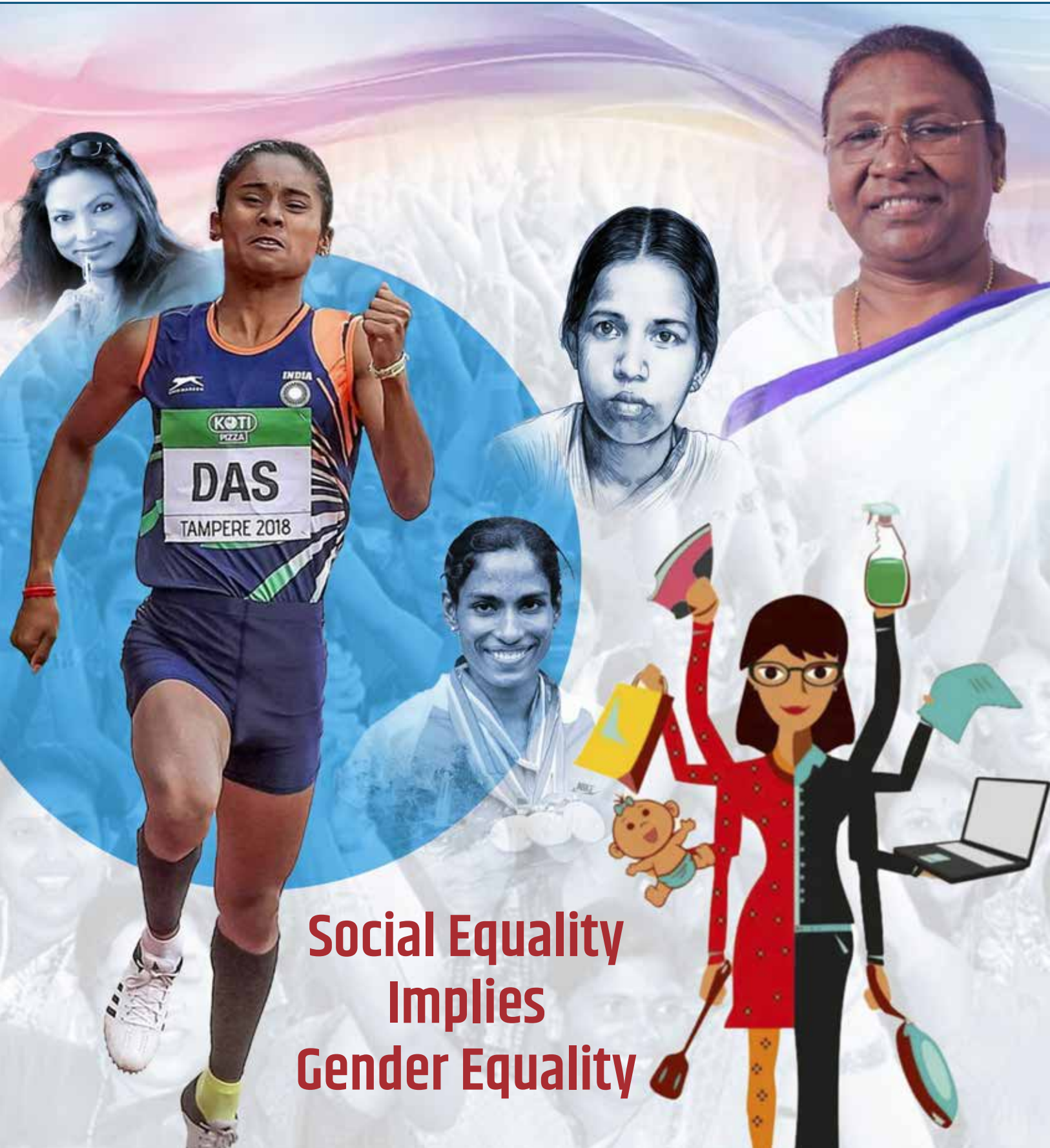


UNHEARD VOICES

14 JULY 2023 | Year 3 | Vol. 4



**Social Equality
Implies
Gender Equality**



Social equality implies gender equality

India is currently debating Uniform Civil Code (UCC). The long pending issue may sound political and religious. But it is rather cosmetic. Notwithstanding the religious aspect of UCC, it is more related with rights, equality and dignity of the women. Usually, we tend to neglect, divert, undermine or sideline the issues, involving women. Same attitude is reflected in UCC while opposing it. In the current issue, we have tried to focus on the status of women from marginalized sections as their problems need to be addressed seriously and in a mature manner. This is necessary as marginalized women have multiple handicaps and lag behind in advancement.

This, unfortunately, happens even though women have gained spectacular success in all the fields of life. In fact, women are seen marching ahead with unbelievable pace in the competitive world. Women from marginalized sections are not an exception to this phenomenon. College campuses - be it rural or urban - are testimony to this reality. This success is not restricted to education but covers all walks of life. We come across cases, when educated girls do not get apt grooms as boys are not educated at expected level. This signifies qualitative change in the society. Progress achieved by women.

However, these achievements are one side of the story. Reality needs to be attended with a great amount of sensitivity and maturity. Like caste, we use, reuse, hide or oppose when the issues of women equality are brought on the agenda. Hardships of women from marginalized sections are more pathetic as they completely lack support structure and environment, which is absolutely required for progress. We, as a society, welcome or support individual achievements of a deprived class woman but tend to overlook women's problems when they are seen against the backdrop of a bigger canvas of social realities. Women from deprived class face many hardships, which range from domestic violence to heinous crimes. Unfortunately, this reality is not pondered upon with necessary seriousness because of traditional mindset.

The people, who are seen neglecting this reality offer excuses to traditions and customs. Traditions or customs have their origins in religion. The dividing line between religion and customs is thin. This applies to all the religions and no religion can claim to be above it. Bounded by traditions, the situation of women from marginalized sections is more painful as they completely lack all the facilities or support base. Women from deprived classes find it absolutely difficult to access many basic facilities like education and health because of strong biases.

Indians have a traditional mindset to look at several social issues from a 'family' point of view. Many people feel that family is the biggest contribution of India to the world. Even though it is admitted, we need to introspect whether we are using the institution of family to run away from the real issues of women. What is the role of a woman in family matters? Do Indians ensure that daughters are given equal opportunities like sons? Do Indians believe that girls are a liability? These are some of the questions, which we need to address by coming out of the traditional mindset. Equality - be it gender or otherwise - is a great social value. Therefore, we must remove all the barriers, obstructing women's progress. Equality, dynamic and healthy society cannot be brought by government policies or gazettes. It is a process of education, awakening and voluntary social acceptance. If half of the Indian population is constituted by women, do we find their equal representation in social affairs? A lot is being said about women empowerment. But we need to seriously introspect the attitude behind it. Is it being out of responsibility or as a gesture or symbolic?

We must remember that women ought to be allowed to blossom in their own natural ways for a healthy and dynamic society. This is the responsibility of all the citizens to ensure the required atmosphere for the purpose. We, as a nation, cannot march ahead in a suffocating atmosphere. Let's have fresh air to ensure ourselves an intellectual and emotional matured nation.

For feedback please click the below link : <https://forms.gle/XWQ19k9xC1CyNr6e7>

'Unheard Voices' monthly publication is owned by Social Studies Foundation, Printed and Published by Hari Sowani, Printed at Sanwad Trade Prints, Gowaikar Bldg, 595, Shaniwar Peth, Pune- 411030 and Published at 1196, Sadashiv Peth, Pune- 411030.

Editor : Vijendra Sonawane

Advisory Editorial Board : Dr. Aditi Narayani Paswan, Edward Mendhe, Prakash Raj

Disclaimer : The views expressed in the periodical are personal views of the author.

The editor & publisher may not agree to it.

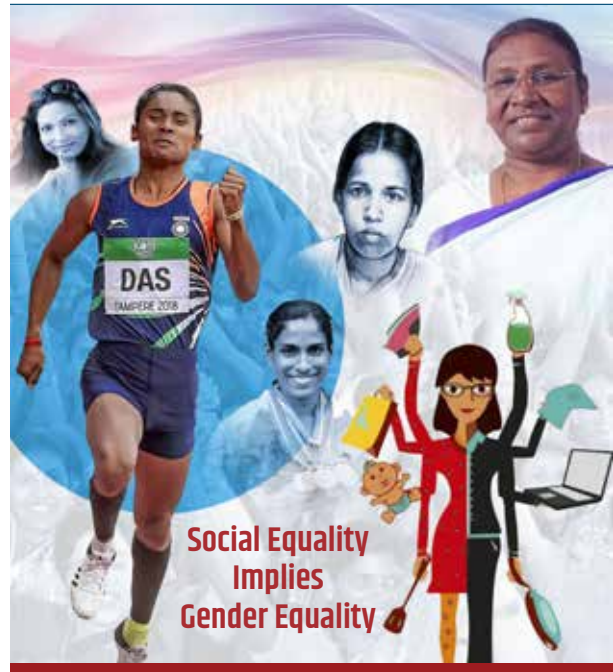
CONTENTS

- 04** SC women's health :
Core area to be attended
-
- 08** Education among
SC women
-
- 10** How should women look at
Dr. Ambedkar?
-
- 13** Dakshayani Velayudhan: Only SC
woman, member of constituent assembly
-
- 16** SC woman,
portrayed in Bollywood
-
- 19** Malayalam actress, hounded for
playing upper caste role
-
- 20** Sports women :
crossing barriers
-
- 23** Kalpana Saroj:
Success after struggle
-
- 25** Dr. Ambedkar
on UCC
-
- 27** Dr. Ambedkar
favoured UCC
-

E-PERIODICAL

UNHEARD VOICES

14 JULY 2023 | Year 3 | Vol. 4



29 Dr. B.R. Ambedkar
as a legal luminary

34 Ahilyadevi Holkar did not opt
for sati tradition

Appeal for financial assistance



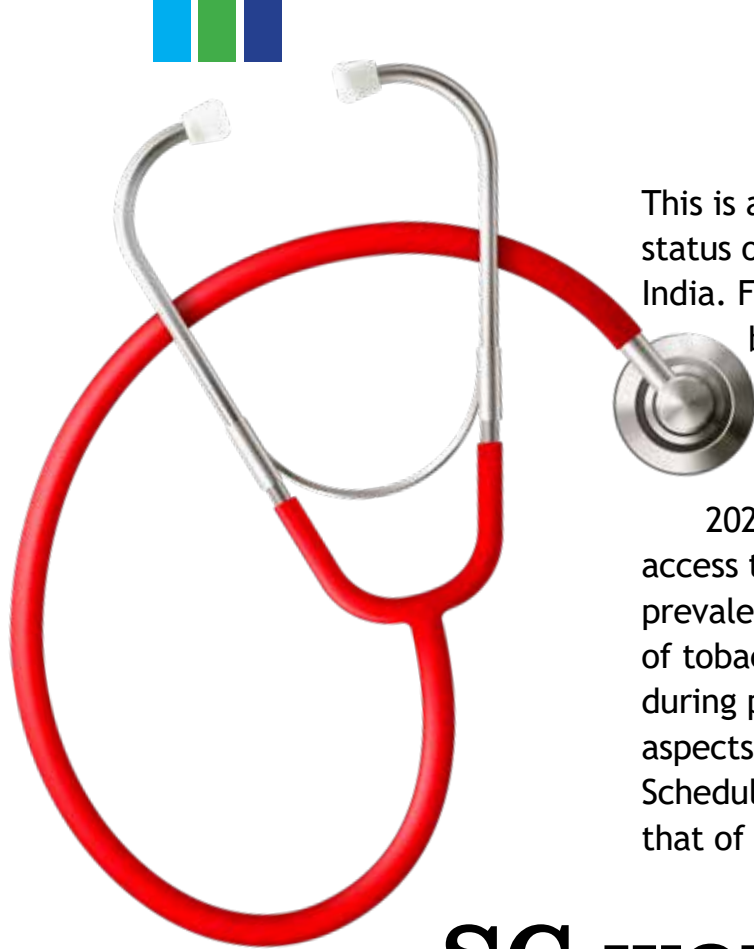
Social Studies Foundation (SSF) is working with the prime objective of conducting social studies and research of the society in a multi-disciplinary fashion. SSF focus, however, is on those people, who have been facing discrimination and are deprived of benefits of the development and democratic process. SSF logo, thus says, "Knowledge for Empowerment".

"UNHEARD VOICES" is a small step in this direction. It provides a platform to all those people, who have to be listened to by the Indian citizens to make this country united and integral. We will raise the voice of these people fearlessly. Social Studies Foundation has currently a small set-up to carry out its objectives. We, however, need financial support from our well-wishers, who agree with our objectives. We appeal to the readers and well-wishers to donate generously to the foundation.

CIT EXEMPTION, PUNE/80G/2020-21/A/10158

Please contact : 9699644930, (020)29526979
or mail us to : uv@unheardvoices.co.in

For feedback please click the below link :
<https://forms.gle/XWQ19k9xC1CyNr6e7>



This is an attempt to assess the health status of the Scheduled Caste women in India. For this purpose, secondary data has been collected. The population- and literacy- related information has been collected from the National Family Health Survey-2019-2020 (NFHS- 2019-2020). This study depicts SCs women's access to toilet facility, child mortality, prevalence of anemia, food consumption, use of tobacco, accessing health care, violence during pregnancy and other health-related aspects. Also, the study compares the Scheduled Caste women health status with that of other categories of women.

SC women's health : Core area to be attended

Dr. Raghavendra R. H. & Anil Kumar R.

As Babasaheb Ambedkar said "I measure the progress of the community by the degree of progress, which women have achieved in that community". Scheduled Caste women, approximately three fourths live in rural areas where they face systematic oppression, social exclusion, and direct and structural violence from within their own community as well as from 'upper' castes, and these problems have been reflected in poor maternal health outcomes. Scheduled caste women generally have limited access to education. It is due to the lack of education that the deprived class women are not able to come out of their poverty and marginalized situations. Being illiterate, they are not aware of their own rights and thus upper caste people can easily exploit and oppress them. Lack of education also keeps them ignorant about health knowledge and they become easy prey to pandemic diseases. Contemporarily women in India are empowering due to the availability of education, but Scheduled caste women are not like that. Very few come out of the obstacles and empowered.

The present study reports the National Family

Health Survey-2019-20, health measures to compare the Scheduled Caste women status with others. Indeed, many of India's health indicators fare poorly in comparison with its neighbouring countries and economic peers. To improve the nation's health, the message is that politicians need to address the caste system. They must work towards creating equality, opportunity, and investment in health and education. Caste can no longer be ignored in Indian society. Health interventions, which target SC/ST may also have to address both perceived and actual stigma and discrimination, in addition to providing needed services.

Strategies for overcoming these barriers may include sensitization of healthcare workers, targeted health education and outreach, and culturally appropriate community-level interventions. In this context, Scheduled Castes women's health status has been discussed with certain health related factors. In the light of above observations, the paper critically sets the objective to study the health status of scheduled caste women in India.



Comparison of Scheduled caste population with overall population						
Indicator	Absolute				Percentage	
	2001		2011		2001	2011
	SCs	Overall	SCs	Overall		
Total	16,66,35,700	1,02,86,10,328	20,13,78,086	1,21,05,69,573	16.2/100	16.6/100
Rural	13,30,10,878	74,23,02,537	15,38,50,562	83,34,63,448	17.9/100	18.5/100
Urban	3,36,24,822	28,63,07,791	4,75,27,524	37,71,06,125	11.7/100	12.6/100

The above table shows the Scheduled Caste total population comparison with percentage. As per the 2011 census, the Scheduled Caste total population is 16.6 percent. Out of the total rural population, 18.5 percent of SCs are living in rural areas and in the case of total urban population 12.6 percent of SCs are living in urban areas. Four states account for nearly half of the country's Scheduled Caste population, reveals the 2011 census. Uttar Pradesh stands first with 20.5% of the total scheduled caste (SC) population, followed by West Bengal with 10.7%, Bihar with 8.2% and Tamil Nadu with 7.2 % come third and fourth.

