

Editorial

Dalits have historically been subjected to various types of humiliation and violence. Dehumanized and humiliated they are forced to accept their subjugation by the hegemonic upper caste. When they get organized and put up resistance, this is met with brutal reprisal. Events in Mansa in Punjab and in other parts of the country are glaring examples.

Punjab has the highest population of Dalits in the country i.e. 31% of the total population. Since millennia the upper castes have perpetrated inhuman atrocities upon the Dalits including rapes of Dalit women. Despite enacting various egalitarian legal provisions for the protection of life and dignity of the Dalits, the local administration and the police often collude with the upper caste criminals and hush up the crimes against the Dalits. Whenever the police is pressured into registering criminal cases against the upper castes the investigation is shoddy. With India's Independence various affirmative actions by the government, protective legislations, the teaching of Dr Ambedkar and mobilizations of various pro Dalit radical organizations, the Dalits of Punjab have begun to become assertive and are coming forward to register criminal cases against the upper caste oppressor for their crimes. These cases are registered under Schedule Caste Schedule Tribe Prevention Act and other Provisions of the Indian Penal Code. According to the state government figures, the number of cases registered under this Act is progressively going up. In 1992 18 cases were registered including 4 rape and 7 murder cases. In the year 66 cases were registered of which 10 were murder cases 3 for rape. 94 cases were registered in the year 2004 which includes 13 rapes and one murder case. Bant Singh of Jhabbar village in Mansa district of Punjab has been organizing Dalit agricultural labourers under the banner of Mazdoor Mukti Morcha a radical organization of farm labourers. For his brave fight against upper caste atrocities he had to pay an immense price. Today he is lying in the Post Graduate Institute of Medicine Hospital in Chandigarh with both his legs amputated. In the year 2002 Bant Singh's eldest daughter was raped by local upper caste land owners. When the matter came to light Bant Singh was offered cash and was asked to hush up the case. But he refused to buckle under pressure and took his daughter to the local police station and a case of rape under relevant sections of IPC was registered against the culprits. As soon as the matter spread in the village, Bant Singh was pressurized again to withdraw the case and was offered money. He was first offered 2 lakhs then 4 lakhs then 10 lakhs. But he refused to be lured by money or buckle down by threats. During the trial all sorts of tricks were used to scuttle the proceeding including threats to his family and relatives. Under tremendous pressure his elder brother Hansa Singh was forced to flee from the village. Ultimately the district court gave its verdict convicting three people Mandheer Singh a Jat, Tarsem and a woman Gurmail Kaur who laid the trap for Baljit Kaur to be raped. The accused appealed to the high court against the verdict. When the case was proceeding in the high court in 2005 the accused and their upper caste villagers pressurized Bant Singh and Baljit Kaur to change their statements, but they refused. On the refusal Bant Singh was assaulted twice. When he complained to the Joga police station; the accused were let off on bail. Again on 7th January on the outskirts of the village Bant Singh was attacked by several armed men. He was rescued by the local sarpanch and was taken to the civil hospital at Mansa where the doctor asked for Rs. 1000 to treat Bant Singh. The delay to collect the money, led to formation of gangrene in the limbs. Bant Singh was then taken to the medical college hospital in Chandigarh where his limbs had to be amputated.

Dalit oppression goes on relentlessly all over the country. The entire country hasn't forgotten the shocking incident of Bhanwari Devi getting gang raped by upper caste Rajput men for preventing child marriage. They have again gang raped a Dalit anganwadi woman, Sahyogini, by three of her upper caste supervisors in Karauli town of Rajasthan on 30th December 2005. The victim had a mental breakdown immediately. Her husband filed a written complaint with the Karali police. But under the pressure of the upper caste trading community whose caste brethren had committed the gang rape the police refused to file a FIR. When the women's community approached the higher authorities the police finally registered an FIR after 20 days. Given her traumatic state of mind she was sent to Jaipur for psychiatric treatment at SMS hospital escorted by a constable.

Even there she was refused admission, and spent two nights outside the hospital. Ultimately when the local MLA and member of Rajasthan cabinet intervened in the matter she was admitted. When the incident hit the newspapers, the police were forced to arrest two of the accused and the state home minister went to visit the victim at the hospital. Meanwhile the dominant trading community downed the shutters of their establishments to pressurize the police to hush up the case. Following the trader's strike the Meena community called the panchayat and resolved to fight for justice. Elected Dalit women sarpanches are also not allowed to hoist national flags on important events. In Maharashtra the principal of Zilla Parishad School stopped Sunita Baburao Ghoderao sarpanch of Karwadi of Sinnur Taluka Nashik district from hoisting the National flag on Republic Day. Humiliated by the incident Sunita Babura Ghoderao complained to the Chief Minister, Principal Secretary Rural Development, State Women's Commission and the CEO of the Zilla Parishad. An enquiry has been ordered against the principal. Earlier Dalit women sarpanches were prevented from hoisting national flags in Thane and other districts. These incidents reveal how the age old hierarchies, caste prejudices and oppression are still intact among a vast majority of the populations including the government servants. Dr. Ambedkar framed a modern democratic republican constitution according to which there should be no discrimination based on caste, gender, etc. Everyone is equal before the law. By preventing the Dalit women sarpanchs from hoisting the national flag, all values of the freedom struggle, the constitutional provisions, the spirit of panchayat laws are reduced to a mockery.

This issue of the Dalit Bulletin painstakingly chronicles the events, the issues as well as the recording of atrocities on Dalits by the upper caste in connivance with the state machinery in a secular and modern state.

National Conference on Dalit Culture and the Politics of Resistance (DIC)

A 3-day National Conference on Dalit Culture and the Politics of Resistance was held at Wagamon, Kerala, from July 29 to 31st, 2005. It highlighted the major issues and challenges faced by the Dalit community and movements in India. It was jointly organized by Dalit Intellectual Collective (DIC, New Delhi), VAK and Village Education Service Association-Nagapattinam.

