

## Gandhi: Beliefs, works, and facts

### (1). Gandhi: Racism remarks against native African

Gandhi lived in pre-apartheid South Africa for about 20 years. In 1895, he began actively promoting racial segregation in Durban, South Africa. The Durban post office had two doors: one for whites and the other shared by Indians and black Africans. Being Indian, Gandhi was required to share a door with black South Africans, which deeply offended him. In his *Collected Works (CWMG)*, Vol. I, pp. 367-368, Gandhi wrote: "In the Durban Post and telegraph offices there were separate entrances for natives and Asiatics and Europeans. We felt the indignity too much and many respectable Indians were insulted and called all sorts of names by the clerks at the counter. We petitioned the authorities to do away with the invidious distinction and they have now provided three separate entrances for natives, Asiatics, and Europeans." Gandhi even volunteered for the British Army and served as a Sgt. Major in the 1906 Zulu War! Gandhi's writings during his 20 years in South Africa clearly display his undeniable racism towards black Africans. Here are some select quote:

Sept. 26, 1896: "Ours is one continual struggle against a degradation sought to be inflicted upon us by the Europeans, who desire to degrade us to the level of the raw Kaffir\* whose occupation is hunting, and whose sole ambition is to collect a certain number of cattle to buy a wife with and, then, pass his life in indolence and nakedness." ~ CWMG, Vol. I, p. 410

Sept. 24, 1903: "We believe as much in the purity of race as we think they do... We believe also that the white race of South Africa should be the predominating race." ~ CWMG, Vol. III, p. 256

Feb. 15, 1904: "Under my suggestion, the Town Council must withdraw the Kaffirs from the Location. About this mixing of the Kaffirs with the Indians, I must confess I feel most strongly. I think it is very unfair to the Indian population." ~ CWMG, Vol.III, p. 429

Sept. 5, 1905: "The decision to open the school for all Coloured children is unjust to the Indian community, and is a departure from the assurance given... that the school will be reserved for Indian children only." ~ CWMG, Vol. IV, p. 402

Feb. 29, 1908: "The British rulers take us to be so lowly and ignorant that they assume that, like the Kaffirs who can be pleased with toys and pins, we can also be fobbed off with trinkets." ~ CWMG, Vol. VIII, p. 167

Dec. 2, 1910: "Some Indians do have contacts with Kaffir women. I think such contacts are fraught with grave danger. Indians would do well to avoid them altogether." ~ CWMG, Vol. X, p. 414

*\*\*"Kaffir" is a pejorative South African term for blacks which is equivalent to the "n" word. Use of this term has been an actionable offense in South Africa since 1975. Gandhi was well aware of the offensiveness of this word but always used it to describe the black Africans.*

Gandhi's writing, compiled in an uncensored series of volumes by the Government of India, is liberally sprinkled with verbal violence against the black South African natives, who he termed "Kaffirs." His animosity towards black people is almost tangible and his racism is undeniable. A brief but shocking example illustrates Gandhi's racism.

He lived in South Africa prior to Apartheid, but at a time when the nation still suffered segregation. In the city of Durban, there was a post office with two doors - one for blacks and Indians and another for whites. Gandhi, of course, was required to use the door for blacks and Indians. This deeply offended him, not because of the segregation, but because he was "forced" to share a door with blacks, which he felt was beneath him. Gandhi successfully lobbied to correct this "problem" by building a third entrance for Indians, thus further entrenching the South African policy of segregation.

In his *Collected Works (CWMG)*, Vol. I, pp. 367-368, Gandhi wrote: "For the present our efforts are concentrated towards preventing and getting repealed fresh legislation. Before referring to that, I may further illustrate the proposition that the Indian is put on the same level with the native in many other ways also. Lavatories are marked 'natives and Asiatics' at the railway stations. In the Durban Post and telegraph offices there were separate entrances for natives and Asiatics and Europeans. We felt the indignity too much and many respectable Indians were insulted and called all sorts of names by the clerks

at the counter. We petitioned the authorities to do away with the invidious distinction and they have now provided three separate entrances for natives, Asiatics, and Europeans.”

