

Legal and Social Safeguards Against Caste-Based Atrocities: A Critical Analysis of Victims' Rights and Remedies in India

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ARTICLE INFO ABSTRACT

Due to its deep sociocultural roots, caste-based discrimination is still a major problem in India. The National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB) reported over 50,000 cases of atrocities against Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) in 2022, despite constitutional provisions and legislative measures such as the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989. Despite its comprehensiveness, the legal system is beset by societal biases, judicial delays, and police indifference. This essay examines systemic shortcomings, emphasizing the gaps in the administration of justice through significant incidents like Karamchedu and Khairlanji. It offers specific reforms like police training, fast-track courts, and victim rehabilitation programs after critically evaluating the effectiveness of legislative protections, judicial interventions, and administrative procedures. The study emphasizes the need for a multidimensional approach involving legal enforcement, education, and public awareness to address the deep-seated inequalities and ensure the realization of constitutional principles of equality and justice.

1. Introduction

The caste-based discrimination is a pervasive social issue in India, which has its origins in the hierarchical varna system, which later evolved into rigid caste divisions¹. This structure has historically marginalized the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and the Scheduled Tribes (STs), exposing them to social exclusion, economic disenfranchisement, and systemic violence². Despite constitutional guarantees of equality, liberty and justice, caste-based oppression persists in both rural and urban settings, manifesting in atrocities, discrimination, and denial of basic rights. For example, data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) indicates that over 50,000 cases of atrocities against the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and the Scheduled Tribes (STs) have been

¹ Goghari, V. M., & Kusi, M. (2023). An introduction to the basic elements of the caste system of India. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1210577>. See also, Vikaspedia. (2022). *Caste system in India*. Social Welfare. Retrieved December 17, 2023, from <https://socialwelfare.vikaspedia.in/viewcontent/social-welfare/social-awareness/caste-system-in-india?lgn=en>. See also, BBC. (2019, June 19). What is India's caste system? *BBC News*. Retrieved December 17, 2023, from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-35650616>

² Human Rights Watch. (2001). *Caste discrimination: A global concern*. Report for the United Nations World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance, Durban, South Africa, September 2001. *Human Rights Watch*, 13(3G). Retrieved December 17, 2023, from <https://www.hrw.org/reports/pdfs/g/general/caste0801.pdf>

reported in 2022³, reflecting systemic issues across the nation. In rural areas, the denial of access to community wells or temples remains prevalent, while urban settings witness subtler forms of casteism, such as employment discrimination or residential segregation. Studies have shown that Dalit households in rural India are five times more likely to face violence compared to other communities, highlighting their vulnerability⁴. In urban spaces, the representation of marginalized groups in formal employment remains disproportionately low, perpetuating economic disparities⁵. Such statistics underscore the persistence of caste-based discrimination and the urgent need for targeted interventions to dismantle systemic barriers and promote inclusivity. Its impact is particularly severe in rural India, where caste often determines social status and economic opportunities. Effective victim protection mechanisms are desperately needed, as evidenced by the prevalence of caste-based atrocities such as physical violence, social boycotts, and denial of access to public resources. A steady increase in atrocity cases against Dalits and Adivasis is revealed by data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), highlighting the structural inadequacy of addressing these problems. Systemic obstacles like judicial hold-ups, police inaction, and social stigma frequently cause legal protections to fall short. Victims are further discouraged from reporting crimes because they are often subjected to ostracism and retaliation when they seek justice. In addition to guaranteeing justice, addressing these issues is crucial for fostering equality and social harmony. Strengthening legal and social frameworks is critical to upholding the constitutional ideals of dignity and non-discrimination. Simultaneously, there is a need to foster societal awareness to dismantle the prejudices that perpetuate these atrocities.