Participants from different regions shared their local experiences and tried to put forward a new Dalit Cultural Agenda. The cultural location and social spaces came under the purview of the critical study. Christhudas Gandhi (IAS), from Chennai observed that Dalits successfully captured the ordered spaces in the society. In India, the period of 1960-1990 was marked as the glorious age of Dalits, as they got good placements in governmental and bureaucratic services. It provided them an opportunity to influence the

government policies. Yet they failed to capture the power of unordered spaces. Gandhi distinguished between the socio-political spaces as ordered and unordered spaces. He denoted that the governmental and bureaucratic structures as ordered spaces and the non-governmental, media, business groups etc. as unordered spaces. He pointed out that the ordered spaces are open and that the unordered are closed spaces that the unattainability of the unordered spaces needs cultural resistance from the part of the victims. The use of identity as a tool to achieve socio-political power in selective locations is a suggestive strategy to capture the unordered spaces. The issue of spaces in media, literature, art and religion also came under a deep analysis.

The interiorisation and exteriorization of subjugation is a form of cultural dynamics. A Dalit himself or herself interiorized subjection in all their behaviour and everyday cultural practices. Construction of obligations, is one form of interiorisation of subjugation. Obligations constructed by the religious practices were observed in the presentations of papers by Nalini Raj, Dr. Sanal Mohan and Dayanandan. Nalini Raj, from Chennai, considered religion as a mix of culture and politics. She pointed out that Dalit Theology is a "political and religious notion of ethics". Dr. Sanal Mohan, Kerala who presented the case study of Prathyaksha Reksha Daiva Sabha (PRDS) observed that the movement first raised the question of social space in the form of cultural resistance in Kerala. The founder of PRDS, Poikayil Yohannan defined religious terminologies like "Reksha Nirnaya" politically, and considered salvation as a political activity of liberation from caste. Yohannan composed a number of songs to rearticulate the Dalit history and visualized a Dalit God. Dayanadan observed that the thina samkalpa is the first resistance movement of Dalits in the cultural realm. Political and symbolic mobilization is considered as the two prominent mode of resistance against cultural subjection. The symbolic mobilization is considered essential to enter in the unordered spaces.

Dalit literature is a form of symbolic resistance. Tamil writer Perumal Murukan and Azhakiya Peruman presented their literary initiatives for cultural resistance. The session moderated by Chalapathy, Tamil literary critic observed that the notion of cultural justice is the central theme of the writings of Perumal Murukan and Azhakiya Peruman. They raised the motto "We go back to our own resources". It become a challenge to the participants. The Dalit Feminists Dr. Arangamalika and Sushama pointed out that Dalit feminists want to fight against caste system and male domination at the same time. Arangamalik said "Women is caste-women, Dalit means-Dalit Man". Susham observed, "Dalit women movements were also under the control of Dalit men". Swathy claimed that, "Ambedkar provides sufficient base for Dalit women's movement".

The Conference views cultural injustice as a form of colonialism. The pre-modern colonialism was both economic and political at the same time but the modern colonialism is a cultural one. Without cultural injustice development and colonialism is not possible. Interiorisation of subjugation is a form of cultural injustice and a potential space of the colonist. The colonist dismantled the self of the subjugated. The loss of self is a big challenge to the politics of resistance. "The self of a black man is not man's self". The black waysided to the white, the dominant; without self-respect he cannot counter the subjugation. The loss of self-respect internalizes subjugation. In this regard the strategies of symbolic mobilization for self esteem and self-respect are inevitable. The Conference pointed out that the "victims also have some responsibility to repair their damaged life (self)". Colonialism and fascism spreads through the homogenization of cultures. Hindutva is also a homogenization process. But the Dalit culture is an immensely diverse one. The political project to homogenize Dalit culture is anti-Dalit. "Diversity itself is a form of resistance. Continuously sharpening and pushing diversity is much more an important task in the contemporary political context. The search for identity should not reproduce the past, but reconstructing interiority is its agenda. It is a new ethno-cultural of political formation. All interiorities are constructed into the caste line." The Conference presses the essentiality of symbolic resistance.

Should Dalit Christians Get Reservation?

In order to escape the age old caste oppression the lowest castes among Dalits like Mangs, Madigas converted to Christianity en masse. The position of the Dalits who have converted to Christianity has not been empowering; they continue to face discrimination even amongst the Christian community. Dalit Christians have been demanding reservations on par with the Schedule Castes. The Centre for Public Interest Litigation demanded reservation for Dalits even after their conversion to Christianity. Many Hindu Dalits have opposed the move. Objections raised against the inclusion of Dalit Christians for the purpose of reservations are,

1. According to the Poona Pact of 1932 between Gandhi and Ambedkar it was decided that reservation to be extended to only Hindu Schedule Castes which eventually came to be included in the Schedule.
2. Christianity does not recognize caste system. Hence how can discrimination against Dalit exist? Further the creamy layer of the Christians will gobble up a large chunk of the opportunities presently available to the SCs..
3. The Mandal Commission Report suggested that the Christians who retained the caste names of the traditional artisan castes and whose Hindu counter parts have been included in the

list of Hindu OBCs should be considered as OBCs. Hence they are already eligible for OBC reservation.

