



MANIPAL
ACADEMY of HIGHER EDUCATION
BENGALURU CAMPUS
Institution of Eminence Deemed to be University

DEPARTMENT OF LIBERAL ARTS, HUMANITIES AND
SOCIAL SCIENCES

MAHE BENGALURU CAMPUS

THE COMMUNIQUÉ CLUB

KALAM

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Editorial Note



Dr. Shilpa Kalyan
Head of Department
DLHS

Dear Students,

It's encouraging to see how enthusiastic you are about putting together this newsletter. Your diverse interests and experiences are reflected in the variety of articles, stories, photography, and design. We hope that this newsletter serves as a catalyst for you to pursue your interests and talents. Best wishes for many more expressions!



From left to right: Zaafrah Siddiqui, Aryaka Srivastav, Shiwangi Verma, Mick Mendonca, Dr. Swathi Shivanand, Dr. Pradeep Thomas, Viha Disley, Maulik Pal

FACULTY CO-ORDINATORS

The first-ever edition of *Kalam*, *Communique's* newsletter, marks the beginning of what we hope will be a productive journey of education and engagement with the world for our department's budding media communicators. The articles in this newsletter span a variety of issues ranging from social and environmental justice to literary endeavours to happenings within our fledgling campus and are reflective of the learnings that have taken place over the duration of the past two semesters. We look forward to *Kalam* and the *Communique* club growing leaps and bounds from here on!

Dr. Pradeep Thomas J. A.
Assistant Professor
DLHS

Dr. Swathi Shivanand
Assistant Professor
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EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

The Department of Liberals Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, MAHE Bengaluru, proudly presents its inaugural edition of *Kalam*.

Kalam is a student-led newsletter, run by BA Journalism and Mass Communication students. The newsletter covers a range of topics, from in-house MAHE events, to city coverage and social issues.

This edition would not have been possible without the hard work of the Core Committee members, and the team of media students working systematically. We would also like to extend our gratitude to our faculty Co-ordinators, who have guided us every step of the way, and facilitated the production the final draft of *Kalam*, which we now bring from our desk, to yours.

Reaffirming Faith In The Constitution

Rights group organizes Preamble readings across Bengaluru to revitalize the spirit of the Constitution

Mick Mendonca, Tanay Kothiala
26 January, 2023
Bengaluru

The Preamble of the Indian Constitution was read out on the 26th of January, 2023, at 11am, at 4 locations in Bangalore, Jayanagar 4th block bus stop, CBI FTT RT Nagar bus stop, CMH Metro Station – Indiranagar and Church Street. The event was conducted by Bahutva Karnataka, a civil rights group. The group advocates for the welfare of minorities, especially those at an economic disadvantage as seen in their bulletin.

A reading of the Preamble was conducted in both English and Kannada, with attendees of the event being requested to repeat after the organizers. The reading was followed by a recitation of Bahutva Karnataka's very own pledge, collectively drafted by the group in



Organizers at Church Street, Empire.
(Vishesh third from left)
Photo Credits: Tanay Kothiala

English and Kannada with attendees reciting after the organizers. The event's turnout at each respective location consisted of primarily working to middle class citizens, with the likes of vendors, by-standers and members/volunteers of the organization joining in. Sachi, who

led the reading at RT Nagar says, "Overall I feel that the preamble reading event was a success as it led to building community engagement and raising awareness about the importance of the Constitutional values. The fact that many people in the area whom we approached, including those who were unable to attend the event due to work, recognized the importance of understanding their fundamental rights and expressed their support for the campaign is a positive sign."

“THE PREAMBLE ENCAPSULATES THE SPIRIT OF THE CONSTITUTION AND ITS CORE VALUES OF JUSTICE, LIBERTY, EQUALITY AND FRATERNITY.
-SACHI
(VOLUNTEER AT BAHUTVA)”

For similar reports see pg 11

Flower Show Presents A Garden Of Opportunities

From rare flowers to small vendors : A glimpse into Lal Bagh's flower show celebrations on Republic Day.