2. Caste-Based Atrocities: A Historical Perspective

The caste system, originally conceptualized in ancient texts such as the Manusmriti, categorized society into four varnas based on occupation⁶. Over time, this division became hereditary, rigid, and exclusionary, with lower castes subjected to severe restrictions and untouchability. The system's codification under colonial rule further entrenched caste identities and institutionalized inequalities. The societal impact of the caste system has been profound. It created rigid barriers to education, employment, and social mobility for marginalized communities. These barriers perpetuated cycles of poverty, illiteracy, and disenfranchisement, making SCs and STs vulnerable to exploitation and violence. Untouchability practices have historically excluded Dalits from accessing public spaces, water resources, and religious institutions, further entrenching their marginalization. But when the Constitution of India came into force, all these blocks were thrown out in 1950.

India used affirmative action laws and constitutional guarantees to try to topple this hierarchy after gaining independence. Despite these steps, the caste system's social legacy still shapes institutional and interpersonal behaviour, frequently showing up as discrimination and violence against Dalits and Adivasis. The cruelty of caste-based atrocities and the inadequacy of state mechanisms to stop them are made clear by a number of historical incidents. The Karamchedu Massacre of 1985⁷, where Dalits were killed in Andhra Pradesh by upper-caste villagers, highlighted the impunity enjoyed by perpetrators and the reluctance of law enforcement to act against dominant castes. Following this atrocity, the incident brought attention to the urgent need for stricter legal mechanisms, though substantive reforms were slow to materialize. Similarly, the Khairlanji Massacre of 2006⁸, involving the brutal murder of a Dalit family in Maharashtra, exposed police negligence and societal

³ The News Minute. (2023, December 07). *NCRB data shows increase in crimes against SCs and STs; UP and Rajasthan on top*. Retrieved on December 15, 2023, from <https://www.thenewsminute.com/news/ncrb-data-shows-increase-in-crimes-against-scs-and-sts-up-and-rajasthan-on-top>

⁴ Sharma, S. (2015). Caste-based crimes and economic status: Evidence from India. *Journal of Comparative Economics*, 43(1), 204–226. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jce.2014.10.005>, See Also, Thapa, R., van Teijlingen, E., Regmi, P. R., & Heaslip, V. (2021). Caste exclusion and health discrimination in South Asia: A systematic review. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Public Health*, 33(8), 828–838. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10105395211014648>. See also, Khandare, L. P. (2017). *Domestic violence and empowerment: A national study of scheduled caste women in India* (Doctoral dissertation, Indiana University). Indiana University ScholarWorks. <https://scholarworks.indianapolis.iu.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/bbdd040b-4a8d-47a0-bebe-5e2e17d5c8e9/content>

⁵ Kumar, G. (2023). Caste and enterprise ownership: Emerging trends and diversification in India. *Artha Vijnana*, 65(4). Retrieved from <https://gipe.ac.in/caste-and-enterprise-ownership-emerging-trends-and-diversification-in-india/>

⁶ Kumar, V. (n.d.). *The Vedic justification of inequality: The varna system*. Retrieved on December 15, 2023, from <https://philpapers.org/archive/KUMVJI.pdf>

⁷ Berg, D.-E. (2014). Karamchedu and the Dalit subject in Andhra Pradesh. *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, 48(3). <https://doi.org/10.1177/006996671454024>. See also, Berg, D.-E. (2014). *Karamchedu and the Dalit subject in Andhra Pradesh*. Retrieved December 15, 2023, from <http://dspace.stellamariscollege.edu.in:8080/xmlui/bitstream/handle/123456789/5083/A.P.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

⁸ Ananth, V. K. (2020, September 17). *Uncovering caste-based violence: The Khairlanji massacre and the story of its cover-up*. The Polis Project. Retrieved December 15, 2023, from

complicity. The public outcry led to nationwide protests and prompted the Maharashtra government to initiate fast-track courts for such cases, albeit with mixed results in ensuring justice for victims. These incidents underscore the systemic failures in addressing caste-based violence and emphasize the importance of reforms in enforcement and victim support mechanisms. The Una Flogging Incident of 2016⁹, where Dalit youths were publicly beaten in Gujarat for skinning a dead cow, underscored the persistence of caste-based violence even in modern times and highlighted the role of vigilante groups in perpetuating atrocities under the guise of protecting cultural practices. These incidents highlight recurrent themes of systemic failure, such as societal indifference, delayed justice, and inadequate victim rehabilitation. They also emphasise the necessity of a more robust social response to such atrocities and the stricter enforcement of current legal provisions.

