QUARTERLY

AMBEDKAR VISION

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AMBEDKARISM
Celebrated In Theory, Disliked In Practice?
[pg.2]

1,318
Anti-Muslim and Anti-Christian Hate Speech Incidents in India in 2025
[pg.4]

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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Contents

Editorial i

A legislative bill seeking five years in prison for the perpetrators of forced conversions was formally submitted to the Punjab Assembly. 1

Ambedkarism - Celebrated In Theory, Disliked In Practice? 2

1,318 Anti-Muslim and Anti-Christian Hate Speech Incidents in India in 2025 4

Social Media Amplifies Caste Inequality in India, Dalits Remain Marginalised- University of Bath Study 6

The persistent persecution of Dalits and Adivasis 7

Bangladeshi Women, Girls, Minorities Face Rising Violence 9

Being a Dalit, being a cockroach: A self-reflective note on Kafka's 'Metamorphosis' 10

World Cancer Day: How caste shapes cancer outcomes across South Asia 11

Dalit girls account for nearly 20 percent of rape cases in Nepal- Study 13

From Textbooks to Campuses- How Caste Continues to Undermine Dalit Representation and Social Justice in Indian Education 15

You're part of a caste system in NYC. Here's what you can do about it 16

Political Will on Dalit Women's Rights & Justice 18

Stop Deaths in Sewers & Septic Tanks': SKA Protests at Jantar Mantar, Alleges 'Systematic Erasure of Dalit Lives by Manipulating Data 20

2025: Another Bad Year for India's Women, Dalits, and Religious Minorities 22















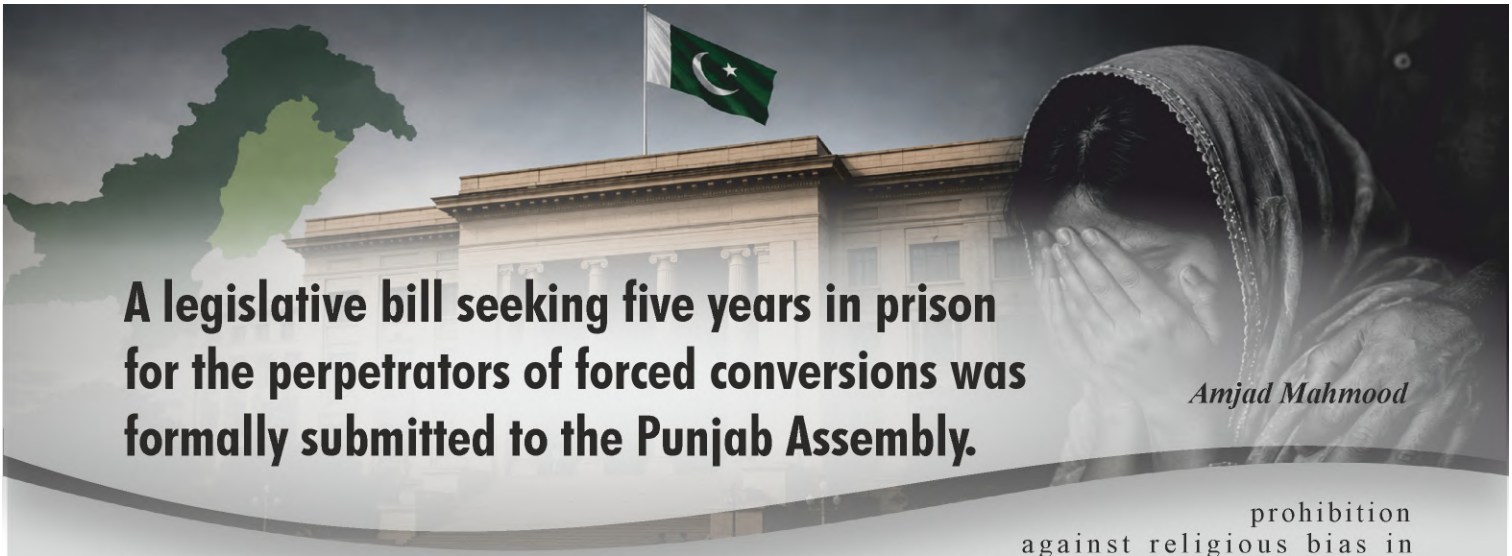



Ambedkar Society for South Asia

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from the Editor

Welcome to the latest edition of Ambedkar Vision. Across South Asia, 2025 and the beginning of 2026 exposed a painful contradiction between constitutional promises and social realities. Governments across the region continue to speak of development, democracy and equality, yet women, Dalits and religious minorities remain trapped in cycles of violence, discrimination and exclusion. From India to Bangladesh, Nepal to Pakistan, the stories emerging from the ground reveal that economic progress means little when large sections of society continue to live without dignity, safety and justice. In India, concerns over rising intolerance became impossible to ignore. Reports of attacks on Christians during Christmas celebrations, hate speeches targeting Muslims and Christians and growing communal polarization reflected a shrinking space for religious minorities. At the same time, violence against women and Dalits continued to expose deep structural inequalities. Cases involving sexual violence against women, especially when politically influential individuals were accused, raised serious questions about accountability and the independence of institutions. The deaths of sanitation workers inside sewers and septic tanks further reminded the country that caste oppression is not a relic of the past but a living reality. Despite legal bans on manual scavenging, Dalit communities continue to perform dangerous and degrading work while governments often minimize or underreport these deaths. The education system, which should challenge inequality, is itself becoming a site of exclusion. Discussions around Dalit representation in textbooks and universities reveal how caste discrimination survives through silence, erasure and distorted narratives. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's legacy is frequently reduced to symbolism while his radical ideas on equality, labour rights and social justice are sidelined. The result is a generation that often remains unaware of the historical and ongoing struggles of marginalized communities. Even in the diaspora, caste discrimination continues to shape experiences in housing, workplaces and social spaces, showing that migration alone cannot erase deeply rooted prejudices. Nepal presents a similarly troubling picture. The brutal rape and murder of Dalit teenager Inisha BK sparked outrage across the country and highlighted the disproportionate violence faced by Dalit women and girls. Studies show that Dalit girls account for a significant share of rape cases, reflecting how caste, poverty and gender intersect to create extreme vulnerability. Although Nepal's Constitution guarantees rights against caste discrimination, many Dalit women continue to face barriers in education, healthcare, employment and political participation. Symbolic commitments and legal provisions have failed to bring meaningful change because implementation remains weak and social attitudes remain deeply discriminatory. In Bangladesh, the period leading up to the country's first elections after the 2024 Monsoon Revolution has seen rising violence against women and minorities. Activists point to the growing influence of hardline religious groups opposing women's rights and gender equality reforms. Hindu minorities and ethnic communities in the Chittagong Hill Tracts have also faced attacks and insecurity. Despite Bangladesh's history of women's political leadership, women remain underrepresented in electoral politics and public decision-making. The gap between progressive aspirations and social realities remains wide. Pakistan, too, continues to struggle with protecting vulnerable communities. Reports of forced conversions, abductions and forced marriages of Hindu and Christian girls reveal systemic failures within the legal and judicial system. Many victims are minors, yet families often face intimidation, social pressure and weak institutional support when seeking justice. Human rights groups have repeatedly called for stronger legal safeguards, faster judicial action and accountability, but the persistence of these cases highlights how minority communities continue to live with fear and insecurity. Even healthcare, often viewed as a neutral space, reflects the inequalities of South Asian societies. Research on cancer care across the region shows that caste, poverty, gender and geography determine who receives treatment and who remains invisible. Dalits, tribal groups, refugees and lower-caste communities frequently face barriers to diagnosis, screening and medical care. For many marginalized families, illness becomes not only a medical crisis but also a social and economic burden shaped by discrimination. Yet amid these grim realities, there is also resistance and hope. Across South Asia, activists, women's groups, Dalit organizations, minority rights advocates and ordinary citizens continue to demand accountability and justice. Their struggles remind us that democracy cannot survive on economic growth alone; it must be measured by how societies treat their most vulnerable people. Real progress will come only when governments move beyond symbolism and implement laws with sincerity, fairness and courage. Equality cannot remain a constitutional promise on paper—it must become a lived reality in classrooms, courts, hospitals, workplaces and homes. A more just South Asia is still possible. The voices rising from the margins are demanding dignity, not charity. If governments and societies truly listen, the future can still belong to equality, justice and humanity.



A legislative bill seeking five years in prison for the perpetrators of forced conversions was formally submitted to the Punjab Assembly.

Amjad Mahmood

Chairman of the Standing Committee on Minority Affairs, Falbous Christopher, submitted the Punjab Protection of the Rights of Religious Minorities Bill 2026.

The bill will now be referred to the Standing Committee on Minority Affairs, where it will be discussed and reviewed. After this process, the bill can be tabled in the provincial assembly. Under the proposed bill, a copy of which is available with Dawn, perpetrators of forced conversion could face up to five years in prison as it formally defines forced conversion as a criminal offence.

According to the bill, whoever "compels or attempts to compel" a person belonging to a religious minority with threats, undue influence and coercion to change their religion "shall be punishable with imprisonment which may extend to five years and with fine". Voluntary conversions without such pressure were excluded.

The bill also empowers the judiciary to take proactive measures in cases of forced marriages, granting them the authority to issue protection orders, "in accordance with the applicable marriage, child protection and guardianship laws".

The bill addresses forced marriages involving minorities, requiring court inquiries and protective orders, with marriages only voided by court order.

The bill calls for a review of the educational curriculum for "identifying material that promotes hatred, discrimination or tolerance against religious minorities".

It also establishes a strict legal prohibition against religious bias in employment and the delivery of public services, while also mandating the physical protection of minority religious sites and properties.

"No person shall damage, desecrate or unlawfully occupy any place of worship or religious property belonging to a religious minority," the bill states.

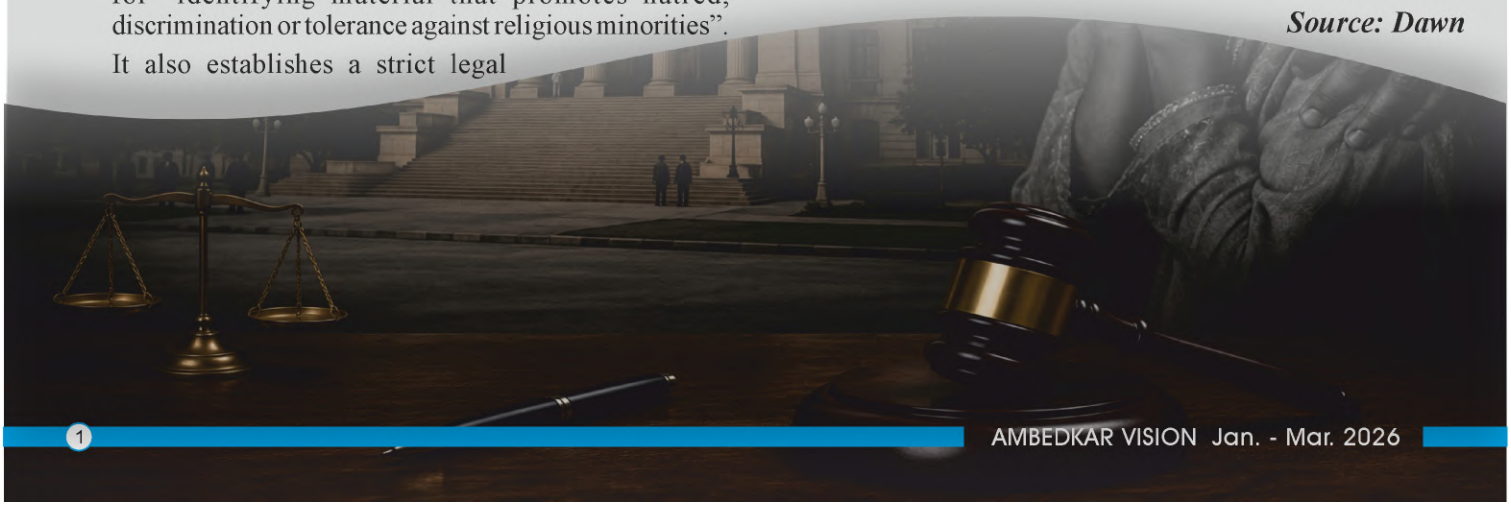
Offences motivated by religious hatred are deemed aggravated, as per the bill, with courts considering religious motivation during sentencing. Offences under the proposed law are cognisable and triable under criminal procedure, with courts empowered to protect victims and witnesses.