Aryaka Srivastava
28 January, 2023
Bengaluru

To commemorate our freedom on Republic Day, Lalbagh Botanical Garden which is centered in the heart of Bangalore hosted its famous 'Flower Show'. It was a 11 day event which was inaugurated by Karnataka's Chief Minister, Basvaraj Bommai himself. The Glass House of the show consisted of a huge display of various kinds of rare flowers which included Statice, Calla Lily and Hydrangea among many others, which were said to have been collected from all over the country. One of the motives behind Indian Independence was to free people from being ruled over and being able to decide what's best for them on their own.

Similarly, this event which is celebrated annually, gave opportunities to small vendors to open up shops and sell their wares in the spirit surrounding patriotism.



Lal Bagh flower show
Photo credits : Viha Disley

One such case reminded me of how we should appreciate things and people who are present in our life right now and

remain thankful for all that is being provided to us. In the flower show I came across an eight year old little girl who was selling children's stationery. When I followed her, it lead me back to a small shop. On asking, I found out that it was being run by the little girl and her mother.

On further questioning, they stated how they had no external help from anyone and were each other's own family. Outside of the flower show, they work in the wholesale market and make their living. In the flower show they had opened up their small shop of stationery items, selling colourful pens, paints, pencils and many such small items.

"Stigma Constructs The City"

A lecture by Shireen Mirza, viewing cities beyond the surface; highlighted hidden connections between waste and social inequality.

Ziya Rai
7 February 2023
Bengaluru

The second of the five talks in the seminar series 'Thinking the city' was delivered by Shireen Mirza, a social anthropologist at Azim Premji University.

Mirza began the talk by telling students about the social structures retained in the city spaces. She explained how caste and waste are related to each other; how the stigma of working with waste is attached to bodies of individuals from certain castes and how the social idea of technology is not the removal of waste but the removal of Dalits, or any other lower caste community.

Mirza also explained the connection between two words, 'Waste' and 'Us' and how the waste we throw away everyday, somehow will find its way back to us in some or the other way. She further explained the ecosystems in the city and the stigma attached to

it. She concluded by stating that the pollution which is being produced by the waste, will not just affect the environment but also the people living in it.



Shireen Mirza addressing the students of MAHE
Photo Credits : Maulik Pal

“THE WASTE WE
THROW AWAY
EVERYDAY,
SOMEHOW WILL
FIND ITS WAY
BACK TO US”

- SHIREEN MIRZA

Where do Cities Fit into the Picture of Climate Change?

From Church Street to Yelahanka : Prathijna Kodira's seminar reveals the alarming consequences of climate change in cities.

Maulik Pal
10 February, 2023
Bengaluru

Prathijna Kodira, senior consultant at the Indian Institute for Human Settlements, was invited to talk on 'What does climate change have to do with cities?' on the 10 February, 2023.

"Cities are now around 2 degrees Celsius hotter than other locations", she stated, connecting cities with climate change; a fact that leads to disproportionate climate change impact due to the economic vulnerability of various groups of the population, she added.

"Cities founded in low-lying coastal locations are particularly susceptible to the repercussions of a changing climate", Kodira told the audience. On the topic of climate change, Kodira prompted the students in attendance to think about the first ideas that sprang to mind when they heard the term.

Problems and potential remedies were discussed, as well as climate-related worries and viable alternatives. She went on to explain the details of the catastrophic consequences of climate change, including the possible extinction of entire natural systems if we wait any longer to take action.

Kodira went on to tell the audience how urbanization and climate change are intertwined, as well as the increasing frequency of catastrophic occurrences like cyclones and floods along the west coast of India. Almost half of the world's population now lives in urban areas, making them particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Cities are also major sources of waste and pollution, she added. Kodira also explained the phenomenon known as the 'Urban heat island', an occurrence that takes place in urban settings, where

concrete, crowded housing and outdated infrastructure cause temperatures to rise more quickly than in less densely populated places.