Scheduled Caste women in rural settings face a number of serious challenges, including lack of access to resources, health, land, basic services and justice. Scheduled castes form a large proportion of India's agricultural workers but they generally do not own land and they are forced to do low-paying and undesirable occupations such as street sweeping and removing human waste and dead animals. They are often not allowed to use the same wells or attend the same temples as higher castes. The landlords' socio-economic and political power in rural, agricultural areas and status as employers of deprived class women allows for continual caste and gender violence. Deprived class women are met with physical, verbal and sexual violence from the landlords when they try to assert their economic right to wages or land and their right to sexual integrity.

Access to a toilet facility

Having a household toilet improves the quality of life for all members of the household, more so women and girls. While the inconvenience of travelling to and from an open defecation site and the risk of contracting diseases is faced by women alike; these problems are exacerbated in the case of women and girls. The material reality of not having a toilet at home results in poor menstrual hygiene management and the withholding of food and water, leading to undernourishment, reproductive and bladder infections.

Such health problems are heightened for pregnant women. Critically, open defecation places women and girls in danger, as they often face harassment and assault from men, or are attacked by animals. A lack of toilets, therefore, leads to stigma, stress, and anxiety.

The data clearly shows that the open defecation among Scheduled Tribes is very high, compared to

Percentage of households having access to a toilet			
Household	Rural	Urban	Total
Scheduled caste	71.2	91.4	76.9
Scheduled tribes	65.1	88.8	68.5
OBCs	75.7	95.6	82.3
Others	87.8	98.6	92.5

other households, the next highest is Scheduled Caste, around 24% not having access to toilet facilities at home. OBCs and others have less open defecation rates. The govt should adopt behavioural changes through the Swachh Bharat Schemes and need to adopt targeted beneficiary approach to eradicate open defecation.

Early childhood mortality rates

The mortality indicators are still being used as important parameters for indirectly assessing the health of the population and the nutritional status. Children belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are more likely to die before their fifth birthday than those born in non-SC/ST families.

Early childhood mortality rates					
Household	Rural				
	Neonatal	Post-neonatal	Infant	Child	Under five
Scheduled caste	31.4	11.8	43.2	9.1	51.9
Scheduled tribes	29.7	13.2	42.9	9.8	52.2
OBCs	26.8	10.5	37.3	7.4	44.4
Others	22.4	9.1	31.5	5.2	36.6
Urban					
Scheduled caste	22.0	10.2	32.2	7.1	39.0
Scheduled tribes	21.8	10.3	32.1	3.5	35.5
OBCs	17.4	8.0	25.5	4.5	29.9
Others	14.5	7.5	21.9	4.4	26.3



The above table clearly shows the desperate situation of lack of facilities to SC women in India. The Neonatal mortality, post neonatal mortality, infant mortality, child mortality and under five mortalities are high in scheduled caste (Both Rural and Urban areas) compared to OBCs and other communities, this shows SC women are facing severe problems more during and after pregnancy. The whole data vividly shows the desperate scenario of SC women health status after the pregnancy. Government should improve access to health facilities for mothers and children belonging to deprived caste groups in India. Continuous efforts to raise the level of maternal education and the economic status of people belonging to deprived caste groups should be pursued simultaneously.

Prevalence of anemia in women (Percentage of women age 15-49 with anemia)

The common cause of anemia in the general population is iron deficiency. Anemia is adversely affecting women of reproductive age and child health, which in turn results in increased morbidity and maternal death, and also hamper social-economic growth. Reproductive women are more prone to anemia due to inadequate dietary intake and iron loss during menstruation and pregnancy.

Household	Mild	Moderate	Severe
Scheduled caste	25.5	30.5	3.2
Scheduled tribes	26.4	35.2	3.0
OBCs	25.3	26.8	2.5
Others	26.1	27.9	2.3

The above data clearly depicts the rate of severe anemia among SCs women is very high compared to STs, OBCs and others. Severe anemia is very prevalent among SC women - 3.2 %, whereas other categories have less severe cases - STs women is 3.0%, OBCs is 2.5% and others is 2.3%. The SC and ST women are more prone to any anemia than OBC and other

women. Economic status dominantly controls the anemia in all social groups. Different potential factors among SC women including rural residency, lower education, lower empowerment, poor economic condition, lower nutrition status, higher childbearing increases the chances to be anemic.

Women’s food consumption (Percentage of women age 15-49 consuming specific foods)

Food consumption patterns and dietary diversity are vital sources for the nutrition status of pregnant women (PW) and lactating women (LW), children, and adolescent girls. SC and ST women in India have been reported to suffer from a lack of proper food intake, which can negatively affect their health and well-being. **(Please refer table 5)**

The quality of food we consume determines our health status; the table shows various food items consumed by different communities’ women (15-49 age group). Consumption of fruits is very less among SCs and STs women i.e., 44.4% and 37.4%. Consumption of milk and curd is also relatively low among SC women and ST women compared to OBCs and others. Poor health conditions among SC and ST women are caused by insufficient consumption of nutritious food, leading to undernutrition and related health issues. Women play a central role in the nutritional status

of children, therefore the urgent need to address the public health problem of under nutrition in women.

Prevalent tobacco consumption

Tobacco consumption has become pandemic, and is estimated to have killed 100 million people in the 20th century worldwide. Some 700,000 out of 5.4 million deaths due to tobacco consumption were from India. Tobacco consumption by females is known to have grave consequences.

Lack of illiteracy also affects the health of women; the table shows that the usage of tobacco among SC and ST women is very high. OBCs and Others have less percentage compared to SCs and STs women. Frequent consumption of tobacco also reduces the life expectancy and also causes lung related diseases. Increased tobacco consumption by SC-ST women poses very severe hazards to their health,

TABLE 5	Type of foods									
	Milk or curd	Pulses or beans	Dark green, leafy vegetables	Fruits	Eggs	Fish	Chicken or Meat	Fish Chicken or Meat	Fried foods	Aerated drink
Scheduled caste	68.7	92.2	90.6	44.4	48.4	37.4	37.7	47.7	42.9	15.0
Scheduled tribes	54.9	90.3	91.0	37.4	46.4	36.0	37.1	46.0	38.0	12.5
OBCs	76.5	93.6	90.2	50.3	42.7	32.4	33.7	42.0	41.9	15.2
Others	74.9	93.5	91.9	57.9	45.7	39.6	37.5	47.7	47.0	18.1



Household	Percentage who use any kind of tobacco	percentage who smoke cigarettes	percentage who smoke bidis
Scheduled caste	4.6	0.1	0.2
Scheduled tribes	11.1	0.2	0.2
OBCs	2.9	0.1	0.1
Others	3.2	0.1	0.1

maternal and child health, and their family health and economic well-being. Due to the remarkably complex Indian picture of SC women tobacco consumption, an immediate and compulsory implementation of tobacco control policies laid down by the WHO FCTC is the need of the hour.

Problems in accessing health care

Deprived class women face the double burden of being lower caste and female. These women have the lowest healthcare utilization and outcome percentage. Living conditions and occupations put them at high risk for disease exposure. This clubbed with discrimination from healthcare workers and lack of awareness makes them the most disadvantaged groups in society. Most of the SC population resides in rural areas and face challenges in travelling to healthcare centres. In urban areas, SC families can be found in urban slums. Most do not avail healthcare subsidies due to a lack of identification documents.

Problems in accessing health care have a major impact on women's health status, there are various problems to access health care facilities. For SC women, major problems are lack of availability of drugs (40.8%), concern that no provider available (39.5), distance to health facility (24.3%), getting money for treatment (24.1%), transport (23.1%), seeking permission to go for treatment also another vital problem of SCs women problems for accessing medical advice or treatment for themselves when they are sick. According to data from the National Family Health Survey, life expectancy at birth for the general caste is 68.0 years. The life expectancy of SC and ST is significantly lower at 63.0 and 64.0 years respectively- this is likely due to the uncertain and unsafe conditions they are exposed to.

Experience of violence during pregnancy

Domestic violence in pregnancy is a serious public health problem that can put the life of the pregnant woman and the foetus at risk. There are many dangerous effects that violence during pregnancy can cause for both the mother and child. A violent pregnancy is considered high risk because verbal, emotional, and physical abuse all lead to adverse health consequences for both the mother and foetus. Violence during pregnancy has been associated with miscarriage, late prenatal care, stillbirth, preterm

birth, fatal injury (including bruising, broken and fractured bones, stab wounds and low birth weight. Violence during pregnancy also leads to additional risks for the mother such as increased mental health problems, suicide attempts, worsening of chronic illness, injury, substance abuse, anxiety, stress, chronic pain, and gynaecological problems. A study conducted in hospitals in India found that 16% of all deaths during pregnancy were a result of partner violence.

S. No	Caste/tribe	Percentage who experienced violence during pregnancy
1	Scheduled caste	3.7
2	Scheduled tribes	3.6
3	OBCs	3.1
4	Others	2.5

Another major factor which affects the health status of women is domestic violence, the table shows that the percentage who experienced violence during pregnancy is very high among SCs women - 3.7%. violence leads to long term health imbalance and it will also affect their next pregnancy.

Conclusion:

The Scheduled Castes women in India represent the most backward and deprived section in the society. The present article has discussed how the SCs women lag behind in terms of the various human development indicators of health and access to health schemes provided to them. They are at the bottom of social indicators, such as health and education, and they are exploited economically, socially and psychologically in every sphere. The government of India, knowing this, has adopted various affirmative action and constitutional safeguards for their uplift. The various policies and actions adopted have seen a positive outcome in various spheres and have led to the improvement of the conditions of this deprived group. But the various provisions sometimes become a myth such that they face difficulty in accessing these provisions due to ignorance and sometimes due to social boundaries such as caste or race. However, in order for significant progress to be made in increasing the human development status of SC women, development organizations must continue to explore varying levels of incentives and pursue national social equality in India.

Dr. Raghavendra is an Asst. Professor & Head of Commerce Department at Govt First Grade College Shiralakoppa, Karnataka

*Anil Kumar is an Asst. Professor & Head of Economics Department at Govt First Grade College Shiralakoppa, Karnataka
uv@unheardvoices.co.in*

Education among SC women

The Infrastructural constraints are yet another hindrance to women accessing education in villages. Schools are either far from the villages, making safety a concern for parents to let their daughters commute, or the schools do not have separate washrooms for males and females, making it uncomfortable for them to spend time in schools. The digital divide created during the pandemic further created an educational divide that impacted the deprived class girls' access to education.



Ritika

Education, like many other arenas, is not devoid of gender disparity as women suffer many challenges in accessing education compared to their male counterparts and the situation further exacerbates when this gender disparity meets caste disparity. Deprived class women are at the bottom of the hierarchy, both economically and socially. Their education has been neglected for centuries. Moreover, they have no land or wealth at their disposal, making it difficult to access education beyond a certain point. The deprived class women have been subjected to abject poverty and social disabilities for ages; their education becomes imperative to provide them with the much-needed social mobility to change their status in Indian society. Education is a powerful weapon for them to evolve socially and within the institution of family, making them less prone to inequality and promoting social equity.

Rural-Urban Divide in the Education of SC Women

The rural-urban divide in education is visible when we look at the statistics of the number of schools in urban areas and rural areas. Rural areas have deep-rooted challenges as caste discrimination are more prevalent in rural areas than in urban ones when it comes to accessing education and breaking social barriers. Since the lineages are clearly demarcated in villages, so are the access points to resources like education.

Girls in rural societies are more prone to domestic labour; their upbringing is directed toward making

them a perfect fit for household chores and taking up traditional gender roles, thereby making education a secondary priority. The educational levels of their mothers have a significant bearing on the school dropout rates and early marriages in SC communities. As against the women of other communities, Deprived class women have for centuries had limited or no exposure to education and life outside their villages, thereby limiting their worldview, which in turn has negative consequences on the education of their adolescent girls. In addition, SC people in rural communities are either landless farmers or have small land holdings; their economic levels restrain them from supporting girls' education; they instead save for their marriage and educate the male children of the family.

The Infrastructural constraints are yet another hindrance to women accessing education in villages. Schools are either far from the villages, making safety a concern for parents to let their daughters commute, or the schools do not have separate washrooms for males and females, making it uncomfortable for them to spend time in schools. The digital divide created during the pandemic further created an educational divide that impacted the deprived class girls' access to education. Most of such households had no access to the internet, and even with the households having access to mobile phones and technology, males had greater control over it, making digital education inaccessible to girls. All these challenges, paired with caste discrimination, make education an inequitable battle for deprived class women.



Urban deprived class women, on the other hand, have their own problems in accessing education; financing good education in urban areas is one of the main reasons. Parents want to invest most of the money in the education of male children as they think they will get a return out of it, whereas investing in women's education does not return much, as she gets married at the age of employment. While most deprived class women are given education up to the college level, they still lack employment opportunities and the necessary financial support to prepare for competitive examinations. Their share in higher education is minuscule, especially in the technical field.

Moreover, deprived class families live in slums, which impacts their physical health as well as mental well-being as the areas are less hygienic, and the efforts to secure water and sanitation on a daily basis is a draining process. Improper diet and increased domestic burden in most of the cases where both parents are engaged in wage-earning restrict their regular schooling.

Research shows that only 4.3 percent of SC women are enrolled among women research students. It shows women's lack of motivation and opportunity to pursue research studies. Moreover, young deprived class women are more prone to physical violence than other groups. According to NFHS (National Family Health Survey), by the age of fifteen, 33.2% of deprived class girls faced physical violence compared to 19.2% of other-category girls. Physical safety of the girls, especially when they have to travel long distances to schools or colleges, and fear of sexual harassment while travelling are other challenges for imparting education to female deprived class students.

Steps Taken by the Government

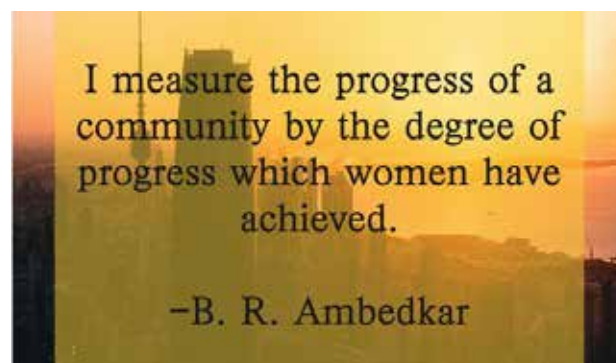
Even though there are many prevalent challenges for deprived class girls to pursue higher education, which need our attention, the improvement made over the decades needs to be given due consideration. According to the data released by the Ministry of Education's, All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2020-2021, there has been a significant increase of 38% in the enrolment of Female SC Students in 2020-21, compared to 2014-15. There are many examples of deprived class women to be led by, who have created examples by breaking the glass ceiling of hierarchy. One such example is Sandhya Chokerwal, who runs a garments design business with a monthly turnover of up to one crore. Along with that, many deprived class women are making it to prestigious examinations like NEET (National Eligibility cum Entrance Test), IIT JEE, and Civil Services Examination, creating examples for others to follow.

With the help of NGOs, the government has taken measures to increase the enrolment of girl children, especially deprived class girls, by launching schemes like Sukanya Samridhi Yojana, which allows parents or

guardians to set up a trust for their child's education and marriage expenses, the Rajasthan government launched the Mukhyamantri Rajshri Yojana, in which monetary benefits are given to parents of girl children from birth until higher education; and the CBSE Udaan Scheme, which offers free course material and online services, to name a few. A mass literacy campaign in different parts of India was launched, which brought out volunteers from all sections of society. Many volunteers impart education in slum areas in their leisure time.