4. The reservation of seats for election depends on the population of the SCs. If Dalit Christians are permitted to be SCs, then in the southern states of India the SC population may almost cornering many more electoral constituencies.
5. Other religious communities will demand similar extension of reservations.
6. Reservation for SCs in election and employment is based on the percentage of population. If Dalit Christians are included with the SCs the percentage of their population will go up but the percentage of reservation will remain same as there is 50% ceiling by the Supreme Court – cutting into existing quota of OBCs.
7. Dalit Christians with access to education are better equipped to take over all the reservation benefits leaving other SCs marginalized; this may provoke inter-community conflict.
8. Issuing caste certificates for Christian is difficult. Christianity came to India several centuries ago. Conversions have been taking place since then. Identifying the caste status of those converted three to four hundred years ago will lead to many cases of bogus certificates.
9. Christians have been adequately represented in the services. There are more Christians in IAS IPS, banking services and public sector undertakings than their percentage in the total population.
10. Ministry of Home Affairs states that fundamentalist Hindu organizations are likely to project this step as an attempt to appease a minority group and ferment communal unrest, pitting Hindu SCs against Christian converts. Tension may also extend to Hindu – Muslim clashes. It also states that it is not sufficient to show that the same caste continues after conversion. It is necessary to establish further that the disabilities and handicaps suffered from such caste membership in the social order of its origins Hinduism continue in their oppressive severity in the new environment of a different religious community.

However the Ministry of Law (Department of Legal Affairs) has stated that if an SC converts to Christianity, he/she fulfils the criteria laid down by the Supreme Court as in the Soosai case. They can also be included in the Constitution orders by legislation. Attorney General Milton Banerjee has argued that, 'It is a matter of policy and legislation and the courts should keep out of it.' He even cited his correspondence with the government

urging it to consider the issue 'sympathetically'.

Brushing aside the Centre's objection to court intervention in matters of inclusion of any particular community in the scheduled caste list, the Supreme Court in February agreed to examine the legality of the issue of reservation for Dalit Christians. Chief Justice R C Lahoti and Justice G P Mathur said that 'it is a crucial issue and we will examine the legal side of the issue on the basis of the rulings cited by the petitioner and the Attorney General.' The court kept with it the letters written by the attorney general to the government even as Banerjee said that the apex court itself had ruled that any amendment to the Presidential Order of 1950 regarding inclusion of any particular community within the Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe was within the purview of the legislative action. Banerjee said that a request for inclusion of Dalit Christians within the category of Scheduled Caste had been rejected by the National Democratic Alliance government in 2002. He said the apex Court had also ruled that the list of entries in the SC and ST categories under the Presidential Order was final and the courts could not 'add or subtract' further.

However, appearing for the petitioner, senior advocate Shanti Bhushan contended that the earlier court rulings were given on the basis of scanty material and claimed that the petitioners have gathered 'overwhelming' material to support its claim for reservation to Dalit Christians. Citing a ruling of the apex court last year, when it was said that even if a tribal converted to Christianity, he or she could still avail of the reservation benefits as his/her status as ST remained unchanged. He said the same law laid down by the court should be applicable to Dalits after their conversion to Christianity. Bhushan said that reservation was available to the Dalits while being a follower of Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism and there was no reason why Dalit Christians be not given the similar benefit.

The Centre in November 2005 told the Supreme Court that several aspects, including whether Dalits who had converted to Christianity suffered social inequalities like untouchability even after their conversion, have to be looked into before deciding to extend reservation benefits to Dalit Christians. A commission that has been constituted to look into the matter was expected to give its reply by April 2006, Additional Solicitor-General Gopal Subramaniam told a bench of Chief Justice Y K Sabharwal, Justice C K Thakker and Justice R V Raveendran. The bench was hearing a PIL seeking grant of Scheduled Caste status for Dalit Christians. Following the ASG's submission, the Court said it would examine the issue after getting detailed information and would also like to see progress made by the National Commission for Religious and Linguistic Minorities in this regard. "We may have to hear the matter in detail after information is supplied," the bench said, adding it would not like to express any opinion on the issue at

this stage. The PIL filed by the Centre for Public Interest Litigation contended that para three of the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950 was coming in its way as Scheduled Castes, on conversion to Christianity, lose all benefits.

The support for the extension of reservation and other facilities to Dalit Christians has prompted the Dalit Muslims to ask for similar treatment. The All India United Muslim Morcha in October 2005 urged Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister to recommend to the Centre inclusion of several Muslim castes in the scheduled castes list to ensure their all-round development. "Almost 85 per cent of the Muslim population belongs to these castes and has remained as impoverished and as backward as the Hindu Dalits. The Morcha urged the Chief Minister to get a resolution passed by the State Assembly for including them in the SC/ST list as well.

Dalit atrocity: Gohana

Haryana is not only the story of success of the "green revolution" and assertive peasantry but is also notorious for medieval barbarism against women, Dalits and other marginal communities. Caste Panchayats of the upper caste Jats continue to commit atrocities on the Dalits. The ghastly mayhem at Gohana is a further illustration of carnages committed against the Dalits after the inhuman traumatic mass murder of Dalits in Jhagjar Haryana. Three years before the Gohana incident five Dalits youth were lynched by an upper caste mob in Duleen in Jhajjar district.

In Haryana the upper caste Jat Panchayat has become extra constitutional body that impinges upon the fundamental rights of Dalits. What happened in Gohana is the latest example how the Jat caste Panchayat behaved like a supra terrorist state ordering arson while the functionaries of a legitimately elected modern democratic government looked the other way. Gohana is a subdivisional town in Sonapat district of Haryana. As a result of this arbitrary extra constitutional authority of the Jat Panchayat 54 houses of Valmiki community (who are Dalits) were looted and ultimately gutted on 31st August. All this occurred while the district administration was a mute spectator. More than one thousand Valmiki's fled their home by 30th August fearing the attack of Jats. The entire district administration knew about the conflict and the impending threat, by the Jats, but took no preventive steps to avert any untoward incident. On 31st August Bara Khap the Jat Panchayat of twelve villagers met at Gohana and the Jat leaders made inflammatory speeches which incited the mob. Hundreds of Jat youth armed with spears, lathis, kerosene and petrol attacked Valmiki nagar and burnt 54 houses looting all their belongings and burnt all their important documents like education certificates, legal documents, etc.