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TO TAKE ACTION.”

- PRATHIJNA KODIRA



"The City is More Lonely Than The Village"

Naveen Kumar and Harshita C.V. share their insights on the impact of urban living on mental health and possible solutions with MAHE students.

Aryaka Srivastava
9 February, 2023
Bengaluru

Students of Manipal were joined by Naveen Kumar and Harshitha C V, professors and head of Community Psychiatry Unit at The National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences, Bengaluru on 9th February.

They took a different stance on thinking about the city, doing so by incorporating mental health perspective that lies within the city. When stated by a student in the very beginning of the session of how, "Being in the city is more lonely than the village", Kumar chose to start his presentation by telling us what the reason behind that statement was; he explained concepts such as 'Global Urbanization', how cities are once again at the center and home to a growing majority of the world's population.

Kumar also stated that as the urban

population is increasing, the rural seems to decrease. He also showcased various kinds of graphs showing census of the urbanization trends in India. Kumar stated, "As cities increase, slums will also increase", a vicious cycle that only gets faster day by day. Kumar then began to explain the concept of how urban living affects mental health of a person throughout their life. Cities are said to be associated with acute as well as prolonged exposure to stressors, he stated. Though there is a very famous saying of work-life balance, people are still at risk; studies show that out of every 50 people, 7 people suffer from a mental disorder.

In addition, one in every 10 Indians, suffer from common mental disorders like anxiety and stress, he added. He also stated that the risk of suicides is double in a city. There were a lot of reasons discussed

by both professors, explaining why there is a constant increase in declining mental health amongst people. Harshitha stated common ones, such as people being stuck in the denial stage, others being the stigma of denying the fact that there even is a mental health disorder to begin with. While creating awareness of the problems, the lecturers also explained the possible solutions. They spoke about the Lay Counsellors Module, in which the civil society trains itself and can provide psychological first aid to the distressed individual on a more personal basis. The professors also spoke of the initiatives taken by their own university, NIMHANS. Tele Mental Health Assistance and Networking across States (Tele-MANAS) is a 24X7 tele-mental health service available on Toll Free Number-14416, which aims to help people and particularly cater to people in remote areas.



Harshitha C V speaking to students
Photo Credits: Aryaka Srivastava

“DECLINING MENTAL HEALTH IS AN URGENT CAUSE FOR CONCERN”

-HARSHITHA C V, NAVEEN KUMAR



Naveen Kumar speaking to students
Photo Credits: Aryaka Srivastava

Cities And Villages: Boundaries Blurred

Sushmita Pati explores the changing face of India's cities in her lecture.

T.Veda Sri
6 February 2023
Bengaluru

"Village is not a distant place anymore; it is something that's created within the cities" stated Sushmita Pati, Assistant Professor at National Law School of India University [NLSIU] in her lecture 'Our cities are made of villages' on Monday.

The lecture focused on different factors that are responsible for distinction between a village and a city like the amenities, occupations, visual landscape, people, and differences in the work life balance. It highlighted how the villagers work full day or don't work at all for months depending on the seasons and crops. She further stated how anonymity is a given in the city while it's not the case in the villages.

"However, the spaces of industries are changing into spaces of consumption, but that is a different story altogether", said Dr. Pati. Villagers who are professionally employed are

the ones who inhabit these so-called cities; however, there are also a great number of workers and laborers inhabiting these cities, she added.

Famines around Maharashtra forced agricultural laborers into Bombay city as workers during colonial times. The neighborhoods therefore continued to replicate social ties from the past and these workers' housings were divided according to the social boundaries like caste, religion, region and class. The lecture further talks about the various rural-urban interactions that are witnessed in countries like India, the cities constituting the needs and demands like electricity and water are sourced from nearby villages, leading cities to evolve by cannibalizing the surroundings resulting in constant changes in land values between agricultural land and urban land.