Making Education Accessible for SC Women

Making education accessible to marginalized women is critical to achieving national development. SC women face dual disparities of gender and caste;



the government and civil society groups need to devise a collaborative approach to address the challenges they face. The first and foremost is the lack of awareness among SCs regarding the importance of education for women and the government schemes implemented to facilitate their education. Increasing awareness about such schemes will not only increase their enrolment in educational institutions but also lead to positive changes in their socio-economic conditions. The infrastructural development of schools, both in structure and capacity, many schools in urban areas lack separate toilets for boys and girls and have poor student-to-teacher ratios and poor gender ratios among the faculty; addressing this will positively impact the enrolment of girls by taking school closer to them and bringing them closer to school.

Furthermore, educational institutions should have mandatory committees to provide counselling and justice to women facing caste discrimination and abuse, creating a safe space for them to pursue education. The integration of school curriculum and industrial training should be done to create more opportunities for deprived class women. A result-oriented, prolonged approach to abridging the educational gap of SC women will go a long way in rewriting the history of India and ensuring better performance against development indicators, which is the need of the hour for its national interests.

*Author is pursuing her Ph.D in International Relations, JNU, New Delhi
uv@unheardvoices.co.in*



How should women look at Dr. Ambedkar?

Dr. Sonali



For women from any caste, Dr. Ambedkar should have become a symbol of social change and upliftment. Some reasons why some women may fail to understand Dr. Ambedkar as a feminist are limited awareness and education, caste-based bias, gender bias, lack of an intersectional perspective, and misrepresentation or stereotyping. It is crucial to address these barriers through education and inclusive discussions to bridge the gap in women's understanding of Dr. Ambedkar's feminist ideology.

My personal journey: How I lacked understanding Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar- A few years ago, one of my female OBC friends reacted with disbelief, saying, "Are you crazy? What is wrong with you? When I greeted my Ambedkarite friend with the salutation "Jai Bhim". Her objection stemmed from the fact that I belonged to the Brahmin caste, and she questioned why I would wish for Jai Bhim despite my background. When I suggested that she could also say Jai Bhim, she responded angrily, stating that she is neither a SC nor belonged to the Jai Bhim community. It became apparent that the woman in my friend could not connect with the remarkable feminist that Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar was.

Growing up in a Brahmin family, it was unfortunate that I had little understanding of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's contributions, thoughts, and strategies. As someone from an average lower-middle-class upper-caste family, it seemed natural to perceive Babasaheb as a leader primarily for the Scheduled Castes community. At a young age, I failed to establish any connection with Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, whether it was as a social reformist, an intellectual, a fighter for human rights, or even as a feminist.

My exposure to Dr. Ambedkar was limited to occasions when his birth or death anniversary was celebrated in the surrounding areas. I found it peculiar to witness people adorning blue symbols on their foreheads, displaying blue flags, and exchanging greetings of Jai Bhim. I would



sometimes feel curious and, at times, even upset when students from Scheduled Caste backgrounds in my class received scholarships for their education. In school, my understanding of Dr. Ambedkar was restricted to his satyagraha at Mahad and the Kala Ram temple in Nashik (my hometown) for the rights of the untouchables. I knew he was the architect of the Indian constitution, but back then, I could not fully comprehend the significance of this achievement. Unfortunately, no one was there to provide a comprehensive explanation of Babasaheb's profound contributions and his unwavering non-violent efforts to reform and rebuild our society, striving for a more just and equal nation to thrive in.

During my college years, I unintentionally found myself attending a celebration commemorating Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's birth anniversary. At that moment, I felt like an outsider, unsure of what to expect. However, what unfolded during that event went beyond the usual narrative of Dr. Ambedkar being solely a SC leader. I was exposed to his eye-opening research as an economist, which broadened my understanding of his significance.

As I engaged in discussions about my discomfort regarding reservations in education and jobs and explored Dr. Ambedkar's impact on deprived classes and other upper caste communities, my perspective on him began to shift. I started to perceive him as a highly intellectual individual, who comprehended the needs of the time, especially during the struggle for independence. Driven by his wisdom, he foresaw that freedom from British rule alone would not be sufficient for the marginalized people of our nation who faced caste-based discrimination and the denial of basic human rights.

Dr. Ambedkar's Vision: Aligning with the Principles of Nature- In the realm of the human species, the natural order has only created a biological difference, male and female, for the purpose of reproduction and the continuation of life. Human beings further introduced the concepts of differentiation and discrimination based on religion, caste, class and gender. Dr. Babasaheb aimed to align our practices with the principles of nature. After all, natural resources such as air, sunlight, wind, and rain do not discriminate based on gender, class, caste, or religion. Dr. Ambedkar envisioned a society where all human beings, except for their biological differences, would not be subjected to discrimination on any grounds. He sought to establish and uphold the natural laws and rights that every individual deserves.

Unveiling the Dimensions of Discrimination: Dr. Ambedkar's Insight- In a single lifetime, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar comprehended the foundations of discrimination. His study of economics enabled him to understand the role of money and social class in the denial of rights. He delved into religion and fearlessly acknowledged the presence of discrimination and denial of equal rights based on caste within his own birth religion. In his work "The Rise and Fall of

Hindu Woman" he cited Manusmriti (IX.18) which stated, "Women have no right to study the Vedas" Recognizing the significance of political rights in attaining overall rights, he understood that a mere transfer of power from the British to the Indian people would not establish justice and equality. He also realized that achieving equal rights and justice necessitated addressing gender-based denial of rights. Through gradual steps, he endeavoured to establish equal rights between men and women. He eloquently expressed his belief that "I measure the progress of a community by the degree of progress which women have achieved" as he made this statement in 1927 at a gathering of 3000 women. In another speech in 1936, he urged the Joginis and Devadasis communities, predominantly belonging to the deprived community, to combat the regressive religious practice of offering pubescent girls to gods in temples, which resulted in them being "sexually available for community members". Driven by the understanding that human rights are universal, he advocated for their implementation through inclusivity.

Championing Gender Equality: Dr. Ambedkar's Feminist Endeavours- Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar not only advocated but also legally established several rights that women should cherish and claim. In the pre-independence era, he recognized that women were the worst sufferers in the caste-based, hierarchical society. He focused on liberating women from religious customs and backward traditions by emphasizing the importance of education and inheritance rights for them. He made tremendous efforts to bring about this fundamental change in both societal attitudes and the formal system.

Dr. Ambedkar was mindful of consciously including women in Satyagrahas, and in 1928, he organized a women's conference in Bombay with his wife, Ramabai, serving as its President. This conference brought together 3000 women to discuss their rights and empowerment. Understanding the challenges faced by women due to motherhood, Dr. Ambedkar introduced the Maternity Benefit Bill in 1942 when he was the labour minister of the executive council of the governor-general. The bill aimed to provide paid maternity leaves for women, recognizing the impact childbirth had on their employment and income.

One of Dr. Ambedkar's significant contributions was the Hindu Code Bill. In ancient Hindu laws, women were denied the right to own property or have a share in ancestral or marital property, restricted only to possessing "Stridhan", which referred to ornaments or money gifted to them. As the first Law Minister of independent India, Dr. Ambedkar presented the draft of the Hindu Code Bill in the Constituent Assembly in 1949. The bill aimed to provide women with property rights and other legal rights to establish equality between men and women in terms of their legal status. However, due to resistance and unacceptance of the unconventional provisions, the bill was delayed



and ultimately rejected in Parliament. Nonetheless, the Hindu Succession Act of 1956, influenced by Dr. Ambedkar's ideas, granted women the absolute right to own and inherit property, challenging the exclusivity of male family members.

Dr. Ambedkar's commitment to gender equality is evident in his conscious articulation, such as his belief that a son should receive an equal share of the mother's property. He also played a crucial role in the enactment of various laws that empowered women, including the Hindu Marriage Act of 1955, which granted women the right to divorce and maintenance in certain cases, and the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act of 1956, which allowed women to legally adopt children. Additionally, the Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act of 1956 recognized a woman's right to be the natural guardian of her child.

Dr. Ambedkar -Beyond Stereotypes, unlocking the Feminist Narrative- For women from any caste, Dr. Ambedkar should have become a symbol of social change and upliftment. Some reasons why some women may fail to understand Dr. Ambedkar as a feminist are limited awareness and education, caste-based bias, gender bias, lack of an intersectional perspective, and misrepresentation or stereotyping. It is crucial to address these barriers through education and inclusive discussions to bridge the gap in women's understanding of Dr. Ambedkar's feminist ideology.

Understanding Dr. Ambedkar is crucial for women as it provides inspiration and empowerment, promotes intersectional feminism, advocates for social justice and equality, strengthens women's rights advocacy, challenges stereotypes and prejudices, builds solidarity, and helps redefine history by recognizing the contributions of marginalized women.

Dr. Ambedkar has laid a foundation for women empowerment and guidelines for execution of feminism in true sense. Developing an understanding of Dr. Ambedkar enables women to actively participate in shaping a more equitable society and contributes to the ongoing fight for gender equality and social justice.

It is unfortunate that Dr. Ambedkar is often reduced to being solely a deprived class icon, neglecting his significant contributions as a feminist leader. The cultural expressions of songs, images, and writings centred around him reflect him mostly as a leader of SC-Bahujan community. Such a narrow perspective fails to capture his vision of nation-building and the inclusive framework he designed as the chief architect of India's Constitution. He redefined the notions of citizenship and justice by including marginalized individuals, particularly women.

On Ambedkar Jayanti, amidst the cultural celebration surrounding Babasaheb Ambedkar, it is crucial to recognize the struggles he endured to place women at the centre of India's development stage. His efforts aimed at establishing a socio-legal

framework for women's emancipation involved critical engagement with Brahmanical power structures, which were responsible for perpetuating the degraded position of women in society.

Multifaceted Legacy of Dr. Ambedkar: Relevance and Impact for Employees, Employers, Intellectuals, Women, Advocates of Social Justice, and Students- Whether you are an employee or an employer, Dr. Ambedkar's expertise in labour rights is highly relevant. As an intellectual, it would be a significant oversight not to familiarize yourself with Dr. Ambedkar's work. For women, failing to understand Dr. Ambedkar means missing out on the knowledge and insights of a remarkable feminist. If you are passionate about social justice, politics, and law, neglecting to learn from Dr. Ambedkar would be a considerable loss. As a student with ambitious goals, Dr. Ambedkar serves as a tremendous source of motivation, demonstrating how to shape your career while fulfilling social responsibilities, even in the face of adversity. It is important to recognize that Dr. Ambedkar's contributions extend far beyond his role as a SC leader.

Feminist Actions by Dr. Ambedkar:

- Emphasizing Education and Inheritance Rights (Pre-independence era)
- Advocated for freeing women from religious customs and backward traditions.
- Fought for women's access to education and inheritance rights.
- Women's Conference (1928): Organized a women's conference in Bombay with Ramabai as its President. Provided a platform for 3000 women to discuss their rights and empowerment.
- Maternity Benefit Bill (1942): Introduced a maternity benefit bill as the labor minister of the executive council. Aimed to provide paid maternity leaves for women.
- Hindu Code Bill and Property Rights (1949): Presented the draft of the Hindu Code Bill in the Constituent Assembly. Proposed provisions for women's right to property and other legal rights. The bill faced delays and rejection (disappointed with this Dr. Ambedkar resigned from his post of Law minister), but later influenced the Hindu Succession Act of 1956.
- Hindu Succession Act (1956): Dissolved exclusive inheritance by male family members. Extended the right to inherit property to Hindu women.
- **Women's Rights Laws:**
 1. Hindu Marriage Act (1955): Granted women the right to divorce and maintenance in certain cases.
 2. Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act (1956): Allowed women to legally adopt children.
 3. Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act (1956): Recognized women as natural guardians of their children.

*Author is a Doctorate from IIT Bombay and working as a Researcher in MNC
uv@unheardvoices.co.in*



Dakshayani Velayudhan: Only SC woman, member of constituent assembly

Through AIWC, Dakshayani organized conferences, seminars, and workshops to discuss pressing issues such as women's health, employment, and legal rights. Her efforts led to tangible changes in the lives of countless women, as the conference played a vital role in shaping policies and legislation that were more inclusive and favourable to women. Furthermore, Dakshayani Velayudhan actively participated in the Indian independence movement, joining the Indian National Congress. She firmly believed that political freedom was incomplete without the liberation of women from social and economic oppression.



Dr. Neha Singh



India stands together as one of the largest democracies in the world. In the celebration of 75 year of independence one needs to acknowledge the contributions of the constituent assembly members as they moulded the country into a democratic model. The world today looks at India as a rapid developing fast- growing economy and the country might not have achieved this status sans the strength of our constitution.

We had 15 women members in our Constituent Assembly. And one of them was Dakshayani Velayudhan, a woman who belonged to the oppressed and deprived section of the society and had reached there. She had made important interventions on various topics related to deprived classes and labourers.

Thus, this Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav it becomes important to discuss the contributions of strong women such as Dakshayani Velayudhan in our

Constituent Assembly. Dakshayani Velayudhan was a name that echoed throughout the realms of social reform and women empowerment in India. The anti-caste movements in India have a long history that were radicalized in varied ways. Different regions at different times observed varied social reformers such as Jyotirao Phule, Sree Narayana Guru, Periyar emphasized on self-respect movement and Adi Dravida Movement while Dr. Ambedkar created a highly contested political phenomena during the colonial and post-colonial times. The commonality in all these movements were the cultural heritage that became the locus of political contestation amongst the marginalized communities in order to assert on their identities and rights.

Born in 1912, the time that she lived in itself is testimony to her struggle as a woman and as a Scheduled Caste, since the oppression of both was considered natural at that time. She created history by



covering the upper part of her body at a time when women from oppressed castes were not allowed to cover their breasts. Later (from 1813 to 1859) the state witnessed the Maru Marakkal Samaram or Channar revolt for women's right to wear clothes to cover their upper body. Dakshayani had other unique achievements to her credit, too. She was the first woman to pass ESLC (Education equivalent to that of present time's tenth standard) and the first Indian Scheduled Caste woman to become a graduate. "One such fascinating personality in the Constituent Assembly was Dakshayani Velayudhan, a Scheduled Caste woman, coming from an untouchable family, much admired by the 14 other upper caste, privileged and Western-educated women with her in the Assembly for her intellectual interventions against social injustices and towards inclusive governance in the assembly debates.

Thus, through the discussion on the life and intervention in Constituent Assembly Debates, the

It is no doubt that the social and political journey of Dakshayani Velayudhan has been very difficult yet path breaking as it had to fight the overlapping identity of a Scheduled Castes woman to get integrated into the mainstream society. There is a very dearth of literature available on her which itself reflects how little the society has taken interest in the journey of a Scheduled Caste woman leader. This discourse needs to be altered.

chapter intends to emphasize on the radical traditions within the Scheduled caste women movement to address issues like separate electorate, social reforms, the state within a conceptual framework of liberty, equality and non-discrimination.

Her Social and Political Journey:

Dakshayani Velayudhan was born in 1912 in the Mulavukad village of Ernakulam district and belonged to the Pulaya community in Cochin. The Pulayas were mostly agricultural labourers. Women from the Pulaya community were prohibited by dominant caste persons from covering their torsos (they were only permitted to cover themselves with bead necklaces), having an access to education, cutting their hair or even coming in close proximity to people from dominant castes. She defied these norms since she was a little child.

She dedicated her life to challenging societal norms and advocating for the rights and upliftment of women in the country. With her unwavering determination, relentless efforts, and remarkable achievements, Dakshayani Velayudhan became a

symbol of change and progress for generations to come. "I can't say that I was born in a poor Pulaya family as the family was not poor at the time of my birth. Unlike other Pulaya families in Cochin state, we had a house of our own and the compound of more than one acre with coconut and other fruit trees. The family could live with income from the coconuts. My father was a village school teacher ... the school being the house itself. He used to go for contract work of bunds, with the other male members of the family. My two elder brothers were the first in the community in the state to crop their long-knotted hair and wear shirts. When they went through the road, other community people used to hoot at them and when going by country boat, the people threw stones at them because they were wearing clothes like upper castes, who were mostly Latin Christians and Ezhavas in my island native place.