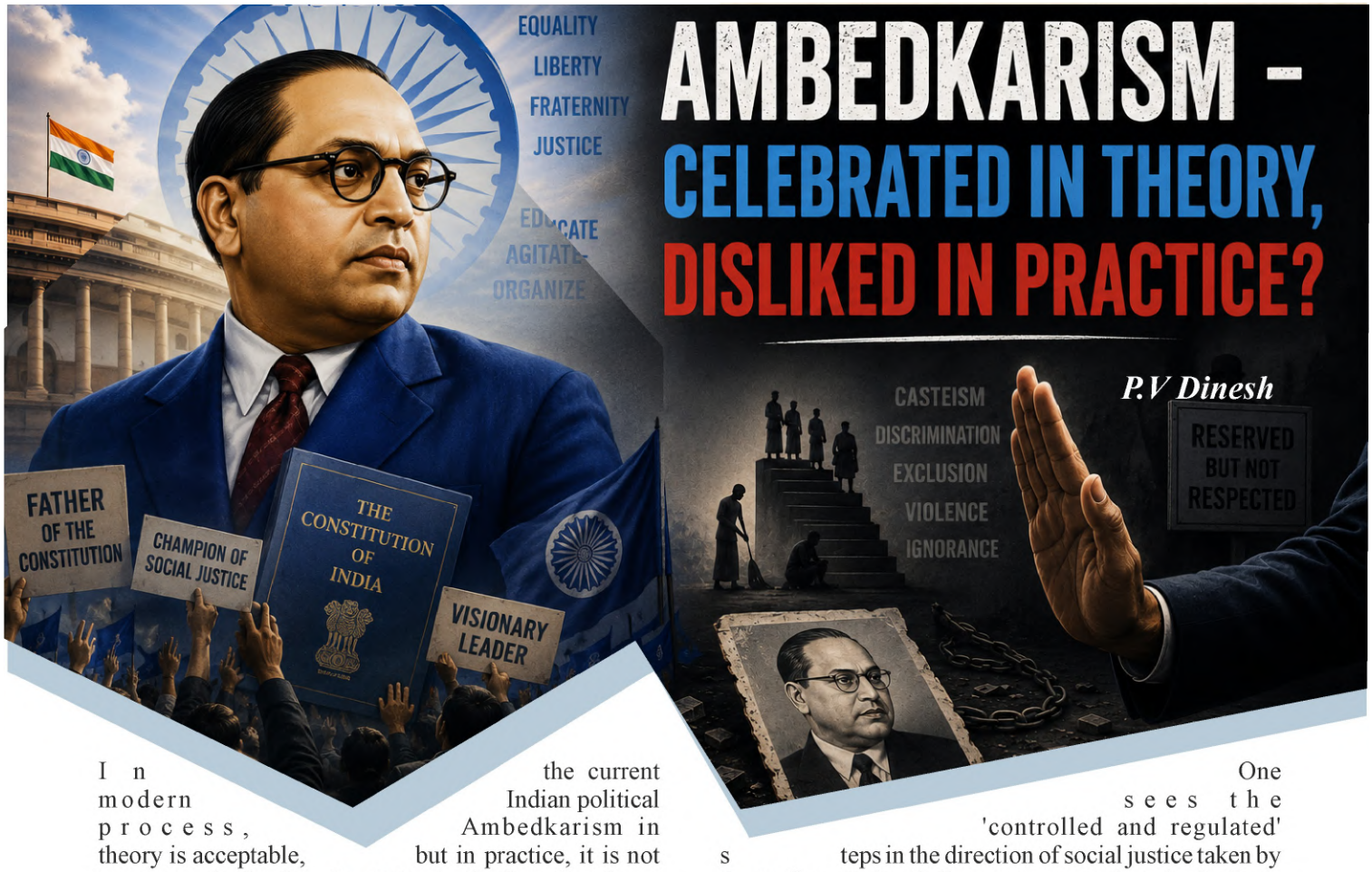
While the bill has been hailed as a landmark achievement, advocates emphasise that legislative victory is only the first step toward genuine safety.

Pakistan's sole Christian senator, Khalil Tahir Sandhu, echoed these sentiments by highlighting that the proposed legislation finally reflected the constitutional promise of equality. He described the move to address forced conversions through a legal framework as a long-overdue necessity.

According to Sandhu, the collective responsibility now shifted to parliamentarians and government institutions to ensure that enforcement was rigorous enough to allow every citizen to live with the dignity and freedom promised by the state.

Source: Dawn





AMBEDKARISM - CELEBRATED IN THEORY, DISLIKED IN PRACTICE?

P.V Dinesh

In the current modern Indian political process, Ambedkarism in theory is acceptable, but in practice, it is not encouraged. So far, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar has been appropriated by many, from Caste Hindus to OBCs and Dalits, each as per their own convenience. This phenomenon is not limited to Ambedkar alone.

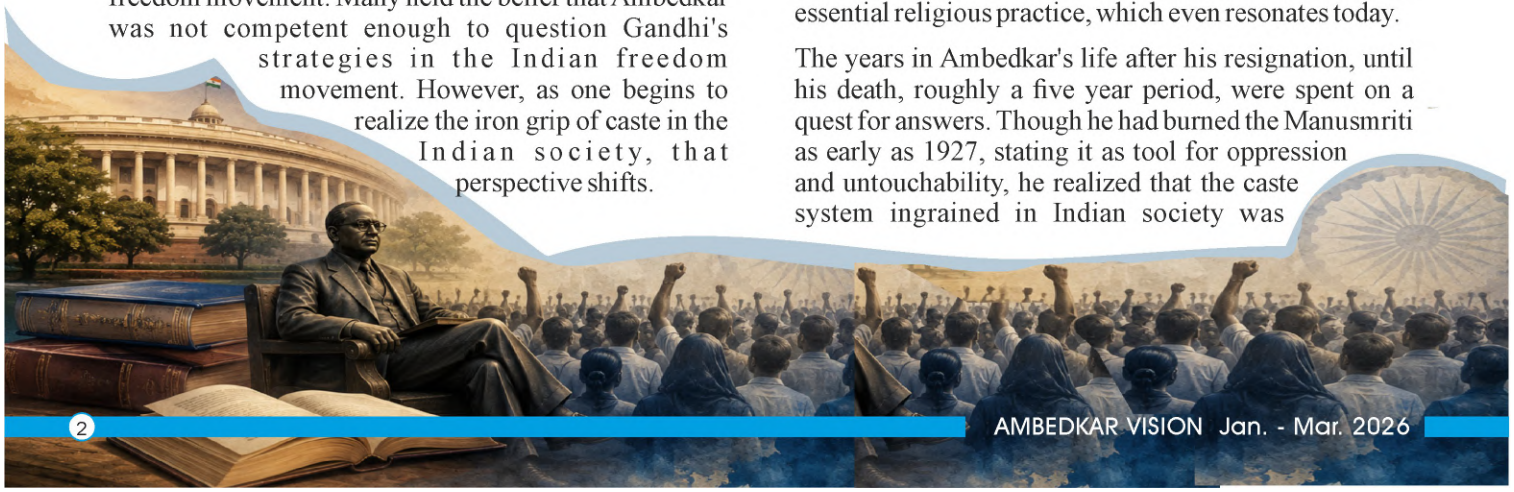
We see it in how the ultimate atheist and communist revolutionary, Bhagat Singh, is being used by forces diametrically opposed to his ideology. Today, one can find a range of past leaders, from radical revolutionaries to ultra-fundamentalists, grouped onto a single poster. They are presented as options before the citizens (read voters) who can then choose, based on their own ideological convenience.

The history many of us were taught presented Ambedkar as the person who opposed Mahatma Gandhi in the freedom movement. Many held the belief that Ambedkar was not competent enough to question Gandhi's strategies in the Indian freedom movement. However, as one begins to realize the iron grip of caste in the Indian society, that perspective shifts.

One sees the 'controlled and regulated' steps in the direction of social justice taken by the Indian National Congress, as against Ambedkar's demand for open and assertive actions to achieve social justice at par with political justice. Finally, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar himself realizes the mammoth power of these regressive forces, which became most evident in the free India's Parliament when the Hindu Code Bill of 1951 failed.

The bill was essentially against patriarchy, which sought to secure equal property rights to women in ancestorial property. Despite being the Law Minister and a prominent educationist, economist, social scientist and the ultimate constitutionalist, Ambedkar could not convince the conservative Hindu Forces including Dr. Rajendra Prasad. This was felt and construed as an attack on Hinduism itself, as if a challenge against their essential religious practice, which even resonates today.

The years in Ambedkar's life after his resignation, until his death, roughly a five year period, were spent on a quest for answers. Though he had burned the Manusmriti as early as 1927, stating it as tool for oppression and untouchability, he realized that the caste system ingrained in Indian society was



He was in search of a new religion. In his mind, he weighed the options of Islam, Christianity and Sikhism, before finally opting for Buddhism. Even in within which, he carved out a specific path calling it 'Navayana'. The underlying philosophy called for work towards the Nirvana of the oppressed society as a whole, rather than an individual's goal for salvation. The purpose of this adoption and adaptation of Buddhism as a tool for social justice or to create justice based society, still remain unachieved. The best way to avoid following someone's teachings is to idolise them. By elevating a person to a godly status, you make them an object to be worshipped rather than a figure whose principles may be practiced.

The present Indian political history demonstrates Ambedkar's fate to be the same. As stated at the beginning, Ambedkar today is appropriated by many. Amongst all, the most vibrant and meaningful appropriation is seen in the 'Ambedkar Study Centres' in some of the National Law Schools and private colleges. In these academic ecosystems, dissent is taught only as a theory and its practice in any form is opposed and suppressed brutally by college authorities. When students are not allowed to unionise and protest, their option now is to form 'Ambedkar Study Centres ' to express their collective opinion. In the present day India, the word 'Ambedkar' has almost become synonymous with dissent. Though the term 'dissent' is treated as a safety valve of democracy, it remains good only for intellectual discourse and not for action. Factually, pretentious democrats dislike the practice of dissent. Although in speeches dissent is highlighted as a virtue and a key component of democracy, many in the judiciary and the executive equally repel its practice.

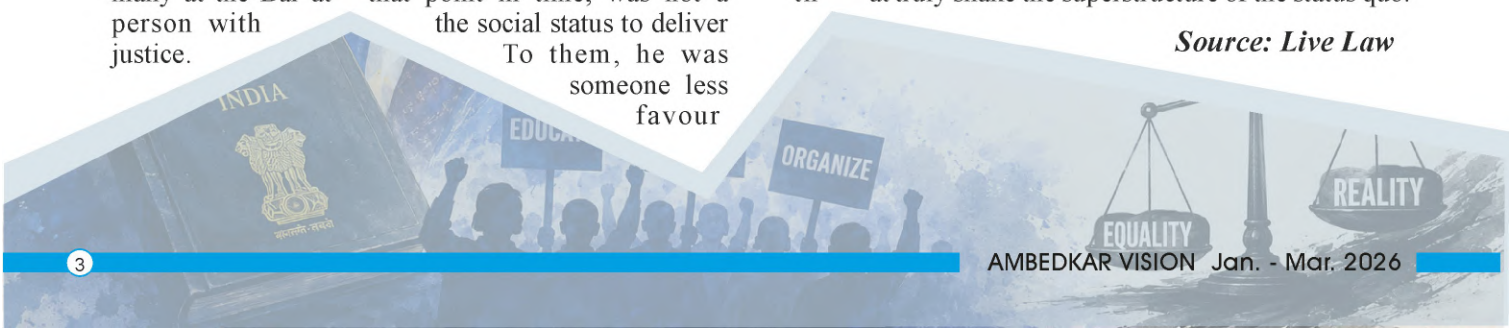
Dissenting lawyers, students and politicians are all treated as roadblocks to the development of institutions and the country as a whole. A lawyer with an element of dissent is never considered for Judgeship or a judge for elevation. Even a dissenting judge is often disliked by senior judges on the bench. This author had the fortune of meeting Justice Krishna Iyer once, who remarked that he was not made party to many Constitution Benches because he was considered a person with independent views. Ambedkar had a miserable professional life when he joined the Mumbai Bar. Apart from the untouchability practiced on him, what hurt him professionally was the cold attitude of judges, solicitor firms and even clients. They all felt that a Dalit, though more qualified than many at the Bar at that point in time, was not a person with the social status to deliver justice. To them, he was someone less favoured by the judges of the colonial judiciary. Even today, after hundred years, the social status of a Dalit lawyer is not much different. A Dalit lawyer, from a village, who studied in a vernacular medium, living in poverty, with no relatives as judges or lawyers much less a small time government officer, finds it tough to survive in an Anglicised court system. They must compete with young lawyers who are products of the best law schools, some of them, even with credit of having appeared before Supreme Court judges in moot court competitions. The scale of social justice remains very unbalanced, adding many still born Ambedkar's in our country. The entirety of Ambedkar's battle was largely on a single agenda, caste. We have judgments written for the need of a casteless society, but unfortunately, 99% of the proponents or advocates of such a society never bothered to practice it in own lives.



Recently, the Supreme Court passed a judgment based on the Scheduled Caste Order, stating that conversion from Hinduism to Christianity results in the loss of one's caste. While the judgment is correct as per the constitutional order, a relevant practical question is still unanswered: Will a person lose the caste status in the eyes of society?

In reality, no matter how many times a person changes their religion, the caste shall follow. Sikhism arrived with the idea of reform and social revolution, yet we now have separate Gurdwaras for Dalit Sikhs. Similarly, Dalits who converted to Christianity have separate churches. Radical social changes are not promoted in Indian society; uncomfortable questions are always preferred to be left unanswered. We relish in cosmetic changes and tokenistic representations of Dalits and not those moves th at truly shake the superstructure of the status quo.