She further gave examples of works of Satendra Kumar, who talks about the changing villages and rural society

in Uttar Pradesh and Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay's book 'Mahesh', which talks about the inter-dependencies of rural livelihoods in nature.

'Halli' means village in Kannada and a few places in Bengaluru like Bommanahalli used to be a village before and still resembles rural presentations.

Towards the end of the lecture, students raised their doubts and gave remarks. She was then given a token of gratitude by DLHS.



Sushmita Pati addressing the students
Photo Credits: T. Veda Sri



“ NEIGHBORHOODS REPLICATE SOCIAL TIES FROM THE PAST. HOUSINGS WERE DIVIDED ACCORDING TO THE SOCIAL BOUNDARIES LIKE CASTE, RELIGION, REGION AND CLASS. ”

- SUSHMITA PATI

Photo Credits: NLSIU

The Art of Saying No

Sheela Balan conducted a workshop on defining and redefining one's boundaries and respecting boundaries of others.

Shiwangi Verma and Viha Disley
20 January, 2023
Bengaluru

The Department of Liberal Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, Bengaluru conducted a workshop on learning to say 'NO' on 20th January, 2023. The session was conducted by counselor Sheela Balan of Manipal Academy of Higher Education (MAHE).

The workshop conveyed the idea of being able to say no and how to define and redefine boundaries. Balan conveyed the idea of paying attention to one's own needs first.

Balan explained that "the psychology behind people's tendency to say 'Yes' is when people want to avoid confrontations; when we care about others a lot, and we think that it might hurt the other person which also reflects our rejection capability". A possible solution, she suggested, "is to take a moment to reflect what we feel. She helped the students understand the importance of taking the time to respond and accepting that saying 'NO' is okay".

She explained that in order to practice saying 'NO' we must begin with small steps, such as saying 'NO' to little things.



Sheela Balan on setting boundaries
Photo Credits: Shiwangi Verma

"Boundaries are defined by individuals, by themselves and for themselves", when defining and redefining boundaries was being discussed, Balan reflected on how boundaries allow a person to communicate their wants and needs while also respecting the needs and wants of others. "Boundaries is a way in which a person can take responsibility for their own actions and emotions and not take responsibility for the actions or emotions of others", Balan added. She stated that

if a person's boundary is being violated, their 'needs, wants and have's' are not being paid any attention. This usually tends to happen when a person puts another person's needs above their own, which generally happens when that person cannot say 'NO', she said.

After the workshop when students were asked what their takeaways were, Ankita, a 1st year Double Majors student, MAHE said that she found it very helpful as she realized her mistakes and understood her boundaries.

Finally, 1st year, BA Psychology student, MAHE, Nithya's takeaway summarizes the workshop "Saying no out of strength is better than saying yes out of weakness. That'd be pretty long. – The Art of saying No".

no
means
no



“ BOUNDARIES ARE DEFINED BY INDIVIDUALS, BY THEMSELVES AND FOR THEMSELVES. ”

-SHEELA BALAN

Photo Credits: Soukup

Nurse Felicitated on TAPMI Founder's Day

TAPMI Bengaluru marked its Founder's Day by felicitating nurse Nagamani Dara and hosting a speech by Chief Guest Apoorva Oza.

Emilia Kumar and Gaius Santosh Kumar
17 January, 2023
Bengaluru

T.A. Pai Management Institute, Bengaluru observed Founder's Day, an annual event commemorating the birth anniversary of the late Shri. Tonse Ananth Pai on 17th January, 2023. Pai was the founder of T.A. Pai Management Institute, one of India's leading business schools. Aditya Jadhav, the Dean of TAPMI Bengaluru, felicitated Nagamani Dara, a nurse by profession, with the 2023 edition of



Dr. Aditya Jadhav, Mr. Apoorva Oza, and Dr. Pragna Rao present Ms. Nagamani Dara with the Shri. T.A. Pai Karmyogi Puraskar
Photo credits: Gaius Thomas

the Shri. T.A. Pai Karmayogi Puraskar for her exemplary contribution to the field of nursing and healthcare. Jadhav then welcomed the Chief Guest, Apoorva Oza, director of the Aga Khan Foundation. Oza spoke at length about how India is not a strictly urban society, as is often portrayed and perceived in films and other media.

