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Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's Views on Dalits' Struggle for Temple Entry: From Social Reform to the Quest for Human Dignity [Page: 2]

Ambedkar Society for South Asia

QUARTERLY

AMBEDKAR VISION

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

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AMBEDKAR SOCIETY FOR SOUTH ASIA

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from the Editor

Welcome to the latest edition of Ambedkar Vision. Discrimination based on caste, religion and social identity remains deeply embedded across South Asia, exposing the persistent gap between constitutional guarantees of equality and the everyday realities of marginalised communities. From caste-based exclusion in India and Nepal to religious persecution in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, recent developments reveal how structural inequalities continue to restrict access to dignity, education, employment, housing, religious freedom and justice. Despite legal protections and growing resistance, these injustices remain deeply entrenched. The persistence of caste discrimination extends beyond India. Dalit scholar Suraj Yengde, describes caste as an inherited hierarchy that continues to operate within modern, globalised societies. Its influence extends across education, employment, religious institutions and political representation. This structural inequality is reflected in the everyday experiences of Dalits. In Nepal, activist Deepa Nepali completed 96 days of a sit-in protest at Maitighar in July 2026, demanding legal reforms to end caste discrimination in rental housing. She called for legislation prohibiting landlords from asking prospective tenants about their caste. Similarly, Pradip Pariyar's book Siyo Dhago documents caste violence, custodial injustice and institutional discrimination through the experiences of victims including Nawaraj BK, Sundar Harijan and Roshan BK.

The struggle for dignity also connects directly to Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's political philosophy. Ambedkar initially supported temple entry as a demand for equal rights and a challenge to untouchability. The 1930 Kalaram Temple Satyagraha in Nashik became a significant expression of this struggle. However, repeated resistance from orthodox Hindu society led him to recognise that temple entry alone could not dismantle caste hierarchy. He increasingly emphasised self-respect, education, political empowerment and the annihilation of caste. But Still, caste-based exclusion also persists through economic exploitation. According to the Dalit Adivasi Shakti Adhikar Manch (DASAM), at least 55 sanitation workers died between February and June 2026 while cleaning sewers and septic tanks in India. These deaths expose the intersection of caste hierarchy, contractor exploitation and institutional negligence. International scrutiny has further highlighted these concerns. In August 2026, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) raised serious concerns about violence, arbitrary detention, torture and discrimination against Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, indigenous communities and Bengali-speaking Muslims in India. It highlighted caste-based segregation, violence against Dalit women, bonded labour, manual scavenging and inadequate access to justice, alongside racial profiling and discriminatory citizenship and voter-registration processes.

Religious minorities across South Asia face comparable challenges. In Bangladesh, the Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council recorded 257 incidents of sectarian violence during the first six months of 2026, including 44 deaths, attacks on religious institutions, land seizures and intimidation. Although large-scale violence has declined since August 2024, the Council warns that persecution has become more targeted and persistent. In Sri Lanka, a study by the National Christian Evangelical Alliance documented bullying, intimidation and religious discrimination against Christian schoolchildren, including pressure to participate in rituals outside their faith and restrictions on religious expression. In Pakistan, a gathering of the Meghwar community in Ghotki district called for reforms addressing education, employment, girls' empowerment, youth development and minority traditions. Participants emphasised community responsibility and collective action, demonstrating that minority empowerment requires meaningful social reforms rather than symbolic recognition. Amid these challenges, India's Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) student movement offers an important example of resistance and inter-community solidarity. Bringing together Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian and Dalit students, the movement raised demands for educational accountability, constitutional democracy and social justice.

These developments demonstrate that caste discrimination, religious persecution and minority exclusion are interconnected challenges that transcend national boundaries. Ambedkar's vision of annihilating caste, the resistance of Dalit communities and the solidarity emerging from student movements all reinforce the need for structural transformation. Legal protections and international criticism must translate into accountability and equal opportunities. Ultimately, justice requires a society where dignity, freedom and equal citizenship are realities for everyone, irrespective of caste, religion or social identity.



Hindu Marriage Amendment Bill passed

The Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Assembly on 13th July 2026, approved the Hindu Marriage (Amendment) Bill 2026 while government and opposition members joined hands to demand continued tax exemptions for the people of Malakand and the newly merged tribal districts.

Provincial Minister for Local Government Mina Khan Afridi presented the Hindu Marriage (Amendment) Bill 2026 in the House, which was promptly passed. Under the new legislation, the power to appoint registrars for Hindu marriages has been delegated to district governments.

In union councils with Hindu populations, the local government will issue licenses to the registrars.

Separately, the provincial government has prepared the Excise Duty on Minerals (Amendment) Bill 2026 aimed at improving the welfare of mine workers.

The bill, which could not be tabled in the assembly, proposes the reconstitution of the Mines Labour Welfare Board.

The reconstituted board will include representatives from the departments of Finance, Health, Labour, Education, Zakat, Social Welfare and Communication & Works.

The Secretary of Minerals will serve as Chairman, while the Chief Commissioner of Mines Labour Welfare will act as Vice Chairman. Four representatives each from mine owners and mine workers will also be included.

The amendment seeks to make the institutional framework for the welfare and wellbeing of mine workers more effective and robust.

In a rare show of unity, lawmakers from both the treasury and opposition benches strongly opposed the imposition of taxes in Malakand and the tribal districts, demanding exemptions for the region's residents regardless of whether the taxes fall under provincial or federal jurisdiction.

Speaker of the Provincial Assembly Babar Salim Swati indicated that a debate would be held in the House on the issue and hinted at convening a joint meeting of government and opposition parliamentary leaders to formulate a future course of action.

Opposition members and some government lawmakers expressed strong resentment over the federal government's move to withdraw tax exemptions previously granted to the former FATA and PATA regions.

Provincial Minister Dr Amjad said the tax was not imposed during the PTI era in Malakand and criticised the opposition for distorting facts.

He noted that only a hotel tax had been levied on an establishment owned by someone outside Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, and that the federal government was behind the move.

He accused the PML-N of "drama" and reminded the House of past promises made by former Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi and PTI founder Imran Khan that taxes would not be imposed in Malakand.

Source: Express Tribune



Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's Views on Dalits' Struggle for Temple Entry:

From Social Reform to the Quest for Human Dignity

SR Darapuri

Introduction

The struggle for temple entry occupies an important place in the history of the Dalit movement in India. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Dalits were denied entry into Hindu temples as a consequence of the practice of untouchability. Many social reformers viewed temple-entry movements as a means of removing this discrimination and integrating Dalits into Hindu society. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, however, approached the issue from a fundamentally different perspective. For him, the demand for temple entry was never merely a religious question; it was a question of civil rights, social equality and human dignity. His views, however, evolved over time. While he initially supported temple-entry movements as a strategy to challenge caste discrimination, he later concluded that they could not bring about the annihilation of caste or secure genuine emancipation for Dalits. This evolution reflects the broader development of his political philosophy—from reforming Hindu society to seeking liberation from the caste system altogether.

Temple Entry as a Struggle for Human Rights

Ambedkar's early support for temple-entry movements was based not on religious devotion but on the principle of equality before society. He understood that exclusion from temples symbolized the larger system of caste oppression. Dalits were denied entry because they were regarded as "untouchables" and therefore considered ritually impure. Such exclusion denied them recognition as equal members of society. Ambedkar argued that if Hinduism genuinely believed in the equality of all human beings, there could be no justification for excluding any section of society from places of worship. Therefore, the struggle for temple entry was intended to expose the hypocrisy of caste Hindus who preached religious morality while simultaneously practicing social discrimination. Temple entry was thus a democratic demand aimed at asserting equal citizenship rather than a plea for religious privilege. By demanding admission into temples, Dalits challenged the legitimacy of the caste order itself.

The Kalaram Temple Satyagraha

The most significant expression of this strategy was the Kalaram Temple Satyagraha of 1930 in Nashik, Maharashtra. Under Ambedkar's leadership, thousands of Dalits organized a peaceful movement demanding entry into the famous Kalaram The movement sought recognition of three fundamental principles: equal right to worship; recognition of Dalits as equal human beings; and abolition of untouchability in religious institutions. The satyagraha attracted national attention and represented one of the earliest mass movements led by Ambedkar. However, despite prolonged protests and disciplined organization, the temple authorities and orthodox Hindu society refused to admit Dalits.

The failure of the movement profoundly influenced Ambedkar's subsequent thinking.

Reassessment of Temple Entry

The repeated refusal of caste Hindus to accept Dalits as equals led Ambedkar to question the effectiveness of temple-entry movements. He gradually realized that the problem of caste extended far beyond access to temples.

He observed that even if Dalits were permitted to enter temples, the fundamental structure of caste society would remain unchanged. They would still face discrimination in education, employment, housing, access to public resources, marriage and political representation. Ambedkar therefore began asking a fundamental question: Would entry into temples make Dalits socially equal? His answer became increasingly clear—it would not. Temple entry could remove one visible symbol of untouchability, but it could not destroy the social and economic foundations of caste.

Self-Respect over Religious Acceptance

As his thinking matured, Ambedkar emphasized self-respect rather than acceptance by caste Hindus. He questioned why Dalits should seek admission into institutions where they were regarded as inferior.

He argued that genuine liberation could never depend upon the goodwill of those who upheld caste hierarchy. Instead, Dalits should concentrate on building their own strength through education, organization, political participation and economic advancement.

His famous slogan—"Educate, Agitate, Organize"—captured this new direction. Rather than investing energy in seeking symbolic recognition, Ambedkar urged Dalits to acquire knowledge, develop leadership and struggle for political power and constitutional rights. For Ambedkar, dignity could not be bestowed by temple authorities; it had to be achieved through self-assertion and social transformation.