At the turn of the 20th century, during the Second Boer War, Gandhi volunteered to raise an Indian stretcher-bearer corps for the British Army. Considering Gandhi's fervent racism, it's no surprise he wished to help suppress the blacks of Africa. During the war, the British were responsible for the deaths of approximately 20,000 black Africans, many of whom starved to death in British concentration camps while Gandhi's stretcher-bearers assisted British troops. Gandhi unwittingly accused himself of culpability for these deaths when he wrote in his autobiography: “He who volunteers to serve a band of dacoits (robbers), by working as their carrier, or their watchman while they are about their business, or their nurse when they are wounded, is as much guilty of dacoity as the dacoits themselves. In the same way those who confine themselves to attending to the wounded cannot be absolved from the guilt of war.”

In response to the rise of White nationalist politics, which stressed racial separation, Gandhi wrote in his Indian Opinion of 24 September 1903:

‘We believe as much in the purity of race as we think they do, only we believe that they would best serve these interests, which are as dear to us as to them, by advocating the purity of all races, and not one alone. We believe also that the white race of South Africa should be the predominating race.’

On 24 December 1903, Gandhi added this in his Indian Opinion newspaper:

‘The petition dwells upon ‘the co-mingling of the colored and white races’. May we inform the members of the Conference that so far as British Indians are concerned, such a thing is particularly unknown. If there is one thing which the Indian cherishes more than any other, it is the purity of type.’

## **(2). Gandhi: A pedophile**

Towards the end of his life, it became public knowledge that Gandhi had been sharing his bed for a number of years with young women. He explained that he did this for bodily warmth at night and termed his actions as "nature cure". Later in his life he started experimenting with brahmacharya in order to test his self control. His letter to Birla in April, 1945 referring to 'women or girls who have been naked with me' indicates that several women were part of his experiments. He wrote five editorials in Harijan discussing the practice of brahmacharya.

As part of these experiments, he initially slept with his women associates in the same room but at a distance. Afterwards he started to lie in the same bed with his women disciples and later took to sleeping naked alongside them. According to Gandhi active-celibacy meant perfect self control in the presence of opposite sex. Gandhi conducted his experiments with a number of women such as Abha, the sixteen year old wife of his grandnephew Kanu Gandhi. Gandhi acknowledged "that this experiment is very dangerous indeed", but thought "that it was capable of yielding great results". His nineteen year old grandniece, Manu Gandhi, too was part of his experiments. Gandhi had earlier written to her father, Jaisukhlal Gandhi, that Manu had started to share his bed so that he may "correct her sleeping posture". Gandhi saw himself as a mother to these women and would refer to Abha and Manu as "my walking sticks".

Gandhi called Sarladevi, a married woman with children and a devout follower, his "spiritual wife". He later said that he had come close to having sexual relations with her. He had told a correspondent in March, 1945 that "sleeping together came with my taking up of bramhacharya or even before that"; he said he had experimented with his wife "but that was not enough". Gandhi felt satisfied with his experiments and wrote to Manu that "I have successfully practiced the eleven vows taken by me. This is the culmination of my striving for last thirty six years. In this yajna I got a glimpse of the ideal truth and purity for which I have been striving".

Gandhi had to take criticism for his experiments by many of his followers and opponents. His stenographer, R. P. Parasuram, resigned when he saw Gandhi sleeping naked with Manu. Gandhi insisted that he never felt aroused while he slept beside her, or with Sushila or Abha. "I am sorry" Gandhi said to Parasuram, "you are at liberty to leave me today." Nirmal Kumar Bose, leading anthropologist and close associate of Gandhi, parted company with him in April, 1947 post Gandhi's tour of Noakhali, where some sort of altercation had taken place between Gandhi and Sushila Nayar in his bedroom at midnight that caused Gandhi to slap his forehead. Bose said, "there was no immorality on part of Gandhi. Moreover Gandhi tried to conquer the feeling of sex by consciously endeavouring to convert himself into a mother of those who were under his case, whether men or women". This maternal emphasis has also been pointed out by Dattatreya Balkrishna Kalelkar, a revolutionary turned disciple of Gandhi. Some more at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uRV8PYDla8I>

### **(3). Gandhi: Non-violence?**

When it came to pacifism, the quality for which Gandhi is most admired, he was no better. Shortly before his assassination, as documented in his "Last Phase," Vol. II, p. 326, he said, "If we [India] had the atom bomb, we would have used it against the British."