English Translation of Bendre's Poems Released

The book, 'The Pollen Waits on Tiptoe', a collection of 26 poems by Kannada poet Da Ra Bendre, was released at MAHE Bengaluru in collaboration with Manipal Universal Press.

Viha Disley
1 February, 2023
Bengaluru

The Department of Liberal Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences (DLHS) in collaboration with Manipal Universal Press, hosted a book release at the MAHE – Bengaluru campus on 1 February, 2023. The translator of the book, Madhav Ajjampur, Chief guest Prof. Pramod Mutalik, the editing team of the book, faculty members of MAHE – Bengaluru and students, were all present at this event.

The book 'The Pollen Waits on Tiptoe' was released on the 127th birth anniversary of Dattatreya Ramachandra Bendre, a famous Kannada lyric poet whose works are still being recognised by the Kannada community. The book is a collection of

26 poems written by Dattatreya Ramachandra Bendre which have been translated to English by Madhav Ajjampur.

The Chief Guest present at the event, Professor Pramod Mutalik, is also a well-known writer, bilingual translator, and professor at the National College.

He stated, "Reading is difficult, and translating is equally challenging". He spoke about challenges a person faces when they are trying to translate a piece of work. He also spoke about how sometimes translators can be denied the permission to translate works. However, he appreciated Ajjampur, as he was able to acquire the copyright of Da Ra Bendre's work.

Madhav Ajjampur's journey translating Da Ra Bendre's work began 10 years ago when he wanted to understand the poems better.

His journey of translating the poems began with Da Ra Bendre's works which were online during the pandemic and now the translated poems are part of the book 'The Pollen waits on tiptoe'.

The name of the book was inspired by one of his articles published in The Hindu, 2021, after which it was also included in his list of titles for the book. 'The Pollen Waits on Tiptoe' is a line from one of the translated poems, 'The Pollen Waits'.



The release of the book
Photo credits: Maulik Pal



Madhav Ajjampur addressing faculty and students
Photo credits: Maulik Pal



Chief Guest, Prof. Pramod Mutalik addressing the students and faculty
Photo credits: Maulik Pal

Concealed Crisis: Violence Against Sex Workers

Sex workers of Karnataka shared their experiences of police violence, discrimination and threats in a discussion organized by Alternative Law Forum

Shiwangi Verma and Rakshana Sivakumar
4 February, 2023
Bengaluru

The Karnataka State Human Rights Commission (KSHRC) found that Rights of Dignity, Equality and Equal Protection of sex workers were violated by law enforcement in September 2022. Two sex workers had been arrested under the offense of petty charges, and were brutally assaulted in police custody. The KSHRC ordered that the state government pay a compensation of Rs 20,000/- each.

The Alternative Law Forum (ALF), a lawyer's collective, organized a discussion on 4th February 2023, with sex workers of Sadhana Mahila Sangha, Sangam and Karnataka Sex Workers Union, to share their experiences, victories and challenges, and to honor the recent KSHRC ruling. The two sex workers who had been assaulted filed a case against state violence to the KSHRC in September 2022.

"They were just grabbing coffee and hanging around, when the police identified them and took them to the police station and subjected them to physical abuse," said Syeda Saba, Alternative Law Forum (ALF).

The sex workers present at the meeting shared past experiences on how the police, as well as the public, had been unfair and brutal

towards them. "I was asked to crush chillies and put them on my genitals, using the police's lathi," said Sheetal*, a sex worker.

