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## Dalit families migrate from Gujarat village

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Zinzuwada/Nagwada (Gujarat), Feb.21 (ANI): Fearing attacks from upper caste people in their village, 187 Dalit or the lower caste **families** have migrated to neighbouring villages in Gujarat.

These families belonged to Zinzuwada village and decided to migrate to other nearby villages to live in makeshift tents, as they feared attacks by members of upper caste people in their village.

Belonging to the Maldhari community, these people felt compelled to move to nearby villages to escape harassment by upper-caste persons of the village.

They left their village with their belongings to Nagwada, a nearby village and are presently living in makeshift tents.

In Zinzuwada village, which maintains an extremely rigid social hierarchy, the Dalits are mostly employed as manual labourers. They depend solely on the dominant, upper-caste Darbar community for survival.

Members of Maldhari community, who are today living in makeshift tents in Nagwada, say that the Darbars used to bully them and denied them even basic amenities like water.

"We have left the village but before that, the village council did not even provide us with the basic amenities like food or water. The Darbars (upper-caste people of the village) have injured six or seven people of our community. Even after filing a case against them, the government has not taken any action. We left the village as we felt that our daughters and sisters were not safe. The village council didn't even allow us to take water from the wells or the river," said Prabhat Rabari, a villager.

He alleged that the Darbars used to sexually harass the women of their village and did not allow their **children** to study in schools.

The Maldharis have allegedly been facing discrimination for ages.

"The Darbar community tormented the villagers to such an extent that they had leave the village. The population of Darbars is so huge that they own more than 1,500 houses in the village. They used to harass and bully the Maldharis (the lower-caste community); they have abducted their cattle too. They used to sexually harass the women and exploited them in every possible way. They abducted the women and kept them for 17-20 days in their houses. The people were not able to go to fill the earthen pots with water, from the wells and for 15 days they were deprived of water. The children were also not allowed to go to the schools," said Lalji Bhai Desai, a social worker.

He added that the Darbars have already killed nine Maldharis, but the government is still not taking any notice of this situation.

Numbering 160 million, Dalits represent 16 percent of India's population of more than one billion.

Officially, caste discrimination is banned in India and special quotas exist



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