Source: Live Law





1,318 Anti-Muslim and Anti-Christian Hate Speech Incidents in India 2025

The India Hate Lab (IHL), a project of the Center for the Study of Organized Hate (CSOH), has released its 2025 annual report documenting 1,318 in-person hate speech events targeting religious minorities, primarily Muslims and Christians, across 21 states, one Union Territory and the National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi in 2025.

This represents a 13% increase from 2024 and 97% increase from 2023, when 668 such incidents were recorded.

The hate speech events were classified under the United Nations definition of hate speech and encompassed conspiracy theories, calls for violence and arms, appeals for social or economic boycotts, demands to seize or destroy places of worship, dehumanizing language and speeches targeting Rohingya refugees living in India.

A total of 1,289 speeches or 98 percent, targeted Muslims, either explicitly in 1,156 cases or alongside Christians in 133 cases, marking a nearly 12 percent increase from 2024.

Hate speech targeting Christians was recorded in 162 incidents, accounting for 12 percent of all events, either explicitly in 29 cases or alongside Muslims in 133 cases.

This reflects a 41 percent increase from the 115 anti-Christian hate speech incidents documented in 2024.

Approximately 88 percent (1,164) of all hate speech incidents occurred in BJP-ruled states, BJP-led National Democratic Alliance coalition states and BJP-administered Union Territories.

This marks a 25 percent increase from the 931 incidents recorded across these jurisdictions in 2024, underscoring the overwhelming concentration of anti-minority hate speech in regions under BJP control.

Across the 23 states and Union Territories analyzed, the BJP held power, either independently or as part of a coalition, in 16 jurisdictions for most of the year.

Uttar Pradesh (266), Maharashtra (193), Madhya Pradesh (172), Uttarakhand (155) and Delhi (76) recorded the highest number of hate speech events, together accounting for 65 percent of all incidents nationwide.

By contrast, the seven states governed by opposition parties or coalitions recorded 154 hate speech events in 2025, a 34 percent decrease from the 234 incidents documented in these states in 2024.

The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and Bajrang Dal emerged as the most frequent organizers, linked to 289 hate speech events (22 percent), followed by the Antarrashtriya Hindu Parishad (AHP) with 138 events.

In total, more than 160 organizations and informal groups were identified as organizers or co-organizers of hate speech events in 2025.

Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami emerged as the most prolific hate speech actor with 71 speeches, followed by Antarrashtriya Hindu Parishad chief Pravin Togadia (46) and BJP leader Ashwini Upadhyay (35).

Hindu monks and religious leaders were involved in 145 hate speech incidents, a 27 percent increase from 2024, continuing to provide religious legitimacy to anti-minority rhetoric.

Nearly half of all hate speeches documented in 2025 (656 incidents) invoked conspiracy theories such as "love jihad," "land jihad," and "population jihad," representing a 13 percent increase from the previous year.

Hindu monks and religious leaders were involved in 145 hate speech incidents, a 27 percent increase from 2024, continuing to provide religious legitimacy to anti-minority rhetoric.

At the same time, 308 speeches included explicit calls for violence, with 136 directly calling for arms, reflecting a 19 percent rise in violent rhetoric.

Maharashtra recorded the highest number of dangerous speeches, with 78 incidents, nearly 40 percent of which contained calls for violence, the highest proportion recorded for any state.

The year also saw 120 speeches urging boycotts of minority communities, primarily Muslims and 276 speeches calling for the removal or destruction of mosques, shrines and churches.

The Gyanvapi Mosque and Shahi Idgah Mosque in Uttar Pradesh were the most frequently targeted, signaling potential on-ground mobilization.

Dehumanizing language appeared in 141 speeches, with minorities described using terms such as "termites," "parasites," "insects," "pigs," "mad dogs," "snakelings," "green snakes," and "bloodthirsty zombies."

Videos from 1,278 of the 1,318 hate speech events were first shared or live-streamed on social media platforms.

Facebook accounted for 942 first uploads, followed by YouTube (246), Instagram (67) and X (23), highlighting the central role of social media in amplifying hate speech.

"The data show that while domestic and international events continued to trigger episodic spikes in hate speech, the more striking trend was the persistence of an elevated baseline throughout the year," said Dr. Eviane Leidig, Director of Research at the Center for the Study of Organized Hate.

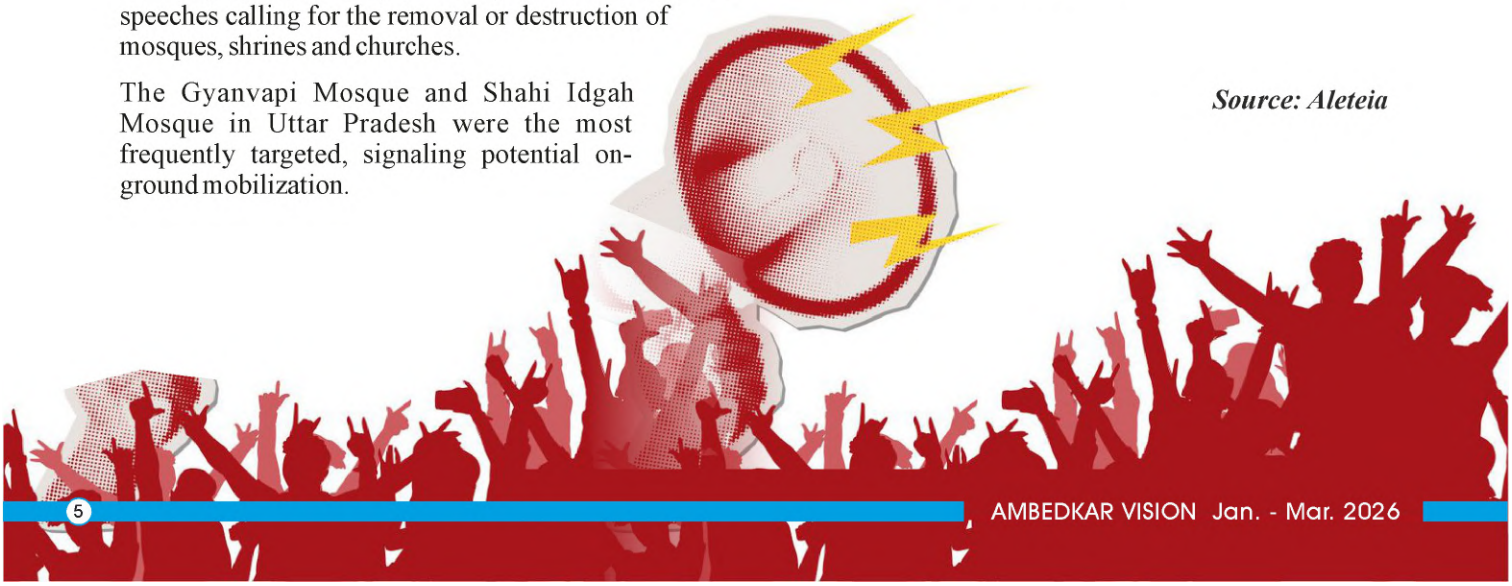
"Unlike previous years, where hate speech tapered off outside election cycles, 2025 saw sustained mobilization even during non-election periods, pointing to a strategic shift rather than reactive mobilization alone."

"The BJP's election-period strategy of overt communal polarization failed to deliver the decisive mandate it anticipated in 2024, leading to a shift in approach rather than an abandonment of that strategy," said Raqib Hameed Naik, Executive Director of the CSOH.

"Our data show a move toward sustained, decentralized, ground-level mobilization by Hindu nationalist groups within the RSS-led ecosystem, using rallies, religious events and local processions to keep anti-Muslim fear and hostility active in everyday political life.

This points to a long-term strategy aimed at shaping the political landscape ahead of upcoming state elections and the 2029 general elections."

Source: Aleteia



Social Media Amplifies Caste Inequality in India, Dalits Remain Marginalised: of Bath Study



A new study by the University of Bath School of Management reveals that social media, often celebrated as a tool for giving everyone a voice, can actually reinforce inequality and deepen the marginalisation of communities such as Dalits in India.

Dalits, formerly called "untouchables" and legally recognised as Scheduled Castes, make up over 200 million of India's 1.47 billion population. Historically subjected to social and economic oppression, Dalits were confined to tasks considered "polluting," including leatherwork and animal slaughter.

Despite progress in employment across public services, banking, railways and private industries, discrimination and violence remain widespread.

"Progress is painfully slow. Discrimination and violence against Dalits continue and while the Dalit middle class is growing, social media has unfortunately amplified these problems instead of reducing them," said Dr Pardeep Attri, lead researcher of the study.

How Social Media Excludes Dalits

The research, titled "You Belong to Gutters, Not Facebook or Twitter: Recovering Dalit Histories from the Shadows of Social Media", highlights how online platforms shape, restrict and sometimes erase the experiences of marginalized communities.

The study identifies three major ways Dalits face exclusion online: being unseen, unheard and unspoken.Dalit histories and contributions are often invisible due to biased algorithms. Platform reporting systems frequently fail to protect them from harassment, leaving many unable to raise concerns meaningfully.

Constant trolling, abuse and discrimination force several users into silence or withdrawal.

Dr Attri explained, "There is an urgent need for moderators who understand the Dalit community and can address trolling effectively. Much of mainstream media and online moderation comes from dominant caste perspectives, which worsens the exclusion."

Digital Visibility Brings Risks

The study found that simply being visible online does not guarantee empowerment. On the contrary, a higher online presence often exposes Dalits to greater harassment and attempts to discredit or erase their narratives.

Many users feel they have little control over how their histories and contributions are represented.

Source: Bath.ac

The persistent persecution of DALITS and ADIVASIS

John Dayal



The National Crime Research Bureau data tells us a truth we don't want to hear. The promise of the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Act remains unfulfilled as atrocities mount and systemic weak nesses show up as a daily routine.

It is a challenge to India's democracy and social fabric as President Murmu recently emphasised reminding the nation that empathy and justice for marginalised communities are not mere ideals but prerequisites for a truly inclusive nation.

There is little to show in the words and deeds of the governing class that they understand the need for intersectional reforms spanning legal, social, political and technological dimensions to dispel the shadow of caste based violence and restore dignity to Dalits and Adivasis across India.

Opposition parties accuse ruling BJP states of complicity or neglect, pointing to mismanagement and fund diversion, but have no answers why the crisis is almost as acute in states not ruled by the BJP till recently.

Prescriptions of ancient lawgiver Manu for women, untouchables and "others" not in the Varna system were rejected by the writers of the Constitution of independent India, but the "Non-Uniform Civil Code" continues to inflict profound suffering on women and the 25 per cent of the nation's population beyond the purity and teachability line.

The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 (SC/ST Act) is a reality mostly in its failure. The Act amended in 2015, 2016, and 2018 to strengthen protections—including the establishment of exclusive courts, victim compensation and the prohibition of anticipatory bail for accused offenders—aims to deter a wide spectrum of offences, from physical assault to social exclusion.

The NCRB "Crime in India 2023" report, published on September 30, 2025, proves in sheer numbers the massive extent of its failure. Coupled with persistently low conviction rates and overwhelming case backlogs, this data exposes deep systemic failures.

Minister of State for Social Justice Ramdas Athawale, in his March 9, 2026 parliamentary statement attributed the rise in reported cases to increased awareness and improved registration processes, but glossed over pervasive enforcement gaps and entrenched societal biases.

The NCRB 2023 report records 57,789 atrocity cases against Dalits- a marginal 0.4% increase from 57,582 in 2022, translating to a crime rate of 28.7 per lakh Dalit population.

However, atrocities against tribal communities have surged alarmingly by 28.8%, from 10,064 cases in 2022 to 12,960 in 2023, with a crime rate of 12.4 per lakh ST population.

These figures scrape the surface. They're veal not just the persistence of violence but also the frailty of the justice system in delivering redress.

Conviction rates remain disturbingly low – between 32-40% for SCs and a mere 28% for STs, well below the average for general Indian Penal Code (IPC) offences.

The backlog boggles the mind – with 307,355 cases pending under the SC/ST Act alone, along with 965 under the Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955.

Athawale's March 2026 Lok Sabha reply credited this rise in case registration to "growing awareness, publicity, and police training," echoing earlier statements from 2025.

Amendments after 2014 such as mandatory FIR registration and special investigative protocols have improved reporting rates. But it has triggered a backlash by self-styled Upper Castes, or General Castes as they now want to be known, against affirmative action measures.

It is critical to note that NCRB data relies heavily on FIRs, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) estimate that 50-70% of atrocities, particularly in remote and tribal areas, remain unreported.

Between 2021 and 2023, SC cases increased steadily from 50,900 to 57,789, while ST cases rose from lower baselines to 12,960. This trend persists despite the introduction of digital tools like e-portals for case tracking.

Acquittal rates are alarmingly high, exceeding 60% in many instances, often due to witness intimidation, delayed investigations, and lack of concrete evidence. Chargesheeting averages 81.2%, but varies starkly across states—Goa reports a 100% rate, while Rajasthan lags below 50%.

The geography of caste and tribal atrocities reveals troubling concentrations and regional contrasts. Northern and central Indian states, many governed by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), bear the brunt—Uttar Pradesh (UP), Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh (MP) together account for 76% of SC atrocity cases.