It is impossible to fully document Gandhi's abundant problems and hypocrisy in such a short letter. Let us simply say that he never remotely epitomized humanitarianism, social justice, or superior morality. According to G.D. Birla's "In The Shadow of the Mahatma," Gandhi told the British during WWII that "Hitler is not a bad man." Should a man with such a warped moral compass be distinguished as a symbol of nonviolence?

The Gandhian state of India is one of the most violent nations in the world today, having overseen the slaughter of hundreds of thousands of Christians, Muslims, and Sikhs over the past 20 years. The myth of Gandhi is merely packaged propaganda developed to benefit those in India who seek to hide their violence by wearing his mantle of faux nonviolence.

In an age when circumstances force us to wage war against ideologies, the world cannot afford to assist or even allow the continued propagation of the Gandhi ideology. If we are not careful we might one day be forced to engage Gandhism.

India's recent activities hardly demonstrate the "nonviolent passive resistance" allegedly taught by Gandhism. Yet they should come as no surprise if one looks beyond the image of Gandhi painted by the Indian Government's historical propaganda.

In 1921, Gandhi helped cover up the murder of an American citizen (Killing of ANNETTE H. DOHERTY's husband) by Gandhians who were rioting during the Second *Satyagraha* Movement. His followers offered the murdered man's wife bribes and Gandhi himself presented veiled threats.

In 1984, after the Indian invasion of the Sikh Golden Temple and slaughter of several thousand Sikhs, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi (no relation to M.K. Gandhi) appealed to Gandhism as a justification for her authorization of the military action, saying, "Mahatma Gandhi, in his time, accepted that necessity." She was right. Gandhi supported achieving political ends through bloodshed, saying in 1922, "I would have India become free even by violence rather than that she should remain in bondage." Years after this comment, Gandhi endorsed the Indian military's annexation of Kashmir, Hyderabad, and Junagarh, states which currently remain in "bondage" to India. In 1961, after seizing Goa, Diu, and Daman, Prime Minister Nehru, a close friend of Gandhi's till the latter's death, truthfully commented that the military venture was "entirely in keeping" with Gandhi's philosophy. These invocations of Gandhism are propaganda clearly used to assuage the Western conscience about India's shadowy massacres of minorities.

On the surface, there is not much wrong with Gandhi's willingness to resort to violence in pursuit of freedom. After all, it was through violence that we in the U.S. achieved independence. What is disturbing, however, is that his support of violent means is hidden behind a veneer of nonviolence. The reality of Gandhian philosophy, which is fervently embraced in modern-day India, is a commitment to deception and violence cloaked in pacifist terminology.

This sham pacifism is eagerly abandoned at any sign that violence might better benefit Gandhism's cause du jour. For example, Gandhi once said, "There are many causes that I am prepared to die for but no causes that I am prepared to kill for." Yet in 1920, as recorded in Vol. 21, p. 133 of Gandhi's "Collected Works," he wrote: "When my eldest son asked me what he should have done, had he been present when I was almost fatally assaulted in 1908, whether he should have run away and seen me killed or whether he should have used his physical force which he could and wanted to use, and defended me, I told him that it was his duty to defend me even by using violence." The nonviolent resistance of Satyagraha would hardly have been useful in preventing Gandhi's death, so of course others more capable of violence than himself would have been justified in defending him, his unwillingness to "kill for [any cause]" be damned! Comparing controversial figures to Nazism has now become cliché, but in Gandhi's case it is almost unavoidable. He brought such comparisons on himself, as in 1940 when he said, "Hitler is not a bad man," or in 1941 when he wrote Hitler, saying, "Nor do we believe that you are the monster described by your opponents." Little has changed since Gandhi's admiration for Hitler. In India today, Hitler is considered a "trendy tyrant," a dictator who is praised for his leadership abilities, whose "Mein Kampf" is a best-seller, and who placed third as "most ideal leader" in a 2002 poll of Indian college students. Gandhi, of course, was everyone's first choice.