Critique of Hindu Social Order

Ambedkar's reassessment of temple-entry movements led him to a deeper critique of Hinduism itself. He argued that untouchability was not an accidental distortion of Hindu society but a logical consequence of the caste system embedded in traditional Hindu religious texts and practices. He maintained that temple entry could never eliminate caste because caste was sustained by religious doctrines, hereditary hierarchy and notions of ritual purity and pollution. Unless these foundations were dismantled, symbolic reforms would merely conceal deeper inequalities. This conviction found its fullest expression in his celebrated work Annihilation of Caste, in which he argued that caste could not be abolished without fundamentally rejecting the religious principles that sustained it.

Difference with Mahatma Gandhi

Ambedkar's position differed significantly from that of Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi strongly supported temple-entry movements and campaigned against untouchability. However, he viewed these movements primarily as efforts to purify and reform Hindu society while preserving its religious framework.

Ambedkar believed that this approach failed to confront the structural basis of caste. In his view, abolishing untouchability without abolishing caste was impossible. Temple entry might improve appearances, but it would not alter the unequal distribution of social status, economic resources, or political power.

This fundamental disagreement reflected their broader differences regarding caste, social reform and the future of Hindu society.

From Temple Entry to Religious Conversion

By the mid-1930s, Ambedkar had largely abandoned temple-entry campaigns. In 1935, at Yeola, he made his historic declaration: "I was born a Hindu, but I will not die a Hindu." This statement represented a decisive break with his earlier hope of reforming Hindu society from within. Over the next two decades, Ambedkar devoted his energies to securing constitutional safeguards, political representation, educational advancement, labour rights and social justice for the oppressed. His search for a religion based on liberty, equality and fraternity culminated in his conversion to Navayana Buddhism in 1956, together with several hundred thousand followers. For Ambedkar, conversion was not merely a change of religious identity; it was a rejection of caste oppression and an affirmation of human dignity.

Contemporary Relevance

Ambedkar's analysis continues to shape contemporary debates on caste and social justice. Although constitutional guarantees now prohibit untouchability and many temples have formally opened their doors to Dalits, discrimination continues in various forms in many parts of India. His writings remind us that genuine equality cannot be achieved through symbolic inclusion alone. Social justice requires equal access to education, economic opportunities, land, political representation, legal protection and human dignity. Temple entry may signify the rejection of one form of discrimination, but it cannot substitute for the broader struggle against structural inequality.

Conclusion

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's views on temple-entry movements underwent a profound transformation. He initially regarded them as an important instrument for asserting equality and exposing the injustice of untouchability. However, experience convinced him that temple entry alone could neither eradicate caste nor secure genuine freedom for Dalits.

His mature philosophy emphasized that the struggle for dignity must extend beyond religious institutions to encompass education, political empowerment, economic justice, constitutional rights and the complete annihilation of caste. Ultimately, Ambedkar concluded that self-respect and equality could not be achieved merely by entering temples but by transforming the social order itself. His journey from leading temple-entry movements to embracing Buddhism reflects one of the most significant intellectual and political developments in modern Indian history. It underscores his unwavering commitment to liberty, equality, fraternity and the creation of a society free from caste-based oppression.

Source: Counter Currents

How India's caste system persists across the globe

Jenna Gadbois



The 2023 movie "Origin" is a biographical drama that focuses on writer Isabel Wilkerson as she sets out to research the book that would eventually become "Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents."

The main character in Ava DuVernay's film is propelled by the killing of Trayvon Martin as she tries to understand why some humans subjugate others. She spends time in the US South. She goes to Germany to understand Nazi policy during World War II. And then, she's goes to India where she asks, "Why is the statue caged?" while looking at a statue of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the leader of the so-called "untouchable" class, the Dalits, since it's enclosed behind fencing. "This is the time when he had just completed the task of drafting India's constitution. You will find these statues all across the country," explained the man she was with, Suraj Yengde. He was acting, but in real life, he is also one of the world's leading authorities on caste. He discussed caste as a global phenomenon with The World's Host Marco Werman.

Marco Werman: Suraj Yengde, how do you define caste?

Suraj Yengde: Caste has evolved in the way we've understood it as a system of organizing a society. Today it continues, but in a very secular, globalized capitalist context. It's essentially a hierarchy that you inherit and you live through it. It operates in prominent democracies, as well as utilizes the gender dynamics to maintain a civicness of a society, thereby producing elements of outcast communities across the world.

Yeah and the so-called untouchables are the Dalits, the lowest strata in the Indian caste system. Can you explain this concept of untouchability and how it's been viewed over time and ultimately, I think, rejected?

Over time, what it essentially did was codify it as a regulated arc of organizing a society. They were creating a swath of humanity, very, very brutally, kind of organized in a way that legitimizes the dominance of a group by creating a group of untouchables. So, untouchables really became identified with a caste and the caste then continued as a stigma over several generations and today, we have that notion of untouchables, not just in India, [but in] South Asia. It has to be looked through the phases of colonization in the past 200 to 300 years. Slavery has produced it here in the W e
stern Hemisphere and we see that happening also in Latin America.

How does caste appear today in India? Like what would be the daily manifestations of caste if you were ascribed to the Dalit caste?

India essentially equates [everything] and makes it synonymous with caste. Everything in the political structure is around caste. Prime Minister [Narendra] Modi, for example, announced himself as someone who belongs to a particular caste that doesn't belong to [the] dominant community. So, every affair, right from education, your religious institution, the jobs you get, is surrounded through the penetrating ideas, as well as the thoughts of caste at work today. So, as a Dalit, for example, access to basic education, access to jobs, as well as access to respectable political positions are challenged because the gaze of the dominant community looks at untouchables still as these filthy, undeserving people who are among us.

So Suraj, you consider yourself Dalit, correct?

That's right.

What does that mean to you when you're in India and when you're not in India?

When I go to India, the viscerality of that experience really comes [out], even though I want to push back and challenge it. But it's no guarantee that the other person is looking at me the same way.

He may not look at me as someone who is an Ivy League professor, an author, an actor, whatnot. He or she is still casting down that gaze of patronage. It's painful because they are not necessarily looking at the humanity here, but they are more looking at the insecurity that I bring to the position that they hold, which is to say that the untouchables are undeserving.These are people who are from the quota communities. They came here because there was a reservation.

They got fewer marks. This whole idea of meritocracy, you know, looks down. When I'm not in India, for example, it's a different ballgame because then I have more freedom to articulate my views and there's nobody saying, "Oh, but you belong to this caste." That's not the kind of conversation I'm having.

Just a second ago, you mentioned B.R. Ambedkar. We discussed the clip earlier from Ava DuVernay's "Origin," and you're in the movie explaining the statue of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. The statue's behind a cage because it's constantly vandalized. Who was B.R. Ambedkar and why that cage?

B.R. Ambedkar was someone who drafted India's constitution. It happens to be the world's largest, longest written constitution and it draws inspiration from the liberalism that exists across the world and America was one of them. He was the first untouchable who was born in 1891 to go to school, to matriculate from the Bombay province and then he came to Columbia. He's a proud alumni of Columbia, gets his doctorate there and then goes to London School of Economics, gets a second doctorate. So, it's almost like an anomaly who comes out of the trenches of the caste system and buried with the heavy weight of untouchability, breaks through it and really becomes this standing icon.



In your book, "Caste: A Global Story," you make this connection from Ambedkar to really, if not the rest of the world, to the United States. You write that 20th-century scholars of caste like Ambedkar became fascinated with Black literature and the Black liberation movement in the United States. What were the parallels?

The Black movement, for example, by the 19th century itself, was global in nature. As in, the abolitionists here in this part of the world where I'm right now, in the New England area, were really advocating through these channels of common wealth. And so, as a result, the liberation of Black people was very well reported and documented.

And Ambedkar, being a product of what was happening during the Harlem Renaissance, we see that there are so many parallels he sees and he makes a remarkable argument to say that untouchables here were the surplus labor.

Whereas here in the Black conditions a of post-slave society, they were this kind of mass exodus of people from South to North and that's what they created this kind of new civilization. His mentor, John Dewey, for example, was somebody who wrote about this in Chicago and other regions, creating a new post-migrant society. So, the Black struggle in this sense was really acting as a solidarity for Ambedkar. And he was a celebrity within the Black academic culture. He was invited to Fisk University.

He was reported about in Black newspapers, which I also write about as to how they capture this imagination. But somehow, that work is eclipsed by this dominance of looking through this religious nationalism that kind of takes place through Christianity here in America, through the Quaker movement and the Hindu movement led by [Mahatma] Gandhi.

So, this kind of Gandhi-led affliction really promotes this kind of nonviolent move undermining Ambedkar, who was essentially leading a more prosperous and subaltern groundswell of the people who were not having voices.

I've got a quote from your book I'd like to read, Suraj. "We cannot speak of caste as a common ancestral practice that originates in one country and replicates similarly elsewhere. To do so is to ignore the ability of caste to reproduce itself as a system that accommodates itself to local customs and introduces its hierarchical logic as a justifiable practice of old." So how does caste reproduce itself outside of India?

I mean, you look at the Indian labor, for example, in America, right? Who are these people? What's their composition? Because when you go to India, in any college or any education institution, caste follows you. And if you are somebody who doesn't have to carry the caste certificate, that means you are from the dominant caste community. Nevertheless, the demography is very diverse.