Uttar Pradesh leads with 15,130 SC cases in 2023, comprising 26% of national figures and marking a 16% rise from 13,146 cases in 2021. Rajasthan follows with 8,449 cases, registering the highest SC crime rate nation ally at 69.1 per lakh population, while low chargesheeting rate of under 50% highlights systemic judicial failure.

Madhya Pradesh reports 8,232 SC cases with the highest SC crime rate of 72.6 per lakh and leads in ST atrocities with 2,979 cases. Bihar reports 7,064 SC cases with a crime rate of 42.6, exacerbated by the presence of caste militias. Southern states show varied patterns: Tamil Nadu's SC/ST cases grew by 9.1% to 1,921 in 2023, marking a 68% increase over five years, often linked to caste-based honour killings. Karnataka reported 1,977 SC cases, with urban Bengaluru emerging as a hotspot.

Andhra Pradesh tops southern SC case numbers with 2,315. Western states like Maharashtra and Gujrat report 2,741 and 1,279 SC cases respectively, but high pendency—up to 96% of trials remain pending—undermines justice delivery. Urban centres show alarming spikes. Jaipur experienced a 35% increase in SC cases between 2021 and 2023, reaching 489, the highest for ST cases at 228. Bengaluru topped metropolitan areas with 285 SC cases and 15 ST cases, while Lucknow led with 517 SC cases.

The intersection of caste and gender multi plies the risks faced by Dalit and tribal women, who are often targeted by violence meant to assert dominance and reinforce systemic oppression.

NCRB 2023 data details 2,835 rapes against SC women over 18 years old and 1,379 rapes of SC girls under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POC SO) Act. Assaults to outrage modesty were reported in 3,716 cases involving SC women. SC women account for 15.32% of all caste-related crimes, while ST rapes numbered 1,189, constituting 9.2% of all ST cases. Only 14 states have established exclusive courts mandated by the Act, severely limiting access to timely justice.



The geography of caste and tribal atrocities reveals troubling concentrations and regional contrasts. Northern and central Indian states Uttar Pradesh leads with 15,130 SC cases in 2023, comprising 26% of national figures and marking a 16% rise from 13,146 cases in 2021.

Police often resist registering FIRs for SC/ST complaints, citing "false cases" in 10-12% of instances, a figure frequently used to discredit victims and dis courage reporting.

Election rhetoric increasingly polarises communities. Some BJP-ruled states have diverted SC/ST welfare funds toward other priorities—Madhya Pradesh, for example, allocated ₹95.76 crore to cow welfare programs, raising concerns about neglect of marginalised groups.

Dalit activists have demanded that NCRB's digital platforms should be leveraged for real-time pendency tracking and public accountability.

Source: Herald Goa



Bangladeshi Women, Girls, Minorities Face Rising Violence

Subhajit Saha

On February 12, Bangladesh is scheduled to hold its first general elections since the country's August 2024 Monsoon revolution. But ahead of the elections, attacks on women, girls and religious minorities are on the rise, exposing the interim government's failure to protect fundamental human rights.

Police data shows that gender-based violence increased between January and June 2025 when compared to the same timeframe in 2024. Dr. Fauzia Moslem, president of the Bangladesh Mahila Parishad (Women's Council of Bangladesh or BMP), attributes this increase to a rise in activity and rhetoric by religious groups seeking to restrict women's free movement and participation in society.

In May 2025, hardline religious groups protested the interim government's efforts to improve gender equality and women's rights and demanded an end to activities they deemed "anti-Islamic."

Since then, women and girls have experienced verbal, physical and digital abuse that further silence their ability to speak out for fear of violence.

Hindu minorities have also been attacked. In December, Dipu Chandra Das, a 27-year-old garment worker, was beaten to death by a mob over alleged blasphemy.

Rights groups have reported at least 51 incidents of violence against Hindus, including 10 killings. Ethnic minorities in the Chittagong Hill Tracts continued to face abuse from security forces after the revolution.

Despite Bangladesh previously having two women prime ministers and many women participating in the 2024 student-led protests, women are still largely denied political participation.

In the upcoming general elections, 30 out of the 51 political parties do not have any women candidates. Jamaat-e-Islami, an Islamist political group and one of Bangladesh's two leading political parties, does not have a single woman candidate among its 276 nominations.

The Bangladeshi government should consider recommendations by the country's Women's Affairs Reform Commission including increasing women's parliamentary representation, adhere to the United Nations Security Council's Women, Peace and Security agenda and comply with its obligations as a state party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). The government should also uphold constitutional provisions to protect religious and ethnic minorities in Bangladesh.

These aren't innovative proposals; they're the same ones Bangladeshis have reaffirmed in the lead-up to and after the Monsoon Revolution. Bangladesh's interim government and all political parties should commit to ensuring gender equality and protecting minority rights.

Source: Human Rights Watch

Being a Dalit, being a Cockroach: A self-reflective note on Kafka's 'Metamorphosis'

Bhimraj M



I have never woken up with an armour-like back and many tiny legs as Gregor Samsa did in Franz Kafka's Metamorphosis. But I know for sure that I am a cockroach – the disgusting species that Charles Bukowski writes in a poem about killing with a subtle pleasure for living rent-free in his home. Maybe it is not just about the rent. It could be the insect's audacity to flaunt its existence. The crime is its visibility.

How dare it leave the sewage, even momentarily, for a place where it does not belong?

Samsa, the salesman in Kafka's novel, met the same fate at the hands of his helpless family when he left his room.

I am acutely aware of this. I know what would happen to me if I dared to breach boundaries. That is why I tend to isolate myself in places that conceal my visibility, hoping that this situation might end one day – the day I metamorphose into a human being.

Mind you, don't pity me. Never. I remind you of what Babasaheb Ambedkar said in his essay Waiting for a Visa, "Though my condition was pitiable I did not like to be pitied." Perhaps, it isn't pity. You are kind enough to empathise with me. But I don't want you to be kind either. I remember complaining to my DPhil supervisor about how her kindness was overwhelming and how I was not used to being treated in such a manner.

Humiliation? Yes. It is painful, yet familiar.

But kindness drags me into a world of unfamiliarity. It disorients me and confronts the comfort that I have known so far of being a cockroach. "Can't you see that I am a cockroach?" That is what I want to say to anyone who tries to be kind to me. You are probably wondering where I am going with all this. Will this end with a hint of hope? Maybe, maybe not. But isn't hope a tricky thing? It is easy to confuse it with delusion.

It is possible to think that I am being delusional when I say that I am a cockroach. You may say, "It is just in your mind" or that I am making it up, something similar to what Justice Brown of the US Supreme Court said in the Plessy vs Ferguson case in 1896 when he held that segregation of races does not treat the Blacks as inferior unless they want to construe it in such a manner. But my mind doesn't operate in a vacuum. What am I supposed to think when I constantly read that my fellow Dalits are being killed – not only for marrying non-Dalits but for actions such as sporting a moustache, for sitting cross-legged, for riding a horse, or dressing up. In short, for breaching society's idea of how a Dalit should be?

How am I supposed to feel when my fellow Dalit students are forced to clean bathrooms in schools, humiliated as "quotawallas" or even driven to suicide in colleges?

I myself was expelled from my previous university without any inquiry for demanding scholarships. Not to mention the humiliation I have faced since my school days. In every nook and corner, I am reminded that I am a cockroach that must never come out of the sewer. I have internalised these reminders. But that's only half the story. Being a cockroach is familiar, but there is also the violence that I commit upon myself, as my therapist once put it. I do want to be a human being with dignity, for I am not made for the sewer.

So far, I have outsourced the task of recognising me as human to others. When others appreciate or validate me for the things I do, I feel like a human – at least until the feeling fades away.

Source: Scroll.in



World Cancer Day:
How caste shapes cancer outcomes across South Asia

Sumit Jha

As the world observes World Cancer Day on 4 February, one intrinsic factor shapes how the deadly malady is treated in South Asia—caste.

Caste creates invisible barriers that operates long before a patient even reaches the hospital. Despite legal abolitions and affirmative action policies, the ancient Indian hierarchy system persists in shaping access to screening, diagnosis and treatment for millions. A major new analysis published in The Lancet Global Health warns that cancer outcomes across the region are shaped not just by poverty or weak health systems, but by "the overlapping effects of caste, gender, religion, language, geography and social exclusion, creating layered barriers that leave millions without timely diagnosis or treatment," said the authors. The analysis was authored by a multidisciplinary group of clinician-researchers and public health experts based in leading cancer and academic institutions across India, North America and South Asia. The authors are affiliated with institutions including Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine in the United States, MOSC Medical College in Kerala, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York, Queen's University in Canada and Tata Memorial Hospital and the National Cancer Grid in Mumbai. The team includes medical doctors, radiation oncologists, surgeons and epidemiologists with expertise in oncology, global health and cancer policy, lending clinical and research depth to the findings.

India: Where discrimination follows patients into clinics

"Caste and ethnic identity are major determinants of access to health care in SAARC countries, resulting in substantial disparities in cancer diagnosis and treatment," the researchers state. In India, marginalised populations such as Dalits—historically referred to as "untouchables"—"face systemic barriers due to sociopolitical discrimination and the legacy of the caste system." Despite the legal abolition of caste-based discrimination, "the effects of this hierarchy persist," said the authors. In India, "Dalits have some of the worst health outcomes," according to the study. Whilst "affirmative action policies have been implemented to reduce these disparities in public services," their "effect on health care remains minimal due to poor implementation and use," the researchers found. The researchers explain that "discrimination against low-caste communities contributes to their poor socioeconomic status, limits their access to health-care services and perpetuates intergenerational poor health."

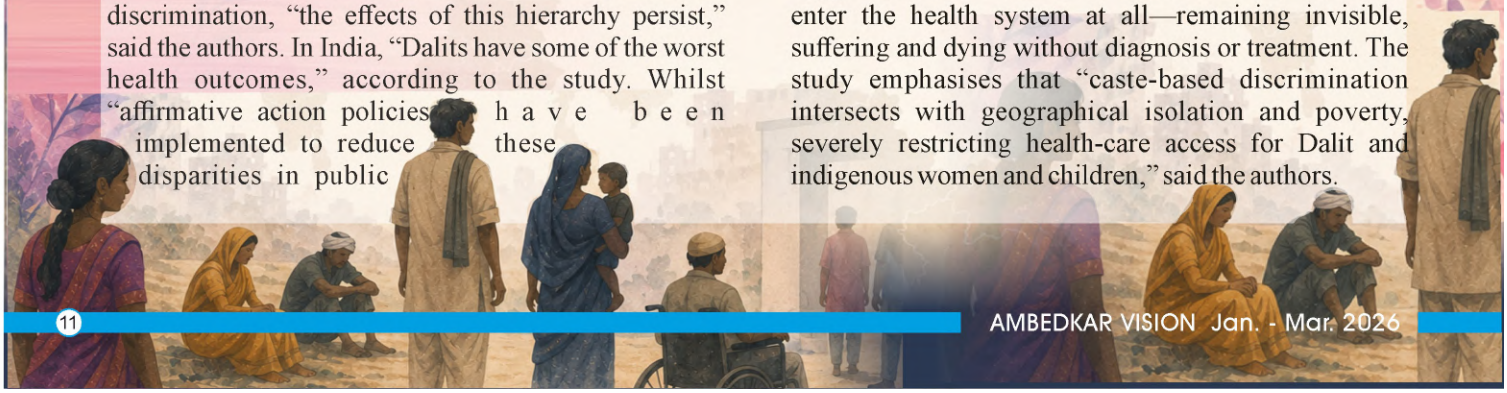
The data reveals a troubling paradox. Whilst "participation in India's health insurance programme, Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana, is higher among scheduled tribe households (18·9 percent) and scheduled caste households (14·1 percent) than among high-caste groups (9·3 percent)," the study notes that "this reliance on government schemes does not fully address the substantial barriers that these groups face in receiving adequate cancer care," said the authors.

For Dalit women, the barriers multiply through what researchers call "double discrimination." The study reports that "74·4 percent of Dalit women in India reported difficulties in accessing health care and only 54·6 percent received professional antenatal care, compared with 70·3 percent of upper-caste women."

These gaps have direct implications for cancer screening, as the researchers note that "Dalit women face double discrimination due to their caste and gender, further limiting their ability to receive timely cancer care and screenings," said the authors.

'Invisible' patients of Nepal

Nepal presents perhaps the starkest evidence of how caste shapes cancer outcomes. The analysis reveals that "Dalits who make up between 13·6 percent and 20 percent of Nepal's population, yet accounted for only 4·8 percent of cancer diagnoses." By contrast, the study found that "Brahmin and Chhetri castes had the highest proportion of cancers diagnoses (30·8 percent), followed by Newar (22·7 percent), Janajati (19·7 percent) and Terai caste (16 percent)." This dramatic under-representation, the researchers suggest, is "potentially due to selective coverage of the population-based cancer registry, under-reporting and inadequate access to health-care services," the authors noted. The numbers suggest that large numbers of Dalit cancer patients never enter the health system at all—remaining invisible, suffering and dying without diagnosis or treatment. The study emphasises that "caste-based discrimination intersects with geographical isolation and poverty, severely restricting health-care access for Dalit and indigenous women and children," said the authors.