Dakshayani's narration of the 1913 formation of the Pulaya Mahajana Sabha, one of the earliest counter publics, involving her maternal uncle and elder brothers, conveys the process of exploration and interpretation of self and society as well as the private experiences and public practices of anti-caste struggles: The meeting was held with country boats tied together in the sea in Bolghatty—the sea did not have a caste. In Kochi, the untouchables were not allowed to hold a meeting 'in my land' by the Maharaja. The raft was made by joining together a large number of catamarans with the help and support of the fisherfolk. The historic Kayal Sammelanam (Meeting on the Backwaters) of 1913 sent out a message of solidarity and protest that led to a meeting of over a thousand men and women in the grounds of St Albert School, Ernakulam and the formation of the Cochin Pulaya Mahajana Sabha.

Her journey as an advocate for women education began with her involvement in the Kerala Mahila Mandal, an organization dedicated to promoting women rights. Dakshayani played a pivotal role in establishing and expanding the organization, ensuring that it reached the grassroots level and reached women across Kerala. Under her leadership, the Kerala Mahila Mandal opened schools, vocational training centres, and provided scholarships to deserving young women. One of Dakshayani's significant achievements was the establishment of the All-India Women Conference (AIWC) in Kerala. She recognized the need for a platform that could bring together women from different backgrounds and provide them with a collective voice.

Through AIWC, Dakshayani organized conferences, seminars, and workshops to discuss pressing issues such as women's health, employment, and legal rights. Her efforts led to tangible changes in the lives of countless women, as the conference played a vital role in shaping policies and legislation that were more inclusive and favourable to women. Furthermore, Dakshayani Velayudhan actively participated in the Indian independence movement, joining the Indian



National Congress and working alongside notable figures such as Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. She firmly believed that political freedom was incomplete without the liberation of women from social and economic oppression. Her involvement in the independence movement allowed her to amplify her message and push for women rights on a larger scale.

Dakshayani Velayudhan comes from the family in Kerala, which was heavily influenced by the caste system in the pre-independence era. The Constituent Assembly had nine women as its members and Dakshayani was the only Scheduled Caste of them.



Only SC
women in
Constituent
Assembly.

Her Intervention in the Constituent Assembly Debates:

It is no doubt that the social and political journey of Dakshayani Velayudhan has been very difficult yet path breaking as it had to fight the overlapping identity of a Scheduled Castes woman to get integrated into the mainstream society. There is a very dearth of literature available on her which itself reflects how little the society has taken interest in the journey of a Scheduled Caste woman leader. This discourse needs to be altered. Not many may be aware that she was also the first SC woman graduate in BSc Chemistry from Maharajas College. But due to the caste system she was stopped from performing experiments. This was at the receiving end of the caste system. And hence in her first speech in the Constituent Assembly, she paid homage to Gandhi's Harijans of the new India. She had been a staunch supporter of Gandhi but on the basis of her own life experiences she opined that the term Harijan itself is insufficient to provide the deprived classes a status of acceptance in the society. According to her, "The Independent Socialist Indian Republic can give freedom and equality of status to the Harijans."

She believed that in independent India the progress of the Harijans can be only brought about by emancipating their economic status. The Harijans were not only oppressed by the caste hierarchical structure but were also exploited by the communists. "She held that the Constituent Assembly should go

beyond framing a constitution and give 'people a new framework of life', use the opportunity to make untouchability illegal and ensure a 'moral safeguard that gives real protection to the underdogs in India.'

Her idea of moral safeguards rested on the idea that only an independent socialist republic could help uplift deprived classes, remove social disabilities and give them the liberties exercised by every citizen. She added, 'the working of the Constitution will depend upon how the people will conduct themselves in the future, not just the actual execution of the law. So, I hope that in the course of time there will be no such community known as Untouchables.' Therefore, new India required the atmosphere of socialism to even out the oppression and hierarchies.

On the question of Decentralization:

On November 8, 1948 when the Vice president allowed the minority speakers to express themselves in the house, Dakshayani contended that the new constitution was merely a replica of the Government of India Act, 1935. She believed that it had the similar nature of centralized power in its hands. Instead, the country must look for the democratic means to decentralize its powers. She opposed Dr Ambedkar's insistence on the continuation of the Government of India Act, 1935 and said, "The Committee feels that if the Governor and the Chief Minister who is responsible to the Legislature are elected by the people then there will be friction between the two. But the remedy they have suggested is worse than the disease. There is a panel and the President is to select from the four one person as a Governor. If the Centre happens to have a Congress President and if a province is having a Socialist majority, suppose the Socialist party recommends three from their party and one from the Congress, certainly the President at the Centre will select the Congressman to be the Governor. Certainly, this will lead to friction. We find that this direct recruitment to Governorship is taken from the Government of India Act and it shows that we have not left out even a comma from it."

The work of Dakshayani needs to be celebrated as it is significant even in today's times. Whether it is her stand on the process of decentralization which is reflected via the 73rd and 74th Amendment Act or call for the protection of rights. The Scheduled Caste women's influence redefined the feminist discourse on issues such as caste violence, access to education etc. When the awareness was created amongst the SC women, the SC activists discussed varied topics such as their diverse topics such as environment, social issues, economic issues etc. It has been only possible with the efforts of women such as Dakshayani who laid a firm foundation for the protection and empowerment of the SC rights. It is only owing to her efforts that we have women such as Shrimati Draupadi Murmu as a President of our country.

*Author is an Assistant Professor of Political Science in Ramanujan College, University of Delhi
uv@unheardvoices.co.in*



SC woman, portrayed in Bollywood

Cinema is a mirror of society and dominant caste filmmakers have depicted deprived classes real issues through the Savarna perspectives. Primarily, they were never interested in producing movies on caste and gender issues. However, popular cinema lacks deprived women-centric movies.

Dr. Chandrakant Kamble

Scheduled Castes belong to the lowest category in the hierarchy of the Indian caste system. Due to Manu's law and other Hindu scriptures, they have been unconditionally excluded from society. Deprived classes were segregated and banned from full participation in Hindu social life. They were even prohibited from using natural resources and women were denied fundamental human rights.

However, the constitution of India postulates human rights and fundamental rights for women through the Hindu code bill. These women are equal before the law and nobody denies such human rights. However, as an outcome of people practicing caste-based hierarchy, their assertions are still constantly happening in the Indian subcontinent and are a question of concern. The experiences of these women are unique in many ways because they suffer from the triple burden of economic deprivation, patriarchy, and caste-untouchability-based discrimination. According to the 2011 National Crime Reports Bureau (NCRB), Deprived class women in India are raped every four hours. They face many issues simultaneously, like Caste exploitation and gender discrimination, and social dignity.

Violence is also the core outcome of gender-based inequalities, shaped, compounded, and intensified by caste discrimination. Mainstream Indian feminists have been exploiting these women's vulnerability to add to their privileges, and such risks are indispensable in developing a theory of gender. Stereotypically, women have been depicted as secondary, like household mothers, helpful sisters, and beautiful wives in Bollywood cinema.

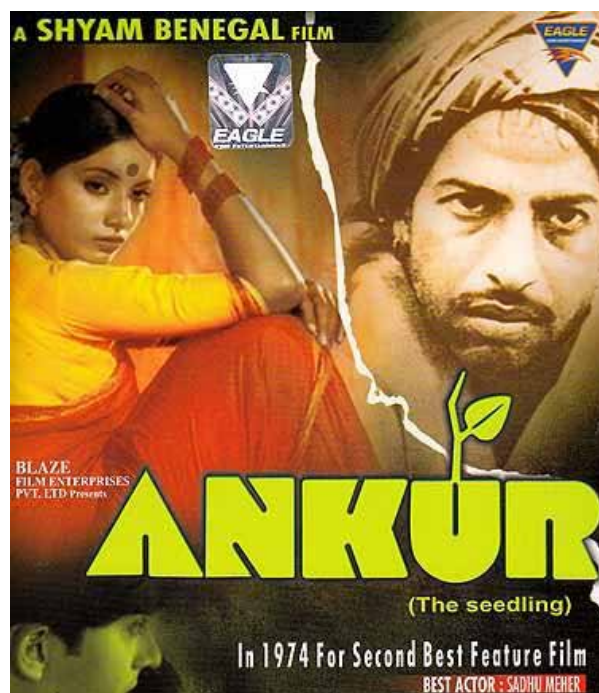
The Bollywood industry runs under the control of males and is massively influenced by nepotism. The Indian cinema industry has been driven by quite prejudiced, biased upper-caste male dominance and filmmakers. Excluding some, Bollywood has not adequately depicted the agency of women and nor an unprejudiced portrayal of women. Dominant caste filmmaker's have assumption such as the their stories do not increase the entertainment business, Deprived class itself is an issue, it does not seem appropriate for Bollywood filmmakers to make movies on social issues. And they are never warmly received in the industry. However contemporary regional filmmakers are successful making movies on their issues and receiving mass appreciation and financial success

such as Nagraj Manjule, Pa. Ranjith, Mari Selvaraj and Vetrimaaran.

Their issues are adequately represented in the literature, politics, and education. What about the arts and especially in modern art cinema? Is there sufficient representation of deprived classes and, in particular deprived class women? How has Bollywood cinema portrayed deprived class women? Exploring through lenses of third-world feminism, the paper examines the representation of these women in Bollywood cinema. Especially, SC women-centric movies are especially selected for the inquiry. Achhut Kanya (The Untouchable Girl, Hindi, 1936) By Franz Osten, Sujata (Sujata, Hindi, 1959) by Bimal Roy, Ankur (The Seedling, Hindi, 1972) by Shyam Benegal, Bandit Queen (Bandit Queen, Hindi, 1994) by Shekhar Kapoor, Rudaali (The Mourner, Hindi, 1996) by Kalpana Lajmi.

The agency of deprived class women elaborates through Gayatri Spivak's question, can the subaltern speak? Who is speaking on behalf of deprived classes? As Spivak argues that the western intelligentsia are talking about the others. They utilize third-world countries as raw materials to make products and sell worldwide (Spivak, 1988). Coherently, are the Savarna filmmakers telling their stories? Are they using deprived class as data or resources for filmmaking? Have they presented deprived class agency unbiased on the screen? Intersectional third world through the subaltern perspective will elaborate on the agency of SC women. India's first deprived class women-centric movie is Achhut Kanya (The Untouchable Girl, Hindi, 1936), directed by Indo-German filmmaker Franz Osten. The story of Achhut Kanya (The Untouchable Girl, Hindi, 1936) has prepositional and imagery of upper caste filmmakers. That happened in British India, where people strictly practiced caste and untouchability in the public or private domain. Franz Osten depicts a liberal, progressive, Brahmin protagonist in Achhut Kanya. The untouchable girl has been portrayed as a victim through a Savarna male from Savarna's standpoint, and it has explicitly become a doubly prejudiced movie. The Savarna perspectives depict that untouchables sacrifice everything for upper-castes and are victims of society. As per the caste system and patriarchy, these women will sacrifice/die or live for their male and Savarna male.

Mahatma Gandhi unsuccessfully attempted a movement to abolish untouchability from Hindu society. Gandhi called them Harijan instead of deprived classes. The movie Sujata (Sujata, Hindi, 1959) is a product of Gandhian philosophy. Again, the Savarna filmmakers have created an imaginary story about the untouchable girls. The constitution of India annihilated inhuman practices, gender, and caste-based discriminations. Moreover, Hindu society strictly practiced untouchability in their daily lives. For the untouchable girl (Sujata) even her shadow is impure and pollutes the Brahmin if touched. Savarna liberal and leftist filmmakers in their fictional story



depict the Brahmin family accidentally parenting the untouchable girl. It is never possible for the Brahmin family to parent an untouchable girl as their girl child. Sujata is portrayed as an untouchable girl who is never special and she faces caste discrimination and all kinds of trauma like any other deprived class woman. Sujata is a romantic drama cum a semi-legal thriller genre movie made for Savarna spectators by dominant castes producers. The filmmaker's perspective is quite clear: they have portrayed these girls as merely workers or sufferers.

Ankur (The Seedling, Hindi 1974) is a socially realistic movie that shows upper-caste males sexually assaulting more inferior caste women. In Ankur, director Sham Benegal depicts rape prevalent in India, societal acknowledgments, and feudal landlords of hegemonic dominance. Ankur is a story about a voiceless, vulnerable, and subaltern deprived class family. India is a (caste prime farming country) agricultural country, and deprived classes, who otherwise are scavengers, are primarily agrarian laborers. Ankur is a saga about the daily life struggles of the Indian deprived community. It mainly represents the behaviour of the Indian feudal system and landlords against voiceless deprived class servants.

Bandit Queen (Bandit Queen, Hindi, 1994) is the first biopic on a deprived class dacoit woman, Phoolan Devi. It is a story of caste atrocities and barbaric patriarchal practices practiced by dominant castes. Today, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh are the top two states that witness an increased number of deprived class women rape cases and harassment. Gender-specific and social inequalities are responsible for sexual violence in India. Unfortunately, Shekhar Kapoor never took her permission to make the



movie. They made the movie merely based on their perspectives and never considered her about her genuine experiences of the traumatic events.

Producers lack the scope to depict empathy or imagination in order to expand the story in a cinematic way. Because it was a living person's biopic, filmmaker Shekhar Kapoor used the subaltern as an object/material for cinematic representation. According to Phoolan, he has depicted her real-life inaccurately on the silver screen. However, the movie's motif is calmly in favour of the propagated western scholar's perspective.

They occupy several traditional and mandatory jobs in the country's particular regions due to the Hindu cultural dominance. Weeper/Mourner is a conventional work for the community in north India. It is a barbaric practice for subaltern deprived classes, especially women. They were highly discriminated against for thousands of years and still retain the same speechless position. They cannot speak and save their history, culture, and life.

However, Rudaali focuses on the tragic memories of these women. Bengali writer Mahasweta Devi wrote a story on the trauma of the deprived class women about the barbaric praxis of Rudaali. A narrative came in the market of literature from an upper-caste empathic perspective. Rudaali (The Mourner, Hindi, 1996) moviemaker found the object/material to make a movie on the concept of the Rudaali. Director Kalpana Lajmi never highlighted the essential elements of the caste exploitations in her narration. She dealt with the film romantically and emotionally, which is never a topic to express romanticism or poetics. The movie has romantic cum tragic songs as

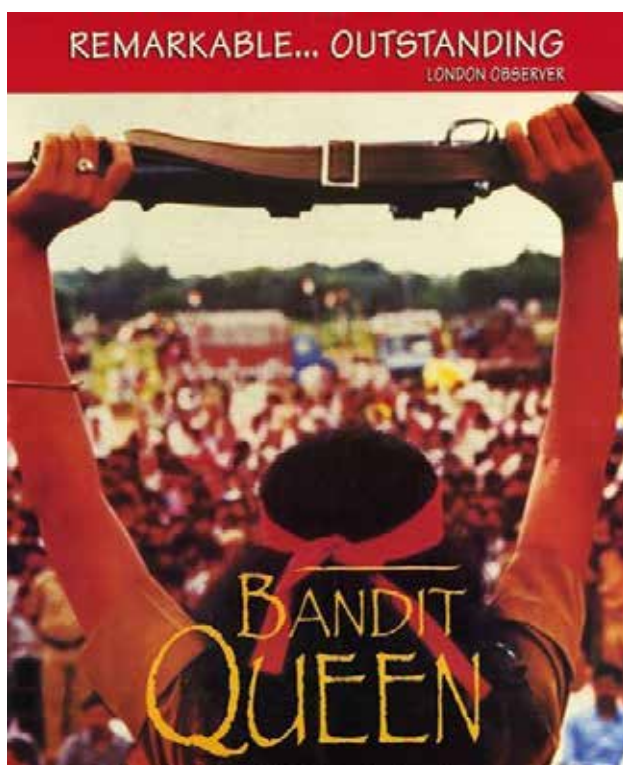
The Savarna perspectives depict that untouchables sacrifice everything for upper-castes and are victims of society. As per the caste system and patriarchy, these women will sacrifice/die or live for their male and Savarna male.

spectators enjoy the trauma with a romantic flavour. Kalpana Lajmi has misrepresented these women and has failed to portray them accurately on the silver screen. She uses the language of tears to mock back at her oppressors and to depict romanticism. The movie expresses empathy to the deprived class women, and the narrative style is interlaced with the trauma. Dominant castes and female filmmakers are never exceptional to narrate without Savarna's perspectives.