3. Legal Framework for Victim Protection

The Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989¹⁰, was enacted to prevent atrocities against SCs and STs and ensure their socio-economic empowerment. This Act contains clauses pertaining to the creation of special courts, severe punishments, and victim rehabilitation initiatives. Additionally, it forbids certain behaviours like degrading treatment, social boycotts, and denying access to shared resources. The Act offers programs for witness protection and acknowledges the unique vulnerabilities of victims.

Notable cases such as the *State of Karnataka v. Appa Balu Ingale* (1993)¹¹ highlighted the judicial role in interpreting the Act's provisions to deliver justice to victims of caste-based violence¹². Similarly, the *Laxman Naik v. State of Orissa* (1994)¹³ case emphasized the judiciary's acknowledgment of the Act's significance in addressing heinous crimes. However, challenges persist, including inconsistent application across states and delays in trials, which hinder the Act's full potential in protecting victims. The 2015 amendments to the Act expanded its scope to include new forms of discrimination and violence, ensuring more comprehensive protection for marginalized groups.

The Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955¹⁴, aims to eliminate untouchability and its associated practices. It focuses on eradicating discrimination in public spaces and services. Despite its comprehensive provisions, the Act suffers from weak enforcement and a lack of awareness among the populace. Additionally, provisions under the Indian Penal Code (IPC), such as Sections 153A (promoting enmity between groups)¹⁵ and 295A (deliberate

<https://www.thepolisproject.com/read/uncovering-caste-based-violence-the-khairlanji-massacre-and-the-story-of-its-coverup/>

⁹ Bhardwaj, A. (2016, October 13). *Una: The flogging of Dalits was a concerted effort among the villagers and the police*. NewsLaundry. Retrieved December 15, 2023, from <https://www.newslaundry.com/2016/10/13/una-the-flogging-of-dalits-was-a-concerted-effort-among-the-villagers-and-the-police>

¹⁰ The Scheduled Castes And the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention Of Atrocities) Act, 1989 Act No. 33 Of 1989: An Act to prevent the commission of offences of atrocities against the members of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, to provide for 1 [Special Courts and the Exclusive Special Courts] for the trial of such offences and for the relief and rehabilitation of the victims of such offences and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

¹¹ AIR 1993 SC 1126

¹² Kaur, I. (2021). *Role of judiciary in interpreting and enforcing the constitutional mandate of "protective discrimination"*. *Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research*, 8(2), 428-434. Retrieved December 15, 2023, from <https://www.jetir.org/papers/JETIR2102053.pdf>

¹³ 1995 AIR 1387

¹⁴ The Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955 Act No. 22 of 1955: This is a significant legislative measure in India aimed at abolishing and penalizing the practice of untouchability, a discriminatory practice rooted in the caste system. The Act provides mechanisms to protect individuals from social injustices stemming from untouchability, enforces equal rights, and ensures compliance with constitutional provisions under Article 17, which abolishes untouchability in all forms.