Research on healthcare use in Nepal showed that "children from marginalised communities, such as Dalit and Madhesi groups, face substantial barriers in accessing health care due to caste-based discrimination and remoteness of health-care facilities."

Pakistan: Unacknowledged hierarchy

Even where caste systems are less openly acknowledged, they continue to shape health outcomes. The researchers note that "in countries such as Pakistan, where the caste-like system (zaat or qaum) is less openly acknowledged, it still plays a substantial role in perpetuating health-care inequities," said the authors. A study cited in the research "revealed that 49·5 percent of respondents identified as low-caste groups, including Kammi and its sub-castes and these groups faced greater barriers in accessing essential health services than high-caste groups."

The disparities begin at birth. The study found that "34·5 percent of low-caste women said they had unskilled attendants during childbirth, compared with 16·1 percent in high-caste groups." These inequities in maternal care, the researchers argue, have "implications for early cancer detection and treatment," said the authors. Pakistan An ethnographic study on maternal deaths in Pakistan, referenced in the analysis, "highlighted how caste and poverty intersect to prevent lower-caste women from accessing life-saving maternal health care, even when services are physically available."

Bangladesh: Ethnic minorities left behind

In Bangladesh, "ethnic minorities, such as the Rohingya and tribal communities in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, face severe barriers to health care." For the Rohingya, "over 1 million displaced people live in camps in Cox's Bazar," where "cancer care is almost non-existent."

The study notes that "Rohingya refugees face multiple layers of exclusion due to their displaced refugee status, ethnicity, poverty and compromised social identity," and "these combined factors prevent this population from accessing cancer care and other key health services," said the authors.

Tribal groups "such as the Chakma and Marma, are affected by health-care inequities due to geographical isolation." The research explains that "these communities often rely on traditional healers, such as the Badi and delay formal medical care," whilst "years of conflict and underdevelopment in the Chittagong Hill Tracts have further worsened these disparities,"
said the authors.

How caste operates as a barrier to cancer care

The researchers highlight that "cancer awareness is often minimal" across the region. In rural north India, their review found that "only 20·6 percent of participants in a study knew that breast cancer was the most common type in the country and over half were unaware of key warning signs that should prompt medical attention."

Amongst marginalised communities, awareness is even lower. In tribal regions of southern India, a study found that whilst "over 80 percent had heard of cervical cancer, only 2·3 percent knew it could be detected early and none had ever been screened." The study emphasises how "geographical isolation can also compound these barriers, particularly where health care facilities are sparse," said the authors. Researchers found that rural Dalit women "face highest screening barriers," illustrating how "factors such as caste, education and rural residency influence cancer screening access in India." The broader pattern across South Asia shows that "urban centres concentrate cancer hospitals and specialists, while rural patients often travel hundreds of kilometres for diagnosis or treatment." The researchers note that whilst "cities report higher cancer incidence due to better detection, rural areas bear higher mortality because patients arrive late or abandon care altogether."

When caste compounds other identities

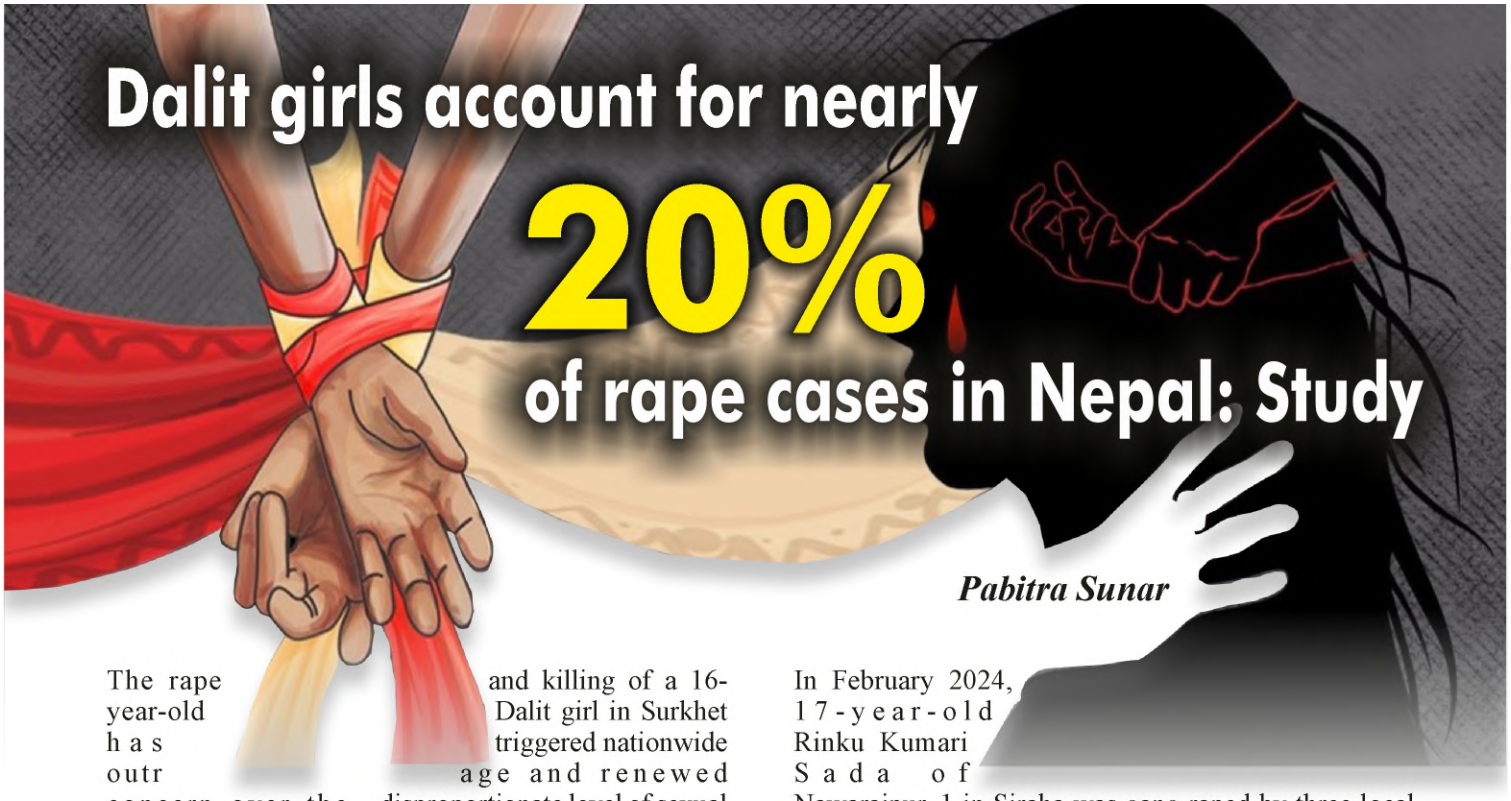
The research stressed that "caste, ethnicity, gender and other marginalised identities intersect in complex ways, multiplying barriers to healthcare access across SAARC countries," said the authors.

For Dalit women specifically, "these compounded identities not only affect access to health care but also exacerbate suboptimal outcomes due to neglect and discrimination within the system," the researchers noted. The study stresses that interventions must recognise "how overlapping identities (caste, gender and sexuality) create unique barriers."

The study provides concrete evidence: "74·4 percent of Dalit women in India reported difficulties in accessing health care and only 54·6 percent received professional antenatal care, compared with 70·3 percent of upper caste women." Additionally, researchers note that "cancer stigma and gender roles limit timely care, especially for Dalit and rural women," said the authors.

Religious identity adds complexity to caste-based discrimination. The analysis points out that "Dalit Christians and Muslims in India, while facing caste-based marginalisation, are excluded from government affirmative action programmes designed to uplift the scheduled castes." The researchers emphasise that "these intersecting factors of caste, religion and socioeconomic status create a widening gap in health-care outcomes for patients with cancer from marginalised communities," said the authors. The study makes clear that "social stigma, cultural and religious beliefs and financial toxicity often lead to avoidance of health-care facilities, further perpetuating inequitable access," said the authors. These barriers operate simultaneously, creating what researchers describe as "compounded layers of oppression that drive inequitable health outcomes."

Source: The South First



Dalit girls account for nearly 20% of rape cases in Nepal: Study

Pabitra Sunar

The rape and killing of a 16-year-old Dalit girl in Surkhet has triggered nationwide outrage and renewed concern over the disproportionate level of sexual violence faced by Dalit women and girls in Nepal.

The victim, Inisha BK, a resident of Gurvakot Municipality–6 in Surkhet, was found unconscious near a community forest close to Sahid Park in Birendranagar on March 7. She was rushed to hospital but was declared dead upon arrival.

Police said post-mortem findings and statements from the accused indicate that she was raped before being murdered. BK, originally from Badakhola in Gurvakot, had been living in Birendranagar with her family while pursuing her studies.

She had left home around 6 am for tuition classes but was later found naked in the forest area around 9 am.

Her mother reported her missing after she failed to return home by 8 am and her phone was switched off. Police later informed the family about the incident.

Following confirmation of rape and murder through the post-mortem report, four individuals have been detained for investigation.

The victim's family has demanded justice, alleging that she was gang raped before being killed. Protests demanding action against those responsible have erupted in several parts of the country.

Pattern of violence against Dalit girls

Rights groups say BK's case is not an isolated incident. Several cases in recent years show a pattern of sexual violence against Dalit girls.

In February 2024, 17-year-old Rinku Kumari Sada of Nawarajpur–1 in Siraha was gang raped by three local youths while on her way to the toilet.

According to reports, local community members had attempted to settle the case through financial compensation, but the victim was killed after refusing to withdraw the complaint.

In 2020, 13-year-old Angira Pasi of Devdaha in Rupandehi died after being beaten following rape. A 25-year-old man and his mother were accused in the case.

Similarly, in July 2019, Maya BK of Gauriganga Municipality–11 in Kailali was gang raped and murdered. Her body was found three days later in a community forest.

Five individuals were accused of the crime.Various studies and reports indicate that Dalit women and girls face higher levels of sexual violence compared to other communities.

A study titled Gender and Caste-Based Violence Against Women and Girls in Nepal, published by the Dalit Women Association in 2025, found that Dalit girls represented the second largest group among victims of violence against girls.

According to the report, 2,202 girls faced violence during the fiscal year 2024/25.

Among 1,437 reported rape cases, 238 involved Dalit girls, accounting for 19.3 percent of the total. The report also recorded 26 cases of attempted rape and two cases involving trafficking followed by rape.



Data from Informal Sector Service Centre (INSEC) for 2080/81 recorded 5,886 incidents of human rights violations, including 4,838 cases related to violence against women.

Among them were 468 cases of rape and 73 cases of attempted rape.

Nepal Police data shows that during the last fiscal year, 2,507 rape complaints and 460 attempted rape complaints were registered nationwide.

However, police statistics do not provide detailed caste-wise breakdowns.

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Socioeconomic vulnerability

Activists say the vulnerability of Dalit women and girls is linked to entrenched caste discrimination and economic marginalisation.

Kala Swarnakar, president of the Dalit Women Association, said social hierarchy and poverty make Dalit women more vulnerable to sexual violence.

"Caste discrimination and the economic hardship faced by Dalit communities create conditions where Dalit women become targets of rape," she said, adding that perpetrators often assume such crimes will go unpunished because victims come from socially and economically marginalised backgrounds.

Kamala Parajuli, chairperson of the National Women Commission, also noted that Dalit girls appear frequently among rape victims.

"Violence is often perpetrated by those who hold power against those who are perceived as weak. Dalit communities are still seen as socially vulnerable, which increases the risk of such crimes," she said.

Parajuli added that perpetrators often target individuals who lack strong social or familial protection.

Need for stronger prevention measures

Experts say that preventing sexual violence against Dalit girls requires sustained government action, including awareness campaigns and stronger social interventions.

Parajuli stressed that legal measures alone are insufficient. "Awareness campaigns must begin at the school level and be implemented strongly through local governments," she said.

Swarnakar also emphasised the need for family-level awareness and guidance for children regarding safety and social interactions from an early age.

Rights groups say tackling caste discrimination, strengthening law enforcement, and empowering marginalised communities are essential to addressing the persistent pattern of sexual violence against Dalit women and girls in Nepal.

My Republica



From Textbooks to Campuses: How Caste Continues to Undermine Dalit Representation and Social Justice in Indian Education

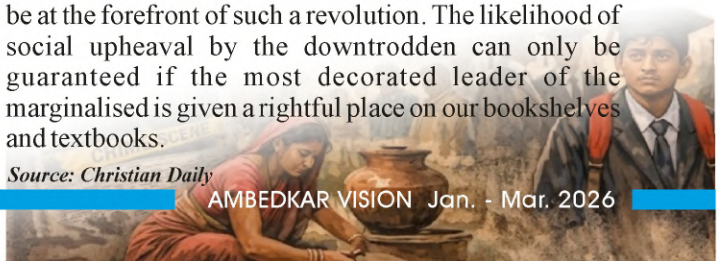
Fr. Don Prem Lobo & Aaron Nair

Caste and its various parallels have become the reality of modern India, refusing to part ways with the social construct deeply ingrained in the culture of the people. While Dr. Ambedkar, in his analysis, called caste a state of mind, he predicted that the discriminatory practices associated with hierarchical standings among human beings would persist despite progress and forward thinking. In a way, while we have overcome complete exclusion and forceful entry into undignified occupations, caste still holds onto its status quo as the dictating factor for the Dalit community in India. Clear examples of this are seen in the educational sphere, where the community is often ignored, leading to high dropout rates of 44.27% at the primary level and just 14.9% enrollment at the higher education level, according to the national census.

