



*Addressing caste discrimination is addressing massive violations of human identity and dignity in the lives of 260 million people worldwide.*

### Editorial...

We are happy to bring out this Newsletter after 2022. We reflect not just on the last two years but how DSN UK is pursuing its goal of including caste in the Equality Law in UK which was led by Ms Meena Varma the first Director of DSN UK who continues for this cause as the Director of IDSN along with the stakeholder group from various organisations in the UK.

The purpose of the Newsletter is to build a stronger community that will extend its solidarity to address caste issues in collaboration with Organisations in Europe and rest of the world especially South Asia and East Asia. The purpose is to reach out, build a stronger community and work as a network raise our voices to combat caste-based discrimination and build a better world.

This Newsletter lets you have a broader view of what is happening in DSN UK with the few changes, challenges in 2024 and the possibilities that are ahead of us brought through core events

that have happened this year in the local, regional, and global levels. We believe that our combined vision for a world without caste discrimination will be a reality if we raise our voice together against the violations of Human Rights with respect to Dalits. As we continue to address caste in Global Supply Chains, casting out caste from our university campuses, continue to raise our voice to include caste as a character in the Equality Law of UK, and show with evidence in 2025 that Everyday Casteism is a reality. We don't have to wait for more people to go through the humiliation through Caste-Based Discrimination.

We thank you all as our members, donors and collaborating partners through different networks to realise our Vision of a World without Caste Discrimination.

Wishing you a very Happy New Year 2025!

Dr Elizabeth Joy  
Director, DSN UK

28th December 2024

**“Caste is not just a division of labour,  
it is a division of labourers.”**

B.R. AMBEDKAR



### ***From the chair . . .***

Greetings from DSN UK!

I am indeed very glad that this Newsletter reflects on some of the key events from DSN UK and its partners in network

The year 2024 saw changes in terms of our leadership and moving our office. Our former Director MS Gazala Shaik moved on after serving us for two years in April and Dr Elizabeth Joy joined us as the new Director in September 2024. DSN UK also moved along with Canopi from Canopi, 7-14, Great Dover Street Borough, London SE1 4YR to Canopi, 82 Tanner Street, London SE1 3GN in November.

We were very happy to welcome Dr Elizabeth Joy who joined us in September 2024 as our New Director and the Administrator Mr Shelvin Kuriakose who also joined later in September 2024. I am indebted to the Board of Trustees especially the Officers Dr Corinne Lennox our Vice-Chair and Mr Dabir Ahmed our Treasurer who worked hand in gloves with me during the interim period.

Finally, I am very grateful to all our members, funding partners, our network of organisations with whom we collaborate to achieve our goal of addressing caste issues for all their support and contributions.

On behalf of DSN UK, I wish you all a very Happy and Prosperous New Year 2025!

Mr Bala Gnanapragasam

**Thank  
you!**



Ms Shaheen Hassan, the editor of  
Quarterly Magazine,  
[Ambedkar Vision](#)  
for permitting us to share its link  
online.

## IDSN's recommendations to the 57th Regular Session of the Human Rights Council

The focus was on our priority matters, including the Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the right to development held on 17th September between 15:00 - 18:00 hrs. Mr Surya Deva the Special Rapporteur focussed on the right to development, especially that of children and future generations.

The Rapporteur highlights specifically the marginalized groups, mentioning Dalits saying, “Moreover, like adults, children are not a homogenous group. Children face different or disproportionate impacts of various policies, programmes and projects concerning development or phenomena such as migration, environmental pollution, climate change and conflicts.”

IDSN’s report on Caste in global supply chains addresses caste discrimination in businesses also pointed out emphatically that Dalits constitute the vast majority of workers subjected to forced labour in South Asia, and the majority of child labourers.


Siddharth Kara from The Harvard Center for Human Rights Policy stated that in India “Every single child labourer that I have documented belongs to a low-caste or minority community”. The Reports have documented that almost half a million children in India work as child labourers in the cottonseed production industry. Most of them are low caste – Dalits or Adivasis – and are subject to hazardous work and harmful chemicals.