So, people who graduate from all engineering colleges or even medical colleges or any institutions, when they essentially come to America as an H-1B laborer or a laborer within various visa categories, they come here and live within that echo chamber because [the] American system recognizes this racial disparity but doesn't adequately pay attention to these intra-community caste-like systems. And that's why it's not just India or South Asia.

It also occurs and happens in [the] Caribbean. That's where one part of my book takes us.

The quote I read is from your chapter about the Dalit diaspora in Trinidad in the Caribbean, as you said. Many Dalits who came to Trinidad saw an opportunity to distance themselves from the caste system that placed them at the bottom of the rung in India. At the same time, many of them assert a Hindu identity as a way of staying connected to their heritage, especially in a place with strong Christian influence like Trinidad. Hinduism has a strong connection with caste. So, what role does caste play for Indo-Trinidadian life?

More than 38% of Indo-Trinidadians are from the Dalit background. They were the descendants of untouchables. And it makes sense, right? Why would you leave a place, the alluvial soil and the riches of your own country and go far away to a distant island which you don't even know?



It is because of these tremors of caste system that untouchables voluntarily choose to cross across this multiple oceans to reach Trinidad and form a big corpus of Indo-Trinidadian population. But the Hinduism that they practiced is not this necessarily Brahmin caste Hinduism.
For them, Hinduism was very much a memory, a distant realization of their ancestry.
So, they would recite various Ram-related kathas, the "Ramayanas," and so forth, which was not Brahminic in nature because it was subaltern Hinduism, if you know what I mean.
And then, there were lots of Hindu dominant caste activities that proliferated them into becoming more Hindu by presenting Christianity as a counter.
And thus, kind of within these two kinds of challenges and schisms, many untouchables assimilated into this kind of Hindu order and many of them eventually changed their names to higher caste names.
So today, if somebody in Trinidad or Guyana or Suriname identifies as an Indian of a higher caste, most likely they may not be that.

Oh, interesting. Just looking further afield, I was listening to a scholar recently arguing that the value to external forces of a Palestinian child in Gaza is the same as that of a Black child in the US South. Would you argue that caste shows up in both of those situations?

Absolutely. In fact, in the movie "Origin," even I kind of make that comparison. It's the same system that we see in operation. The genius of the caste system is [that] it exists, yet there is no adequate language to capaciously challenge this, to really assimilate the experience of everyday people.
That's why these comparisons that we see are often thrown around as categories like race and race-like, which is not adequate to understand the rest of the world.

why if you look at the experience of a Black child here in America or a Palestinian child in Gaza and elsewhere, we see [the] same phenomena of repeated oppression that is based on this inherited hierarchy where one group establishes its unchallenged supremacy while creating a punishing system and experience for [the] majority.

And finally, just to return to the movie "Origin," I saw a clip of you recently with Ava DuVernay on the red carpet at Cannes when the film premiered a few years ago.
There's now discussion of caste on social media and I wonder what has bringing this difficult and complex topic of caste into the arena of popular cinema and culture done to move the needle?

I think that movie is really a great statement on what art and what creativity can do. And I think many people are now coming to terms [with it].
It tells us that the American conscience is ready to understand and there are solidarities, especially among Dalits, the Black, the Native Americans. And if they are not as prominent, we ought to make them now.
And let the 21st century — like [W.E.B.] Du Bois said, the 20th century was going to be a century where the world will wrestle with [the] color problem.
My hope is the 21st century will wrestle with the caste problem that exists around the world.

Source: The World



'Government, do you see caste or people?' Dalit activist marks 96 days of sit-in

Pabitra Sunar

Deepa Nepali, a young Dalit woman, completed 96 days of her sit-in protest at Maitighar on 23rd July, demanding an end to caste-based discrimination in rental housing. Despite more than three months of continuous protest, she says the government has yet to take meaningful action. Nepali, who began her protest on April 19, is calling for legal provisions to prevent landlords from asking prospective tenants about their caste before renting out rooms. She alleges that instead of introducing the necessary legal reforms through dialogue, the government has turned a blind eye to the issue.

"The new government does not seem to view caste-based discrimination as a serious issue," she said. "It appears to be trying to ignore it altogether."

According to Nepali, the movement has received support from Dalits, socially conscious non-Dalit youths and other citizens, but the government has failed to respond adequately. About a month after the protest began, Home Minister Sudan Gurung met the protesters and assured them that caste-based discrimination in room rentals would be addressed. She said the issue was also discussed with lawmaker Khagendra Sunar, but no meaningful negotiations followed. "When we raised the issue of negotiations, he simply said, 'I can't do it,' and left," she said. Several lawmakers have repeatedly raised the issue in Parliament, but the government has yet to take it seriously, Nepali said.

Despite repeated requests to meet the Prime Minister and the Home Minister, the protesters say they have not been invited for formal talks.

On 22 July, Minister for Women, Children, Gender and Sexual Minorities and Social Security Sita Badi and Rastriya Swatantra Party whip Prakash Chandra Pariyar met the protesters. However, Nepali said the meeting fell short of their expectations. "We had a general discussion with a deputy minister from the Ministry of Home Affairs, Pariyar and Badi. What we need is formal government-level talks and a concrete commitment," she said. Nepali also accused the government of remaining insensitive to the discrimination faced by Dalits and persons with disabilities. "There should be government-level negotiations with an official negotiation team. Instead, we have had only superficial discussions," she said. She expressed appreciation for the solidarity shown by Gen-Z youths, Dalit activists and socially conscious citizens. "Many non-Dalit youths came to apologize and express solidarity. They acknowledged that the Dalit community continues to face discrimination," she said.

Nepali said she would end her protest only after the government announces a date for formal talks on caste-based discrimination in rental housing.

Protesters at Maitighar have been displaying placards bearing slogans such as, "Is the room vacant, Government?", "My caste is human. Is yours too?" and "Government, do you see caste or people?"

She believes caste-based discrimination in rental housing can be eliminated by amending the Caste-based Discrimination and Untouchability (Offence and Punishment) Act to include stronger legal provisions.

Deepa moved to Kathmandu seven years ago to pursue higher education and prepare for a government job. However, after repeatedly facing caste-based discrimination while renting rooms, she decided to launch a campaign for justice.

"Sometimes I was evicted after landlords learned my caste. At other times, I faced physical violence. Now it is time to fight the final battle and end this discrimination once and for all," she said. She is currently pursuing two legal cases against former landlords.

One involves government employee Krisha Bidari and his wife, from whom she rented a room in 2076 BS. The other is against Prabin Maharjan and Anjali Maharjan of Kirtipur, who allegedly evicted her about six months ago after learning her caste through social media.

Nepali, who comes from a poor Dalit family, said she completed her LLB despite financial hardship. She added that her aspirations have changed as a result of the discrimination she has endured while renting rooms in Kathmandu.

Source: MyRepublica



Vivek Bhoomi

55 dead in five months: India's manual scavenging crisis persists

In March 2014, the Supreme Court delivered its judgment in Safai Karamchari Andolan vs Union of India, a landmark ruling meant to protect the lives of India's sewer and septic tank workers – overwhelmingly Dalit – who clear the country's waste with their bare hands and bodies. The verdict capped more than a decade of litigation and directed the government to fully implement the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013, which had been passed the previous year. More than a decade on, that promise remains largely on paper. Despite the legislation and repeated Supreme Court directives, successive governments, regardless of which party is in power, have failed to enforce it and the deaths have not stopped. According to a recent survey by the Dalit Adivasi Shakti Adhikar Manch (DASAM), at least 55 sanitation workers died between February and June 2026 while cleaning sewers and septic tanks across the country. Eighteen of those deaths were recorded in June alone, nine of them in Delhi. In a statement issued in New Delhi on June 29, DASAM condemned what it called the continuing deaths of sanitation workers during the hazardous manual cleaning of sewers, septic tanks, sewage treatment plants, open drains, manholes and other confined sanitation spaces.

These deaths, the organisation said, expose a brutal reality shaped by caste violence, contractor exploitation, institutional negligence, weak law enforcement and systemic state failure, despite the legal prohibition under the 2013 Act, repeated Supreme Court directives mandating mechanisation and constitutional guarantees of equality, dignity and life.

A drain in Mumbai, a tank in Delhi

On February 4, 2026, Shamim Razak Gazi, 26, a contract labourer with the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation's (BMC) sewerage operations department, died while cleaning a 25-foot-deep drain in Goregaon, Mumbai. He was overcome by toxic fumes and then caught in a sudden gush of water. A second worker survived after being rescued.

Months later, on June 26, three more men died the same way. DASAM's fact-finding team visited the families of Arun, Sandeep and Chand on June 27 at their rented homes in the Indra Jheel area of Sultanpuri, after the men were killed cleaning a septic tank at Marwah Printers in Delhi's Mundka Industrial Area.“According to testimony, the workers first drained the water from the tank and were then pressured by the contractor to manually remove sludge from inside it,” DASAM said. “Sandeep entered first and collapsed due to toxic gases. Arun entered to rescue him and also collapsed. Chand entered trying to save both and also lost consciousness. All three died.” All three were the sole breadwinners of their households, leaving behind children, spouses and elderly parents now facing acute economic uncertainty.DASAM's preliminary findings point to clear violations of the Manual Scavenging Act, labour safety law and Supreme Court directives on sewer deaths. “These incidents reveal that workers continue to be sent into toxic confined spaces without oxygen support, gas detectors, breathing apparatus, protective gear, harnesses, or emergency rescue systems,” the organisation said, adding that what it calls “rescue-chain deaths” – where one worker after another goes in to save a colleague and is overcome – continue to claim multiple lives in single incidents. The team recorded testimonies from family members covering not just the sequence of events, but also the workers' employment conditions and how the authorities responded after the tragedy. Family members said the men were sent into the tank with no protective equipment, no safety harnesses, no oxygen supply and no gas-detection devices of any kind. “These deaths contradict official claims that manual scavenging has been eliminated and mechanisation implemented,” DASAM said.