¹⁵ 153A. Promoting enmity between different groups on ground of religion, race, place of birth, residence, language, etc., and doing acts prejudicial to maintenance of harmony.-- (1) Whoever--

(a) by words, either spoken or written, or by signs or by visible representations or otherwise, promotes or attempts to promote, on grounds of religion, race, place of birth, residence, language, caste or community or any other ground whatsoever, disharmony or feelings of enmity, hatred or illwill between different religious, racial, language or regional groups or castes or communities, or

(b) commits any act which is prejudicial to the maintenance of harmony between different religious, racial, language or regional groups or castes or communities, and which disturbs or is likely to disturb the public tranquillity, ²[or]

[(c) organizes any exercise, movement, drill or other similar activity intending that the participants in such activity shall use or be trained to use criminal force or violence or knowing it to be likely that the participants in such activity will use or be trained to use criminal force or violence, or participates in such activity intending

acts intended to outrage religious feelings)¹⁶, are often invoked in cases of caste-based violence, providing supplementary support to the PoA Act.

The Indian Constitution enshrines several provisions to protect marginalized communities. Article 14 ensures equality before the law and equal protection of laws. Article 15 prohibits discrimination based on religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth. Article 17 abolishes untouchability and forbids its practice in any form, providing constitutional backing to anti-discrimination laws. Article 46 mandates the state to promote the educational and economic interests of SCs, STs, and other weaker sections. These provisions, complemented by legislative measures, create a comprehensive legal framework to combat caste-based atrocities. However, gaps in implementation and awareness continue to hinder their effectiveness. For instance, while Article 17 provides the foundation for abolishing untouchability, societal norms and prejudices often override legal provisions, resulting in continued discrimination.

4. Role of the Judiciary

Indian courts have played a significant role in ensuring that the rights of victims of caste-based atrocities are upheld. Judicial interventions have been pivotal in upholding victim rights¹⁷.

a. Swaran Singh and Anr. v. State through Standing Counsel and Others¹⁸

In this case, the appellants allegedly insulted the complainant by using a derogatory caste name, "Chamar," while he was near a parked car at the gate of a premises. The Supreme Court had to decide whether this constituted an atrocity under Section 3(1)(x) of the SC/ST Act. The Court held that the incident occurred in a place visible to the public, which suffices to classify it as an offense under the Act. Importantly, it clarified that "public view" could include private spaces, not just public places, if the incident was observable or audible to others. The Court emphasized that the term "Chamar" should be interpreted with sensitivity, considering its historical use as an insult. This judgment expanded the understanding of what constitutes an offense under the SC/ST Act and reinforced the need to avoid language that humiliates marginalized communities.

b. Arumugam Servai vs. State of Tamil Nadu¹⁹

In this case, the accused referred to the complainants, who were from the Pallan caste, using the term 'Pallapayal.' The complainants alleged this was intended to insult them. The Supreme Court held that terms like "Pallan" and 'Pallapayal' were highly objectionable when used with the intent to insult, and such words amounted to an offense under the SC/ST Act. The Court underscored that caste-based derogatory language, whether overt or subtle, perpetuates humiliation and discrimination. This case reinforced the protective framework of the Act, ensuring that even indirect insults could have legal consequences.

c. Gayatri vs. State and Ors.²⁰

This case looked at whether state administrative actions pertaining to SC/ST people's rights were lawful. According to the Delhi High Court, arbitrary administrative decisions that infringe upon an individual's rights may be challenged. The Court stressed accountability and openness in governance, especially when it came to cases involving underprivileged groups. This decision reinforced natural justice principles in the administrative

to use or be trained to use criminal force or violence or knowing it to be likely that the participants in such activity will use or be trained to use criminal force or violence, against any religious, racial, language or regional group or caste or community and such activity for any reason whatsoever causes or is likely to cause fear or alarm or a feeling of insecurity amongst members of such religious, racial, language or regional group or caste or community,]

shall be punished with imprisonment which may extend to three years, or with fine, or with both.

(2) Offence committed in place of worship, etc.--Whoever commits an offence specified in sub-section (1) in any place of worship or in any assembly engaged in the performance of religious worship or religious ceremonies, shall be punished with imprisonment which may extend to five years and shall also be liable to fine.]

¹⁶ Section 295A. Deliberate and malicious acts, intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs.