The district administration was fully aware of the Valmikis fleeing their homes few days before. But did

nothing to prevent the situation from getting out of hand. The administration was informed about the mahapanchayat and it had also given the permission to hold the meet, but there was a complete lackadaisical attitude to firmly put down the planned attack.

Only after the armed mob started burning the houses the deputy commissioner of the district and the superintendent of the police arrived on the spot. The police did nothing to stop the mob. There were only few sub inspectors and a station house officer posted in the area, while the district administration and the higher echelons of the police department were aware of the situation and did nothing to control the volatile situation. This indirectly amounts to the complicity of the district administration and the police department with the violence and arson committed on the Valmikis. As a token action the police fired in the air but did nothing to prevent the violent mob from entering the Valmiki colony. The whole episode which followed indicated organized action by the perpetrators, which was overlooked by the local authorities.

The role of Pradeep Sangwan son and Ranvir Sangwan brother of the local BJP MP is highly suspect. He along with 23 others have been named in the FIR and a case has been registered under the Scheduled Tribes Scheduled Castes Prevention of Atrocities Act. Eyewitness's present on the mahapanchayat say that it was Pradeep Sangman who instigated the mob. 15 out of 23 people named in the FIR belong to the BJP local people say that the Valmikis had voted for Congress in last elections and the BJP MP wanted to teach them a lesson. As usual the Chief Minister made a routine visit to the area and declared a CBI enquiry into the incident. The arrogance and high handedness of the upper caste Jats can be gauged from the fact that immediately after the chief minister declared the CBI enquiry, the Jats called a meeting of Haryana KHAP (State level Mahapanchayat of Jats) and gave a call for Haryana badh on September 23. this clearly indicates how the upper castes can armtwist the state machinery to hush up their gruesome acts.

Independent report notes that this reprisal on the part of Jat stems from their growing intolerance of the upwardly mobile Valmikis. Valmiki's are relatively prosperous among the Dalit groups in Harayana. Due to the reservation policies and various affirmative actions of the government, the Valmikis have made an effort to get education and get government jobs. Many of their children study in engineering, medical and other professional courses. The Valmikis have thus improved their socio-economic status and started building pacca houses and acquiring household gadgets like T.V., Fridge etc. This was too much for the Jats who had seen them living in mud huts and begging (forced labour) since ages. The refusal of doing beggary and the newfound status of Valmikis has been the main reason

for the simmering discontent of Jats against the Valmikis.

NHRC takes note of Gohana incident

NEW DELHI: The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) on Tuesday took suo moto cognisance, based on media reports, of the torching of houses belonging to Dalits by a mob belonging to upper castes at Gohana in Sonapat district of Haryana, on August 27. It has directed that the news reports be sent to the Chief Secretary, Haryana, and the District Magistrate, Sonapat, and asked for their response within four weeks. (The Hindu 4/9/05)

Protest against Gohana incident

NEW DELHI: The Delhi State Committee of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) on Saturday staged a protest march here against the burning down of 50 houses of Dalits at Gohana in Sonapat on August 31. Several activists gathered at Windsor Place in New Delhi and marched to Sansad Marg condemning the "dastardly and casteist attack". Addressing a gathering, Inderjeet Singh, secretary (Haryana State Committee), alleged that the police and the administration were involved in the attack. He said the excuse given by the administration that strong action by the police would have resulted in loss of lives was reminiscent of similar justification advanced by them for the lynching of five Dalits in Duleena village, Jhajjar, a few years ago. Jogendra Sharma, Member, Central Committee, CPI (M), said the State Government had failed to provide protection to the Dalits though it claimed to be their well-wisher. The speakers demanded immediate arrest of those involved in the attack. They demanded a CBI inquiry into the role of the local Bharatiya Janata Party MP, Kishan Singh Sangwan, who was allegedly behind the attack and full compensation to the victims. They demanded immediate suspension of the Deputy Commissioner and the Superintendent of Police. (The Hindu 4/9/05)

Interim relief for Gohana victims

New Delhi: In wake of the casteist violence that ravaged Gohana in Haryana, Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda has announced an interim relief of Rs 50,000 to the members of the family affected by the carnage. The Haryana Government took this decision when a delegation consisting of the elderly members of the affected families met the Chief Minister on Sunday. After hearing their grievances and plight the CM came to this decision. According to the decision, rehabilitation and restoration work undertaken for the affected families in Gohana will be done under the supervision of the Commissioner of Rohtak Division, NC Wadhwa. He will also be required to supervise the assessment being carried out by the Committee consisting of PWD and Tehsildar constituted earlier to assess the loss of properties or articles in the damaged houses. The Committee has been ordered to complete the

assessment work within three days instead of one week in order to determine the final compensation to be paid to the affected families. According to an earlier decision the Public Welfare Department (B&R) has already taken up the work of repair and restoration of damaged houses for which the entire expenditure will be borne by the State Government. (Pioneer 5/9/055)

Land Struggle: Police Firing at Kalinga Nagar

In the present neoliberal era of globalization, the state is selling off its commons and rich natural resources for a song to national and international businesses. As a result, millions of vulnerable communities like Adivasis and Dalits get uprooted from their natural habitat and lose not only their livelihood but also their cultural moorings and sense of belonging. This also leads to the mushrooming of slums in cities like Mumbai, Bangalore, etc and increases the pauperized reserve army of labour, who migrate to urban areas, bulging the ranks of unemployed.