India is one of the largest, most powerful nations in the world. Assisted by the white-washed image of Gandhi and his philosophy, India has achieved much success by using Gandhism as a double-edged sword. While earning accolades for its adherence to the popular pacifist image of Gandhism, Indian leaders have simultaneously used Gandhism to justify such bloody actions as the annexation of Kashmir and the destruction of the Golden Temple. Additionally, as India emerges as a superpower and continues to make deeper political inroads into various African and Latin American nations, it becomes even more necessary to understand India's guiding philosophy.

After all, if Nazism were the guiding philosophy of such an important nation, we would have cause for extreme concern. What Americans must realize is that Gandhism, the "nonviolent" ideology espoused by the same man who said, on June 16, 1947, "if we had the atom bomb, we would have used it against the British," should inspire just such concern.

#### **(4). Gandhi: Satyagraha?**

In this connection reference may be made to two novel weapons for redressing human wrongs. Mr. Gandhi claims exclusive credit for forging and perfecting them. First is satyagraha. Mr. Gandhi has put into action this weapon of satyagraha many a times against the British Government for the removal of political wrongs. But Mr. Gandhi has never used the weapon of satyagraha against Hindus to get them to throw open public wells and temples to the Untouchables. Fasting is another weapon of Mr. Gandhi. It is said that there have been altogether 21 fasts to the credit of Mr. Gandhi. Some were for the sake of Hindu-Muslim unity and quite a number as atonements for the immoralities committed by the inmates of his Ashram. One was against the order of the Government of Bombay refusing to give the work of a scavenger in the gaol to a prisoner by name Mr. Patwardhan although he demanded it. In these 21 fasts there is not one undertaken for the removal of Untouchability. These are very significant facts.

In 1929 when the Untouchables in the Bombay Presidency opened a campaign of satyagraha against the Hindus for establishing their civic rights in the matter of temple-entry and taking water from public wells. They hoped to get the blessings of Mr. Gandhi in as much as satyagraha was Mr. Gandhi's own weapon to get wrongs redressed. When appealed to for support, Mr. Gandhi surprised the Untouchables by issuing a statement condemning their campaign of satyagraha against the Hindus. The argument urged by Mr. Gandhi was very ingenious. He stated that satyagraha was to be used only against foreigners, it must not be used against one's own kindred or countrymen and as the Hindus were the kindred and countrymen of the Untouchables by rules of satyagraha the latter were debarred from using the weapon

against the former. What a fall from the sublime to the ridiculous! By this Mr. Gandhi made nonsense of satyagraha.

Mr. Gandhi was obliged to sign a pact -called the Poona Pact—which conceded the political demands of the Untouchables he took his revenge by letting the Congress employ foul electioneering tactics to make their political rights of no avail. There was nothing noble in the fast. It was a foul and filthy act. The Fast was not for the benefit of the Untouchables. It was against them and was the worst form of coercion against a helpless people to give up the constitutional safeguards of which they had become possessed under the Prime Minister's Award and agree to live on the mercy of the Hindus. It was a vile and wicked act. After having gone on a fast unto death, he signed the Poona Pact. People say that Mr. Gandhi sincerely believed that political safeguards were harmful to the Untouchables.