“In reality, many deaths are never officially recorded as manual scavenging deaths and are instead misclassified as workplace accidents, toxic gas exposure, industrial accidents, drowning or contractor negligence and remain underreported or undocumented, allowing authorities to evade accountability,” it added.

A case with no FIR

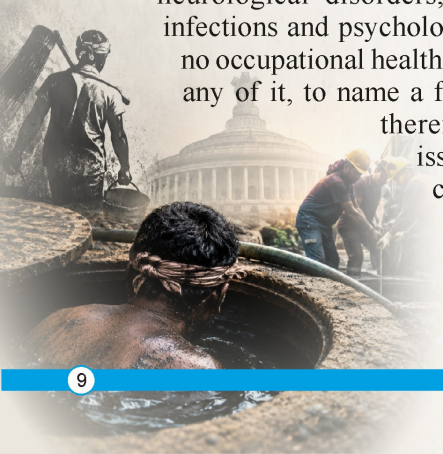
DASAM has also flagged what it calls serious anomalies in the case of Vinod Kumar, a sanitation worker who died in New Ashok Nagar in May 2026 while cleaning a septic tank. His co-worker, Dharmendra, was seriously injured in the same incident. The organisation's fact-finding found the family was refused a copy of the first information report (FIR), with no clarity offered on what legal provisions had been invoked, no information on any arrests and no effort made to fix criminal liability.

Investigators appeared instead to shift blame onto the workers themselves. Most strikingly, DASAM said, authorities failed to invoke either the Manual Scavenging Act or the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, despite the case's evident caste dimensions. This, DASAM said, is not an isolated lapse but a pattern. Police routinely decline to register FIRs under the Manual Scavenging Act, treating such deaths instead as accidents or negligence. Most sanitation workers are hired through informal contractors or subcontractors, with no written contracts, no insurance, no healthcare and no social security.

That layer of contracting is what allows the system to function with near-total impunity, where employers deny responsibility, municipal bodies distance themselves, contractors disappear and prosecutions, let alone convictions, remain rare, it said. Compensation, where it exists, follows the same pattern of neglect. The Supreme Court has directed that families of sewer and septic tank deaths receive Rs 30 lakh in compensation, but DASAM said many never receive it at all, while others get it late, in part, or through informal settlements outside any formal process. Long-term rehabilitation, such as government jobs, pensions, housing, education for children and alternative livelihoods, is, the group said, "largely absent," leaving already vulnerable Dalit and working-class families pushed further into poverty.

The toll beyond death

The damage is not confined to those who die. DASAM points to a wider and largely undocumented burden of harm carried by sanitation workers who survive. Respiratory illness, lung damage, skin disease, neurological disorders, chemical burns, chronic infections and psychological trauma, with virtually no occupational health monitoring in place to track any of it, to name a few. "Manual scavenging is therefore not merely a labour issue but a manifestation of caste hierarchy, untouchability, structural violence, economic coercion and institutional discrimination," the organisation said.



What DASAM is demanding

DASAM has called for the immediate registration of FIRs in every sanitation worker death, invoking the Manual Scavenging Act, relevant provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), labour law and the SC/ST Act, alongside independent, time-bound judicial inquiries into each case.

It wants the immediate arrest of contractors, employers and officials found responsible, a minimum of Rs 30 lakh in compensation for every affected family, government jobs for dependents and full rehabilitation covering housing, pensions, education and livelihood support. The organisation is also demanding complete mechanisation of sewer and septic tank cleaning, a nationwide audit of sanitation practices across municipalities and private industry, criminal accountability for institutions that permit hazardous manual cleaning and a total ban on subcontracting sanitation work to unregulated labour intermediaries. Central to its demands is a call to stop the systematic misclassification of these deaths.

DASAM wants every sewer and septic tank death formally registered as a case of manual scavenging, rather than being recorded as negligence, accidental drowning, a workplace accident or toxic gas exposure. "Such misclassification systematically erodes legal accountability and enables impunity," the organisation said, calling for mandatory training for police, district administrations, labour departments, municipal bodies and judicial authorities on how the Manual Scavenging Act is meant to be applied.

DASAM has also urged the creation of dedicated monitoring committees at the national, state and district levels to track and prevent manual scavenging, enforce mechanisation and oversee compliance by municipalities and private companies, alongside strict punitive action, including criminal prosecution, blacklisting, contract cancellation and licence revocation, against contractors, employers and officials found responsible for repeated violations.

A constitutional violation: DASAM

DASAM argued that these continuing deaths amount to caste-based structural violence, violating Article 14 (equality before law), Article 17 (abolition of untouchability), Article 21 (right to life and dignity) and Article 23 (protection from forced labour) of the Constitution. "Sanitation workers are still being forced to enter toxic sewers and septic tanks with their bare bodies despite laws, court orders and technological alternatives," the organisation said. "The deaths continue," its survey report concludes, "because there is no deterrence and little accountability."

Source: Siasat



Christian children in Sri Lanka subject to bullying, discrimination, report says

Edward Ross

Some Christian schoolchildren in Sri Lanka, especially children of non-traditional church pastors, are targeted by both bullies and teachers for their faith, according to a study by the National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka (NCEASL).

Between 2023 and 2025, the NCEASL found multiple incidents of religious freedom violations against children of minority religions in the majority Buddhist country, including discriminatory practices, acts of intimidation and physical violence, often linked to religious tension in the localities, according to the alliance recent report, "Growing Up Believing: Explorinig Children' Right to Freedom of Religion or Belief in Sri Lanka."

The study found Christian children face "bullying from peers and targeting by teachers, with children of pastors of non-traditional churches being more vulnerable to discrimination and bullying. This includes teachers scolding Christian students for attending church, forbidding them from reading their Bibles during breaks and making them attend school on Sundays."

In one incident, a student was coerced into participating in non-Christian rituals at school and threatened by teachers with expulsion for refusing, the report notes.

Apart from school, in some of the incidents of violence against Christians, children were indirect victims when their parents or churches were targeted. In one incident in 2025, non-Christian religious leaders who demanded a pastor's church be discontinued in Hambantota District subjected his 12-year-old son to intimidation when he was alone at home, the report stated.

In another instance in 2025, 11 members of a church, including two girls, were physically assaulted during a protest by villagers against a church in Gampaha District. Likewise, in 2024 the 14-year-old son of a Christian pastor was assaulted along with some of the pastors of the church in Nuwara Eliya District.

The population in Sri Lanka is 68.6 percent Buddhist, 12.9 percent Hindu, 10.5 percent Muslim and 7.6 percent Christian, according to the Joshua Project. At least 80 percent of the Christians are estimated to be Roman Catholic.

Religion is a compulsory subject for students sitting for the General Certificate of Education (Ordinary Level) exam in Sri Lanka, with Buddhism, Saivanery (devotion to Lord Shiva in Hinduism), Roman Catholicism, non-Roman Catholic Christianity and Islam being the available options.

"While this curriculum is designed to reflect the country's religious diversity, it can raise concerns regarding the protection of a child's freedom of religion, belief and conscience," the NCEASL reported states. "In cases where a parent's/student's religion is not one of the available options for study or there is no qualified teacher available to teach the parent's/child's preferred religion, the child may be compelled to study and sit for an examination on a religion they do not adhere to."

Such instances within a system of compulsory requirement can be seen as a violation of the child's right to religious freedom and potentially create an environment of discomfort or alienation for students whose beliefs differ from the prescribed curriculum, according to the report.

"Due to a shortage of Christian teachers and insufficient funding to onboard them, there have been reports of Christian children forced to study and follow Buddhist or Hindu rituals in schools, leading to harassment, bullying and poor academic performance," it notes, adding that there were some cases where Christian children were denied admission to schools in violation of Education Ministry Circulars.

The Human Rights Committee in the country has emphasized that religious instruction should respect the beliefs of parents or guardians who do not adhere to a particular religion. While law does not mandate private schools to teach religion, it is generally included in most schools.

In an NCEASL survey that reached teachers in 22 out of the 25 districts, 17 percent of the respondents reported instances of students being pressured or coerced into participating in religious activities outside their own faith.

"These teachers taught in schools based in 14 districts – Mannar, Batticaloa, Kilinochchi, Hambantota, Ampara, Polonnaruwa, Kandy, Anuradhapura, Ratnapura, Vavuniya, Trincomalee, Kegalle, Galle and Mullaitivu – indicating that coercion and violations of religious freedom in schools are not confined to a single locality," the report states.

The teachers provided examples such as attendance at Catholic Mass for all students, compulsory attendance at Hindu, Muslim and Buddhist religious events, compelling Christian students to wear pottus, forcing non-Buddhist children to bring oil, flowers and incense sticks for Buddhist religious events and participate in them.

"One teacher from a government school in Ampara shared that a Hindu male student who wanted to attend Christian worship on a Friday and went to a Church was punished by a Hindu science teacher," the report states.

Schools should follow a "do no harm" approach, allowing children to participate in religious instruction voluntarily rather than being forced, the report states, citing Article 18(2) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which protects people from coercion in matters of religion or belief.

Article 18(4) of the ICCPR protects the parents' rights to educate their children according to their own religious convictions.