Cinema is a mirror of society and dominant caste filmmakers have depicted deprived classes real issues through the Savarna perspectives. Primarily, they are never interested in producing movies on caste and gender issues. However, popular cinema lacks deprived women-centric movies.

They have produced movies only on deprived class victims, stories; they are merely rape victims, like Bandit Queen and Bawandar, who are the biopics of rape victims; Ankur, Rudaali, and Chauranga are based on the actual incidents. They have produced realistic movies through their imagination and expressed empathy/sympathy to these women in their movies. Achhut Kanya and Sujata are realistic fictional movies. The deprived class women rape ratio is high in India and the same is reflected in the silver screen through the cinema. The three movies mentioned above represent deprived class women's caste, class, gender, and social victimization. In addition, they produce movies with their creative imagination for targeted spectators. The portrayal of these women protagonists is metonymically represented and over-embellished by makers. They have misrepresented or under-represented deprived class women's agency in their cinema. The movies are realistic and based on their life experiences, but there is an unsuccessful attempt to fictionalize it for cinematic liberty. However, the motive of producing movies had never been anti-caste or anti-sex but entirely professional and used as an object/material for the upper caste spectators.

Primarily, dominant castes producers' have used or abused deprived class (Rape Victims) experiences as objects/materials to produce professional movies for targeted spectators through their perspectives. Savarna filmmakers produce self-authorized movies and have economic and cultural-political interests without scientific representation of deprived classes. *Author is a film scholar and independent filmmaker. uv@unheardvoices.co.in*



Malayalam actress, hounded for playing upper caste role



P.K. Rosy became the first Malayalam cinema actress who appeared in Malayalam's first director J C Daniel film "Vigathakumaran", in 1928. When acting in a movie by a woman was taboo, a first lady of Malayalam cinema faced the ire of society for taking such a bold step in 1928. But rather than encouraging her bold movie and appearing in a cinema, she was hounded out of the state. The only reason was though she belonged to the Pulaya community, which is classified as Scheduled Caste, she dared to play an upper caste Nair woman in the film Vigathakumaran.

Dr. Divya

"How dare she, who belongs to a lower caste, play the role of a Nair lady?" This outrageous slogan reverberated across the State of Kerala way back in the 1920s. To give a name to she mentioned here, let me present before you P. K. Rosy, the forgotten heroine of the Malayalam film industry.

PK Rosy is believed to have been born as Rajamma in 1903 to Paulose and Kunji. The family lived in Nadankode, Thiruvananthapuram. She was reportedly a grass-cutter, who showed immense interest in acting. Her affinity and interest in theatre began at a very young age. She was fond of acting in plays and insisted on going for rehearsals at the traditional school of performing arts, where she studied Kakkarashi (folk dance and drama). This folk-art form originally comes from Tamil Nadu and uses a mix of Malayalam and Tamil in a musical drama format.

P.K. Rosy continued to perform, going against the wishes of her grandfather. Later she joined a drama company in Thycaud, Thiruvananthapuram, where she stayed. Rosy was bold enough to embrace her passion for theatre in an era when there were grave limitations on the entry of women into theatre and cinema. Her participation in the local theatre led to her discovery by director J. C Daniel. Eventually, she was offered a role in a film directed by J. C. Daniel.

With this, P.K. Rosy became the first Malayalam cinema actress who appeared in Malayalam's first director J C Daniel film "Vigathakumaran", in 1928. When acting in a movie by a woman was taboo,

a first lady of Malayalam cinema faced the ire of society for taking such a bold step in 1928. But rather than encouraging her bold movie and appearing in a cinema, she was hounded out of the state. The only reason was though she belonged to the Pulaya community, which is classified as Scheduled Caste, she dared to play an upper caste Nair woman in the film Vigathakumaran.

The actress was not even allowed to see her acting when the film was screened at Capital Theatres at Trivandrum. The upper caste attacked the screening theatre because Rosy was an SC woman, and her portrayal as an upper-caste character was unacceptable. Few eminent people of that time even refused to watch the cinema in which she acted or even to watch it in her presence.

The primary reason for the backlash was her background. In the early 20th century, India was deeply entrenched in a rigid caste system, which placed specific communities, including SCs, at the bottom of the social hierarchy. Rosy's participation as an SC woman in a film challenged the prevailing caste norms. It drew criticism from those, who believed that people from marginalized communities should not be allowed to enter the film industry or be depicted on screen.

She had to flee her village after her house was set on fire. She managed to escape from Kerala with the help of a lorry driver and landed in Tamil Nadu. She later married the lorry driver, an upper caste (a Nair by origin), and Rosy could lead a true Nair's wife in her real life. Recently, many attempts have been made to recognize the role of **(On page 31)**



Sports women : crossing barriers

Mehakshree



Hima Das

Women in India significantly had transitions of the roles and influence since Ancient India society till today. According to Indian History written by modern historians, women were more independent and powerful during early Vedic Period then the trend changed during post-Vedic period as they were restricted to households, later during Mahajan padas, women of certain castes only enjoyed privilege. The worst situations were faced by women during Medieval India, where there are references of women even used as sex slaves mentioned by foreign travellers like Ibn Batuta.

Therefore, Indian women have come a long way with response to their roles in Society. In the area of sports, women are too late to have been involved. It was after independence that women's role in sports began where women like Kamaljeet Sandhu, Arti Saha Sania Mirza fought against shackles of discrimination, social deprivation to establish a prominent career for themselves. Women athletes have occupied esteemed place in society by acquiring numerous roles rather than being just a mother. The mindset of people has also undergone a change as they have now started considering women as admirable, who inspire the rest of the world to become the best. Though there are various challenges, women still face challenges to gain respect during the journey towards the desired goal. Women in sports are still considered taboo especially in rural

India has been shining in the field of sports, considered as male dominated field. Significantly, sports women have brought glory to India and many of them belong to deprived castes. Despite all the odds - social or financial - they marched for the nation and emerged as the pride for the country.





areas and that too if women are from a backward class, it becomes a challenge. But women like Hima Das, who rose above the shackles of backwardness, geography, and taboos. We see that women's potential is not limited to physical capacity but goes beyond it. Hima Das, an Indian sprinter was born in Assam. Her achievement is significant as India hardly has even any male member as a sprinter. She became the first and only Indian Athlete to ever win a gold medal in a track event at the IAAF World U20 Championship. She has also set a new milestone by winning five consecutive international gold medals in just 20 days. Hima Das was born in a poor family in Assam's Nagaon district. Her parents belong to an indigenous Lsaibarta community. They did agriculture activities to support their families. Das was interested in sports. She met her teacher at school, who once advised her to go for sprinting. There was no looking back then.

She had to face a lot of struggles due to lack of training facilities, equipment available and professional track. She had to practice on a muddy football field. But Hima has proved that sports are not male domain only. She proved that India lacked sprinters but the country can certainly hope to look for them among the women.



P.T. Usha

We have another example of P.T. Usha in the field of sports. She had put India on the map in track and field after Milkha Singh. As a child, PT Usha did not have good financial support and faced difficulties. In fact, she also had certain health problems. But, the hallmark of a great athlete is to overcome what life throws at that person and PT Usha just did that. During her time, the country didn't have facilities for training. She was not aware about the importance of one millisecond, due to which she lost her first Olympic game. Her family was also financially weak and could not support her financially. But challenges

and problems couldn't desist Usha from achieving her goals. She became the first Indian track and field athlete and was even given the title of "Queen of the Tracks and Fields" and also 'Golden Girl'.

Born on June 27, 1964, in the small village of Payyoli, Kerala, Usha displayed her athletic prowess from a young age. With determination, hard work, and perseverance, she became one of India's most celebrated athletes.

Usha's journey to success was challenging. She faced numerous challenges, both on and off the track, but she never allowed them to deter her spirit. Her unwavering dedication and relentless training earned her a spot in the global sporting arena.

In the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics, Usha's talent shone brightly as she narrowly missed winning a bronze medal in the 400 meters hurdles event, finishing fourth. However, her stellar performance did not go unnoticed, and she became an inspiration for aspiring athletes across the nation. Usha's greatest triumph came in the 1986 Asian Games held in Seoul, where she clinched five gold medals and a silver, breaking several records in the process. Her unprecedented feat catapulted her to international fame and cemented her status as one of Asia's finest athletes.

Beyond her achievements, Usha has nurtured and mentored young talents through her sports academy, the Usha School of Athletics. Her passion for athletics extends beyond her glory, and she strives to create a platform for budding athletes to pursue their dreams.

Even after retiring from competitive athletics, Usha's impact continues to be felt. Her dedication to the sport, her humble demeanour, and her relentless pursuit of excellence serve as an inspiration to countless athletes, both in India and around the world.

P.T. Usha's legacy is not merely defined by her medals but by her immeasurable impact on the sporting landscape. She symbolizes determination, resilience, and the power of dreams. Her story will forever be etched in the annals of Indian athletics, serving as a beacon of hope for generations to come.

Pooja Khanna

In India disabled people are still viewed as dependents, and their full potential is not recognized. One of such personalities is Pooja Khanna, who is the first Indian Paralympic archer who represented India at International level. We are trying to shed some light on her journey. Pooja Khanna, considered to be the first Indian paralympic archer, was born in 1990 in the Scheduled Caste family. Her mother is a housewife and her father is a bin collector turned scrap vender. Due to illiteracy and lack of awareness, she suffered from polio, which resulted in her with weakened legs.

Living with disabled leg, Pooja had to deal with caste prejudices. When she started learning archery, many of her fellow athletes were also physically



disabled, would not be ready to share water with her. There are the incidents when she was asked not to use public tap also.

With all the odds, she represented the Indian Paralympic squad in 2016, which took place in Rio De Janeiro. In 2016, India sent 19 athletes to the Paralympic games. That was the first time when India sent the largest delegation. In the paralympic, archer Pooja Khanna, failed to win her Round of 32 match against Poland, which ended her journey in the paralympic. In one of her interviews, she gave a message to the people who are disabled, “Don’t let disability defeat you.”

Vandana Katariya

Vandana Katariya is a hockey player representing the Indian National Women’s Hockey team. She has gained recognition and acclaim for her exceptional skills and contributions to the sport. Born on May 15 1992 in Uttarakhand, Katariya has emerged as one of the leading goal scorers in international women’s field hockey.

Katariya’s journey in field hockey began at a young age when she was inspired by her father, an ex-army officer, who encouraged her to pursue sports. She joined the Shahbad Hockey Academy in Haryana, which has produced several renowned hockey players, including Rani Rampal, to hone her skills and nurture her talent.

Vandana Katariya debuted for the Indian national team in the year 2011 and quickly established herself as a key player. Known for her speed, agility, and exceptional goal-scoring ability, she has played a pivotal role in many of India’s victories on the international stage. Her contribution to the team’s success cannot be understated, as she has consistently found the back of the net against some of the world’s top-ranked teams.

One of Katariya’s standout performances came during the 2017 Asia Cup, where she emerged as the tournament’s top scorer. Her crucial goals helped India secure the silver medal, marking a significant achievement for the team. She continued to excel in subsequent matches, including the

Commonwealth and the Asian Games, where her goal-scoring prowess played a vital role in India’s strong performances.

In the 2021 Tokyo Olympics, Vandana Katariya made history by becoming the first Indian woman to score a hat-trick in an Olympic competition. Her outstanding performance against South Africa helped India secure a place in the quarterfinals, creating excitement and optimism for the team and its supporters. However, after the loss against Argentina, her family faced casteist abuse by the upper caste people in a village in Haridwar. These people claimed that India lost the match because there were too many deprived class players in the team, and they also said that deprived class people should keep out of every sport.

Off the field, Katariya is known for her humble demeanour and dedication to her sport. She continues to inspire young aspiring athletes, particularly girls, to pursue their dreams and break barriers in sports. Her success and achievements have played a crucial role in raising the profile of women’s



field hockey in India and have garnered widespread recognition for her contributions to the sport.

Vandana Katariya’s accolades and accomplishments have earned her numerous awards and honours, including the prestigious Arjuna Award, which is bestowed upon athletes for outstanding national sports achievements. Her journey as a field hockey player inspires millions and highlights the potential of Indian women in the world of sports.

As Vandana Katariya continues to make her mark in field hockey, she remains a symbol of determination, skill, and perseverance. Her performances on the field, humility, and dedication have solidified her status as one of the most talented and influential players in Indian women’s field hockey history.

*Author has completed her PG in History from
Jammu University
uv@unheardvoices.co.in*




Kalpana Saroj: Success after struggle



Kalpana Saroj is a remarkable Indian entrepreneur, renowned TEDx speaker and the chairperson of Kamani Tubes, a leading manufacturing company based in Mumbai. Born into a family burdened by poverty and social constraints, Kalpana overcame numerous challenges to become a symbol of success and empowerment. Through her inspiring journey, she has not only transformed her own life but also made significant contributions to society, empowering women and uplifting underprivileged communities.

Dr. D. Mavoothu & Dr. Shraddha



Kalpana was born in 1961 in Roperkheda village in Akola, Maharashtra to a Marathi Buddhist family, the eldest of three daughters and two sons. Kalpana's father served as a police constable at Repatkhed village in Akola. Kalpana was married at 12 and lived in a slum in Mumbai with her husband's family. After suffering physical abuse from her husband's family members, she was rescued by her father. Then she left her husband and returned to her village to live with her parents. She faced much criticism and insensitive comments from her fellow villagers for deserting the marriage. This resulted into suicide attempt by consuming poison. Survival from the suicide attempt taught her to be courageous and overcome any hurdle. At 16, she moved back to Mumbai to live with her uncle's family. She started working in a garment factory to support her family. She successfully started a tailoring business and then a furniture store using government loans for scheduled caste people.

Her journey saw a new turn when Kalpana started K.S. Film Production and produced her first movie Khairalnji, dubbed in English, Telugu, and Hindi. She

has realized her entrepreneurial potential after going through innumerable ups and downs. Subsequently, she established many entrepreneurial networks through her real estate business. She was on the board of Kamani Tubes when it went into liquidation in 2001, and after taking over the company, she restructured it and brought it back to profit. She estimates that she now has personal assets worth \$112 million.

Under her guidance, Kamani Tubes expanded its product range, improved production processes, and adopted advanced technologies, becoming a trusted name in the steel industry. Saroj's ability to navigate challenges and make bold decisions has earned her widespread recognition as a business leader in India.

Beyond her entrepreneurial achievements, Kalpana Saroj is deeply committed to empowering women and improving the lives of marginalized communities. She firmly believes that economic independence is vital for social progress. Saroj actively supports initiatives that promote skill development, education, and entrepreneurship



among women. Her philanthropic efforts include funding scholarships, establishing vocational training centres, and providing financial aid to deserving students.

Kalpana Saroj's inspiring journey and her contributions to society have garnered international acclaim. She has been invited to deliver motivational talks at prestigious platforms, including TEDx events, where she shares her experiences and encourages others to overcome adversity.

Through her own transformation, Saroj exemplifies the transformative power of perseverance, resilience, and hard work.

Kalpana Saroj's life story is a testament to the indomitable spirit of human resilience and the power of determination. From a poverty-stricken childhood to becoming a successful entrepreneur and philanthropist, she has shattered stereotypes and paved the way for others to follow. Through her leadership at Kamani Tubes and her tireless efforts to empower women and uplift marginalized communities, Saroj has left an indelible mark on society. Her journey serves as an inspiration to aspiring entrepreneurs and a reminder that no obstacle is insurmountable when one possesses the courage and determination to succeed.