Orissa's total Adivasi population is 22.21% of the total population and 73% of the Adivasis are below poverty level. According to a study done by Walter Fernandes, ex-head of Adivasi research section of Indian Social Institute, who has been studying the problem of displacement of Adivasis caused by industrialisation — more than 2 million people have been displaced without any rehabilitation between 1951 to 1995. Of this total, 40% were Adivasis, 20% Dalits and 20% were other backward castes. Since the past decade and half during the liberalization phase MNCs have been usurping the mineral rich areas of Orissa. When the Adivasis protest the state government resorts to extreme repression. A well known case is of Kasipur in Rayagada district which earlier was a part of the undivided District of Koraput which has a saga of untold miseries caused to the Adivasis due to various mega projects like the Hindusthan Aeronatics Limited, National Aluminium Company, the Upper Kolab hydro electric dam etc. Few years ago six Adivasis were killed in police firing in the Maikanch village of Kasipur block in Rayagada district. They were protesting against their displacement to be caused by the bauxite mining and alumina smelter plant, by Utkal Alumina whose parent company is the Canadian multinational Alcan. The Kasipur Block is one of the poorest regions in Orissa but with almost 70% of the bauxite deposit of India are exploited and the local people will be further pauperized, loosing even their homestead and agricultural lands. The Adivasis of this area have been fighting the management of Alcan and Hindalco under the banner of Prakrutik Sampad Suraksha Parishad since the ten years. During their struggle, the villagers and activists of Kashipur were jailed, lathi charged, framed with false criminal cases etc. Another sordid incident in Kashipur was the Government decisions to set up a police outpost and police barrack at Karol near Kuchipadar village in Kashipur. On 2nd December 2004, the Collector and SP

of Rayagada arrived with 10 platoons central reserve police and Orissa state armed police force. Around 400 people (men and women) sat down on the road in a peaceful dharna. When they refused to move the police threatened the women of rape. All this was happening in the presence of the District Collector and SP. When people refused to budge there was brutal lathi charge. More than a dozen men and women were seriously injured. Later they were jailed on trumped up charges.

In the present times, some of the backward states with overwhelming Adivasis population have been inviting the MNCs to invest in the state and they compete with each other in the made rush of getting FDI (Foreign direct investment). The state governments are in a MOU signing spree. The government of Orissa has signed 43, Jharkhand 42 and Chhatisgarh 48. These MOUs have been signed by some of well known International and Indian mega Corporations like Posco (Korea), Vedanta Alvimina (UK), Rio Tinto (UK), BHP Billiton (UK-Australia), Alcan (Canada), Hindalco, Jindal, Larsen and Tubro and Bhusan. Overall, mining projects worth Rs. 30,000 crore have already begun in Orissa and projects worth a further Rs. 1.10000 crore are in the pipeline. (Source – Ranjan Padhi, Nagra Adve "Endemic to Development police killing in Kalinga Nagar EPW January 21, 2006). As a result, Adivasis are uprooted and marginalized. The Kalinga Nagar police firing in Orissa stems from the rapid corporate globalization with rapacious MNCs and national industrialists trying to grab every inch of Adivasi land.

The state repression against Adivasi resistance reached its nadir in the recent police firing at Kalinga Nagar in Jajpur Dist. Of Orissa on January 2. Reportedly, 12 people were killed in police firing. The real fact is 21 people were killed, 12 on the spot, another 8 on their way to the hospital. The police firing is in line with people's uprising in Orissa against the missile testing range in Baliapal, the privatization of Chilika lake, the Bauxite mining and Alumina complex in Kashipur, Bauxite mining in Gandh Mardan hills in western Orissa, the resistance against a Tata steel plant in Gopalpur of Ganjam district, Niyama giri, lower Sukhtel and so on. The Kalinga Nagar area in Jajpur district lies contiguously with iron ore and other mineral rich region of nearby Keonjhar district.

After Independence an express highway was built from this region to Paradip Port with Japanese aid mainly to export cheap iron ore to Japan. Since the past one and half decades of the liberalization regime these areas have been handed over to the MNCs and Indian big business at a throwaway price forcibly evicting Adivasis, Dalits and marginal peasants. Most of the metallurgical plants coming up in this region are hi-tech export oriented enterprises, with minimum scope of employment generation for the local unemployed youth, while causing massive destruction of livelihood by displacing them from their habitat thus adding to the

unemployment by erasing rural communities with their artisanal skills which had provided them self employment in agriculture and allied traditional artisanal employment. The police massacre of Adivasis is an eye-opener to what has been happening in Orissa, with the government acquiring Adivasis lands at a very low price without proper rehabilitation and fair compensation. In the Kalinga Nagar area the land of the Adivasis of different villages was taken in early 1990's by the Industrial Development Corporation of Orissa (IDCO) and were handed over to the TATAS. IDCO acquired the land from Adivasis for Rs. 35,000 per acre and sold it to Tisco (Tata Iron and Steel Company) for Rs. 3.5 lakh per acre.

The police repression of the Adivasis of Kalinga Nagar raises a number of pertinent questions. Through their resistance from Kalinagar to the Narmada valley the Adivasis are asking "development for whom?" Is it the development for a few urban elites or a dignified life for the teeming millions?

On the morning of January 2 over a thousand tribal people had gathered from surrounding villages at Nuagain village of Baidabari panchayat protesting against the forcible construction of a boundary wall by TISCO on Adivasis lands, acquired from the Adivasis without fair compensation or rehabilitation. In the absence of any alternative livelihood the tribals will be tilling the land. On the day of their protest the Adivasis were willing to negotiate with the District Collector and SP with more than 12 platoons of police. When a four member delegation went to negotiate, the police responded with violence which was a totally unwarranted. First they attacked with tear gas shells followed by indiscriminate firing killing.

On 3rd January thousand of Adivasis held a 'rasta-roko' in the area protesting against the murder. At Gobarghati of Chandia panchayat angry Adivasis kept 4 dead bodies of which three were those of women, demanding handing over all the dead bodies to the tribals. In May 2005 the Adivasis confronted the Government over the issue of compensation, when a bhoomi puja was performed by Maharashtra Government. The police beat up many of them and arrested 26 people including 25 women. Hundreds of Adivasis left their home and took shelter in nearby forests. As a result of this state terror two children died from starvation and the NHRC has ordered an inquiry. But no action against the erring officials has been taken so far. People of that area have also been struggling against the upcoming Jinda steel plant. A serious national debate and action plan is needed against this inhuman displacement of tribal people and incessant police atrocities including the ruthless killing of Adivasis in Orissa.