The study found Christian children face "bullying from peers and targeting by teachers, with children of pastors of non-traditional churches being more vulnerable to discrimination and bullying.

This includes teachers scolding Christian students for attending church, forbidding them from reading their Bibles during breaks and making them attend school on Sundays."

"With regard to the freedom to manifest one's religion or belief, both its positive and negative aspects must be equally protected: the right to express one's beliefs and the right to be free from any pressure, particularly from State authorities or within State institutions, to engage in religious activities against one's will," the report states.

The survey found 79 percent of respondents stated that all students in the school were allowed to attend religious instruction classes that align with their own or parents' religion; 6 percent stated that only some students have access to instruction in their own religion, citing the primary cause for it as lack of qualified teachers for certain religions, limited student numbers from specific religious groups and lack of government or school support for instruction in minority religions.

Source: Christian Daily





What India's student uprising asks of Hindus

Sunita Viswanath

On July 20, I stayed up all night watching terrifying livestreams from Delhi. Student protesters including teenagers faced tear gas and police batons as they tried to march toward the parliament building demanding an accountable education system in the wake of repeated exam failures and a chief justice calling unemployed youth activists "cockroaches." For more than a decade, through Hindus for Human Rights, I have tried to mobilize Hindus in India and the diaspora against the erosion of civil rights, minority rights and democracy under the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, whose politics are rooted in the Hindu nationalist ideology of Hindutva. The ideology uses Hindu identity to justify majoritarian rule and can make equality feel, to some Hindus, less like justice than the loss of a privileged place. Hindus must take note: This uprising is different. This protest reached deep into the Hindu constituency Hindutva claims — Hindu and middle-class families — and then refused the communal politics Hindutva offered.

This protest is different because it showed that Hindus can be mobilized in large numbers, in solidarity with people whom Hindu nationalism has taught us to see as outsiders. For weeks, the protesters confronted failures that reached directly into their homes: leaks of exam answers, cancelled exams, joblessness and a disappearing future. Yet they did not turn that grievance into a narrow or exclusionary politics. Their Cockroach Janta Party began as satire after Chief Justice Surya Kant used the word "cockroaches" in remarks widely understood as contempt for unemployed youth. Abhijeet Dipke, a Dalit Indian graduate student in Boston, answered with a meme: "What if all cockroaches unite?" The joke became a movement.

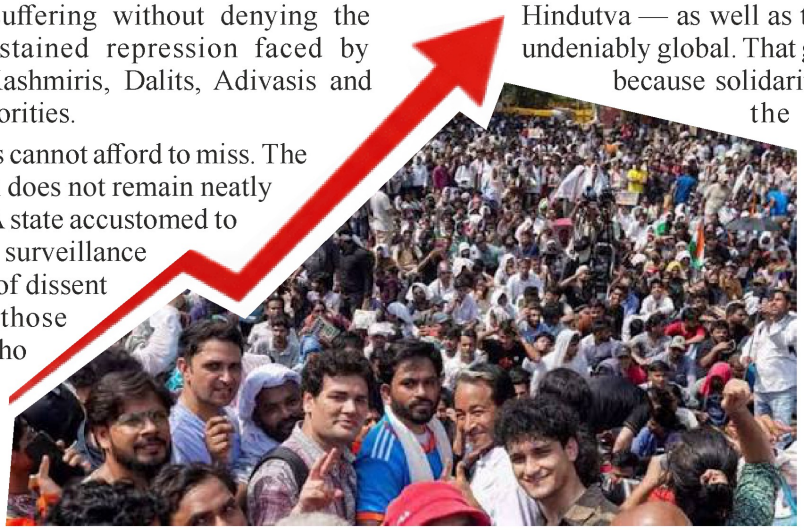
Over weeks online and then in person, Indian youth built a movement in which Hindu identity, constitutional democracy, anti-caste politics and interfaith solidarity could share the same stage. At Jantar Mantar, Delhi's most iconic road for protests near the parliament, protesters carried roses and copies of the constitution. They sang, danced and mocked a government that cultivated an image of invincibility. Some went on hunger strikes. After weeks of protest and the July 20 brutal police crackdown, Minister of Education Dharmendra Pradhan resigned on July 25, a rare concession from a government that has seldom yielded to public pressure.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's India has seen courageous resistance before. Muslim women sat round-the-clock through the winter at Shaheen Bagh to oppose the discriminatory Citizenship Amendment Act. Students at Jamia Millia Islamia and Jawaharlal Nehru University resisted police violence. Farmers camped outside Delhi for a year and forced the repeal of three agricultural laws. Dalit students have repeatedly challenged caste violence and institutional discrimination. But the government and its supporters found ways to isolate each of those movements. Muslim protesters were called "jihadists." Sikh farmers were called "Khalistanis." Students were branded "urban Naxals," a term trying to link them to far-left insurgencies. The identities of the protesters became a weapon used to distract from their demands.

The youth "cockroach" movement was harder to label and contain. Young Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Dalits and people from many regions stood together. Student leaders shared space with young people who had never joined a protest. The Hindu epic "Ramcharitmanas" and the constitution appeared on the same stage. "Jai Bhim," a salute to Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, the Dalit leader who helped write India's Constitution, rang out alongside bhajans and popular music. I watched on livestream a Muslim student dancing joyfully to a Hanuman bhajan. Hindutva politics often present constitutional secularism and Hindu civilizational identity as competing visions of India. Gandhi and Ambedkar, too, are frequently placed on opposing sides of India's political memory.

Yet at Jantar Mantar, protesters invoked both. Almost every speech began with "Jai Bhim," a salute to Ambedkar. The hunger strike and other aspects of the peaceful protest or "satyagraha" invoked Gandhi. The students refused to be divided. They showed that Hindu participation in public life need not require anyone else's humiliation. They also showed that young Hindus can recognize their own suffering without denying the harsher and more sustained repression faced by Muslims, Christians, Kashmiris, Dalits, Adivasis and other dissenters and minorities.

This is the lesson Hindus cannot afford to miss. The machinery of repression does not remain neatly confined to minorities. A state accustomed to demolitions, detention, surveillance and the criminalization of dissent will eventually turn those tools against anyone who threatens concentrated power. When Hindu students were beaten, many middle-class families witnessed the machinery of repression firsthand. That recognition should deepen solidarity, not shrink it. State retaliation against students has continued unabated despite the minister's resignation. Despite the government's promise to withdraw cases against peaceful protesters, arrests, detentions and police violence have continued to be reported in several states. We have now seen footage of police brutality and arrests of students in Bihar, Goa, Assam and beyond. In fact, police in Bihar fired AK-47s at students. India's upper castes and middle classes are horrified by this violence because Hindus are not being spared. Unsurprisingly though, India's minorities have faced the most sustained and severe forms of extreme violence and state targeting. The movement's victory will be fragile if India celebrates one minister's resignation and abandons students facing intimidation, surveillance or legal cases. It will become smaller if Hindu participants return home without acknowledging the Muslim, Dalit, Sikh and Christian movements that preserved India's democratic conscience through far more isolating years. Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam, Muslim student activists associated with the movement against the Citizenship Amendment Act, remain imprisoned without trial. Their fate is part of this story too. Hindus of conscience now have a responsibility. We can speak about these protests in temples, family WhatsApp groups, community organizations and diaspora institutions. We can support legal defense for targeted students, challenge the use of Hindu symbols to justify state violence and refuse efforts to split this movement along religious or caste lines. At solidarity gatherings abroad, I saw Hindus who had rarely joined an Indian political protest stand beside Muslims, Sikhs, Christians and secular Indians. Some feared consequences for their families or their ability to return to India. They came anyway. This uprising initiated by an international student in Boston has grown into a large and unusually inclusive movement in India and returned to our shores in the U.S. in the form of huge solidarity rallies. The hatred and violence of Hindutva — as well as the resistance to it — are undeniably global. That global circulation matters because solidarity does not have to look the same everywhere. In Delhi, it meant sleeping at the protest site, enduring the heat and practicing nonviolent resistance in the face of police brutality. In the diaspora, it meant turning up outside consulates, calling journalists, translating testimony, raising legal funds and speaking in family and community spaces where silence is often mistaken for neutrality. These acts are not equivalent, but they can strengthen one another. The students also gave us a language that traveled. "Main bhi cockroach" (I'm a cockroach too) was funny, defiant and instantly understood. It allowed people to recognize themselves in the struggle before they had mastered every detail. Humor opened the door; the students' courage and demands kept people there. That combination created something rare: a movement rooted in a specific injustice but capable of gathering a much wider public around questions of dignity, fairness and the future. We should not underestimate the value of that wider public. Movements need committed organizers, but they also need to meet and welcome people where they are and mobilize them. The work now is to keep those relationships alive across borders and generations. We in the diaspora now have a concrete example of a way to resist Hindutva together, refusing to be divided. The "Bhagavad Gita" names "abhaya," freedom from fear, as the first quality of a divine nature. We saw it in young people carrying handmade signs, sharing food in the Delhi heat and returning after being beaten. My prayer is that Hindus in India and throughout the diaspora remain beside them. Let us carry Tulsidas and the constitution together. Let "Jai Bhim" be heard in our satyagraha. Let us defend those whom the state finds easiest to isolate. Let us help the opening created at Jantar Mantar grow into a country where no one has to starve, bleed or surrender years of freedom simply to be heard and a diaspora and a world where we see the interconnection of all oppression and all resistance.