In 2013, Dr. Kalpana was honoured with Padmashree, one of the highest civilian awards, by the government of India. Later, she became the Member of Board of Directors of Bharathiya Mahila Bank (Now merged with SBI) and also served the Board of Governors of the prestigious Indian Institute of Management, Bengaluru.

She reached the top only through sheer hard work and commitment. She is a woman of leadership, determination, and hard work, which brought her success.

Dr. Kalpana's success story inspires many women, particularly first-generation ones. It conveys that every woman can succeed; remembering their past does not define their future. Our choices, options, and actions today will ultimately decide who we will eventually become.

Entrepreneurial Lessons from Dr. Kalpana's Success:

- Gender and social stereotypes have not deterred

her from dreaming and achieving. So, background and ecosystem do not matter at all.

- A woman can start a new business and even convert a failed company into a profit-making company, provided she has dreams and life goals. She was criticized (by relatives) for having abandoned the marriage, but today she is appreciated for turning an abandoned company into a successful company. So, your past is not going to define your future.
- Realize the importance of money sooner than later. Money cannot buy everything. Money is needed from the point of view of you and the society. You can help yourself and others with the money you have. Dr. Kalpana realized the importance of money when her sister died for want of money for her medical treatment. At this point in time, she felt life without money is worthless.
- Make a bold decision. Dr. Kalpana decided to become an entrepreneur to solve her money problem and as well as to realize her entrepreneurial potential.
- Continue your hard work even after your success. Dr. Kalpana used to work sixteen hours daily to make both ends meet, a habit that she still maintains.
- Have business acumen and a high reputation among business circles. When the trade unions of Kamani Tubes Ltd could manage the company, they approached Dr. Kalpana to save the company and their (566 workers) livelihood because of her business acumen and ethical approach to business.
- Do not forget your past. Even now, she visits her village regularly and does charity works there.
- It would help if you had a big dream, not an enormous degree, to be successful in entrepreneurship.

Dr. D. Mavoothu is a Professor, School of Management Studies, Cochin University of Science and Technology

*Dr. Shraddha is an Associate Professor of Social work at Gyanodaya Institute of Management and Technology, Neemuch, Madhya Pradesh
uv@unheardvoices.co.in*



Uniform Civil Code (UCC) is currently on the national agenda. Many look at it from religious perspective, which is not a healthy sign. We have to remember that UCC is part of directive principles of constitution. It is timely to recall what Dr. Ambedkar says on the issue.

Dr. Ambedkar on UCC

CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY DEBATES VOLUME 7 on 23rd Nov. 1948

My friend, Mr. Hussain Imam, in rising to support the amendments, asked whether it was possible and desirable to have a uniform Code of laws for a country so vast as this is. Now I must confess that I was very much surprised at that statement, for the simple reason that we have in this country a uniform code of laws covering almost every aspect of human relationship. We have a uniform and complete Criminal Code operating throughout the country, which is contained in the Penal Code and the Criminal Procedure Code. We have the Law of Transfer of Property, which deals with property relations and which is operative throughout the country. Then there are the Negotiable Instruments Acts: and I can cite innumerable enactments which would prove that this country has practically a Civil Code, uniform in its content and applicable to the whole of the country. The only province the Civil Law has not been able to invade so far is Marriage and Succession. It is this little corner which we have not been able to invade so far and it is the intention of those who desire to have article 35 as part of the Constitution to bring about that change. Therefore, the argument whether we should attempt such a thing seems to me somewhat misplaced for the simple reason that

we have, as a matter of fact, covered the whole lot of the field which is covered by a uniform Civil Code in this country. It is therefore too late now to ask the question whether we could do it. As I say, we have already done it.

Coming to the amendments, there are only two observations which I would like to make. My first observation would be to state that members who put forth these amendments say that the Muslim personal law, so far as this country was concerned, was immutable and uniform through the whole of India. Now I wish to challenge that statement. I think most of my friends who have spoken on this amendment have quite forgotten that up to 1935 the North-West Frontier Province was not subject to the Shariat Law. It followed the Hindu Law in the matter of succession and in other matters, so much so that it was in 1939 that the Central Legislature had to come into the field and to abrogate the application of the Hindu Law to the Muslims of the North-West Frontier Province and to apply the Shariat Law to them. That is not all.

My honourable friends have forgotten, that, apart from the North-West Frontier Province, up till 1937 in the rest of India, in various parts, such as the United Provinces, the Central Provinces and Bombay, the Muslims to a large extent were governed by the Hindu Law in the matter of succession. In order to bring them on the plane of uniformity with regard



to the other Muslims who observed the Shariat Law, the Legislature had to intervene in 1937 and to pass an enactment applying the Shariat Law to the rest of India.

I am also informed by my friend, Shri Karunakara Menon, that in North Malabar the Marumakkathayam Law applied to all—not only to Hindus but also to Muslims. It is to be remembered that the Marumakkathayam Law is a Matriarchal form of law and not a Patriarchal form of law.

The Mussulmans, therefore, in North Malabar were up to now following the Marumakkathayam law. It is therefore no use making a categorical statement that the Muslim law has been an immutable law which they have been following from ancient times. That law as such was not applicable in certain parts and it has been made applicable ten years ago. Therefore if it was found necessary that for the purpose of evolving a single civil code applicable to all citizens irrespective of their religion, certain portions of the Hindu law, not because they were contained in Hindu law but because they were found to be the most suitable, were incorporated into the new civil code projected by article 35, I am quite certain that it would not be open to any Muslim to say that the framers of the civil code had done great violence to the sentiments of the Muslim community.

My second observation is to give them an assurance. I quite realise their feelings in the matter, but I think they have read rather too much into article 35, which merely proposes that the State shall endeavour to secure a civil code for the citizens of the country. It does not say that after the Code is framed the State shall enforce it upon all citizens merely because they are citizens. It is perfectly possible that the future parliament may make a provision byway of making a beginning that the Code shall apply only to those who make a declaration that they are prepared to be bound by it, so that in the initial stage the application of the Code may be purely voluntary. Parliament may feel the ground by some such method. This is not a novel method. It was adopted in the Shariat Act of 1937 when it was applied to territories other than the North-West Frontier Province. The law said that here is a Shariat law which should be applied to Mussulmans who wanted that he should be bound by the Shariat Act should go to an officer of the state, make a declaration that he is willing to be bound by it, and after he has made that declaration the law will bind him and his successors. It would be perfectly possible for parliament to introduce a provision of that sort; so that the fear which my friends have expressed here will be altogether nullified. I therefore submit that there is no substance in these amendments and I oppose them.

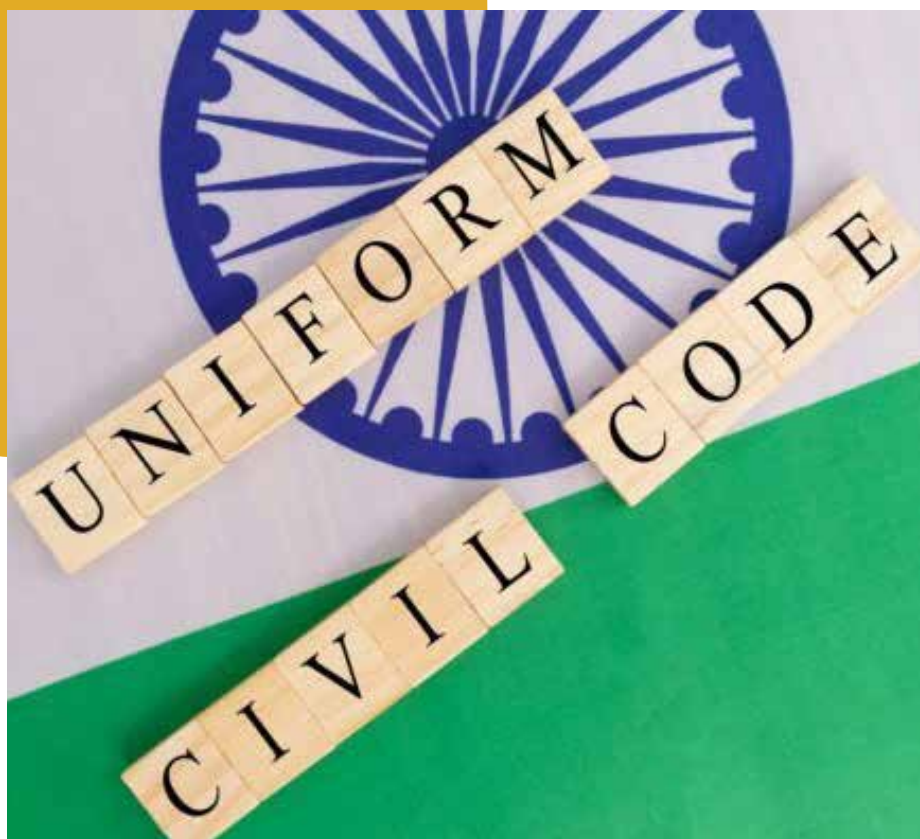
CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY DEBATES VOLUME 7 on 02 Dec. 1948

Coming to the question of saving personal law, I think this matter was very completely and very

sufficiently discussed and debated at the time when we discussed one of the Directive Principles of this Constitution which enjoins the State to seek or to strive to bring about a uniform civil code and I do not think it is necessary to make any further reference to it, but I should like to say this that, if such a saving clause was introduced into the Constitution, it would disable the legislatures in India from enacting any social measure whatsoever. The religious conceptions in this country are so vast that they cover every aspect of life, from birth to death. There is nothing which is not religion and if personal law is to be saved, I am sure about it that in social matters we will come to a standstill. I do not think it is possible to accept a position of that sort. There is nothing extraordinary in saying that we ought to strive hereafter to limit the definition of religion in such a manner that we shall not extend beyond beliefs and such rituals as may be connected with ceremonials, which are essentially religious. It is not necessary that the sort of laws, for instance, laws relating to tenancy or laws relating to succession, should be governed by religion. In Europe there is Christianity, but Christianity does not mean that the Christians all over the world or in any part of Europe where they live, shall have a uniform system of law of inheritance. No such thing exists. I personally do not understand why religion should be given this vast, expansive jurisdiction so as to cover the whole of life and to prevent the legislature from encroaching upon that field. After all, what are we having this liberty for? We are having this liberty in order to reform our social system, which is so full of inequities, so full of inequalities, discriminations and other things, which conflict with our fundamental rights. It is, therefore, quite impossible for anybody to conceive that the personal law shall be excluded from the jurisdiction of the State. Having said that, I should also like to point out that all that the State is claiming in this matter is a power to legislate. There is no obligation upon the State to do away with personal laws. It is only giving power. Therefore, no one need be apprehensive of the fact that if the State has the power, the State will immediately proceed to execute or enforce that power in a manner that may be found to be objectionable by the Muslims or by the Christians or by any other community in India.

We must all remember—including Members of the Muslim community, who have spoken on this subject, though one can appreciate their feelings very well—that sovereignty is always limited, no matter even if you assert that it is unlimited, because sovereignty in the exercise of that power must reconcile itself to the sentiments of different communities. No Government can exercise its power in such a manner as to provoke the Muslim community to rise in rebellion. I think it would be a mad Government if it did so. But that is a matter which relates to the exercise of the power and not to the power itself.

uv@unheardvoices.co.in



Babasaheb Ambedkar warned in the Constituent Assembly, “No one need be apprehensive that if the State has the power, the State will immediately proceed to execute...that power in a manner may be found to be objectionable by the Muslims or by the Christians or by any other community. I think it would be a mad government if it did so.”

Dr. Ambedkar favoured UCC

Ramesh Chaner



The issue of UCC is once again in the news because of government initiative and the Law Commission. With a view to make the things easy to understand for the common man, I thought of sharing a common man's take on the subject. The move is obviously supported by the ruling BJP and opposed by few oppositions, as expected, on the respective party lines. UCC repeatedly remained on the agenda of the ruling BJP and other right wing Hindu outfits right from independence in 1947, framing of the constitution and thereafter. As such it remained a controversial issue. BJP and other proponents quote Article 44 of the Constitution which reads, “Shall endeavour to secure for the citizens a uniform civil code throughout the territory of India” and underline that it was the will of the majority of the constitution makers to have UCC that is why it was stipulated in the constitution under the Directive Principles of State Policy.

On the other side the Congress and other parties in the opposition argued that time was not ripe to have UCC as it would tend to fragment the social fabric of the country which was threat due to various

factors. The opposition argued that the proposed legislation was against the principles enshrined in Article 26B and Article 29(1) of the Constitution, which allow people “to manage its own affairs in matters of religion” and the right to conserve distinct language, script or culture.

The Constituent Assembly discussed and debated the matter extensively and decided to insert the issue of UCC under the Directive Principles of State Policy. The chief architect of the constitution, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was, prime facie, in favour of UCC as his personal motivation was to reform the society of graded inequality of which the socially depressed classes and the women folk were suffering for centuries. He was of the view that the UCC aimed to provide protection to vulnerable sections including women and religious minorities, while also promoting nationalistic fervour through unity.

BJP and proponents of UCC often tend to take shelter under Ambedkar while pursuing their agenda in this regard. Babasaheb Ambedkar was a visionary and pragmatic leader and a nationalist to the core. India is a multi-cultural and multi-racial society. The



Hindu conservatives were interested in maintaining the Hindu traditions with regard to civil matters of marriage, divorce, inheritance and share of women folk on one hand and the Muslim minority were keen to retain the personal laws like Shariat as India was a secular state which guaranteed religious freedom.

Dr. Ambedkar agreed to insert the UCC under the Directive Principles of State Policy, I think, against his own liking. The objective of Article 44 of the Directive Principles in the Indian Constitution was to address the discrimination against vulnerable groups and harmonize diverse cultural groups across the country. Dr. B R Ambedkar, while formulating the Constitution had said that a UCC is desirable but for the moment it should remain voluntary, and thus the Article 35 of the draft constitution was added as a part of the Directive Principles of the State Policy in part IV of the Constitution of India as Article 44. It was incorporated in the constitution as an aspect that would be fulfilled when the nation would be ready to accept it and the social acceptance to the UCC could be made.

Babasaheb Ambedkar warned in the Constituent Assembly, "No one need be apprehensive that if the State has the power, the State will immediately proceed to execute... that power in a manner may be found to be objectionable by the Muslims or by the Christians or by any other community. I think it would be a mad government if it did so." It was a far-sighted and pragmatic approach. We need to build consensus on the issue. The minority communities should also not adopt a hard attitude just for the heck of it as many of the Islamic states have opted for 'Common Law System and Civil Law Systems.

The legal systems of countries all over the world are divided into two categories: common law systems and civil law systems. There are around 150 nations with predominantly civil law systems, compared to approximately 80 countries with common law systems. A Uniform Civil Code means that all sections of the society irrespective of their religion shall be treated equally according to a national civil code, which shall be applicable to all uniformly. They cover areas like- Marriage, divorce, maintenance, inheritance, adoption and succession of the property.

In the post-independence struggle, we are trying our best to make it a modern nation as a 'Union of States' with its diversity and individual freedoms. We are to maintain this under its 'secular' identity as many democratic and federal countries like the USA have done. In the United States of America, States are independent legal entities with their own Supreme Courts, which follow their own practices and legal conventions. Even though there are common principles that govern these civil laws in the States in a manner that is universal across the nation.