The sex workers discussed how their personal images and contact information were circulated from the police station on social media. The amount that they earn on a daily basis is around Rs 200-300, and the fine they are charged by the police in order to get bail is around Rs 5000-6000. They spoke about being treated as untouchables, being considered 'dirty' and restricted from entering some areas of the city. The sex workers often received threats from the police, and the aftermath of these threats affect their families.

Priya*, the leader of the Karnataka Sex Workers Union, spoke about the popular discriminatory assumptions about sex workers because they sell their bodies. She further explained how sex workers are not treated as normal workers whose duty is to provide services to their customers, they also deserve dignity and respect like other service providers

On suggestions for implementation of sex workers rights, Miriam, a lawyer, emphasized that implementation is the most vital part to play. "Cubbon park,

Upparpet, and Ashok Nagar police stations can be our starting points. We can get regular women to sensitize. Targeting one police station, jamming them to see if their culture changes" she stated.

"Article 21 extends to sex workers as well. In Karnataka, sex workers are not to be arrested and cannot be accused for the type of profession they have chosen, according to the Circular by DGP and yet sex workers continue to face violence," added Lawyer Mohammed Afeef, ALF.

*: names changed to protect individual identities

I WAS ASKED TO CRUSH CHILLIES AND PUT THEM ON MY GENITALS, USING THE POLICE'S LATHI.

-SHEETAL (NAMES CHANGED TO PROTECT INDIVIDUAL IDENTITIES) THIS QUOTE WAS TRANSLATED FROM KANNADA TO ENGLISH BY SAYEDA SABA.



Media: Fourth Estate or Primary Weapon for Spreading Propaganda?

Sevanti Ninan, a seasoned journalist, spoke about changing media landscapes dominated by politicians and elites.

Maulik Pal
20 January, 2023
Bengaluru

By 2030, it has been predicted that three-quarters of all media outlets would be owned by politicians and 60 percent of those outlets will be controlled by state and municipal officials, said Sevanti Ninan, veteran journalist and founder of media criticism website The Hoot, expressing how this adversely impacts freedom of press in the country.

She spoke on 'Paradox of Media: Plentiful yet unviable, plentiful yet unfree' at the public lecture series hosted by National Centre for Biological Sciences on 20th January 2023.

Ninan argued that when there are too many actors, there is no news; instead, what we see as news are the entrenched interests of businessmen and politicians. It is characteristic of the media of a democratic society to operate as a watchdog, ensuring that public figures in the media adhere to the values held by the majority of the

population, she stated. "The media's role as a watchdog has helped establish its legitimacy as a 'fourth estate' in India.

This has led to political and business elites buying up media outlets to advance their own agendas and broaden their reach," she added. She elaborated saying that due to the structure of media ownership in India, press freedom is severely limited in the country. Companies often have owners who have additional interests that fall under the purview of the current administration's regulatory framework, she added. She posed a question asking, "If the government can exert pressure on the company's owner, how successful is it (media) at holding power accountable?"

The decline of impartial and independent journalism has been linked to the rise of political ownership of the media. Online news outlets such as Quint and Brut have been hindered by government restrictions

throughout this administration, she stated. "The media must be capable of policing themselves in the interest of the public if it is to provide comprehensive coverage of the news" she added.

Further, politicians can now reach out to the public directly through social media, she stated. "From 2019 to 2023, there has been exponential increase in the use of the internet and social media due to the Modi government's legitimization of a corrupt media" she added, explaining that the free internet provided by Jio and sanctioned by India's telecom regulator boosted the country's social media user base.

She explained how Prime Minister Narendra Modi became a pioneer by launching a program called "Mann ki Baat", which is broadcasted live over the internet and that the internet has become the BJP's primary weapon for spreading propaganda.

Elephant Captivity : A Violation of Animal Rights

Alok Hisarwala Gupta spoke about the violation of animal rights in the case of elephants in India, using one of his own client's stories.