The satyagraha at the Kala Ram Temple situated in Nasik, a town in the Nasik District of the Bombay Presidency, was organised to establish the right of the Untouchables to enter Hindu temples. There were many minor satyagrahas. These were, however, the two principal ones over which the efforts of the Untouchables and their opponents, the Caste Hindus, were concentrated. The din and noise caused by them were heard all over India. Thousands of men and women from the Untouchables took part in these satyagrahas. Both men and women belonging to the Untouchables were insulted and beaten by the Hindus. Many were injured and some were imprisoned by Government on the ground of causing breach of the peace. This satyagraha movement went on for full six years when it was brought to a close in 1935 at a Conference held in Yeola in Nasik District in which the Untouchables as a result of the adamant attitude of the Hindus in refusing to give them equal social rights resolved to go out of the Hindu fold. This satyagraha movement was no doubt independent of the Congress. It was organised by the Untouchables, led by the Untouchables and financed by the Untouchables. Yet the Untouchables were not without hope of getting the moral support of Mr. Gandhi. Indeed they had very good ground for getting it. For the weapon of satyagraha—the essence of which is to melt the heart of the opponent by suffering—was the weapon which was forged by Mr. Gandhi, and who had led the Congress to practise it against the British Government for winning Swaraj. Naturally the Untouchables expected full support from Mr. Gandhi to their satyagraha against the Hindus the object of which was to establish their right to take water from public wells and to enter public Hindu temples. Mr. Gandhi however did not give his support to the satyagraha. Not only did he not give his support, he condemned it in strong terms.

#### **(5). Gandhi: Advocate of Caste system**

The caste system, in my opinion, has a scientific basis. Reason does not revolt against it. It has disadvantages. Caste creates a social and moral restraint - I can find no reason for their abolition. To abolish caste is to demolish Hinduism. There is nothing to fight against the Varnasharma (caste system). I don't believe the caste system to be an odious and vicious dogma. It has its limitations and defects, but there is nothing sinful about it. (Harijan, 1933).

There are I am sorry to say, many Hindu temples in our midst in this country, which are no better than brothels. The caste system can't be said to be bad because it does not allow inter-dining and inter-marriages in different castes. (Gandhi by Shiru, p129).

I would refer to what is known as the Kavitha incident Kavitha is a village in the Ahmedabad District in Gujarat. In 1935, the Untouchables of the village demanded from the Hindus of the village that their children should be admitted in the common school of the village along with other Hindu children. The

Hindus were enraged at this outrage and took their revenge by proclaiming a complete social boycott. Here is the advice Mr. Gandhi gave to the Untouchables of Kavitha:

"There is no help like self-help. God helps those who help themselves. If the Harijans concerned will carry out their reported resolve to wipe the dust of Kavitha off their feet, they will not only be happy themselves but they will pave the way for others who may be similarly treated. If people migrate in search of employment how much more should they do so in search of self-respect? I hope that well-wishers of Harijans will help these poor families to vacate inhospitable Kavitha." Mr. Gandhi advised the Untouchables of Kavitha to vacate. But why did he not advise Mr. Thakkar to prosecute the Hindus of Kavitha and help the Untouchables to vindicate their rights?" Obviously, he would like to uplift the Untouchables if he can but not by offending the Hindus. What good can such a man do to promote the cause of the Untouchables?

Mr. Gandhi's views on the caste system—which constitutes the main, social problem in India—were fully elaborated by him in 1921-22 in a Gujarathi Journal called NavaJivan. The article is written in Gujarathi. I give below an English translation of his views as near as possible in his own words. Says Mr. Gandhi:

1. I believe that if Hindu Society has been able to stand it is because it is founded on the caste system.
2. The seeds of Swaraj are to be found in the caste system. Different castes are like different sections of military division. Each division is working for the good of the whole.
3. A community which can create the caste system must be said to possess unique power of organisation.
4. Caste has a ready made means for spreading primary education. Every caste can take the responsibility for the education of the children of the Caste. Caste has a political basis. It can work as an electorate for a representative body. Caste can perform judicial functions by electing persons to act as judges to decide disputes among members of the same caste. With castes it is easy to raise a defence force by requiring each caste to raise a brigade.
5. I believe that interdining or intermarriage are not necessary for promoting national unity.
6. In India children of brothers do not intermarry. Do they cease to love because they do not intermarry? Among the Vaishnavas many women are so orthodox that they will not eat with the members of the family nor will they drink water from a common water pot. Have they no love? The Caste system cannot be said to be bad because it does not allow inter-dining or intermarriage between different Castes.
7. Caste is another name for control. Caste puts a limit on enjoyment. Caste does not allow a person to transgress caste limits in pursuit of his enjoyment. That is the meaning of such caste restrictions as interdining and intermarriage.
8. To destroy caste system and adopt Western European social system means that Hindus must give up the principle of hereditary occupation which is the soul of the caste system. Hereditary principle is an eternal principle. To change it is to create disorder. I have no use for a Brahmin if I cannot call him a Brahmin for my life. It will be a chaos if every day a Brahmin is to be changed into a Shudra and a Snudra is to be changed into a Brahmin.
9. The caste system is & natural order of society. In India it has been given a religious coating. Other countries not having understood the utility of the Caste System it existed only in a loose condition and consequently those countries have not derived from Caste system the same degree of advantage which India has derived.