Ambedkar was not only a constitutional expert but also a great social reformer to make India a cohesive country. In the face of stiff opposition, he was interested in safeguarding the interest of women and depressed classes and proposed changes which

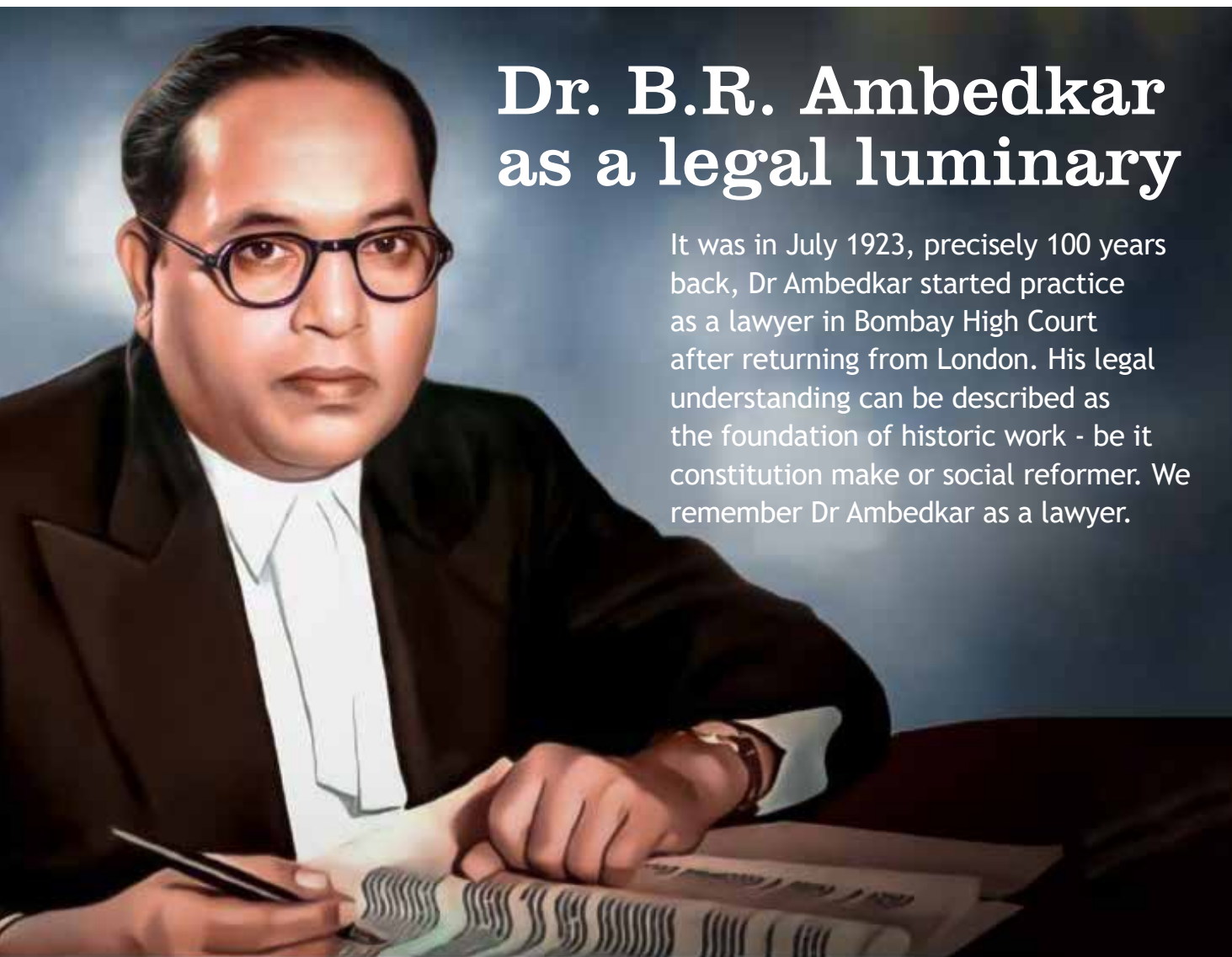
later came as Hindu Code Bills - The Hindu code bill was passed in the 1950s that aimed to codify and reform Hindu personal law in India, abolishing religious law in favour of a common law code.

Dr Ambedkar resigned in 1951 from his coveted position as the Law Minister when Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru could not carry forward the reform agenda of Ambedkar. Nehru could not convince President Rajendra Prasad, who openly opposed the proposed Hindu Code Bills. He said, "My right to examine it (the bill) on its merits, when it is passed by the Parliament, before giving assent to it is there. But if any action of mine at a later stage is likely to cause embarrassment to the Government, I may take such appropriate actions as I may be called upon to avoid such embarrassment consistently with the dictates of my own conscience".

In this background, we need to be balanced and practical in addressing this complex issue as advised by Babasaheb Ambedkar. It is a matter of satisfaction that our judiciary has acted pragmatically to reconcile the differences owing to Uniform Criminal Code as against Diversified Civil Code - While the criminal laws in India are uniform and applicable equally on all, no matter what their religious beliefs are, the civil laws are influenced by faith.

Swayed by religious texts, the personal laws which come into effect in civil cases have always been implemented according to constitutional norms. All said and done, I think Uniform Civil Code would be beneficial to the health of the society at large. I quote from an article on the subject which explains the matter further and puts the issue in its perspective, "Since India is an emerging and progressive country, and it is a bit disappointing to hear that we are not bolting our attention to achieve the core purpose of equality and secularism that we have committed to providing to our citizens. India can be a great nation only if the same laws relating to inheritance, marriage, family, land, etc. apply to all citizens, irrespective of caste, creed or community. All Indians will be treated equally in this way. The age-old religious customs and personal laws of our country are usually gender-based. The Uniform Civil Code is an indication of a progressive modern nation. It is an indication that the nation has moved away from caste politics and religious politics. We as a nation are regularly striving towards the best possible economic growth, it might also be right to say that socially and culturally we have degraded to a new low. A uniform civil code will help to improve the conditions of women in India. It will help to bring about changes in the age-old traditions that have no relevance in today's modern society, where women should be accorded equal rights and treated fairly. The uniform civil code in India will ensure not division on the basis of religion but unity by creating a sense of nationality."

*Author is a retired diplomat
uv@unheardvoices.co.in*



Dr. B.R. Ambedkar as a legal luminary

It was in July 1923, precisely 100 years back, Dr Ambedkar started practice as a lawyer in Bombay High Court after returning from London. His legal understanding can be described as the foundation of historic work - be it constitution make or social reformer. We remember Dr Ambedkar as a lawyer.

Vijendra



Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, fondly known as Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was not only a social reformer, politician, and architect of the Constitution of India but also a distinguished lawyer. His remarkable legal career, combined with his tireless efforts to fight social discrimination and uplift marginalized communities, has left an indelible mark on the annals of Indian history. This article delves into Dr. Ambedkar's life and legal journey, highlighting his pivotal role in shaping India's legal landscape and advocating for social justice.

Early Life and Legal Education:

Born in an untouchable family on April 14, 1891, Dr. Ambedkar studied in Satara in Maharashtra and completed his high school education at Mumbai's Elphinstone High School. Bhimrao Ambedkar became the first student from the 'untouchable' community to pass the matriculation exam, which was a difficult

exam then. Dr. Ambedkar pursued his B.A. from Elphinstone College. He also completed an M.A. and a Ph.D. from Columbia University in the United States and an M.Sc. and a D.Sc. at the London School of Economics in Britain. He studied at Gray's Inn in London for two periods before being called to the Bar by Gray's Inn.

The Struggle for Social Justice:

Dr. Ambedkar's legal career was intrinsically intertwined with his relentless fight against social discrimination and the oppressive caste system. He understood that to bring about meaningful change, the law needed to be harnessed as a powerful tool for justice. With a profound understanding of the legal system and its potential, he dedicated himself to securing equal rights and opportunities for marginalized communities.

After returning from London in July 1923, he



started his career as a lawyer at the Bombay High Court. However, he did not have money to pay the registration fee for starting the practice. At that time, one of his close Parsi friends, Naval Bhathena, helped him with the required amount of Rs. 500. At that time, the independent movement was at peak. The leadership of Congress was transferred from Tilak to Mahatma Gandhi. Those who were lawyers but are from Upper castes gave up their law practices and jumped into the freedom struggle. This is the privilege that these people had at that time. But Ambedkar was an exception to this. He was the sole earner for his family. After achieving the requisite education, he had no cases for about a year and a half.

Challenging Discrimination:

As a lawyer, Dr. Ambedkar undertook numerous legal battles against caste-based discrimination. His landmark case, the Mahad Satyagraha in 1927, aimed to secure the right of SCs to access public water sources. This event marked a significant step in the struggle for social equality and set the tone for Dr. Ambedkar's unwavering commitment to fighting discrimination through the legal framework.

Fighting for the Untouchables:

Dr. Ambedkar's legal expertise was instrumental in advocating for the rights of deprived classes and their emancipation from the shackles of societal oppression. He worked ardently to abolish untouchability and secure fundamental rights for them. His advocacy paved the way for including provisions against untouchability in the Indian Constitution, ensuring legal protection for oppressed communities.

Drafting the Indian Constitution:

One of Dr. Ambedkar's most influential contributions lies in his role as the chairman of the Constitution Drafting Committee. His legal acumen and deep understanding of social issues enabled him to shape the Constitution of India, which stands as a beacon of equality, justice, and fundamental rights. Dr. Ambedkar's vision, as reflected in the Constitution, aimed to dismantle caste-based discrimination and promote social harmony.

Social Reforms and Women's Rights:

Dr. Ambedkar's legal pursuits were not limited to caste-based discrimination alone. He recognized the need to address the systematic oppression faced by women in Indian society. He championed women's rights, advocating for legal reforms to eliminate discriminatory practices such as child marriage and denying inheritance rights. Dr. Ambedkar's efforts laid the groundwork for subsequent advancements in women's empowerment in India.

Affirmative Action and Reservation Policies:

Dr. Ambedkar was pivotal in formulating affirmative action policies because social justice required proactive measures. He recognized the need for reservations and quotas to uplift marginalized communities and provide them with opportunities in education and employment. These policies, embedded in the Indian Constitution, continue to shape the



landscape of social equality in contemporary India.

Legacy and Continuing Impact:

Dr. Ambedkar's legacy as a lawyer extends far beyond his lifetime. His legal battles and advocacy continue to inspire generations, transcending the realms of law and touching the lives of millions. His contributions laid the foundation for a more inclusive and just society, fostering the spirit of equality and empowerment.

In the Viceroy's Council, Dr. Ambedkar worked as a Labour Minister and was responsible for labor, irrigation, power, social work, and mines. His significant contributions included the following:

- Reducing the daily working hours of industrial laborers from 14 to eight.
- Introducing provisions for paid leave.
- Establishing employment exchanges for skilled and semi-skilled laborers.
- Advocating for various labor welfare measures.

Dr. Ambedkar played a crucial role in the passage and implementation of Bills related to Employees State Insurance, review of wage-fixing parameters, minimum wages, maternity leave for women, and other similar measures. Through his political engagements, writings, teachings, and practice of law, Dr. Ambedkar championed the idea of the State as an organization that upholds the rights of every individual.

He aimed to eliminate social, political, and economic inequalities by creating better opportunities for marginalized groups, ensuring freedom from want and fear. His lifelong struggle for justice earned him an enduring reputation as a defender of human rights and a lawyer for the marginalized.

Some of the cases fought by Dr. Ambedkar:

1. In March 1927, as part of the Mahad Satyagraha, Dr. Ambedkar led a march to assert the rights of SCs to access the Chavdar lake and drink water from it. This defiance challenged the discriminatory practice of untouchability, which relegated deprived classes to social and ritual inferiority. Dr. Ambedkar's legal acumen and advocacy skills were crucial in this case. He filed a petition arguing for the equal rights of deprived classes to access public resources, including water bodies, regardless of their caste. Although the case did not result in a direct legal victory, it sparked a movement for SCs rights and brought national attention to the issue of untouchability. The Chavdar lake incident marked an important milestone in Dr. Ambedkar's fight against caste-based



discrimination and his relentless pursuit of social justice. It symbolized the struggle for equality and inspired subsequent SC movements in India.

2. There was a case against the publisher of *Deshache Dushman* (Enemies of Country) in 1926. The petitioner claimed that the books publisher defamed Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Vishnushashtri Chiplunkar for their upper caste people's idea of supremacy. Through this book, the publisher emphasizes that this was the petitioner's claim. However, in his argument, Dr. Ambedkar clarified that the petitioner is not a close relative of these personalities. Dr. Ambedkar also argued that these personalities were not alive at this moment. Their case should not stand as the third person files it.

3. Dr. Ambedkar provided legal representation to Raghunathrao Dhondo Karve, a social reformer, in a case involving allegations of obscenity. Karve had published a magazine called - *Samaj Swasthya*, which aimed to raise awareness about sexual health, despite facing strong opposition due to the sensitive nature of its subject matter. Dr. Ambedkar supported Karve's advocacy for sex education, addressing topics that were considered taboo at the time. The government initiated the case against Karve based on the claims of an officer who identified as an oriental translator. The officer deemed certain content in the December 1933 Gujarati edition of the magazine, specifically in the section containing responses to correspondence, as vulgar. Dr. Ambedkar's involvement as Karve's defence counsel highlights his commitment to defending freedom of expression and challenging societal taboos. By representing Karve in this case, he demonstrated his belief in the importance of open discussions surrounding sexual health and his dedication to promoting progressive social reform.

Dr. Ambedkar strongly believed in equality and fought against social discrimination. In 1930, he led a

procession of SCs to the Kalaram Temple, demanding the right to enter and worship alongside members of higher castes. This event was a part of his more prominent campaign against untouchability and caste-based discrimination.

The procession to the Kalaram Temple was a significant moment in the SCs rights movement. Dr. Ambedkar's activism and insistence on challenging the discriminatory practices at the temple brought attention to the issue of caste-based discrimination. They sparked discussions about the need for social reform. While the immediate outcome of Dr. Ambedkar's efforts did not result in the complete abolition of discriminatory practices at the Kalaram Temple, it laid the foundation for future movements and initiatives advocating for the rights of marginalized communities to access places of worship without discrimination.

Dr. Ambedkar's advocacy in the Kalaram Temple entry was part of his mission to eradicate caste-based discrimination and establish a more just and equitable society. His work and activism paved the way for legal and social reforms that aimed to dismantle the barriers of caste and uplift the marginalized sections of society.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's journey as a lawyer is inseparable from his lifelong commitment to social justice. His legal expertise, coupled with his unwavering determination, allowed him to challenge the deeply entrenched systems of discrimination and fight for the rights of marginalized communities. Dr. Ambedkar's role in drafting the Indian Constitution and his pursuit of social reforms have left an indelible mark on the legal landscape of India. His legacy is a constant reminder that the law can transform society, eradicate discrimination, and pave the way for a more inclusive future.

uv@unheardvoices.co.in

Hounded for playing upper caste role

(From page 19)

P. K. Rosy in the Malayalam film industry. In 2013, a movie named *Celluloid*, based on the life of JC Daniel and his attempt to make the first Malayalam film, was released. The film won seven Kerala State Awards, including Best Film and Best Actor (Prithviraj). However, the film was criticized by SC intellectuals for failing to give Rosy her due credit.

The challenges faced during her career (P.K. Rosy's role in *Vigathakumaran*), hold significant historical importance, as they marked a milestone in the development of the Malayalam film industry. Her contribution to Indian cinema paved the way for future generations of actors and actresses. It's important to acknowledge the significance of P.K. Rosy's role in *Vigathakumaran* and its impact on the history of Malayalam cinema. Her participation in the

film marked a pioneering moment for marginalized communities' representation and challenged the established norms of the industry. Despite her challenges, Rosy's contribution opened doors for future generations of actors and actresses from diverse backgrounds. Her struggle serves as a reminder of marginalized individuals' difficulties in breaking through societal barriers.

Various attempts made by activists in Kerala have led to opening up of multiple avenues for the recognition of P. K. Rosy. One such was the P K Rosy Smaraka Samithi which was announced by the then Kerala's Chief Minister Oommen Chandy. But, so far away from the 1920s, she still remains forgotten!