This path of neocolonial development has displaced more the 50 million people which is almost equal to the population of United Kingdom. These displacements occurred due to mega projects like hydro power dams,

factories, mines, etc. these projects were mainly in the territories inhabited by the Adivasis when they protested against displacement the state came down heavily against them killing maiming and imprisoning the protesting Adivasis in large numbers.

In early nineties when the Indian economy was opened up under the neoliberal regime there was a rush of multinationals to plunder the resource rich Adivasis areas. The Government of India laid out the red carpet for MNCs bending all the protective laws to give away the resource rich tribal areas to these corporations for a song. Wherever the Adivasis protested the most oppressive provisions of the penal laws were used against them. Orissa, like other BIMARU states Bihar and Jharkhand is quite low in the Human Development Index with one of the lowest per capita incomes. Yet, it is richly endowed state with mineral rich areas. Since the globalization of Indian economy the state is up for sale to the predatory MNCs. Orissa is a Fifth Schedule state with a high concentration of tribals with a number of the mines, dams, factories and other mega projects. Since Independence lakhs of Adivasis have been displaced and pushed into poverty.

Dalit women prevented taking office of the Sarpanch

New Delhi, Sept. 3: Forty-two-year-old Vitthan, wife of Sonpal, who won the panchayats election from Marriayaa block of Etawah district of Uttar Pradesh, was forced to miss the oath-taking ceremony that took place on Friday as the upper castes of the village were angry at a Dalit woman becoming mukhiya (village head). Ms Vitthan, the elected representative of the people of Marriayaa, cannot even enter her village now. She has been on the run since August 28 — the day she was elected — as the village landlords have threatened her of dire consequences if she dared return. She came to New Delhi and lodged a complaint with the National Commission for Scheduled Castes. Rupram Nishad, elder brother of Sonpal, accused her political rivals for the misery of Ms Vitthan and that they threatened her to resign from the post of mukhiya and leave the village. (Asian Age. 4/9/05)

Attack on Dalits in Akola

MUMBAI: Maharashtra Chief Minister Vilasrao Deshmukh announced a magisterial inquiry into the recent attack on Dalits in Akola district. He also stated that 13 houses and two shops were destroyed in the attack. The total loss of property amounted to Rs. 5.47 lakh. The Government would rebuild the homes he promised. Referring to the flood relief operations, Mr. Deshmukh said farmers who had lost their crops would be compensated @ Rs. 25,000 a hectare for irrigated land and Rs. 15,000 a hectare for unirrigated land up to two hectares. Since the Central aid was not yet approved, the State would fork out the relief amounts. So far the State has spent Rs. 429 crores for relief. (The Hindu 7/9/05)

Dalit girl kidnapped by Upper caste men

New Delhi, Sept. 13: Sixty-year-old Moolchand, a resident of Ballabgarh in Haryana, has lost faith in the police. Landlords of a nearby village have kept his 16-year-old daughter hostage for the last three months. Whenever Moolchand approaches the police, they start beating him up and make derogatory remarks since he is a Dalit. Talking to this correspondent, Moolchand said, "There is nobody in the village who will help me, simply because I am a Dalit. I know that my daughter is in the custody of landlords. Even the local police knows that. When the landlords kidnapped my daughter, I lodged a complaint with the local police but no action was taken against the landlords." "After lodging several complaints, I requested police officials several times to rescue my daughter. But now the policemen have started abusing me. Sometimes they beat me and pass derogatory remarks against me and my community. Now with the help of the local police, the landlords have threatened me with dire consequences. I am worried about my wife Sheila and four other children. The landlords sometimes threaten my family in my absence. I don't know what to do," said Moolchand. He further said, "I am a very poor man. It's really difficult for me to fight with the landlords of the village. The police has also become anti-Dalit in the village. Last time when I visited the police station, one of the senior officials said, 'What will you do with your daughter, she is now pregnant?'" (Asian Age 14/9/05)

Gaya Dalits' last supper: Goat carcass

Barachatti (Gaya): More than 15 Dalits died in drought-hit Barachatti and Mohanpur blocks of Gaya district, some of them after consuming the carcass of a goat in a desperation. Starvation and disease stalks a vast population here and the total lack of medicare is adding to the toll of human lives. This correspondent on Friday watched people dying, with foam trickling down their mouths and nostrils and their fingers twisted. In Jalhi village alone, 13 deaths have been reported. Overall, over 25,000 people are said to have fled their homes in Mohanpur block. Scenes of unimaginable agony abound, in village after village. As we enter Jalhi, news of Hiramman Man-jhi's son Baldeo (4) meeting a painful death greets us. At the neighbouring Boat village, Kari Devi (40) died and the body of Rita Kumari (6), daughter of Sukar Manjhi, is being called to the cremation ground. At Piprahi, villagers are returning after performing the last rites of 45-year-old Basrath Manjhi. In a span of less than a month, 13 villagers, mostly children, have died. Most deaths were due to diarrhoea. Even as Ishwar recalls the names of the victims, a woman rushes in, crying. She whispers something to a person and hurries back. The toll has just risen to 14. At neighbouring Bongia village, people confess the deaths began after some starving people dug out the carcass of a goat and ate it. Ramji Choudhary says although only a few persons had died in the village, the most

likely reason was the consumption of contaminated meat. At least three members of his family are still sick, a three-year old child being in a serious condition. (Times of India 17/9/05)