Whoever, with deliberate and malicious intention of outraging the religious feelings of any class of ² citizens of India, by words, either spoken or written, or by signs or by visible representations or otherwise, insults or attempts to insult the religion or the religious beliefs of that class, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to ⁴ [three years], or with fine, or with both.

¹⁷ Centre for Law and Policy Research. (2021). *Cases and materials on SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989*. Retrieved December 15, 2023, from <https://clpr.org.in/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Cases-Materials-on-SC-ST-Prevention-of-Atrocities-1989.pdf>

¹⁸ (2008) 8 SCC 435

¹⁹ (2011) 6 SCC 405

²⁰ MANU/DE/1823/2017 – Delhi HC

process by highlighting the judiciary's role in ensuring that state actions do not violate the rights of SC/ST individuals.

d. Daya Bhatnagar and Ors. v. State²¹

This case dealt with the admissibility of evidence in criminal proceedings, particularly under the SC/ST Act. The Delhi High Court emphasized that only relevant and reliable evidence is admissible in court. The quality of evidence is crucial to ensure justice, especially in cases involving vulnerable communities. This ruling set a significant precedent for the standards of evidence in SC/ST cases, ensuring that legal proceedings protect the rights of the accused and the victims.

e. Patan Jamal Vali v. The State of Andhra Pradesh²²

This case involved the rape of a Dalit blind woman, examining the intersectionality of caste, gender, and disability in the context of sexual violence. While the Supreme Court upheld the acquittal of the accused, it emphasized that cases involving victims from marginalized backgrounds should be viewed through an intersectional lens. The Court recognized that caste, gender, and disability can compound the oppression faced by victims. This ruling is significant for acknowledging how multiple identities intersect to influence the experiences of discrimination and violence.

f. Asharfi v. State of Uttar Pradesh²³

This case focused on the amendment of Section 3(2)(v) of the SC/ST Prevention of Atrocities Act, specifically concerning the knowledge of the accused about the victim's caste. The Supreme Court clarified that merely knowing the caste of the victim is sufficient for an offense to be prosecuted under this provision. This ruling emphasized that the protective intent of the Act should not be undermined by technicalities and ensured that perpetrators cannot evade justice simply due to a lack of formal acknowledgment of caste in the charge.

g. Kailas and Ors. v. State of Maharashtra²⁴

The Supreme Court in this case reaffirmed the judiciary's role in reviewing state actions that infringe upon individual rights, especially those of marginalized communities. The Court emphasized the need for judicial oversight to prevent arbitrary administrative actions. This ruling reaffirmed the Court's critical role as a protector of individual rights, ensuring that state actions comply with constitutional mandates and do not violate the rights of SC/ST individuals.

h. MP Mariappan v. The Deputy Inspector General of Police, Coimbatore Range and Ors.

This case addressed police accountability in the handling of SC/ST individuals. The Madras High Court ruled that police actions must be lawful, justified, and maintain public trust. The Court held that arbitrary or unlawful police conduct could violate the rights of SC/ST individuals, which highlighted the importance of police being accountable for their actions in such cases. This ruling set important standards for police conduct and reinforced the need for law enforcement to uphold the rights of marginalized communities.

i. State of Kerala and Anr. v. Chandramohan²⁵

This case involved the challenge of arbitrary administrative actions affecting SC/ST individuals. The Supreme Court ruled that such actions could be contested if they violate the principles of natural justice. The Court emphasized fairness, transparency, and accountability in administrative decision-making, ensuring that the rights of SC/ST individuals are not undermined by state actions. This ruling reinforced the importance of administrative actions being scrutinized for their adherence to constitutional principles of justice.

j. Rajendra Shrivastava v. The State of Maharashtra²⁶

This case focused on the interpretation of criminal statutes and the legislative intent behind the SC/ST Act. The Bombay High Court emphasized that courts must interpret laws in light of their purpose and the societal values they reflect. The Court highlighted that judicial decisions must align with the spirit of the law, which aims to protect the rights of marginalized communities and promote justice. This case is significant for its reminder that the interpretation of laws should be consistent with their legislative intent, particularly in cases involving vulnerable groups.