Aniket Kumar Srivastav
3 February, 2023
Bengaluru

India has over two thousand elephants in captivity, the highest in the world. This is despite the Wildlife Protection Act 1972, declaring the capture of elephants from the wild in their natural homes as illegal, said lawyer and activist Alok Hisarwala Gupta on 3rd February, 2023. He spoke at a Friday Forum of the Alternative Law

Forum, Bengaluru, about his work on elephant rights and how a new language of animal rights in India can be fashioned. He continued by sharing a story of one of his own clients. The elephant was an Asian elephant named Lakshmi Kumari, born in 1950 in the Andamans, she was taken from her home at the age of 50 to work in

the temples of Kerala. She was later moved to the state of Goa in order to entertain tourists. Unfortunately, she died in 2020 during the first wave of COVID lockdowns having only known a lifetime of captivity and being repeatedly exploited by her various owners.

“Today, as many as 1500 elephants remain in the hands of private individuals as their personal property.”
-Alok Hisarwala Gupta

The Veil Over Caste Inequality

Shattering the cycle of discrimination: Why education is the key to ending caste based prejudice in India; a relic of the past that still impacts social mobility and access to opportunities for the lower castes.

Ajitesh Menon
22 January, 2023
Bengaluru

Caste prejudice, often known as casteism, has long been a serious social problem in India. It refers to the practice of classifying individuals into hierarchical groupings according to their place of birth and lineage.

The Caste system is said to have its origins in ancient India, it was implemented to create distinct social classes, each with a unique set of responsibilities and occupations. Over centuries, it has evolved into a tool for oppression and discrimination over time, which has resulted in social inequality and a lack of social mobility for many people.

The four primary caste groups in India are Brahmins (priests and scholars), Kshatriyas (warriors and rulers), Vaishyas (merchants and traders), and Shudras (laborers). There is a fifth group, the Dalits or Untouchables, who were exempt from the caste system entirely since they were deemed to be filthy. Caste-based discrimination is prohibited under the Indian constitution, although it is nonetheless pervasive in many areas of the country.

In India, caste prejudice can take many different forms, from physical abuse to social and economic marginalization, to even murder. In India, lower castes are frequently subjected to discrimination, which has an impact on every area of their lives, including political representation, employment possibilities, and access

to healthcare and education. One of the most important elements in ending the cycle of discrimination and poverty is education. Yet, discrimination and exclusion from the educational system are commonplace in India for lower-caste youngsters. They frequently experience prejudice and bullying from their upper-caste peers, which prevents them from receiving a high-quality education and forces them to leave school.

According to the 2011 India Human Development Survey, only 27% of Dalit children aged 7 to 17 were enrolled in school, compared to 41% of non-Dalit children.

In India, employers frequently favor applicants from higher castes over those with more education or work experience. Even when they are competent for the role, people from lower castes frequently find themselves rejected from employment because of their social standing. Due to their social standing, many Dalits are compelled to work in low-paying, menial professions including manual scavenging, cleaning sewers, and handling rubbish.

Access to healthcare in India is also impacted by caste inequality. Due to their social standing, people from lower castes frequently have less access to medical facilities and services. Also, they are more likely to receive subpar healthcare and be refused emergency medical attention.

According to National Center for Biotechnology Information, patients from lower castes were less likely to receive medical care than Dalits and Adivasis (tribal people).

In India, prejudice based on caste is often associated with crime and violence. Dalits frequently fall prey to rape, murder, and other forms of physical and sexual abuse committed by members of upper castes. They endure harassment and humiliation as well, which can result in depression and other mental health problems.

According to 2020 data from National Crime Records Bureau, around 45,000 incidences of crimes against Dalits were registered in 2019, up 7.3% from the previous year.

Political representation in India is also impacted by caste discrimination. Despite making up a sizable portion of the population, members of lower castes are frequently excluded from positions of political leadership and decision-making. Even within the Indian parliament, only 84 of the 545 members of the Indian parliament are Dalits, or less than 16% of the total number of seats. Because of their underrepresentation, lower-caste communities are marginalised and their demands are not met by policy.

In conclusion, caste prejudice in India is a serious social problem that has a negative impact on millions of people.