Another interesting perspective on the Dalit issue is the purposeful ignorance or exclusion of historical suffering and wrongdoing. The first step to achieve complete oblivion is to deny rightful space in textbooks and other popular discourse, thus shunning any discussion on marginalised groups. The National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT), a body responsible for publishing textbooks and other educational resources in the country, has long evaded Dr. Ambedkar's contribution to social reforms and the uplifting of weaker sections of society. In 2012, they went so far as to publish a textbook with a derogatory cartoon featuring Ambedkar as a snail, titled 'The Constitution,' and to haul a chariot with Jawaharlal Nehru holding a whip. While the cartoon was later brought down and the then Congress minister Kapil Sibal made an official apology, the incident reflects how Bahujan, Dalit and marginalised communities have their leaders insulted or defamed from time to time. Apart from exclusion or defamation, the plight of the Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe groups is not given a platform in educational parleys. With the recent surges in the field of education that involve online mediums and other convenient modes of qualifications like remote learning, the continued ostracism is a culmination of a purposeful agenda and the downplaying of Dalit icons and leaders. This can be vividly seen in government-run online portals like Swayam and NPTEL, wherein Dalit representation is cornered into literature and culture, safely avoiding radical opinions and thoughts that may find a mainstream audience. These platforms host certificate courses on leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi and even offer classes on religion and faith, elevating Indian Knowledge Systems to the highest level. However, the ignorance of caste-based issues, which are a by-product of faith, is a hypocritical understanding of Indian society. The marginalised sections of society have long gone through undeniable struggles and injustice based on irrational ideals and such a downgrade in terms of content in education can be seen as a revamp of the same ideals that were promised to be eradicated. The result of such exclusion is not only historical differences in how events are remembered but also a misinformed view of an entire generation regarding caste-based issues. In the latest report from IIT Delhi, over 75% of students from disadvantaged groups face racial discrimination and separation on campus. In comparison, 58% of students coming from general or upper-caste backgrounds are either indifferent to their struggles or agree with the remarks and actions against the community. Lack of education and discourse on Dalit icons also enables misuse by certain political parties to target minorities or the marginalised. The need for more dialogue in areas concerning Dalits and the icons who represented them, like Dr. Ambedkar, rises even more in the present environment, which seems hostile to unbiased education. The State Education Department of Maharashtra's decision in 2018 to procure more books on Prime Minister Narendra Modi, way ahead of Ambedkar, Gandhi and Phule, substantiates the concern. Similarly, conversation on Ambedkar is contained only within the purview of being the Father of India's Constitution, unfairly misrepresenting a leader who has fought for women's rights, social justice, education of the marginalised, labour reforms, rational thinking and so many more.

Given that Ambedkar's writings are under the Government's complete control, their suppression proves that the authorities in power pay mere lip service to the ideals and thoughts of India's most popular leader. In times when indoctrination in education is at an all-time high, critical analysis of the writings of Indian leaders is a necessity and the reading of Ambedkar must be at the forefront of such a revolution. The likelihood of social upheaval by the downtrodden can only be guaranteed if the most decorated leader of the marginalised is given a rightful place on our bookshelves and textbooks.

Source: Christian Daily



You're part of a caste system in NYC. Here's what you can do about it

Ambar Castillo



Yashica Dutt can't forget when a graduate student died by suicide in India after denouncing caste discrimination. The student, Rohith Vemula, took his life in 2016 after his university suspended and harassed him and other activists from the Dalit caste, once called "untouchable," the lowest tier in Hindu social hierarchy.

Now Dutt wants New Yorkers to remember this legacy.

She had just finished graduate studies in journalism at Columbia University when the tragedy ignited protests nationwide and propelled a movement for Dalit rights. Dutt would later partly credit Vemula with driving her to finally share her own story: "Coming Out as Dalit." In the book, she chronicled her secret life passing as someone from a higher caste in order to survive in her homeland, secure a good education and even rent an apartment.

On 30th Jan, she and others advocating to end caste oppression hosted an event in Manhattan commemorating the anniversary of Vemula's death — and highlighted Dalit culture against the backdrop of renewed focus on South Asians in New York. "From Shadows to the Stars" included a film screening, an art installation featuring Dalit artists and a conversation with anti-caste poets and thinkers.

Reclaiming Dalit culture — and the table

Dutt's hope is for this to be the first of many events celebrating Dalit culture, "not to be confused with just Hindu upper-caste culture." That will include a new perspective on desi food, from the Indian subcontinent. "Usually, if you go to a desi event you will have lassi or chai or samosas, but we want to present the kind of food that is important to Dalit people."

That includes beef, which is politically fraught in India, which has seen an increase in killings by Hindu nationalists of members of Dalit or Muslim communities suspected of slaughtering cows. It also includes Indo-Caribbean dishes, which are tied to the history of indentured labor from lower-caste people brought to the region from India.

Another goal is to create solidarity with Black New Yorkers and others whose history shares parallels with caste discrimination. And she said the event is also about carving out space for Dalit people who have long been pushed to the margins.

"This is a time of reckoning for South Asian communities and we cannot leave Dalit communities behind," Dutt told Epicenter NYC, referencing local politicians' greater engagement with the diaspora after Zohran Mamdani, a nearly unknown state assemblyman from Queens, was elected mayor last November.

In an article Dutt wrote during the mayoral campaign, she wrote: "As an assemblymember, Mamdani, who comes from a mixed dominant-caste background (his mother, Mira Nair, is from a dominant Khatri caste and his father, Mahmood Mamdani, comes from a Khoja merchant caste background), has been vocal about his support for the anti-caste movement.
In 2021, Mamdani appeared on a panel with anti-caste activist Prachi Patankar and emphasized the need for leadership from Dalit and marginalized caste communities to counter the rise of Hindu nationalism."

Caste in your city

The city provides some degree of distance from the discrimination Dutt and others face back home for being born into a certain family. But only some. A recent paper from Cornell Law School alludes to often underreported accounts of caste discrimination in everything from housing to employment in centers of the South Asian diasporas in New York and New Jersey.

And there's still an active civil lawsuit related to the majority-Dalit men allegedly lured from India to build a temple in New Jersey for about $1 an hour under dangerous conditions. The Hindu sect named in the lawsuit, known as BAPS, is tied to India's ruling party and also runs a temple in Flushing visited by politicians from former Mayor Adams to Mamdani during his campaign.

At the same time, opponents criticized Mamdani for co-sponsoring a bill to ban caste discrimination, calling him "Hinduphobic," as New Lines Magazine reported. The bill, sponsored by Assemblyman Steve Raga and cosponsored by Mamdani and several other lawmakers, is currently in an Assembly committee. It would add caste as a protected class in New York's laws covering employment, housing and public accommodations.

Raga said in an email he introduced the bill because New Yorkers shouldn't face unequal treatment "because of a rigid social hierarchy they were born into." He said many constituents have reported caste discrimination but hesitate to come forward because caste is not explicitly protected under state law.

Caste in your community

You might not call it caste, but odds are, your community has its own social hierarchy. Similar patterns of exclusion show up far beyond South Asia, according to civil rights organization Equality Labs. Raga pointed to caste-like hierarchies among the Burakumin community in Japan, the Osu in Nigeria and groups in Senegal and Mauritania.

In New York, he said, inherited status and quiet, community-based exclusion continue to shape people's access to housing, jobs and dignity. "This bill acknowledges those realities without targeting any religion or culture," Raga said. "It is focused on one thing: protecting people from discrimination."

In this city of immigrants, many bring with them attitudes from back home that reinforce caste hierarchy. This includes making nannies or housekeepers sit separately for meals or use a different bathroom from the family they care for. "This discrimination against people who work in our homes, it is such a big part of caste," Dutt said. She would know: She comes from a family that once worked cleaning toilets, a job that in India is believed to pollute anyone who touches the workers. Sometimes, she said, Dalit workers are given food on a separate plate that is thrown away after a single use.

One of the biggest complaints she hears from members of the South Asian diaspora is that here, unlike back home, they have to do their own household work. When asked about similar comments from some Latin American immigrants used to different lifestyles in their home countries, she said it reflects a shared "entitlement to the labor of lower-class people," a belief that certain people exist to serve others.

What you can do

So what can you do? Start by noticing these patterns in your own community. But more is needed, Dutt said: "We can't leave it to the people who are feeding off of the labor of the exploited."

She said bringing Dalit Indo-Caribbean people and other Dalits together can open the door to broader alliances with other marginalized groups. "People hear us more because you can't just ignore one group and say 'Oh, it's just Dalit people, or it's just the oppressed people from Latin America,'" she said.

She urges New Yorkers to learn more about the caste system. If you're not from the South Asian community, be aware of the subtle ways that caste shows up, she said. Questions about where your family is from or even the reasons you're vegetarian or eat meat are often coded caste inquiries.

Dutt also urges you to ignore the idea that it's racist to talk about caste discrimination if you're not South Asian. "That is something that certain Indian American groups have tried to push," she said. As a Dalit person, she believes that when you question or call out caste, "you're only helping us, you are empowering our voices, you are giving solidarity to the oppression that we experience in these spaces."

Dutt said she hopes people learn what they can about caste, but understands everyone has limits, especially in this political climate: "Be as aware as we can and do what is possible for us," she said. "But also understand that collective solidarity is where it is at this moment."

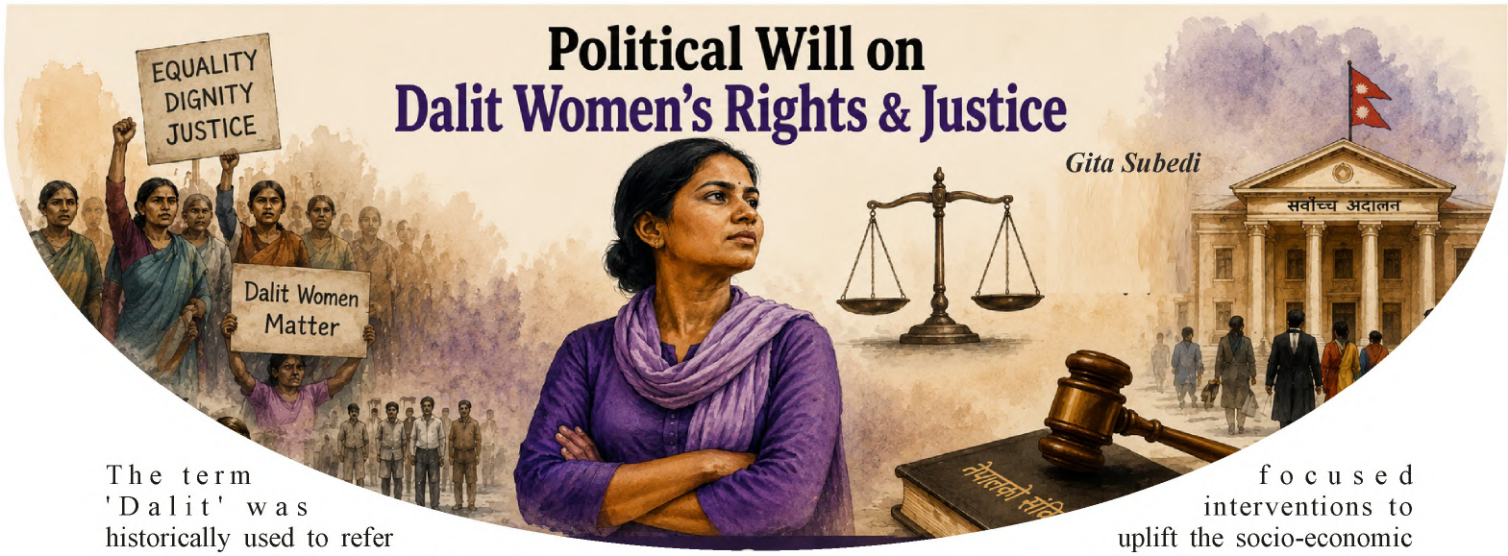
Raga said New Yorkers should know that caste discrimination "does happen here, even if it's not always visible and that naming it in the law matters." He encouraged neighbors to connect with advocacy groups, listen to affected communities and talk to their state representatives.

"A6920 is about providing clear legal protection," he said, referring to the bill. "But lasting change also comes from collective action."

Source: Epicenter-nyc

Political Will on Dalit Women's Rights & Justice

Gita Subedi



The term 'Dalit' was historically used to refer to caste-based discrimination and untouchability. It reflected deep social stigma despite such practices being illegal and inhumane. Today, the term is increasingly used in a rights-based way to claim dignity, equality, justice and human rights. Caste-based hierarchies created long ago labelled certain groups as untouchable, resulting in systemic exclusion, barriers to basic services, social discrimination, caste-based violence, economic marginalisation and intergenerational poverty. Dalit women have the right to live free from caste, class and gender-based discrimination. Effective implementation of intersectional justice and sufficient budgeting to enforce the 'Dalit Empowerment Act' are urgently needed. Dalit women also have the right to lead and shape national-level decisions that prioritise their rights, access and agency. They require decent employment opportunities alongside social inclusion schemes to address poverty.