50 years after Ambedkar, another conversion wave

At Nagpur last week, Dalit activists planned to organise a mega-conversion event next year to coincide with B R Ambedkar's embrace of Buddhism 50 years ago at the same venue. Not many noticed when lakhs of people, many of them Dalits, visited "Deekshabhoomi" in Nagpur last week to mark the anniversary of Ambedkar's conversion to Buddhism on Dusshera Day in 1956 in what was essentially a protest against caste discrimination. The calculation of the Dalit activists is that the mainstream indifference would give way to close attention — even concern — next year when they plan to turn the 50th anniversary of Ambedkar's deeksha into a mega-conversion event. Just as many Blacks took to Islam in the US to protest discrimination, activists here feel Dalits would also shake Hindu caste complacency. Dalits have steadily been converting to Buddhism in large numbers. While conversion of just over a hundred of them at Meenakshipuram in Tamil Nadu in late 70s sparked a furore, provoking VHP to expand its reach among the category it had so far neglected, conversion to Buddhism is not frowned upon similarly perhaps because of the belief that it does not represent a complete break from the larger Hindu fold. (Times of India 21/10/05)

Dalit woman set on fire

Lucknow: Prabhawati, a 28-year-old may have to pay for her life for refusing to be cowed by other villagers who wanted her to step down from contesting a panchayat election. On Saturday, she was battling for her life with 90% burns at a Mirzapur hospital on Saturday. Prabhawati was dragged out of her home on Thursday, the day of the panchayat vote in Mujera Khurd village, by men from her own caste who wanted another candidate to win. These assailants poured kerosene on her and lit a bonfire to mock the empowerment of low caste women.

Prabhawati's husband filed an FIR with the police station in Cheel, naming three people. The Police hadn't made a single arrest until late on Saturday. Gulab, a resident of Mujehra Khurd village in Cheel police circle, said in his FIR that a man named Lalji, his brother Juggan and another person called Jhilmit Singh, barged into his house late in the night on October 20 and assaulted Prabhawati. They then conducted the gory torture of pouring kerosene. Gulab told police his wife was contesting elections and the accused had repeatedly asked her to step down which she refused. Prabhawati also reportedly had a heated public argument with the men earlier in the day. At the hospital, doctors described Prabhawati's condition as critical and gave no guarantee that she would live through another night. (Times of India 23/10/05)

Upper-caste puncture Dalit's nose

Jaipur, Oct. 12: A Dalit's nose was punctured with a needle and a thread. The atrocity was committed by the powerful farming community in Rampur village under Bhratpur district on Monday. Even though the local police arrested one person, it said that it was only a case of beating a Dalit. Dalit organisations, however, do not agree with the police version. According to the FIR lodged with the Gadhi Bajna police station of Bayana sub-division, Rampura's Babulal Jatava, a Dalit, complained to the police that he was paraded after his nose was punctured by Kalua and a few others. It was the second such atrocity in the last few years in eastern Rajasthan. The police arrested one person on the charges of beating Babulal while two more persons are still wanted. Deputy SP Narayan Toges of Bayana told this correspondent that Babulal had falsely implicated Kalua Gujar because he borrowed some money from Kalua. However, the police recovered the needle and the thread used in this connection. (Asian Age 13/10/05)

Dalit woman's arm chopped off

Bhopal: When Kamala Bai, the 35-year-old mother of three and her family refused to take back rape cases against local upper caste men, six men stormed her home in Nigari village on Friday night, and chopped off a part of her right forearm for daring to file a complaint at the Silwani police station in Raisen district in April 2002. A second case of rape was lodged against one of the attackers by Kamala Bai's sister in September. After the bloodshed on Friday, Kamala Bai was rushed to Hamidia Hospital in Bhopal. Doctors on Saturday said although her injury wasn't life-threatening, her arm could not be fixed. Police did not appear worried, though. They said the case would be treated routinely with all the concomitant paperwork. In fact, local police are blaming Kamala Bai's family for repeatedly crying rape. They say a DSP investigated into the FIR of the rape charge alleged by Kamala Bai's sister in September. Upon investigation, it was found that the case was false. The police don't believe the rape charges brought by Kamala Bai and her sister, officers said. This was mostly because the sisters have been unable to hold on to their testimonies in courts, the police say. There was no clear answer from the police on allegations that the Dalit family was being pressured to take back the two rape cases. (Times of India 11/12/05)

Bhopal: The 35-year-old rape victim from Raisen, whose right hand was chopped off after she refused to withdraw her complaint, has been given Rs 10,000 compensation from the Chief Minister's Fund besides Rs 2,000. Meanwhile, all the five accused were sent to jail for 14 days. The victim had lodged the rape complaint against Manmod Singh Mehra and his friends on September 25 and the offenders were pressurising the victim to change her statements or withdraw the complaint. After

she declined to do so, she was assaulted on December 8. She is undergoing treatment at the Hamidia Hospital, Bhopal. The Raisen Police had registered a case under Sections 336, 436, 147, and 148 of the IPC and Section 323 of SC/ST Atrocities Eradication Act against Manmod Singh, Devi Singh Raghuvanshi, Prem Narayan Raghuvanshi, Dinesh Raghuvanshi and Ramsevak Raghuvanshi. The action was taken after the National Commission for Women took cognizance and sought report from Madhya Pradesh Police. Meanwhile, Gondwana Gantantra Party (GGP) State president Gulzar Singh Markam while talking to mediapersons here on Monday said that a fact finding team of the party had visited the Nigari village on Sunday and found that lax attitude of the administration led to the incident. Mr Markam demanded a high-level inquiry in the incident and stated that DSP AJK and Silwani SHO should be suspended immediately because they were responsible for not taking action against the offenders. He also demanded that a compensation of Rs 10 lakh should be given to the victim. (Pioneer 13/12/05)