27%

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-2011 India Human Development Survey

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-2020 data from National Crime Records Bureau

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The Constitution, 'Maitreyee' And Caste: A Conversation With Bahutva Karnataka



After the reading of the preamble, Kalam's Mick Mendonca spoke with Madhu Bhushan and Vishesh, organisers and volunteers of the reading at Church Street on the purpose of Bahutva Karnataka, the values of the Preamble and Constitution and India's current political situation.

Mick Mendonca
26 January, 2023
Bengaluru

Mick: Can you talk about your organisation?

Vishesh: Bahutva Karnataka is a collective of concerned citizens, some of us are affiliated to grassroot level organisations that work on various progressive issues, others are concerned professionals. All of us have come together because we see that the constitutional values, values of secularism, diversity and plurality are under attack, and that we see that there's need for a non-partisan alternative that can bring people together.

Mick: Can you tell me how long you (Madhu) have been working in association with this organisation?

Madhu: Bahutva has been around for around I'd say 3 years. I think it has really emerged out of a love for this country and this state because I think what this state particularly represents, what is really precious about Karnataka is its Diversity. We think that we really need to treasure it, protect it, promote it, build awareness about it, because the whole concept of diversity itself is under threat, and it's something that we cannot take for granted. We have to impose 'Sarva Janangada Shantiya Thota', it's something we've taken for granted. We have to nurture and nourish these values, 'Shantiya Thota' cannot flourish if you don't nurture and nourish and water these values, so what we are trying to do is really water these values to that it take root and grows stronger.

Mick: Can you tell me about why the

Preamble was chosen to be read today?

Vishesh: The Preamble in a sense offers you a microcosm of all the values of the Constitution stands for, and I think somewhere we believe that the Constitution's message of equality and fraternity are also a message of love in what has always been a deeply unequal and what is now becoming an increasingly violent society. I think being able to recover that message of love and lay claim to it in a public space was very important today.

Mick: Dr. B.R. Ambedkar in his final speech to the constituent assembly stated that we (India) would be entering into a life of contradictions,, that we would have equality in politics but unequal footing in social and economic backgrounds. Do you think the values the Preamble and Constitution stands for has been upheld?

Madhu: Dr. Ambedkar knew this country and I think as much as he wanted the best for it, he also realized the worst in us, which is why I think he made that very telling comment, saying that democracy is only the top pressing on a soil which is essentially undemocratic and unequal. He was referring to the caste system, which is at the core of the inequalities we see in our system. What is specific to India is the inequality brought in by caste and I think to that extent what the Constitution really promotes is an ideal, that we all have to live up to. I think it's a constant challenge, I don't think we have lived up to it, we have tried but we have failed.

think we have lived up to it, we have tried but we have failed. We should not be afraid to face up to it and say that no, we are dealing with it, we acknowledge it and we are aspiring to be a better, more equal and a more just society. This is an essential feature of the Constitution: fraternity. I think that symbolizes 'maitreyee', i.e. friendship and love that Vishesh was talking about. A love that cuts across all barriers, whether it's of caste, religion, genders, we should be able to embrace this multiplicity and diversity and plurality. Unfortunately, we are being programmed to be paranoid about each other and our differences. We think that is the biggest threat today, which is why there is the need for spaces like Bahutva, which try to reaffirm and re-acknowledge these values.

Mick: Can you walk me through how you created the pledge and the reason behind it?

Vishesh: The pledge clearly takes inspiration from the Preamble. People can read the text in many different ways but to me, the pledge took the form it did because it connects the values and the promises of the Preamble to a greater universal promise. The promise of equality is not just a constitutional promise. It's one step along a larger quest, along the route to human freedom and in a sense Baba Saheb Ambedkar was also liberal, he cared about these universal values and I think the Preamble gestures to that in terms of the dichotomy between superstitions and reason, between parochialism of caste and universality of humanness.

(This piece has been edited for clarity)