²¹ MANU/DE/0085/2004 – Delhi HC

²² 2021 SCC Online SC 343

²³ (2018) 1 SCC 742

²⁴ (2011) 1 SCC 793

²⁵ (2004) 3 SCC 429

²⁶ MANU/MH/0036/2010 – Bombay HC

5. Challenges in Implementation

The legal and social safeguards against caste-based atrocities in India, while robust in theory, face numerous challenges in their actual implementation. Despite the enactment of progressive laws, such as the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, which aims to prevent violence and discrimination against SCs and STs, the protection of victims remains inadequate due to systemic and societal issues.

First: Police Apathy

A primary challenge in the implementation of laws protecting victims of caste-based atrocities is the apathy within the police force. Law enforcement agencies in India often exhibit reluctance or bias when it comes to addressing caste-based violence. This can be attributed to the widespread caste prejudices present within police personnel. Police officers may belong to upper-caste communities and, therefore, are more inclined to sympathize with perpetrators from the same social group. Consequently, victims, especially those from marginalized communities, often face indifference or even hostility when they approach the police.²⁷ This apathy is compounded by the failure to register FIRs (First Information Reports) or inadequate investigation processes. This not only prevents timely justice but also discourages victims from reporting crimes, fearing further harassment or dismissal of their complaints. In cases where action is taken, it is often slow or superficial, leading to a lack of accountability.

Second: Social Stigma

Another significant barrier to the effective implementation of laws against caste-based atrocities is social stigma. Victims of caste-based violence, particularly Dalits and Adivasis, often experience societal shame and ostracism, even within their own communities.²⁸ This social stigma acts as a deterrent to victims coming forward and seeking justice. They may fear that they will be blamed for the violence or face social exclusion from their families or localities.

Moreover, caste-based violence is often normalized in rural and remote areas, where centuries-old traditions of social hierarchy continue to influence the behavior of individuals and institutions. The inability or unwillingness of communities to challenge the deeply ingrained caste system results in a situation where victims are often silenced by fear of retaliation or social scorn.

Third: Lack of Awareness and Resource Constraints

The lack of awareness regarding the legal protections available to victims of caste-based atrocities remains a critical issue. Many victims, particularly in rural areas, are not aware of their rights under the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, or the provisions available through other legal frameworks like the Indian Penal Code (IPC). Additionally, the complexity of the legal process, including the filing of cases, pursuing legal remedies, and accessing compensation, can be overwhelming for victims who may not have the resources, education, or guidance to navigate the judicial system.

Moreover, resource constraints continue to hinder the effective implementation of these laws. The lack of adequate funding for the implementation of victim support systems, such as legal aid, counseling, rehabilitation, and safe housing, means that victims often find themselves alone and unsupported throughout the legal process. Local authorities and judicial institutions, particularly in rural areas, often lack the necessary infrastructure, training, and personnel to deal with caste-based atrocities effectively. This creates a significant gap between the existence of legal safeguards and their practical application on the ground.

²⁷ International Dalit Solidarity Network. (2023, December 15). *Police role in increased violence against Dalits. The Hindu*. Retrieved December 15, 2023, from https://idsn.org/wp-content/uploads/user_folder/pdf/New_files/Press/Police_role_in_increased_violence_against_Dalits_-_The_Hindu.pdf. See also People's Union for Democratic Rights. (2023, December 15). PUDR condemns police apathy in the case of brutal caste and gender-based violence against Dalit law student in Kerala. People's Union for Democratic Rights. Retrieved December 15, 2023, from <https://www.pudr.org/press-statements/pudr-condemns-police-apaty-in-the-case-of-brutal-caste-and-gender-based-violence-against-dalit-law-student-in-kerala/>