Dalits fined for entering temple

Bhubaneswar, Dec. 16: Dalit women continue to suffer at the hands of upper caste people in Orissa. In a recent case, a few Dalit women of Jenasahi, in coastal Kendrapara district, were punished for entering a Hindu temple. According to an inquiry report submitted by Rajnagar tehsildar Laxmi Narayan Sethy to the district authorities on Thursday, some Dalit women were fined Rs 1,001 by the upper caste people and temple servitors for entering the Jagannath temple at Keredagarh to worship the Goddess on Karthik Purnima, despite a "ban" on their entry. The district collector had asked the tehsildar to conduct an inquiry after some Dalit women submitted a petition stating that they were fined for entering the Jagannath temple by the upper caste people. The report said some Dalit women of Jenasahi had entered the sanctum sanctorum of the Jagannath temple, managed by the royal family of Kanika. When the upper caste people and the servitors came to know about the incident, they summoned the Dalit women and imposed a fine of Rs 1,001 each for violating the tradition which banned the entry of Dalits into the temple. (Asian Age 17/12/05)

CUSTODIAL DEATH

Tribal woman's death in lock-up

HYDERABAD: Local residents stormed Saroornagar excise station on Sunday and ransacked the premises protesting against the alleged rape and death of a tribal woman in the station, after she was picked up on the charge of selling illicit liquor. Following a complaint lodged by the sister-in-law of the victim, the Hyderabad Police booked cases against the Saroornagar Excise Inspector Krishna, SIs Srinivas Reddy and Ravinder Reddy, besides five other constables for alleged rape, murder and wrongful confinement of the tribal woman,

according to Saroonagar ACP Jaganmohan Reddy. The Saroonagar Excise personnel had picked up Nanavath Bujji, 40, at 2 p.m. on January 13 from the Karmanghat tenement after demolishing her hut. Enraged relatives stormed the Excise station alleging that the personnel sexually assaulted Bujji and beat her to death. Excise personnel denied the charges saying Bujji was shifted to a local hospital after she complained of stomach pain. She was referred to the Osmania General Hospital in a critical condition where she died. The body was shifted to the hospital mortuary. (The Hindu 16/1/06)

DALITS

Jharkhand police kitchens are casteist

Ranchi: Although Jharkhand has a Dalit police chief, Dalits are considered untouchable in the police force! Over the years, Jharkhand, which has never had a traditional caste system, appears to have been infected by the caste virus from neighbouring Bihar. For proof, visit Ranchi's police line located on Kanke Road right opposite the official residence of Chief Minister Arjun Munda. Here, more than 1,000 policemen of various castes may share the hall, restrooms, and other facilities but they must have separate kitchens along caste lines. As a result the police line has eight such caste kitchens catering separately to Brahmins, Bhumiards, Rajputs, tribals, Dalits, and backwards. These kitchens have names like Bhojpur and Patna kitchens, indicating where the caste bug came from. The cooks' salaries vary from kitchen to kitchen, depending on the caste. "Some cooks get Rs 1000 while others get Rs 700 per month. It depends where one is cooking," says Vijay Mahto one of the cooks. The Brahmin, Bhumiar and Rajput kitchens pay their cooks Rs 1000 a month. Muslims too have separate kitchens but they have a Hindu cook. The mode of preparation too varies from kitchen to kitchen. For instance, while LPG is used in the Brahmin kitchen, other kitchens use charcoal and coal. The Dalit kitchen is located at a distance from the other kitchens.

Paying a price for securing justice for his daughter

CHANDIGARH: A 40-year-old Dalit, Bant Singh, has paid the price through amputation of three of his limbs, as about five years ago he managed to secure justice for his then minor daughter, who was gang raped by upper caste, individuals from his Jhabbar village of the remote Mansa district in Punjab. Doctors in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) of the PGI's Emergency ward, are struggling to save his right leg, prevent sepsis and revive his kidneys. They would need many more units of blood beyond the seven which have already been

transfused. Various left and human rights organisations, have demanded that Bant Singh be paid Rs 10 lakh as compensation and be provided an attendant, whose salary be paid by the present Sarpanch of the village. They also seek a government job for his wife, as the family's only bread earner, who made a living through working as farm labour and rearing pigs and goats, lies completely disabled. The State organiser of the Liberation faction of the CPI (ML), Jeeta Kaur has announced that her organisation would hold a rally in the village on January 16 to be followed by a 'dharna' in front of the Mansa district civil hospital on January 25. The organisation's local secretary, Sukhcharan Singh Danewalia narrates that Bant Singh's ordeal began ever since he resisted all attempts to pressurise or lure him into reaching a compromise with the individuals, who had raped his daughter in the year 2000. Two years later, the trial court convicted three persons, Mandhir Singh, Tarsem Singh and Gurmail Kaur, for their involvement in the case. The three were handed life imprisonment sentences. (The Hindu 16/1/06)

Dalit woman burnt to death

Bulandshahr: Upper caste landlords of a village in Bulandshahr burned a Dalit woman to death. After the incident, the police registered a case against the accused. However, the landlords are absconding. According to sources, on Thursday, villagers noticed a charred body of woman lying in the ditch along side a road in village Danagarh. The body was identified as that of Naina Devi (50). Husband Rati Ram told this reporter that landlords of the village had been torturing them since long. Therefore, he had left the village and went to Chandigarh to earn a livelihood. However, his wife stayed back in the village and was earning for herself and the children. Rati Ram was here in the village since last week. Some dominants of the village had been taunting him but he kept mum thinking everything would be alright soon. The aggressive young boys belonging to the upper caste dragged Naina Devi to the road side and burnt her alive after spraying kerosene on her body. They had threatened Rati Ram of dire consequences if he went to the police station to get the case registered. On Thursday morning, Rati Ram lodged a complaint with Kotwali Dibai stating that four persons burnt his wife. The police registered the case under section 302 of IPC and under SC, ST Act. The SSP said that the murder was committed due to on going rivalry between the dominants and the family of Rati Ram since long. We have constituted the team of competent police officer to nab the criminals soon. (Pioneer 16/1/06)



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