

Hindustan Times

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SO DEEP-ROOTED IS CASTE MALAISE THAT FOR MANY DALITS IN AN UJJAIN VILLAGE IT IS A TRADITION TO KEEP

HT PHOTOS

Children play in Kadachha village in Ujjain district

Those who try to raise their voice are told to keep mum by their elders

Salil Mekaad

Kadachha (Ujjain), May 6

IN KADACHHA village like in many others in Madhya Pradesh, social discrimination has become a way of life, with Dalits and Other Backward Classes (OBCs) accepting it as a tradition to be followed.

A visit to this village in Ujjain district (adjoining Indore) — that shot into the limelight following an HT report based on the findings of NGO Jan Sahas and Unicef on caste discrimination in serving of mid-day meals and care of pregnant and postpartum Dalit women — showed how deep-rooted the malaise is.

A schoolteacher belonging to the Dalit community said on condition of anonymity fearing further victimisation, "I have experienced it all my life. We can't mount a horse at marriage processions. We can't celebrate in upper caste localities with drums and the like. We have to get off a cycle if an elderly person from the upper caste is close by. The list is endless."

"But what can an individual do when the practice is accepted even by members of the reserved class. If I make a hue and cry over the issue, the elders in my own community will gag me," he said.

Ignorant of the stigma attached to the practice, Lekha (only name mentioned), a standard V student said, "We have always been sitting in separate rows for mid-day meals. Is it bad?" When informed that it



It's a way of life

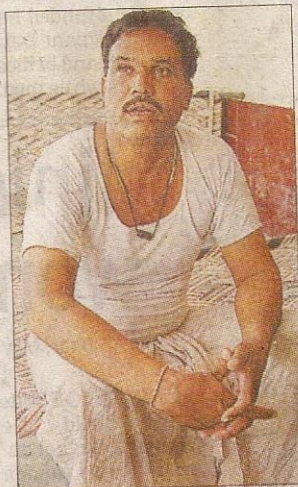


APARTHEID IN MP

was a violation of his rights, the schoolboy said, "My father never told me this."

The sarpanch (headman) of the village, Balaram Jaat, went to the extent of defending the discrimination. "No one tells Dalits to refrain from eating at public functions with the upper caste people or remain outside the houses of Brahmins or Rajputs. They do it on their

Continued on Page 2



“ No one tells Dalits to refrain from eating at public functions with the upper caste people... They do it on their own. They feel it is a tradition that has to be kept alive. ”

—BALARAM JAAT, sarpanch

Hindustan Times Impact



NHRC asks for report in 4 weeks

Following a series of HT reports on discrimination against Dalit children and women in Madhya Pradesh, the NHRC issued a notice to the state to send a report in four weeks. The Commission will also depute its investigation team to four districts

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BUY REPRINTS Print

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Government-funded health workers often refuse to treat pregnant Dalit women.

When they do, they demand bribes and then refuse to touch the patients while medically examining them. Even injections are administered without touching the women.

A survey by Jansahas, an NGO, and Unicef reveals these, and other, gruesome cases of caste discrimination in four districts — Jhabua, Sheopur, Katni and Ujjain —in Madhya Pradesh. *Hindustan Times* reported this first on Tuesday in a report titled Apartheid funded by the Indian tax-payer.

The survey has revealed that assistant nursing matrons (ANMs) or Asha Workers, who are responsible for delivering government-funded health benefits to poor people, seldom visit dalit localities. When they do, they don't touch pregnant Dalit women while medically examining them.

And finally, Dalit women have to pay a major part of the monetary benefits they receive under the government's Janani Suraksha Yojana (Mother Protection Scheme) as bribes to these ANMs and, sometimes, even to doctors.

The ANMs visit the villages once a month without intimation and examine pregnant women only in Anganwadi centres. "Since most of the Anganwadi centres are run from the homes of upper caste peoples, Dalit women, who are denied entry into these, are deprived of any medical attention," Jan Sahas activist Ashif Sheikh told Hindustan Times.

In cases where they do receive treatment, Dalit women are the last to be examined — after the last non-dalit woman has left.

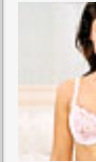
Then, even injections are administered without touching them, the survey showed. Injections administered in this manner increase the possibility of the needles breaking, thus, exposing the patients to medical complications.

"As many as 42 per cent of the young Dalit mothers surveyed claimed that they avoided visiting the Anganwadi centres

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because of caste discrimination," he said, adding that 96 per cent of Dalit women surveyed said they had experience some form of discrimination, the most common being casteist abuses.

Around 23 per cent of Dalit women are deprived of the monetary benefits they are entitled to under the government's Janani Suraksha Yojana.

"Legally, they are entitled to free medical care during deliveries, but in practice, 86 per cent of Dalit women had to spend money," said Sheikh.



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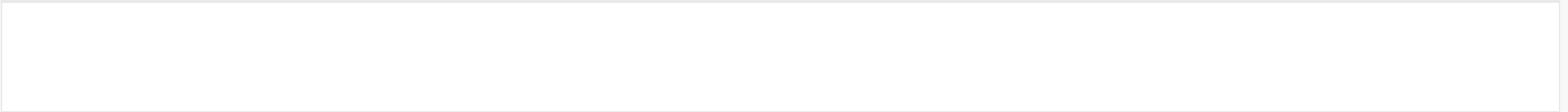
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