Source: Religion News



Dalits' gathering demands social reforms for minority communities

A big gathering of Dalits, belonging to the Meghwar community, held in Mirpur Mathelo, Ghotki district, demanded social reforms to ensure resolution of their issues pertaining to education, youth development, social behaviour and family relations, besides facilitation of minority communities' traditions and customs.

The gathering was held in connection with the country's Independence Day and provided the participants an opportunity to highlight their issues.

Heads of Sukkur division Panchayats, saints and elders attended the gathering and expressed their views. They identified the social challenges being faced by members of the community.

The speakers said that community development could not be ensured by merely holding ceremonial functions or resolving disputes. They stressed that issues like education, employment and social behavior must be addressed.

The first session of the gathering was devoted to speeches on the Independence Day. A cake was cut to mark the occasion and the participants prayed for peace, prosperity, stability and progress of the country.

The gathering paid tribute to those members of the Meghwar community who were serving in the armed forces, police and government departments.

They noted that the minority community contributed significantly to national development and this must be recognised and encouraged.

In the second session, speakers focused on some of the pressing social issues confronting the community.

The participants took part in an extensive and candid debate on the need for reforms aimed at minority communities' welfare and facilitation of their traditions and customs amid changing realities.

Most of them
sed their concern over
sty marriages leading to early
breakups". They stressed that marriage should be decided after ensuring a serious and lasting social responsibility, rather than merely a family bond.

The growing use of drugs by youth at weddings and other social gatherings also came under strong criticism.

Greater parental responsibility, community awareness and collective action was stressed to protect the younger generation.

Education appeared to be the central theme of the debate. The participants stressed that children must be encouraged to get education by creating an understanding with them and through counselling and proper guidance.

Emphasis was placed on girls' education and creating opportunities for their higher education and social and economic empowerment.

Mukhis Babu Ram, Daryano Mal and Santosh Kumar; Ameet Kumar, Comrade Kishin, Vijesh Kumar Goyal and others were among those who spoke to the participants.

They called for collective thinking, greater participation of young people and the involvement of educated and socially conscious members of the community in shaping its future.

A significant step taken at the gathering was the decision to constitute committees comprising serious, responsible and socially conscious members to examine the issues and suggest practical measures to address the same.

Source: Dawn



UN Committee Flags Racial Profiling, Caste Discrimination and Ill-Treatment of Refugees in India

Ritvi Jain

The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) has called for urgent action against large-scale human rights violations by Indian law enforcement agencies against disadvantaged ethnic groups, indigenous and tribal communities, marginalised caste groups, Muslim migrants and asylum-seekers, while recommending a review of India's citizenship and migration frameworks.

In its concluding observations published on Tuesday (August 25), the committee noted that it had received reports of racially motivated violence, excessive use of force, extrajudicial killings, arbitrary and prolonged detention without due process, torture, ill-treatment and sexual violence during law enforcement operations in India. CERD has urged authorities to readily tackle the crisis through thorough and impartial investigations, prosecution of alleged perpetrators and reparations for the victims and their families. The committee said Police Complaints Authorities have been set up in 25 states and seven Union territories, with approximately 100 cases involving alleged human rights abuses during law and order operations pending before the judiciary.

CERD specifically called attention to the poor treatment of Rohingya, Bengali-speaking Muslims, migrants and asylum-seekers in India and noted that law enforcement operations had increased following an August 8, 2017, order by the home affairs ministry that treated Rohingyas as "illegal migrants." Hate crimes against Muslim asylum seekers also peaked significantly after the April 2025 Pahalgam attack in Kashmir. The committee's press release said "police stops and identity checks involving racial profiling had reportedly resulted in arbitrary arrest and detention without due process, as well as torture and ill-treatment." It cited allegations of forcible returns of people who lacked international protection, potentially violating the principle of non-refoulement, that prohibits the return of asylum seekers to places where they face serious risks. The report also flagged concerns about the state of detention facilities, the Matia Transit Camp in Assam in particular, with reports of overcrowding and inadequate food, drinking water, sanitation and medical care. It urged India to refrain from collective expulsions, to be more cognisant of detention conditions and investigate alleged abuses against migrants and asylum-seekers. New Delhi acknowledged the committee's press release on Wednesday and said it "rejects any politically motivated highly malicious references in the report with all the contempt that it deserves".

Concerns over citizenship and voter-roll revision

The committee questioned the implementation of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), 2019, its associated regulations and the National Register of Citizens (NRC), saying that the framework uses religious criteria to provide expedited citizenship to migrants and refugees through what it described as a complex procedure. It added that it had already raised the issue through its early-warning and urgent-action procedures in May 2025 and January 2026, but remained concerned about the plight of Bengali-speaking Muslims in Assam due to "systematic and structural racial discrimination" in the updating of the NRC. CERD said it was "gravely concerned" that such a selective and discriminatory implementation could lead to "mass arbitrary deprivation of citizenship." The committee said the NRC process was reportedly marked by procedural irregularities and difficulties in producing documents, including family records and birth certificates. Women and children were the worst affected. It also highlighted the unfair classification of Bengali-speaking Muslims as "non-original inhabitants" and the difficulties in accessing appeals before foreign tribunals.CERD recommended that the NRC exercise be suspended in India and the CAA reviewed. Furthermore, it pressed India to ratify the 1954 convention relation to the status of stateless persons and the 1961 convention on the reduction of statelessness.

The committee also raised concerns over the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, the current phase of which covers nine states and three UTs.



It said that approximately 52 million names had been removed across 12 states and UTs, including 9.1 million names in West Bengal ahead of the April 2026 assembly elections. Bengali-speaking Muslims were reportedly most disproportionately affected in Bengal and Assam. Lastly, the report flagged contentious statements made by senior officials in Assam and Bengal that it said conflated Muslim citizens with foreign nationals. It pushed for an independent inquiry into these irregularities and the usage of SIR to spread racist rhetoric. Caste discrimination. Another major concern cited by CERD was caste discrimination, stating that the Dalit community continued to face segregation and exclusion from shared public, religious and cultural spaces, with severely limited access to adequate infrastructure, healthcare, drinking water, sanitation, education and electricity. It highlighted reports of violence against inter-caste couples and caste-motivated "honour killings," gender-based violence against girls and women belonging to the Dalit community, bonded labour and the persistent correlation of the Dalit community with sewer and septic-tank cleaning. CERD noted that only 217 exclusive special courts were operating across 15 states and UTs for cases lodged under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, with a remarkably low prosecution rate and merely 18 cases of "untouchability" registered in 2024 under the Protection of Civil Rights Act. Of the 849 judges appointed since 2018, only 33 belonged to Schedule Castes (SCs). Meanwhile, only two chief justices in the previous 70 years has been members of the SC community, as per information cited in the report.

Tribal displacement and land rights

CERD cited reports of land acquisition, displacement and development projects undertaken without consultation or "free, prior and informed consent" (FPIC) of indigenous and tribal communities, including the Naga, Kuki, Chakma and Hajong communities. It noted that the Forest (Conservation) Amendment Act, 2023, could exempt certain project from consultation requirements, infringing on the rights of tribal communities. According to the report, following a June 19, 2024, order from the National Tiger Conservation Authority, approximately 89,000 indigenous and tribal families across 18 states had been forcibly evicted. CERD called for such evictions to be suspended until affected communities had completed appeals before court and that they should not take place without their consent, fair compensation and, wherever possible, an option to return. It also called for the suspension of development projects in sensitive tribal areas such as the Great Nicobar and Andaman Islands.

Hate crimes and immigration

The report criticised the gaps in India's legal framework on racist hate speech and hate crimes, flagging that the "Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) does not recognise racist motivation as an aggravating circumstance." CERD raised concerns over attacks targeting Christian and Muslims members of SC and ST communities, including alleged forced reconversion campaigns and vigilante activity. It noted that more than 1,800 FCRA licenses were rescinded between 2019 and 2021, with rights groups being the worst affected. The committee also condemned the Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025, stating that undocumented migrants and asylum-seekers were vulnerable to prolonged detentions with restricted judicial oversight. It asked India to keep detention as a last resort and establish asylum procedure consistent with international standards.

The report made mention of the downgrade of India's National Human Rights Commission to "B" status in March 2025, risking institutional dependence. The committee has asked India to report within two years on steps taken to address law-enforcement abuses, sparse tribal rights, caste discrimination and anti-immigration. The committee also acknowledged positive measures taken by the state such as the 2013 prohibition of manual scavenging, amendments made to the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act in 2015 and 2018 and the creation of a welfare board for nomadic and semi-nomadic communities in 2019.

'Rejects any politically motivated highly malicious references'

In its response Wednesday the external affairs ministry said that India "rejects any politically motivated highly malicious references in the report with all the contempt that it deserves". India sent an inter-ministerial delegation led by solicitor general Tushar Mehta to Geneva, where it "highlighted India's constitutional safeguards, robust legal framework, pluralism and sustained efforts to protect disadvantaged communities", ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said.

It also "rejected the sweeping generalisations, unsubstantiated allegations or tendency to exceed the Convention's mandate during the review meeting", Jaiswal added, referring to the 1965 International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) whose implementation CERD monitors. New Delhi will respond to the committee's observations through the established procedure for doing so, he said, stating that as a country that "played a leading role in negotiating and drafting ICERD", India's "commitment to combating racial discrimination remains unwavering".

Source: The Wire

BANGLADESH

Violence against minorities is less frequent but more targeted

Sumon Corraya

Attacks against religious minorities in Bangladesh have decreased compared to the wave of violence that erupted following the change of government in August 2024, but the nature of the persecution has changed, becoming more targeted and persistent. This is according to new data released by the Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council during a press conference held on 27 July in Dhaka.