²⁸ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. (2016, April). The shadow of caste and its stigma continue to violate all aspects of human rights. United Nations. Retrieved December 15, 2023, from <https://www.ohchr.org/en/stories/2016/04/shadow-caste-and-its-stigma-continue-violate-all-aspects-human-rights>. See also Jaspal, R. (2019). The stigma of caste and its implications for Dalit identity and well-being. Nottingham Trent University. Retrieved December 15, 2023, from https://irep.ntu.ac.uk/id/eprint/39690/1/1315888_Jaspal.pdf. See also Jaspal, Rusi. "Caste, Social Stigma and Identity Processes." *Psychology and Developing Societies*, vol. 23, no. 1, 2011, pp. 1-24. SAGE Journals, <https://doi.org/10.1177/097133361002300102>.

6. Evaluations

Addressing the challenges in the implementation of legal safeguards against caste-based atrocities requires comprehensive reforms across several sectors, including law enforcement, judicial processes, education, and social awareness. Below are key recommendations to strengthen the protection of victims and ensure that justice is served.

First: Policy Reforms and Implementation Strategies

To effectively address caste-based violence, policy reforms are essential to improve both the existing laws and their implementation. One key recommendation is the enhancement of police training and sensitization programs. Police officers must be trained not only in the legal provisions related to caste-based atrocities but also in sensitivity and empathy toward victims, particularly from marginalized communities. Specialized units within police forces could be established to handle cases of caste-based violence, ensuring that victims receive the necessary support and attention.

Additionally, strengthening accountability measures within the police force is crucial. Creating systems for monitoring the progress of cases, ensuring that FIRs are properly filed, and holding officers accountable for delays or mishandling of cases will help increase the efficiency of law enforcement agencies. Fast-track courts could also be set up to expedite trials related to caste-based atrocities, ensuring that victims receive timely justice.

Second: Role of Education, Media, and NGOs

Education plays a transformative role in combating caste-based discrimination. Curricula should include lessons on social justice, human rights, and the historical context of caste-based violence. Schools and universities should promote discussions on caste equality, teaching students to challenge the prejudices that sustain the caste system. It is essential to build a new generation that is aware of the social and legal frameworks available to protect the rights of marginalized communities.

The media also has a significant role to play in raising awareness about caste-based violence and promoting social change. By responsibly reporting on incidents of caste-based atrocities, media outlets can bring attention to these issues and ensure that they remain part of the national conversation. Media campaigns should focus on breaking down caste-based stereotypes and encourage public support for victim rights.

Furthermore, NGOs continue to play a critical role in supporting victims, raising awareness, and advocating for stronger laws. NGOs that provide legal aid, counseling, and rehabilitation services for victims of caste-based violence must be better funded and supported. Collaborative efforts between NGOs and the government can improve the implementation of victim protection measures and ensure that resources reach the communities that need them most. These organizations can also work on educating victims about their legal rights and guide them through the judicial process.

7. Conclusion

The protection of victims of caste-based atrocities in India is a complex issue that requires a multifaceted approach. Despite the existence of strong legal safeguards, such as the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, the challenges in implementation—such as police apathy, social stigma, lack of awareness, and resource constraints—continue to undermine the efficacy of these laws.

To address these challenges, comprehensive policy reforms, improved training for law enforcement, public education, and NGO involvement are critical. These reforms must aim not only at strengthening legal protections but also at changing societal attitudes toward caste-based violence and discrimination. Only through coordinated efforts between the government, civil society, and the media can caste-based atrocities be effectively prevented, and victims can be empowered to seek justice.

The way forward requires a deep commitment to ensuring that the legal framework becomes a tool of genuine social change, where all citizens, regardless of caste, are able to live with dignity, equality, and the full protection of their rights. It is essential to focus on the holistic empowerment of marginalized communities, including access to education, economic opportunities, and social support, while also ensuring that the law provides a strong safety net for victims of caste-based violence. Through these efforts, India can move closer to realizing its constitutional promise of equality and justice for all.

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