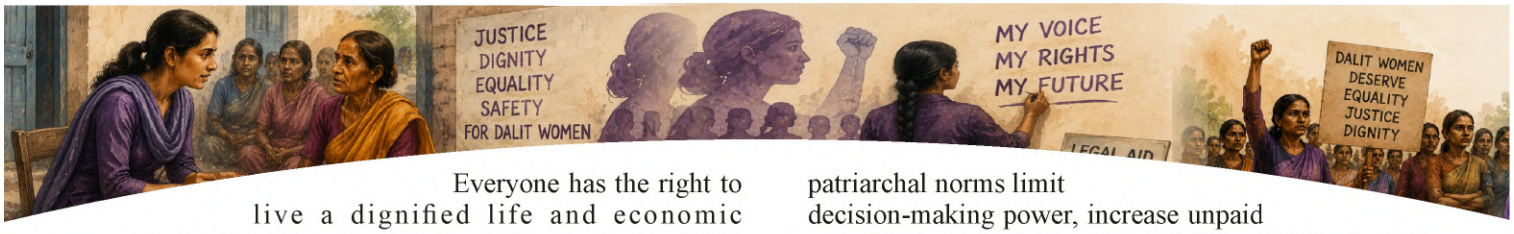
Rights, representation and structural inequality

Despite strong legal and constitutional mandates, discriminatory practices continue in Nepali society, creating a gap between theory and the lived reality of Dalit communities, especially women. People-first and dignity-based language is still lacking in many contexts, while derogatory labelling remains in practice. Untouchability and caste-based discrimination are not merely harmful practices; they are criminal offences and social crimes. Every person, including Dalit women, has the right to live with dignity, equality and respect as a human being. According to the National Population Census 2021, 13.4% of Nepal's population belongs to Dalit communities. Many Dalit children are the first generation in their families to access education and decent employment opportunities due to long-standing structural inequalities. Data show that 36% of Dalits live below the poverty line compared to the national average of 25%. This indicates that political parties must adopt focused interventions to uplift the socio-economic status of Dalit communities, particularly marginalised women. The national literacy rate is 76.2%, while Dalit literacy stands at only 67.4%. Only 1.6% of Dalits have attained education above the bachelor's level. Nepal's vision of a casteless state under the national agenda 'Happy Nepali: Prosperous Nepal' cannot be realised without intentional efforts toward the overall upliftment of marginalised Dalit women. Regional disparities in educational status also exist among Dalits in Madhesh/Terai and hill regions, with educational outcomes particularly poorer among Madheshi Dalits. About 31.6% of Madheshi Dalit women have never attended school and 55.9% of Terai Dalit women are illiterate compared to 29.9% among hill Dalit women. This highlights the deeply rooted intersection of patriarchy, class, caste and gender within these communities.

Socioeconomic and educational disparities

Among harmful practices, child marriage appears higher among Dalit communities than the national average. Data show a rate of 23% among Dalits compared to the national average of 14%. Disability status also affects Dalit communities more than other caste groups. Approximately 2.4% of Dalits live with some form of disability, slightly higher than the national average of 2.2%. Women-headed households are more common among Dalit communities; however, 10.1% of Dalit households still lack toilets.

This figure is particularly alarming in the Terai, where 24.6% of Dalit households lack toilets compared to 3.6% among hill Dalits. In this era of digitalisation, access to technology is essential. While electricity access has surpassed 95%, the digital divide remains significant among Dalit communities. Only 2.5% of Terai Dalits and 5.6% of hill Dalits own laptops compared to a national average of around 15%. Political commitments and priorities should intentionally address this gap.



Everyone has the right to live a dignified life and economic empowerment is essential. Regarding property rights, only 15.7% of Dalit women own land or a house in their own names compared to the national average of 25.4% among women. These figures show that caste, gender, geography, poverty and disability intersect to shape exclusion. Dalit women, in particular, face multiple layers of discrimination related to gender, class, disability, caste, language, religion and geography. Without an intersectional analysis, achieving gender and social justice as envisioned by the country will remain difficult and resources may be wasted.

Nepal's Constitution contains progressive provisions to protect Dalit rights, including Article 24 (Right against untouchability and discrimination) and Article 40 (Rights of Dalits). However, implementation remains weak, with insufficient enforcement, accountability and resourcing. It is time for action rather than paper-based commitments. The implementation of the 'Dalit Empowerment Act' must be institutionalised. Dalit empowerment mechanisms at the federal, provincial and local levels need strengthening and the participation of marginalised Dalit women in pre-budget consultations should be mandatory. Without empowerment, leadership development and skills enhancement among Dalit women, their issues cannot be effectively mainstreamed within state mechanisms. Commemorations such as the 'National Day for the Elimination of Caste-Based Untouchability' should move beyond symbolic advocacy towards meaningful action, education and systemic commitments.Commitments made at national and international levels must be translated into local contexts. Although policies exist on paper, many Dalit women remain unaware of their rights. Therefore, capacity-building and awareness initiatives must be prioritised.

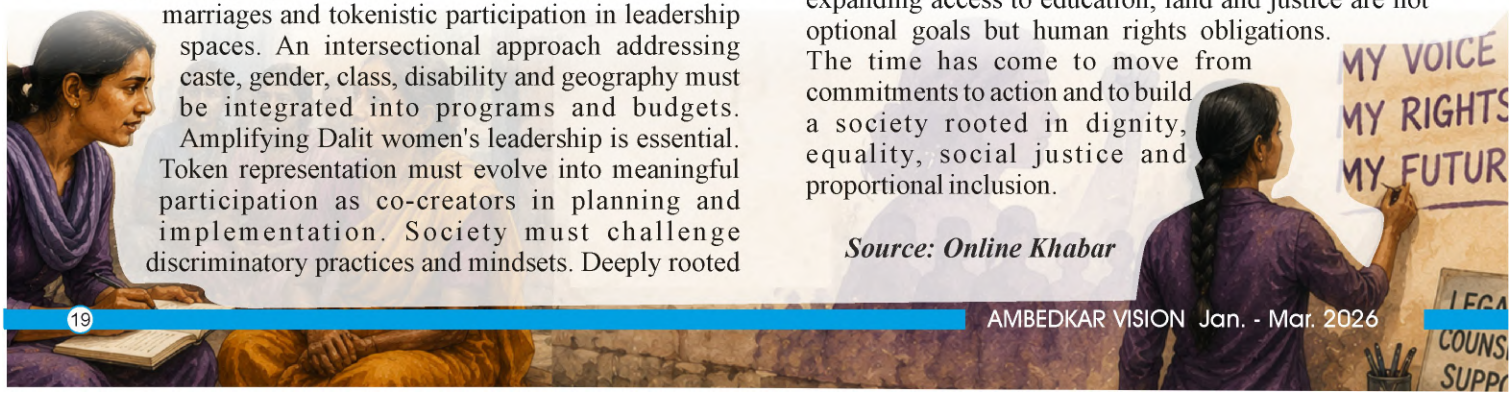
Health, poverty and social exclusion

Data indicate that Dalit women face multiple forms of oppression, including caste-based discrimination, gender-based violence, economic exclusion, landlessness, low-paid labour, barriers to education and healthcare, stigma in public services related to inter-caste marriages and tokenistic participation in leadership spaces. An intersectional approach addressing caste, gender, class, disability and geography must be integrated into programs and budgets. Amplifying Dalit women's leadership is essential. Token representation must evolve into meaningful participation as co-creators in planning and implementation. Society must challenge discriminatory practices and mindsets. Deeply rooted patriarchal norms limit decision-making power, increase unpaid care burdens and restrict mobility and leadership opportunities for Dalit women. A shift toward human rights-based approaches and transformative power structures is necessary. Advancing gender and social justice for Dalit women requires coordinated action across state institutions, civil society and communities. For example, free legal aid and grassroots legal literacy programs should support survivors of gender-based and caste-based violence.

Inclusive, technology-friendly and resilient education must be accessible to all, especially marginalised Dalit children. Untrained teachers risk widening the digital divide and perpetuating generational poverty. Without economic justice, gender and social justice cannot be achieved. Efforts must focus on Dalit women's land and property rights as well as access to decent work opportunities. Awareness of informed consent in all aspects of life, including sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), is equally necessary. Safe civic spaces must be created to support Dalit women's leadership and meaningful participation in policy forums. Grassroots Dalit women's groups require support for movement-building. Feminist philanthropy and flexible funding should be promoted. Dalit rights networks should be strengthened to provide survivor-centred services such as shelter, legal counseling and leadership opportunities in anti-trafficking, rescue, rehabilitation and reintegration efforts. Maintaining intersectional and disaggregated data, along with monitoring constitutional and legal provisions, is essential for evidence-based programming.

In conclusion, strong political will is vital to dismantle caste-based discrimination and establish gender and social justice. This is a societal issue requiring collective responsibility. Progressive constitutional provisions alone are insufficient; effective implementation is what truly matters. Transforming laws, norms, institutions and everyday mindsets is essential. Dalit women's voices and leadership are central to meaningful social change. Ending gender-based violence, ensuring equal pay, guaranteeing bodily autonomy and SRHR and expanding access to education, land and justice are not optional goals but human rights obligations. The time has come to move from commitments to action and to build a society rooted in dignity, equality, social justice and proportional inclusion.

Source: Online Khabar



‘STOP DEATHS IN SEWERS & SEPTIC TANKS’

SKA PROTESTS AT JANTAR MANTAR,

ALLEGES ‘SYSTEMATIC ERASURE OF DALIT LIVES BY MANIPULATING DATA’

Geetha Sunil Pillai

Just a stone's throw away from the country's Parliament, hundreds of sanitation workers gathered at Jantar Mantar once again, raising slogans that echoed their anguish - "Stop Killing Us," "Stop Deaths in Sewers and Septic Tanks," and "PM Apologise to the Nation." Called by the Safai Karamchari Andolan (SKA), the protesters came from approximately 10 states on March 25, to express their pain and demand justice for the continued deaths of sanitation workers engaged in hazardous cleaning of sewers and septic tanks.

The protest was organized to demand an immediate halt to the killings of Indian citizens in sewers and septic tanks, along with a time-bound action plan from the government to address the issue.

National convenor of Safai Karamchari Andolan and Ramon Magsaysay awardee Bezwada Wilson addressed the gathering, stating that 41 people have already lost their lives this year in sewers and septic tanks. He criticized the government for what he called a "muted silence," as if these lives did not matter.

"Casteist mindsets prevalent in the society force people to go down the gutters of death," Wilson said. "No one is held accountable or punished for these killings, despite this being illegal as per law."

SKA leader Deepthi Sukumar questioned the government's attempts to conceal the actual number of deaths taking place in sewers and septic tanks.

Citing SKA's own documentation, she highlighted a glaring discrepancy between the deaths recorded by the organization and those reported by the government.

"In 2025, a total of 121 people died while cleaning sewers and septic tanks as per SKA data, but the government registered just 46 deaths," Sukumar said. "Similarly, in 2024, the death figure was 116, but the government recorded only 55 deaths. Where are the remaining people who were killed? The government should present the actual figures in Parliament."

Several family members of those who lost their lives while cleaning sewers joined the protest and recounted their traumatic experiences. They urged the government to immediately put a stop to such killings.

SKA leaders from various states including Lovjinder Kaur, Seema Khairwal, Neelam, Poonam, Aanchal, Puja, Usha Sagar, Raj Valmiki, Rajkumar, Subhash, Amar Singh, Prakash and Mayank also addressed the gathering.

They spoke about the casteist and patriarchal mindsets of local administrations in dealing with such issues, alleging that victims' families are neither given proper compensation nor justice.

The protesters submitted a memorandum addressed to the Prime Minister, outlining their demands and highlighting the systemic failure of the government to address the crisis.

The memorandum began by reminding the Prime Minister that exactly one year earlier, on March 25, 2025, hundreds of safai karamcharis had gathered at Jantar Mantar with similar demands for the Right to Life with dignity. It stated that despite repeated submissions, there had been "no assurance, no protection and no change."



The memorandum sharply criticized the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment for its statement made on March 19, claiming that there were "no deaths due to manual scavenging." SKA called this a "shocking and callous claim" and a "deliberate erasure" of Dalit lives. 'Systematic Erasure of Dalit Lives'

The memorandum presented a stark comparison of data to expose what SKA called a "systemic erasure of Dalit lives":

In 2023, SKA documented 102 deaths, while the minister reported only 65 to Parliament.

In 2024, SKA recorded 116 deaths, but the official figure was reduced to 54.

In 2025, SKA recorded 121 deaths, while the ministry reported merely 46.

In the first three months of 2026, 41 persons have already been killed inside sewers and septic tanks.

The memorandum emphasized that those killed in this brutal and dehumanizing work are Dalits.