According to the report, between January and June 2026, 257 incidents of sectarian violence were recorded, including murders, attacks on places of worship, illegal land occupations, threats, assaults and harassment, some of which were linked to allegations of blasphemy. Council officials emphasise that, although large-scale attacks have decreased, minority communities continue to suffer persistent forms of persecution that fuel fear and economic insecurity. During the six-month period under review, 44 people were killed in 40 separate incidents of violence. The report also documents assaults against women, abductions, extortion, acts of vandalism against religious buildings, occupations of land belonging to religious institutions and attacks on homes and businesses owned by families belonging to minority groups. Behind these figures, the Council notes, lie thousands of people who are still trying to rebuild their lives. Between August 2024 and June 2026, in fact, 2,055 incidents affected homes and businesses linked to religious minorities. Many families have lost their livelihoods and continue to live in conditions of severe economic hardship, with no certainty about the future.

The consequences, the report adds, go far beyond material damage. Repeated acts of violence have fuelled internal displacement, heightened a sense of social insecurity, weakened mutual trust between religious communities and undermined confidence in the judicial system. Minority leaders fear that, although mass violence has subsided, targeted intimidation continues to pose a real threat to security and religious freedom. A comparative analysis of the period between August 2024 and June 2026 reveals a marked shift in the pattern of violence. Of the 2,963 incidents recorded over 23 months, almost 74 per cent occurred in the five months following 5 August 2024, when the homes, businesses and places of worship of minority groups were extensively targeted. In 2025, such incidents fell to 17.6 per cent of the total, whilst in the first half of 2026 they accounted for 8.7 per cent. However, the Council warns against interpreting this numerical decrease as a genuine improvement in the situation. Compared with 2025, the first six months of 2026 saw an increase in murders, attacks on places of worship, acts of vandalism against religious symbols, looting, arson, physical assaults and attempts to seize land belonging to religious institutions. According to the organisation, sectarian violence "has shifted from large-scale collective attacks to a more targeted and sustained form of persecution". Particularly worrying, according to the report, is the number of attacks on places of worship, which remains disproportionately high and raises questions about the ability of minorities to practise their faith freely. During the press conference, the case of Haridas Chandra Tarani Das was also discussed. He is a Hindu religious leader who has been campaigning for the construction of an 81-foot-tall statue of the god Rama at a temple in Palashbari, in the district of Gaibandha.

Arrested on 12 July on charges of money laundering, Das is, according to the Council, the victim of a wider campaign of opposition to the temple project, fuelled by extremist groups that have long sought to exacerbate religious tensions. The organisation described his arrest as "deplorable" and called for his immediate release, arguing that the measure has heightened anxiety within the Hindu community. For representatives of the interfaith coalition, the issue is not merely about statistics, but about "the dignity, security and full citizenship" of communities that have contributed to Bangladeshi society for generations.Speaking at the press conference, the Catholic leader Nirmol Rozario, vice-president of the Unity Council, expressed confidence in the government's actions. "We want peace. We do not like to protest constantly. But if attacks against minorities continue in this way, we will be forced to announce wider protest initiatives. We want the government to conduct thorough investigations into incidents of persecution against minorities. We have this confidence in the government," he stated.

Finally, the Council called on the authorities to adopt a 'zero-tolerance' policy towards sectarian violence, by stepping up legal action against hate speech and religious incitement and by ensuring greater protection for minority communities. According to the religious leaders, the challenge for Bangladesh lies not only in preventing further attacks, but also in rebuilding trust, justice and the principle of equal rights for all citizens. Attacks against religious minorities in Bangladesh have decreased compared to the wave of violence that erupted following the change of government in August 2024, but the nature of the persecution has changed, becoming more targeted and persistent. This is according to new data released by the Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council during a press conference held on 27 July in Dhaka. According to the report, between January and June 2026, 257 incidents of sectarian violence were recorded, including murders, attacks on places of worship, illegal land occupations, threats, assaults and harassment, some of which were linked to allegations of blasphemy. Council officials emphasise that, although large-scale attacks have decreased, minority communities continue to suffer persistent forms of persecution that fuel fear and economic insecurity. During the six-month period under review, 44 people were killed in 40 separate incidents of violence.



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Source: Asia News

Over 400 Dalit Christians stage protest demanding SC status in Vellore

Keerthana Chris



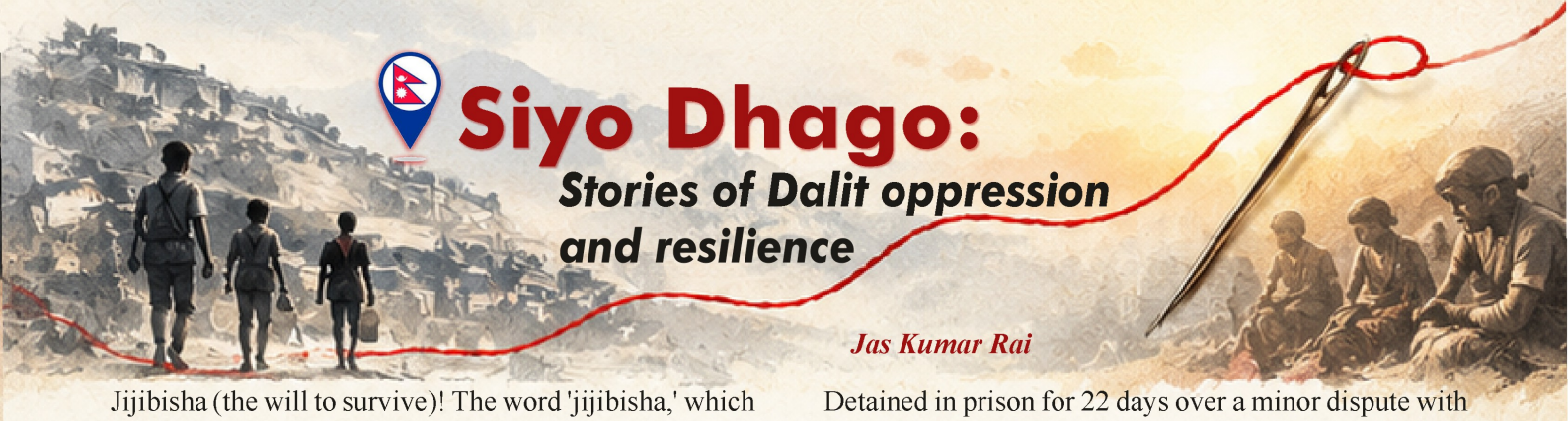
Over 400 members of the Dalit Christian community in Vellore observed Black Day on 10th August, taking part in the annual nationwide protest demanding SC status for Dalit Christians and Muslims and repealing of the 1950 presidential order that had then granted SC status exclusively to Hindus. The protest was organised by Vellore Catholic Diocese SC/ST committee, the CSI church-Vellore diocese and the All Minorities Federation. Protesters gathered near the Anna Kalaiarangam on 10th August and were joined by Vellore Catholic Bishop Ambrose Pichamuthu and Vellore CSI Bishop Sharma Nithyanandam, along with more than 20 other fathers and pastors from across the district. August 10 has been observed as Black Day annually since 2009 as the presidential order, which excluded non-Hindu converts, was passed on this date in 1950. Protesters recalled multiple instances where recommendations of individual commission reports, such as the Ranganath Misra Commission (2007) report, are yet to be implemented. The Misra Commission observed that the majority of the Christians who needed protective law from discrimination belonged to Scheduled Caste converts, thus needing constitutional protection. Rev. Pastor Isaac Kathirvel said it was ironic that the government itself isn't implementing the suggestions of the commission it formed. “Our people are still SC in villages and our houses are still cheri/slums; even in terms of marriage and matrimony, we are discriminated against as Dalits.

What is stopping the union government from granting us the SC status?” he asked. The Misra Commission's report suggests that the converted Christians and Muslims of SC origin continue to be victims of the caste system and suffer from a comparable depth of social and economic disabilities and educational backwardness to those already recognised a SC. The commission also pointed out that protection under the Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955 and the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, was inaccessible to the Dalit Christians and Muslims even after suffering from innumerable forms of indignities and atrocities inflicted upon them.

“Dalit Christians are being oppressed both politically and even in our legal justice system. This is an injustice to us. Just like the protest and the dissent of the youngsters from the Cockroach Janta Party, Dalit Christians throughout India should unite for their constitutional right," said Tiruvanamalai Vicar Forane, Bopathi Lourdusamy. The protest was later followed by songs remembering the 1997 Melavalavu and the 1968 Keezh- venmani massacres and Panidhu poga matome, Evanukum Bayandhu vaazha matome composed by Dalit Subbaiah. They reiterated their demands to include Dalit Christians and Dalit Muslims, similar to the inclusion of Sikhs in 1956 and Buddhists in 1990.

Additionally, the protesters seek to ensure equal access to reservations, education, employment, political representation and social justice. "As the next step, we are ready to take our demand to CM Vijay and PM Modi, whose union government holds the power to include us in Scheduled Caste (SC) status. We've been fighting for 76 years; by next year, if our demands are not met, we will march to Delhi. “Chalo Delhi," said one of the protesters.

