caste women. Moreover, Krishna P Adhikari and David N Gellner have recently started to discuss how international migration transforms inter-caste relations in Nepal.

Whilst there is a growing body of literature highlighting the importance of caste in the labour migration process, the authors of the latest Labour Migration Report make no mention of 'caste' anywhere in the report.

However, if we take a closer look at the report, particularly its bibliography, we see that upper-caste researchers were present throughout.

For example, if we remove white, western and non-Nepali authors cited in the report, we observe that almost 80 percent of them were elite upper-caste, who constitute nearly one-third of Nepal's population.

This percentage relies on our judgement of the authors' caste identities, which we recognise could be higher, as the reportage relies on data collected by the governmental departments and ministries & international organisations, also dominated by the so-called upper-caste. Several intersectional feminist, postcolonial and decolonial scholars across the world have shown that citational politics are never neutral.

They represent epistemic authority, if not epistemic violence and reinforce existing power structures. Just as historically elite white straight men have dominated the epistemic landscape, this report follows a similar trajectory by privileging elite upper-caste Nepali citizens (mostly men) and rendering indigenous, Dalit and lower-caste citizens of Nepal invisible.

This report not only highlights upper-caste bias in its citations but also establishes the validity of upper-caste knowledge in producing casteless labour migration in Nepal.

It is high time that our overview of the state of Nepal's labour migration began with the question of how caste matters. Taking a cue from the incisive work of Seira

Tamang, we argue that this report, which ignores caste, reflects a history of an exclusionary state run by high-caste, hill, male elites.

For example, research highlights that caste wage differentials in Nepal are substantial and labour migration provides one route to escape entrenched economic inequalities. Labour migration is a choice for many Nepali citizens to break the cycle of intergenerational caste-based oppression.

Caste influences migration decisions, destinations and occupational outcomes.

Hence, disaggregated caste data would allow researchers and policymakers to understand which caste groups have higher or lower migration rates; whether caste-based occupational segregation persists after migration; how

migration either reduces legacies of caste-based oppression or reinforces them; exploitation of poor Dalit, indigenous and so-called lower caste groups and their access to justice; and the relationship between caste and reintegration of returnee migrants.

We believe that with caste-disaggregated data, policymakers of Nepal could design

targeted interventions for vulnerable

caste groups, including migrant welfare schemes, housing support and labour rights protections.

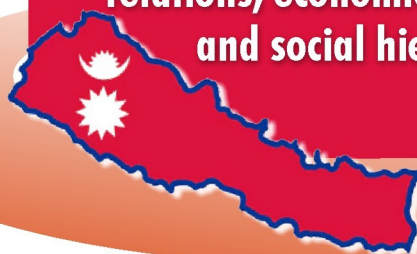
It will allow concerned labour migration actors to identify systemic discrimination in labour markets and inform affirmative action to ensure justice, thereby upholding the non-discriminatory provision (Article 24) enshrined in the Constitution of Nepal.

Whilst the Nepal Labour Migration Report 2024 is a comprehensive and valuable resource, its silence on caste perpetuates the myth that migration in Nepal is casteless.

We ask: If the MoLESS can adopt 'gender-responsive migration policies', why should it not also adopt caste-responsive migration policies?

Source: Kathmandu Post

Caste has always shaped labour and migration in Nepali society. From the historical varna system to its legal codification in the Muluki Ain, caste has structured labour relations, economic opportunities and social hierarchies.





Ambedkar Society for South Asia