It strongly condemned the Minister's statement that this was "occupation-based" and not "caste-based," calling it a deliberate attempt to deny social justice to a historically oppressed and excluded community.

"These deaths are not accidents," the memorandum read. "They are the direct result of caste-based violence, sanctioned through neglect, denial and inaction. Yet, the government has shown neither remorse nor urgency. Instead, our deaths are reduced to numbers, manipulated and minimized, to deny us our most fundamental right- the right to life."

Apology and Time-Bound Action Plan Demanded

The memorandum demanded that the Prime Minister apologize to the nation for what SKA called "centuries-old caste oppression." It also demanded that the government declare a time-bound action plan to:

1. Put an end to deaths in sewers and septic tanks

2. Ensure the complete eradication of the practice of manual scavenging

3. Provide rehabilitation for those involved in the occupation

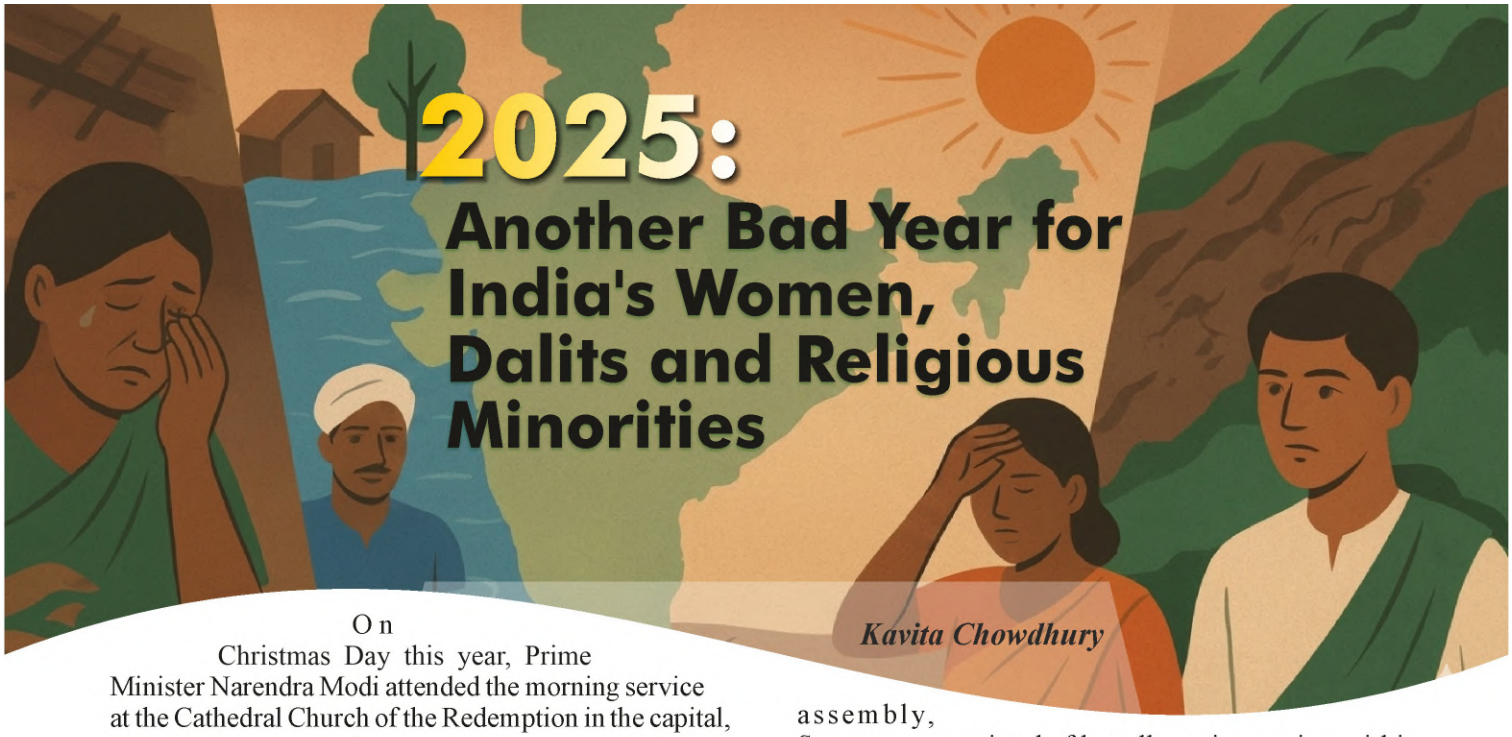
The memorandum further noted that dry latrines continue to exist across districts in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and Jammu & Kashmir, where Dalit women are still forced into manual scavenging.

It stated that the schemes of mechanization and modernization announced by the government have failed to dismantle the caste structures that bind Dalits to this work.

"Our youth continue to die inside sewers and septic tanks, without any safety, dignity, or accountability," the memorandum concluded.

Source: Mooknayak





2025: Another Bad Year for India's Women, Dalits and Religious Minorities

Kavita Chowdhury

On Christmas Day this year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi attended the morning service at the Cathedral Church of the Redemption in the capital, New Delhi, purportedly to send out a message of "love and compassion."

Ironically, 2025 saw attacks on Christian minorities and Christmas celebrations by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-affiliated Hindu supremacist goons grow in number. Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Kerala, Odisha, Delhi, Assam and Uttar Pradesh all reported incidents of churches being vandalized; carol singers, including children, being attacked; and church services disrupted during Christmas. Except for Kerala, all these states are under BJP governments.

"PM Modi poses in church for photo-ops, while RSS-trained criminals unleash violence against Christians with impunity. STOP this hypocrisy," the Communist Party of India (Marxist) pointed out in a post on Facebook. The RSS or Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh is the ideological mentor of the BJP.

While Modi tweeted about the "spirit of Christmas" inspiring "harmony and goodwill in society," the ground reality in India was different. India's secular social fabric in 2025 was in tatters.

Hindu supremacist organizations under the Modi-led BJP rule over the past 11 years have enjoyed a free rein in attacking the most marginalized sections of society – religious minorities, lower-caste Dalits and women.

Violence against women remained an issue of concern throughout 2025. Particularly worrying in this regard was how molesters, rapists, even convicted ones and particularly those with ties to the ruling party, were treated leniently by courts.

Take the case of Kuldip Singh Sengar, for example. An influential BJP legislator in the Uttar Pradesh state assembly, Sengar was convicted of brutally raping a minor girl in Unnao, Uttar Pradesh, in 2017. Although the girl survived the horrific rape, the violence she suffered did not end there. Faced with police inaction, she attempted suicide.

pressure her to withdraw the case against Sengar, her father was arrested and subsequently died in police custody. Even as the criminal trial against Sengar was underway, the victim miraculously survived a road accident; two of her aunts who were with her were killed.

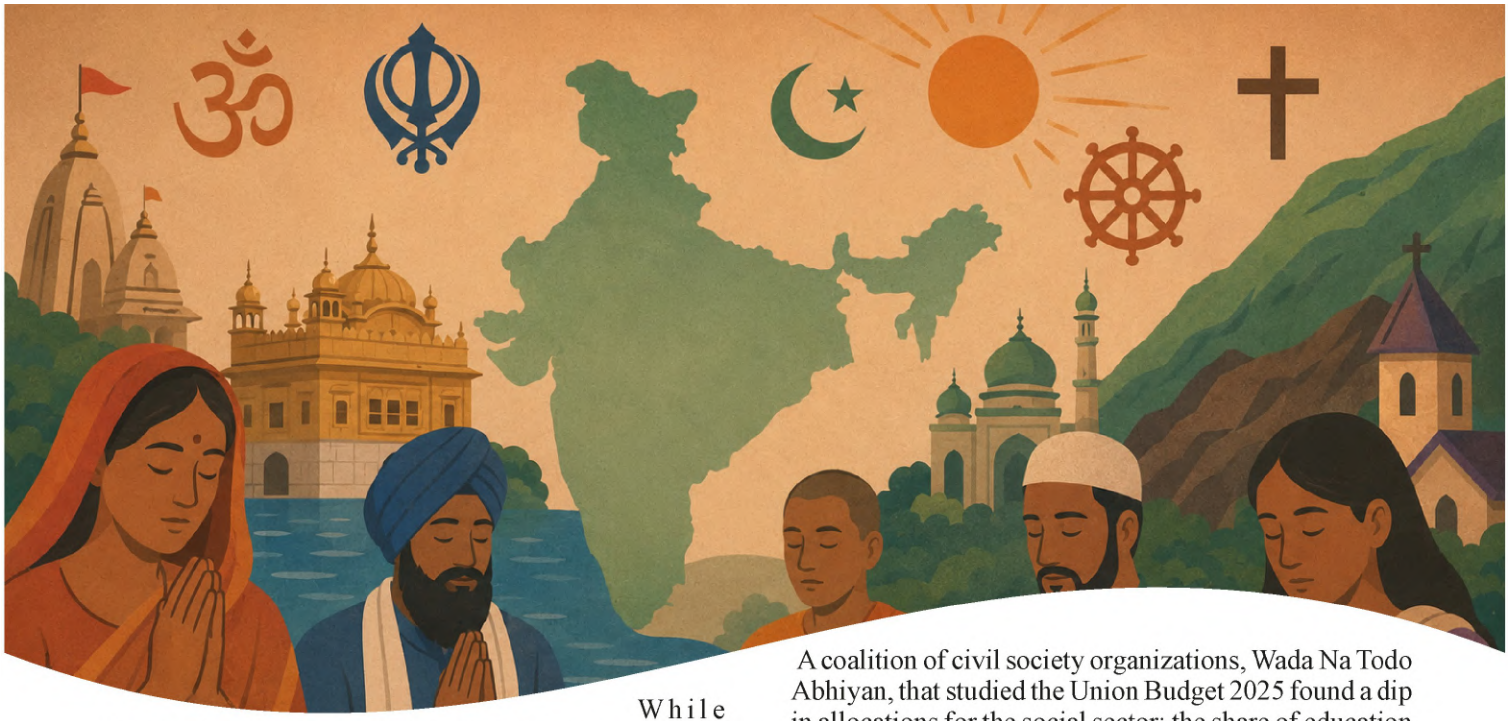
On December 23 this year, the High Court suspended the life sentence that Sengar was serving on the bizarre plea that he was "not a public servant" or in a position of authority as defined under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offenses law and hence not liable to harsher punishment for raping a child.

The BJP has often downplayed rapes and the culture of sexual violence in the country, especially in incidents where the perpetrator is a BJP legislator or party worker.

This was the case when India's women wrestlers accused former BJP parliamentarian and Wrestling Federation of India chief, Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, of sexual assault in 2024. Unsurprisingly, Singh was again in the news recently, publicly expressing support for Sengar.

While violence against women has been a reality in India's patriarchal society for millennia, the impunity that rapists, molesters and serial offenders enjoy under the BJP government has been unprecedented.

Although a vacation bench of the High Court stayed the suspension of Sengar's sentence, this is but a temporary relief.



While the Modi government claims that it has made great strides for women's empowerment in India, as per global statistics, the situation for women in India has worsened.

According to the global Women, Peace and Security Index, which measures women's inclusion, justice and security in 181 countries, India ranks at 131, a slide from its previous position of 128. Women's safety, equality and social security continue to be major challenges, more so when the ruling dispensation BJP's views on women are deeply misogynistic.

In recent years, the Modi government has rescinded several rights-based laws brought in by the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance government.

In 2025, it put the last nail in the coffin of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), which guaranteed 100 days of manual employment and wages to the rural poor. Instead, it has put in place G-RAM–G, a discretionary scheme where the central government decides where and when the scheme applies.

In 2025, social justice and equality remained a pipe dream for marginalized groups in India. As per the World Inequality Report 2026 released earlier this month, inequality in India is "among the highest in the world."

The study found an extreme concentration of economic power, with the top 1 percent of Indians cornering 40 percent of the country's national income.

Despite Modi's claims of "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikaas" (inclusive growth), analysis of the social sector spending of his government indicates this was far from true.

A coalition of civil society organizations, Wada Na Todo Abhiyan, that studied the Union Budget 2025 found a dip in allocations for the social sector; the share of education dropped from 3.3 percent to 2.5 percent of GDP and health allocations remained stagnant at 0.3 percent.

Modi has reiterated that his government is spearheading the country towards the goal of a Viksit Bharat or a Developed India.

However, as the opposition has pointed out, as per the government's own data, 810 million people are receiving free food grains under the Prime Minister Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana initiative.

Staggering numbers of poor people are still dependent on free rations, say opposition leaders. And these figures are outdated as the long-overdue Population Census is awaited.

Meanwhile, India ranked 102 out of 123 countries, i.e., in the "serious" category, on the Global Hunger Index, according to the 2025 report.

Major challenges like poverty, growing income inequality, child malnutrition, unequal food distribution, poor sanitation, high rates of stunting and wasting among children and poor maternal health persist.

If India aims to become a developed nation by 2047, its development has to be more equitable and inclusive. Therefore, more resources will need to be directed toward overcoming these challenges and ending income inequality.

The Indian government needs to move from rhetorical claims of being the world's fastest-growing economy and focus instead on action.

Source: The Diplomat


AMBEDKAR SOCIETY FOR SOUTH ASIA