Author is an Assistant Professor in Kochi Business School, Kakkand.
uv@unheardvoices.co.in



Anti Caste bill in California now

SB- 403 bill on Racial discrimination was approved in the California state senate recently. The bill was passed by a majority of 34 to 1. In fact, it should have gone uncontested. It started in the city of Seattle, Washington. The bill was passed in February in Seattle. It was approved by the city council.

Ayesha Wahab, a female senator of Afghan origin, introduced the bill. After the ban on caste discrimination was sealed, some people realized that Hinduism had sunk. Some welcomed it. Why was this bill introduced in the first place? A 2018 report by Equality Lab, organization in the US, is alarming. Two out of three deprived class employees face caste-based discrimination at various companies in the US. Those who discriminate want to project that 'elite' Asian students also face caste discrimination in some American universities. Forty years ago, as a student, Dr. Narendra Jadhav, economist and former Rajya Sabha member, experienced caste abuse at the US University.



Addressing the person taking him to the learned professor of Indian origin, the professor said "Do you know anything, Dhed ke Bachche ko leker aye ho!" Those who insist that there is no caste discrimination should find the meaning of the word 'Dhed'. What has changed since then in the cognitive world of elite Indians in America? The answer lies in the Equality Lab report!

For those who think that California has brought this issue to the fore, racial discrimination was banned in 2020 at Brandeis University, Harvard University, California State University, University of California, and Brown University. Opponents of the Anti-Racist Discrimination Bill should remember history. Despite being a king, Sayajirao Gaikwad could not stop the discrimination against Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar. This is the situation all over the world.

Why do we struggle to question the existence of the caste system that has persisted for five thousand years? Why are we holding back from asserting that caste distinctions are invalid? Why are we opposed to habitating religion by rejecting caste? Why do we not have the courage to think that some defects in the ancient culture should be removed and to assert that - This question comes to the mind of a SC like me who has received foreign education and works in the private sector.

Like every year, on Ambedkar Jayanti, we performed Buddha Vandana at home. After the

removal of Article 370 from Jammu and Kashmir, generations of the Valmiki community (SCs) were freed from slavery. For 75 years, their generations worked only as cleaning workers. Because there is no domicile certificate, no scholarship. No social justice. Article 370 has been removed, and a golden dawn has dawned in their lives. We meditated at home for these brothers. Welcomed them into the mainstream of development. They might not have Phule, Shahu, Ambedkar in their hearts - but first, they should take advantage of reservation, and save their own generations - we prayed.

Who wouldn't want such a modern religion if the result of Buddha Vandana is the battle of the end of caste? It is the responsibility of the highest and most powerful element of the society to ensure that there is no caste exploitation. Efforts to legislate this responsibility will now take place worldwide as disadvantaged social elements are spread across the globe. Ambedkar is reaching the countries.

2019, data reveals a significant lack of representation for marginalized communities in top government positions. Out of 89 secretaries at the Centre, only one belonged to the Scheduled Castes (SC), with three from the Scheduled Tribes (ST). Surprisingly, there were no secretaries from the Other Backward Classes (OBC). This lack of diversity is particularly evident among Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officers who dominate these positions, highlighting the urgent need for greater inclusivity.

The underrepresentation issue extends beyond secretarial roles, as it persists at the additional secretary, joint secretary, and director levels as well. Among the 93 additional secretaries in central government ministries, only six are SCs and five are STs. Regrettably, there are no OBCs in this rank either. These numbers raise concerns about equal opportunities and the fair inclusion of all sections of society.

This data reflects a systemic denial of opportunities to the oppressed classes. Former law minister Kiran Rijju addressed this issue in the Rajya Sabha, pointing out that there were no ST judges appointed to the Supreme Court. It is crucial for us to be more vigilant about these issues and approach them with empathy and passion, ensuring fair representation and opportunities for the oppressed classes. The need to combat caste discrimination is evident in the adoption of the anti-casteism bill in the US, which reflects a commitment to inclusivity and equality. It is essential for everyone to stand up against caste-based discrimination in order to foster a truly inclusive society.

*Author is Pune based journalist.
uv@unheardvoices.co.in*



SC to hear plea on religion-neutral Scheduled Caste status

The Supreme Court has agreed to hear a plea, challenging the use of religious identity as a criterion for granting Scheduled Caste status. The petition, filed by Tamil activist Kudanthai Arasan, argues that the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order of 1950 goes beyond its parent provision, Article 341(1). The petition calls for a religion-neutral approach to the classification, stating that religion should not be a criterion for granting or denying Scheduled Caste status to any community. The outcome of this case could have significant implications for the eligibility and rights of SCs converts to Christianity and Islam.



Untouchability includes all forms of social exclusion

The Madras High Court has observed that the practice of untouchability extends beyond caste-based discrimination and includes all forms of social ostracism and exclusion based on ideas of inferiority. This observation was made during a case involving the membership rules of the Madras Bar Association, which was criticized for being elitist and exclusionary.

“Going beyond the specific Caste-based practice, untouchability includes all practices of social ostracism and exclusion that have their bases in ritual ideas of purity/pollution and hierarchy/subordination.”

Justice SM Subramaniam emphasized that Article 17 of the Constitution, which prohibits untouchability, should be interpreted broadly. The court clarified that untouchability encompasses any practice involving social subordination, exclusion, and segregation, irrespective of caste.

The case was filed by Senior Advocate Elephant G Rajendran, who alleged that his son, a non-member, was denied access to drinking water at the MBA Hall. The court recognized that the issue raised was one of class discrimination rather than caste discrimination, stating that discrimination based on economic status falls within the ambit of untouchability.

The court discussed how the Constitution aims to address social hierarchies and highlighted that untouchability should be understood in a broader sense, beyond its narrow interpretation limited to religion or caste. It referred to Article 15, which guarantees equal social conditions, to support its stance.

Bhim Army chief shot at, four detained

The suspects arrested in connection with the shooting of Chandra Shekhar Aazad have revealed to investigators that they targeted the SC leader due to their discontent with the activities of the Bhim Army against their community and his social media statements, according to police. The four arrested individuals, all in their twenties and belonging to the upper caste community, include three with prior criminal records and one taxi driver.

The arrest operation was conducted jointly by the Haryana Special Task Force and Uttar Pradesh police near a dhaba in Haryana’s Ambala district. The shooting incident occurred on June 28 in Deoband, Uttar Pradesh, where Aazad sustained a bullet injury and was hospitalized.

Preliminary investigations have revealed that the accused were upset about the Bhim Army’s alleged actions against their community, including an attack on the Maharana Pratap Bhawan in Malikpur and a rally of Rajputs in Sabirpur, both in Uttar Pradesh. Additionally, the accused expressed dissatisfaction with Aazad’s statements on social media.

The Uttar Pradesh police will conduct the final interrogation and investigation since the attack took place within their jurisdiction. Police have seized two country-made pistols, cartridges, and a car believed to have been used in the crime based on information provided by the accused. Charges of attempted murder, criminal conspiracy, intimidation, and violations of the SC/ST Act have been filed against them, along with a case under the Arms Act.

Deprived class family faces caste discrimination, denied temple food

A SC family in a village in Madhya Pradesh’s Sagar area was subjected to caste discrimination and denied access to a communal feast at a local temple. The incident occurred on July 4, where two individuals from an upper caste group not only refused to give them prasad (sacred food) directly but also threw it at them. The SC community has filed a complaint, and a case has been registered against the accused individuals under relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code and the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act. The police are currently investigating the matter.

*Compiled by Prajvalant.
uv@unheardvoices.co.in*



Ahilyadevi reminded Malharrao of the custom and tradition. However, Malharrao replied to that saying, “Customs and traditions are meant for social welfare. They must be changed to suit the needs of the time. Today, we need you. The two children would be left orphans if you perform Sati. My life would be meaningless. Therefore, you must reconsider. You have a lot of work to do in your lifetime.” Thus, Malharrao convinced Ahilyadevi to perform Sati. However, Kunvarsaheb Ramjani and the other wives of Khanderao, as well as his pet dog Gulbadan, sacrificed themselves.

Ahilyadevi Holkar did not opt for sati tradition

Rambhau Lande



Though she faced many adversities and challenges, Ahilyadevi has made her mark on history as a brave woman. Not only that, she was also concerned about the welfare of her subjects and launched several schemes to provide better quality of life to people.

The glorious history of the Holkar dynasty is full of women, who have played a vital role in shaping the future of not only the dynasty or Maratha Empire but that of the entire country. Among such women were Gautamabai Holkar, Ahilyadevi Holkar, Rakhamabai Holkar, Harkunvar Holkar, Tulsabai Holkar and Krishnabai Holkar, whose terms were path-breaking.

Malharrao, the great warrior-founder of the Holkar dynasty with its trailblazing achievements and yore of glorious culture, carried a great influence of his maternal uncle Jahagirdar Bhojraj Bargal and aunt Mohibai Bargal on him. Malharrao was still a child when the unfortunate death of his father made his mother Jivai seek refuge at her maiden

home. As the Indian tradition goes, a woman in distress is never turned away by her maiden family. Therefore, struck by the misfortune of the untimely death of her husband, Jivai chose to live in her maiden Talode village for upbringing of Malharrao. Malharrao realised the important role that a woman plays in the life of a man at an early age. That is why he obtained the charters of the privy estate in the name of Gautamabai from the Maratha Emperor Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj by requesting Peshava Bajirao the Great.

Many military campaigns and diplomatic tours made Malharrao's life full of uncertainty. Since he would be on campaigns continuously, he would always travel with his family. So much so, he was accompanied by his entire family when he set out on the campaign to capture Kumher (Kumbheri). He lost his only son in the war. However, though grief struck, Malharrao held himself together and



convinced Ahilyadevi not to become a Sati. Thus, he handled the grave occasion with great courage and laid down a new progressive tradition.

The Kumher (Kumbheri) Campaign

Surajmal Jat, a Jat chieftain, launched an offence against Delhi and took occupation of the capital of the Mughal empire on 10th May 1753. He ousted the Moughal Vizier (Wazir) Safdarjang and installed Intizam-ud-Daulah as the Grand Vizier (Wazir). He also replaced the Military paymaster-general and head of the intelligence agencies of the Mughal (Mir Bakshi). This unsettled the political conditions of Delhi. Malharrao and Jayappa Shinde were camping in Pune at that time. On 21st November 1753, an army of 4000 strong men led by Khanderao Holkar reached Delhi. The emperor requested Khanderao Holkar to wage a war against the Jats. Khanderao showed the willingness to fight against the Jats on the condition that the emperor hand over the reins of the province (Subah) of Agra to the Mahrattas. The emperor was not willing to lose the strategic province. Therefore, he involved Gaziuddin as a mediator and continued cajoling Khanderao. He even gave expensive gifts and a robe of honour (Khilat) to Khanderao. However, Khanderao returned to his camp without accepting any of the gifts. Gaziuddin too accompanied him to his camp. Malharrao was kept informed about the talks between the emperor and Khanderao. When Khanderao received Malharrao's orders to move out of Delhi, he decamped for Bharatpur on 8th January 1754. The troops led by Khanderao laid a siege to the Kumher (Kumbheri) fort on 20th January 1754 and started launching guerrilla attacks in the vicinity of Bharatpur. The Mahratta army led by Khanderao ransacked several villages ruled by Jat chieftains adjacent to Palval. Such was the pressure exerted on Surajmal Jat by Khanderao through guerrilla attacks in the vicinity of Bharatpur, which was Surajmal Jat's fiefdom, that the latter sought refuge by locking himself in the impenetrable fort at Kumher (Kumbheri). He even invited Khanderao to initiate negotiations to forge a peace treaty with Mahrattas. However, Khanderao would have nothing of it.

Therefore, Surajmal Jat sent his counsellor Rupram Chaudhari to negotiate with Malharrao and offered to pay a ransom of forty lakh. Meanwhile, Malharrao, accompanied by Raghoba Dada Peshava and Jayappa, had left Pune. Malharrao and Raghoba Dada Peshava camped in the Gangarsoli area near Kumher (Kumbheri) and laid a siege to the Kumher (Kumbheri) fort to extract a ransom of one crore rupees from Surajmal Jat. When Surajmal Jat did not show the inclination to pay the ransom, Malharrao cut the provisions for the Army holding the fort. Surajmal Jat did not agree to pay the ransom till the first fortnight of March ended. Finally, when the Army holding the fort ran out of provisions, he resorted to fighting back the Maratha Army and launched attacks from the positions in the fort. Surajmal Jat made all-out efforts to make a breach in the siege. A fierce

war broke out on the plains of Kumher (Kumbheri) on March 15/16. On 17th March, a valiant Khanderao started advancing towards the fort, slaying whoever tried resisting him. His valour terrified the enemy, leaving Surajmal Jat rattled. Scared that Khanderao's success in forcing entry inside the fort would mean his end with all his descendants, Surajmal Jat started firing cannonballs to resist Khanderao. As the Jats targeted Khanderao's army with their firepower, great misfortune struck as a cannonball hit Khanderao, killing him instantaneously. The war ceased with Khanderao falling. Taking advantage of the ensuing chaos, Surajmal Jat made good his escape from the fort.

Khanderao's demise struck Malharrao like a bolt of lightning. A pall of gloom descended over the Holkar camp. Malharrao broke into tears. All wives of Khanderao including Ahilyadevi and nine others started preparing to perform Sati. Khanderao and Ahilyadevi had two children – Malerao and Mukta. Malharrao was grief-stricken on seeing Ahilyadevi



ready to perform Sati while Khanderao's mortal remains were being taken to the funeral. He stood in front of Ahilyadevi and requested, "My daughter, I am an old man. I may die at any moment. You will have to look after everything in this case. This dynasty and Indore need you. Please do not perform Sati. I would think Ahilyabai has died and not my heir Khandu and treat you like Khandu. Be considerate at least towards the innocent Malerao and Mukta."

Ahilyadevi reminded Malharrao of the custom and tradition. However, Malharrao replied to that saying, "Customs and traditions are meant for social welfare. They must be changed to suit the needs of the time. Today, we need you. The two children would be left orphans if you perform Sati. My life would be meaningless. Therefore, you must reconsider. You have a lot of work to do in your lifetime." Thus, Malharrao convinced Ahilyadevi to not perform Sati. However, Kunvarsaheb Ramjani and the other wives of Khanderao, as well as his pet dog Gulbadan, sacrificed themselves.

*Author is a Researcher of Holkar Dynasty.
uv@unheardvoices.co.in*

DINVISHESH

Uddham Singh, born on December 26, 1899, in Sunam, Punjab, was a prominent Indian freedom fighter and revolutionary who played a significant role in the struggle for India's independence from British colonial rule. He is best remembered for assassinating Michael O'Dwyer, the former Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab, in 1940 as an act of retribution for the Jallianwala Bagh massacre. Uddham Singh grew up in a politically charged environment, witnessing firsthand the atrocities committed by the British during the Jallianwala Bagh massacre in 1919. This tragic event left an indelible mark on his psyche and fueled his determination to seek justice for his fellow countrymen.

In pursuit of his mission, Singh traveled extensively, taking part in various revolutionary activities and engaging with like-minded individuals. He believed in armed resistance as a means to overthrow British rule and restore freedom to his motherland. It was on March 13, 1940, that Singh avenged the Jallianwala Bagh massacre by shooting Michael O'Dwyer during a public meeting in London. Singh was subsequently arrested, put on trial, and eventually executed on July 31, 1940.

Uddham Singh's act of assassination was a stark reminder of the atrocities committed by the British Empire and served as a catalyst for India's independence movement. His unwavering dedication to the cause of freedom and his sacrifice continue to inspire generations of Indians. Uddham Singh's name will forever be etched in the annals of Indian history as a true patriot and a fearless freedom fighter.

Remembering Uddham Singh



31st July
Uddham Singh Death Anniversary



15th July
Sant Namdev Maharaj
Death Anniversary



18th July
Annabhau Sathe
Death Anniversary &
1st August Birth Anniversary



13th August
Ahilyadevi Holkar
Death Anniversary

To subscribe us,
simply scan or click
on this QR code and
fill the form.