Source: New Indian Express



Siyo Dhago:

Stories of Dalit oppression and resilience

Jas Kumar Rai

Jijibisha (the will to survive)! The word 'jijibisha,' which carries an extremely deep meaning, kept touching my heart throughout the week. On June 28 during the release of the book Siyo Dhago on the final day of the Nepal America International Film Festival held in Maryland, United States, author Pradip Pariyar said, “My favorite powerful word is jijibisha. If it were not for this word, my journey would have ended long ago. It gave me the strength to live, fight and move forward even in the most difficult circumstances. Even after losing everything in history, the jijibisha of Dalits did not die. Dalits are alive solely on the strength of their intense desire to live a meaningful life.” Siyo Dhago weaves stories of the pain of caste discrimination experienced by the Dalit community and their relentless struggle against it. In it, the author connects his own experiences to tell the story of Nepali society. He has held up an unvarnished mirror to people showing their tragic behavior. What is in a caste? Some educated people ask. However, a deep chasm of caste has been dug from within the very laws made by those educated people. Caste is history, culture, language, tradition, identity and collective memory.

As Dor Bahadur Bista wrote in his book Fatalism and Development, “If a society does not emerge from the cycle of birth, caste, fate, sycophancy and privilege, even if development plans change, the fundamental state of society will not change much.” The caste system is not merely social discrimination; it is a structure that limits talent, labor and opportunity. Much of the wave of physical or human development in present-day Nepal seems stuck in that very caste system. Siyodhago contains the story of human tragedy birthed by this very caste. A long record of the murder of Nawaraj BK is presented prominently in the book. The place where Nawaraj and his friends were murdered was a Maoist stronghold. That incident shows how extremists there distorted the core slogan “The International shall be the human race.” The book covers events ranging from the remarks of the then Home Minister Ram Bahadur Thapa 'Badal' after Nawaraj's murder to the absurd logic offered by Janardan Sharma, elected from Western Rukum, claiming they jumped into the Bheri River themselves. Arriving at the press release issued 18 days after the incident, multiple layers of the upper-caste structure protecting the perpetrators are exposed. The story of Sundar Harijan, who was taken from Nepalgunj to Rolpa, is equally painful. Detained in prison for 22 days over a minor dispute with the police, Sundar was prosecuted with demands for 1 year of imprisonment and a fine of Rs 10,000. The endless suffering endured by his family after his death is also included in the book.

From Roshan BK, who lost his life in police custody in Kailali, to Bijay Ram, who was killed in Rautahat, these stories demonstrate the distance between Dalits and the state. As the author contends, the country belongs to Dalits as well, but the state failed to belong to Dalits. The book questions society: why did you draw lines of slavery, injustice, inequality and discrimination between human beings by making them untouchables?

“Why did mother sit separately on the ridge of the field to eat snacks when going to work? Why did I have to wait for the guard brother when squirming with thirst and trying to drink water? Why couldn't I serve and eat food myself?” Such powerful questions are present throughout the book. These are not his personal questions, but questions asked of society. Many such questions included in the book keep pricking like a needle. While the author grew up experiencing discrimination in Khurkot, Sindhuli, I was in Dharan. I realize now that I grew up in Dharan from a young age with the status of a ruler.

Now I understand; while the author had to wait for the guard brother to drink water when thirsty at school, I was over here playing the game of dumara baji. In our school in Dharan, which had only five classrooms, classes were held outside on straw mats in an open field. Since the open field was our classroom, we played more than we studied. At that time, two group games were popular: hide-the-handkerchief and the other, dumara baji. First, a dum had to be chosen. To decide who would be the dum, we first had to chant a spell-like rhyme by mouth, pointing at one person with each word as we counted. Whomever was pointed to as dum on the final word became the dum. Then, whoever they touched sequentially became dum. The simple counting chant recited while choosing the dum went like this: Ambal dambal khairepaat, darshan kuti, Mahadev ora dora baandarko chhora chamchame bhatuwa, Damai, Dum. The game learned upon going to school was played with great enthusiasm. However, the monster of discrimination was taught hidden within it. We probably played that game until Grade 8.

Only when studying in college did I realize that discrimination was taught right through textbooks and sports. I do not know since when it was taught. I still remember by heart the dumara-choosing chant of the game played nearly 4.5 decades ago. While reading Pradip's book Siyo Dhago, I sobbed in many places. My heart grew heavy and tears welled up unexpectedly. What if I had to experience what the author did?

Golche Sarki, who became a fine pawn of politics during the CPN (UML) era in Khurkot, had ended up becoming a guest at the author's house. Sarki gained considerable notoriety in the fiscal year 1992/93 for slapping Ram Chandra Paudel in the then National Assembly. In a fit of anger because Poudel teased him while he was speaking, he slapped him. Due to this slap, he was suspended from the National Assembly for 15 days. It can be understood that the CPN (UML) used him as a star for election campaigning and organizational expansion. 1 day, that very Sarki arrived to stay at the author's house. His father, Krishna Bahadur Pariyar, was a government employee, head of the Area Post Office in Khurkot. He was the only government employee from the Dalit community. Upper-caste CPN (UML) leaders had arranged for Sarki to stay at Pariyar's home in Khurkot. Even though he was a national leader of the CPN (UML), after all, he was still a Dalit in the eyes of others.

The author mentions the fact that Golche Sarki had to stay at Pariyar's house precisely because communist leaders of other castes rejected him. The book Siyodhago describes without missing a single detail how caste grew hidden even among progressive communists who envisioned an international human race where everyone is considered of one caste. The author's family, grandfather Mahajan and grandmother Krishna Maya, worked day and night for the high-caste patrons (Bista), yet never received proper value for their labor. The grandfather passed away after crushing so many of his desires. He worked all his life, but could not sew new clothes with needle and thread on his own sewing machine for his family during Dashain.

In his drunken state, grandfather reportedly used to say, "In the life of a Damai, everyone looked down on me, squeezed me and oppressed me. But alcohol never looked down on me. As soon as you drink it, it hits." Grandfather was one who knew the art of finding happiness within sorrow. The havoc of caste endured by father Krishna Bahadur and mother Sita. Father believed that the light of education could break society's caste pride. That was why he did not encourage his children to learn tailoring, which society looked down upon. He worked to spread the light of education to pull his children out of the quagmire of caste oppression.

Father Krishna Bahadur's desire to see his children's beautiful future was cut short by his untimely death. The social oppression and mental torment experienced by the mother after the father's death are also filled with pain. How tragic that after coming to Kathmandu, a situation was created where she had to lie about her caste in adult literacy classes! Adding the Provident Fund money received after his father's death to complete the purchase of a house in Kathmandu that had already been booked with earnest money, the author writes and hands over a check in his own name. However, because his caste was indicated right on the check, the homeowner returned the check and stated that they refused to sell the house simply because of his caste.

This incident shows that caste discrimination persists deeply not only in villages but even among the wealthy urban class. After the plan to buy a house failed solely due to caste, the author too was left dumbfounded. It was around 1983/84. I must have been seven or eight years old. In our small, one-story elevated attic house in Mangalbare, Dharan, guests were never lacking. My father, who migrated from Bhotechhap in Bhojpur to Dharan, was the first person from our village to do so. Having a home in Dharan was considered by the village to mean the son had made progress. Being able to welcome villagers at our home when they came down to Dharan was a matter of pride for my father. He considered it his duty to feed guests and help them reach their destinations. One evening, my ritual father (mit buwa) arrived from Bhojpur. He sat on the veranda chatting with father. Mother was preparing food. During their conversation, my ritual father took a waistcoat out of his bag and handed it to father. It was neat and fitted as if tailored to measurement. Mother also praised it, saying it suited him. After some time, father urged my ritual father to step inside the house. He hesitated a bit, but seeing the confidence on father's face, he stepped inside. Both were happy, perhaps for breaking tradition with love and trust. Mother, however, was not happy.

The next day, mother scolded father severely and purified the house with gold-water (sunpani) and cow urine. From that very incident, I understood that there were people who were not allowed to enter our home.

Father appeared revolutionary. Was it because he lived abroad for many years? Was it due to the gift from his Damai ritual brother, or the colorful intoxication of alcohol? That day, father had challenged the so-called caste system. When hearts torn over thousands of years are stitched together, they do not look the same, yet no one has the right to erase history. Darning is a necessity.

The idea that the society needle and thread connect becomes beautiful is the very thread of author Pariyar's book. The idea that connects society is the needle. Author Pariyar's Siyo Dhago made of words stitches together torn relationships.

Source: Ratopati

India faces criticism from UN discrimination watchdog



A United Nations watchdog has said India must step up protections for tribal peoples and disadvantaged castes facing extrajudicial killings, torture and other violence by law enforcement.

The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) also said that the world's most populous nation urgently needs to tackle hate crimes against Bengali-speaking Muslims.

"The committee was gravely concerned about reports of large-scale violations perpetrated by law enforcement officials against ethnic and ethno-religious groups, Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, including Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes, particularly Dalits and non-citizens," it stated in a release on its findings.

"These included racially motivated violence, excessive use of force, extrajudicial killings, arbitrary and prolonged detention without due process, torture, ill-treatment and sexual violence."

The committee urged India to investigate all such claims and bring those responsible to justice.

Caste remains a major determinant of social status in India, dictating access to resources, education and opportunity.

The system, rooted in historic social hierarchical structures, separates Hindus by function and social standing.

CERD is a panel of 18 independent rights experts that monitors compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination by the 182 countries that are party to it.

Under the convention, which entered into force in 1969, countries must eliminate racial discrimination, eradicate practices of segregation and ensure equality before the law.

India appeared for review before CERD earlier this month, for the first time since 2007, with Solicitor General Tushar Mehta leading its delegation.

The committee pointed to an increase in law enforcement operations targeting Rohingya, Bengali-speaking Muslims, migrants and asylum seekers.

Source: Aljazeera



Ambedkar Society for South Asia