These being my views I am opposed to all those who are out to destroy the Caste System.

## Fact Sheet – Atrocity in India

- Every hour in India, two Dalits (untouchables of South Asia) are brutally assaulted.
- Every day, three Dalit women are raped, two Dalits are murdered, and two Dalit homes are burned.
- 37% of Dalits live below the poverty line in India.
- More than half (54%) of Dalit children are undernourished in India.

- 85 per 1,000 children born in Dalit communities die before their first birthday.
- 45% of Dalits do not know how to read or write in India.
- Dalit women bear double discrimination (gender and caste) in India.
- About one-third of Dalit households do not have basic facilities, such as toilets.
- 90% of the villages do not have burial ground for the dead.
- There are more children forced into labor in India than throughout the whole world put together.
- Human trafficking and prostitution of poor people are rampant

(Source: Ministry of Welfare of the Government of India, Annual Report 1992–1993)

Crimes against Dalits increase yearly (135,771 cases were reported in 1999; 137,492 cases were reported in 2000). More than 28,000 incidents of crime against scheduled caste/scheduled tribe (SC/ST) Indians were committed in 2005, according to the National Crimes Records Bureau. There are numerous massacres, and Dalit carnages take place under the nose of state governments and law enforcement officials. Until recently, the world was not even aware of this human cruelty. Thanks to the Internet and better communication systems, the news of such heinous crimes travels the world in minutes. But even in such an era, the Indian government has not taken measures to curtail these atrocities. It was the recent “Khairlanji Buddhist massacre” of September 29, 2006, that caused the world to pay attention for a minute. The inaction and carelessness of the government regarding the Khairlanji incident created a strong reaction among the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, and Buddhists in Maharashtra and other parts of India. But this time, the Indian atrocities also garnered international attention. The UN recently condemned the lack of law and order in India and warned the government about not taking adequate steps to protect the SC/STs (Ref: Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) Report 2007).

#### **REGISTERED ATROCITIES IN INDIA, 1999–2004**

Year	FIRs filed & Cases Registered under SC/ ST Act	Poor Convic- tion rate in the Courts	FIR Cases Regist- ered under PCR Act	Con- viction in the Courts under PCR	Total FIR Cases Registered on Atrocity	Total Convic- tion in Courts	% of Convictions
1999	25093	655	4450	45	29543	700	2.36
2000	23742	901	3958	81	27770	982	3.54
2002	27894	3748	526	150	28420	3898	13.71
2003	22603	2727	651	13	23254	2740	11.78
2004	23629	3259	126	34	23755	3293	13.86
<b>Total</b>	<b>122961</b>	<b>11290</b>	<b>9711</b>	<b>323</b>	<b>132672</b>	<b>11613</b>	<b>8.75</b>

\* Data for 2001 are not available.

(Source: Annual Report of Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment of India)

The conviction rate under the SC/ST Prevention of Atrocities Act is 15.71%, and as much as 85.37% of cases are pending. The Indian government enacted the SC/ST Prevention of Atrocities Act in 1989. Unfortunately, it has proved to be lame duck legislature. Nothing has improved, or even changed, for the Dalits. Many atrocity cases remain unreported by the casteist police, so the judicial system does not register the crimes. The caste-dominated newspapers also do not report atrocities. It has only been with

increased access to the internet that atrocity statistics have been made available. Following are some of the sites with current data:

- [www.gandhism.net](http://www.gandhism.net)
- [www.satyaguru.us](http://www.satyaguru.us)
- [www.upliftthem.blogspot.com](http://www.upliftthem.blogspot.com)
- [www.dalits.org](http://www.dalits.org)
- <http://nhrc.nic.in>
- [www.nyuhr.org](http://www.nyuhr.org)
- [www.dalitinternational.org](http://www.dalitinternational.org)
- <http://atrocitiesnews.wordpress.com>
- [www.ambedkar.net](http://www.ambedkar.net)

### **Abuse and Exploitation of Children in India**

Millions of India's children are denied the most basic rights of survival and protection. Child Relief and You (CRY) compiled the following grim data on the children of India based on its experience:

- Children from 100 million families live without water at home.
- Children from 150 million families live in households without electricity.
- Less than half of India's children between the ages of 6 and 14 go to school.
- A little more than one-third of all children who enroll in grade one reach grade eight.
- One in every 10 children is disabled in India.
- Only 60% of Indian children (the total child population below 14 is 228 million) reach grade five, and many of those "completing" primary school cannot read or write.
- 100 million child laborers in India work in hazardous or exploitative conditions.
- Children often work 12–15 hours per day, making less than a penny.
- 15 million Indian children are bonded laborers.
- There are 11 million Indian children living on the streets.
- 50% of children between the ages of 6 and 14 have no access to primary education.
- 25% of the victims of commercial sexual exploitation in India are below 18 years of age.
- Poor and bonded families often "sell" their children to contractors, who promise lucrative jobs in the cities. The children end up being employed in brothels and hotels, doing domestic work. Many run away and live on the streets.
- There are approximately 2 million child commercial sex workers between the ages of 5 and 15 years, and about 3.3 million between 15 and 18 years. They form 40% of the total population of commercial sex workers in India, and 71% are illiterate. 500,000 children are forced into this trade every year.

In addition to the deaths of infants and children due to malnourishment, disease, and exploitation, innumerable and unrecorded numbers of female children are killed within hours of being born. Many others are killed in the womb. Patriarchal norms, the low status of women, and preference for male children are the primary factors threatening survival of female children in India. This repeatedly occurs in downtrodden communities due to poor education. Following are some facts about female children in India:

- One out of every six girls does not live to see her 15th birthday.
- One-third of female deaths take place at birth.
- Every sixth female child's death is due to gender discrimination.
- One out of every 10 women reported some kind of child sexual abuse during childhood, chiefly by someone they knew.

- One out of four girls is sexually abused before the age of 4.
- 300,000 more girls than boys die every year.
- Female mortality exceeds male mortality in 224 out of 402 districts in India.
- Even if a female escapes infanticide or feticide, she is less likely to receive immunization, nutrition, or medical treatment, compared to a male child.
- 53% of females between the ages of 5 and 9 are illiterate.

In India, aborted female fetuses are sometimes found on the roads. Workers cleaning drains in a northern Indian town recently discovered two aborted female fetuses, a find that highlights the country's bias against girls. A few weeks later, a bag turned up in Alwar in Rajasthan containing a dozen female fetuses and dead baby girls that police believe was dumped by a nursing home. Also recently, a Hindu businessman's house was raided because he was suspected of kidnapping and raping minor girls and boys. About 40 skeletons were found there, out of which 80% were from Dalit and downtrodden communities.

### **Devdasi (Prostitution) System in Hindu Temples**

There are several causes of child prostitution, but one of the most insidious is the Devdasi system. Devdasis are girls dedicated to a goddess at a young age and forced to work as prostitutes in temples. Their parents, being uneducated, fall prey to false promises made by the Brahmins who run the Hindu temples. They are told that their daughters will be servants of God, and they marry the girls to a goddess in a ceremony that takes place twice a year. Once a girl is married to a goddess, she cannot marry a mortal. About 5,000 girls are dedicated to a goddess every year.

Another ceremony, known as Lawni (touching ceremony), occurs when a girl reaches puberty and is sold to the highest bidder. One-third of these girls, of which three-fourths are under 14 years old, are in Bombay's cheapest brothels. They belong to low castes, such as Mahar and Matang, which give low priority to education. People in these castes are so poverty-stricken, that fathers, brothers, and husbands do not hesitate to sell their daughters, sisters, and wives.

Though the Prevention of Devdasis Act was enacted in 1935, the Devdasi system continues today. In Delhi, it was estimated that 50% of the prostitutes became prostitutes because they were forced into the profession via the Devdasi system, and 15% of prostitutes are Devdasis in Bombay, Pune, Solapur, and Sangli. Another important act, the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, was passed by both houses of parliament in 1956, yet child marriages are still common. Often, the bride is much younger than the groom, so he forces her into prostitution.

### **Untouchability**

A recent study of untouchability in rural India that covered 565 villages in 11 states found the following:

- Public health workers refused to visit Dalit homes in 33% of villages.
- Dalits were prevented from entering the police station in 27.6% of villages.
- Dalit children had to sit separately while eating in 37.8% of government schools.

- Dalits did not get mail delivered to their homes in 23.5% of villages.
- Dalits were denied access to water sources in 48.4% of villages.
- Half of India's Dalit children are undernourished and 21% are severely underweight.
- Literacy rates for Dalit women are as low as 37.8% in rural India.

Untouchability in schools has contributed to drop-out and illiteracy levels for Dalit children far beyond those of the general population, with the "literacy gap" between Dalits and non-Dalits hardly changing since India's independence. Democracy does not mean anything to Dalits, as they are treated below animals in Hindu society.

Dalit women, who alongside "tribal" women, are the poorest of the poor in India, face double discrimination on the basis of caste and gender in all spheres of life. They are subjected to gross violations of their physical integrity, including sexual abuse by dominant castes, and are socially excluded and economically exploited.

The National Commission for Scheduled Castes has observed substantial underallocation and underexpenditure of the allocation for Dalit welfare and development under the government's Special Component Plan for Scheduled Castes. Dalits are subjected to bonded and forced labor and discriminated against in a range of markets, including the labor, housing, consumer, capital, and credit markets. They are paid lower wages and subjected to longer working hours and delayed wages. Verbal and physical abuse takes place in broad daylight in public, at times in front of the police.

Brahmin, Shatriya, and Vaishya castes make up 15% of the population, yet claim about 65% of the upper-level jobs (see the following table). This is another form of casteism and discrimination.

Caste	Population	Politics	Employed	Commerce	Land	Education
Brahmin	3.5	41.0	62	10	5	----
Shatriya	5.5	15.0	12	27	80	----
Vaishya	6.0	10.5	13	60	9	----
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>66.5</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>78</b>
SC	15.0	11.0	4	0.1	0.5	6
ST	7.5	7.6	1	0.1	0.5	2
OBC	52.0	8.0	7	0.8	4.0	2
Minorities	10.5	3.0	1	2.0	1.0	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>85.0</b>	<b>33.5</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>22</b>

(Source: Mahanayak, *Marathi daily newspaper from Bombay*, P1, *Head News*, 4-30-2006)

### Gross Injustice Occurs Every Day in India

Recently, a small village in Bhandara district, Maharashtra, was the focus of attention when four members of a Dalit family were slaughtered on September 29, 2006. The victims were stripped naked, dragged

from their hut to the village plaza 500 meters away, and hacked to death by an entire village of upper-caste Indians. So far, all political parties and the local administration have covered up the matter. More than a week after the gruesome killings took place, no member of the legislative assembly (MLA) or members of parliament (MP) from Bhandara had visited the village. Two MLAs from Nagpur, ostensibly sent by congress higher-ups, visited Khairlanji, but did not make any noise. Not a single villager's statement was recorded. The local village police and village administrative authorities worked hand-in-hand with the killers. Another recent event in the village of Kadkol, Basavanabagewadi Taluk, Bijapur District, was reported by *The Hindu* on October 21, 2006. Families from 93 scheduled castes were boycotted by upper-caste landlords as a punishment for drinking water from a public tank. The families, made up mostly of landless laborers and including hundreds of children, reached starvation. The landlords felt their water supply was polluted by the untouchables drinking from it. This is not a one-village event or a one-time event; it takes place 24/7/365 across India, yet the Indian government does not protect and safeguard Dalits from such oppression.