*[Source : “IDSN Recommendations for the 57th Regular Session of the Human Rights Council 9 September to 11 October 2024”, pp 4-5]*



At the [2024 UN Forum](#) on Minority Issues, IDSN delegates called for action on caste discrimination and exclusion. Sundar Sheni from Nepal emphasized the need for Dalit inclusion in political and public spaces, highlighting the barriers faced by Dalit women. Hariharan Karuppusamy from India addressed the pervasive problem of caste-hate speech on social media, calling for stronger regulatory measures and culturally informed solutions. Their contributions underscored the urgency of combatting caste discrimination and amplifying marginalised voices globally.



*For more info,  click on the book*



DSN UK works in close collaboration with Ethical Trade Initiative, BOND, IDSN, Christian Aid and other Organisations to focus on caste in the global supply chains. DSN UK has participated in Company progression meetings to address Caste in the global chains.



Caste in global supply chains can be found in the form of bonded labour, cheap labour and child labour where intersectionality of caste, gender, age and class plays a vital role.

One can have a peek through the following research that [ARISA](#) reports as follows:

Caste-based discrimination and exclusion are often fundamental drivers of widespread labour rights violations. Companies operating in or sourcing materials from caste-affected regions need to be aware of these risks and take steps to address them. Failure to do so can undermine the effectiveness of companies' due diligence efforts.

The following research that ARISA reports speaks aloud of caste-based discrimination and exclusion. Research focused on two key areas: Budhpura, known for its sandstone cobbles, and Makrana, famous for its marble. Both clusters export widely, but workers, mostly from oppressed caste communities, remain trapped in exploitative conditions. Interviews with 200 workers reveal widespread problems of informal employment, low wages and unsafe working conditions.

DSN UK is committed to address Caste in the global supply chains and voice out for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion with dignity.

## Tribute to Rikke Nöhlind

It is with deep grief that DSN-UK [received](#) the sad news of the demise of Rikke Nöhlind, the former Director of the IDSN, on August 30th, 2024



She was a great leader in the movement against caste-based discrimination. She also supported those in the diaspora to advocate for Dalits and caste affected groups globally. She voiced out Dalit Rights as Human Rights and leaves behind a legacy of supporting Dalit cause.

DSN-UK gratefully recognises her contributions especially as the former and the first Director of IDSN-UK.

Rest in Peace and Hope!

## Engaging with Higher Education Institutions

DSN UK has continued to maintain its established relationship with student unions at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London; Oxford South Asia Ambedkar Forum (OxSAAF), formerly known as Oxford South Asia Alternative Forum, a collective of students and faculty from and working on South Asia; and Cambridge Majlis, a South Asian student forum at Cambridge University.

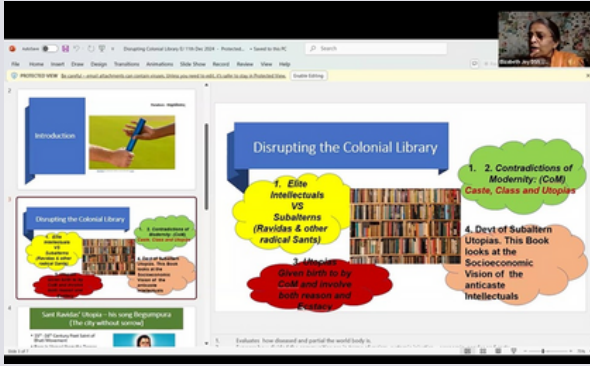
These relationships have focused on supporting the inclusion of caste in student union policy and other university union policies on equality and diversity and providing a tool for reporting on experiences of caste-based discrimination via the Everyday Casteism UK website hosted by DSN-UK.

Alongside this work, DSN-UK has made progress in bringing awareness on caste with the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) teams at two major UK universities – Brunel University and University of London. This has included consultations with EDI teams on practices of addressing caste discrimination in HEIs in other countries, advising on possible approaches in the UK, and awareness raising events around Dalit History month.

Dr Corinne Lennox worked with the University of London to host a learning event on caste-based discrimination for members of the Race Equality Charter-Self Assessment Team on 8 August 2024. This event emerged from suggestions that the Race Equality survey conducted by the University of London include also caste, which is presently excluded. The event was an important step in building HEI awareness on caste.

We are very grateful to our Vice Chair Dr Corinne Lennox, Treasurer Mr Dabir Ahmed, our Trustee Adv Sushanth Singh and Prof Royona Mitra (Brunel University) for their leadership and contributions.

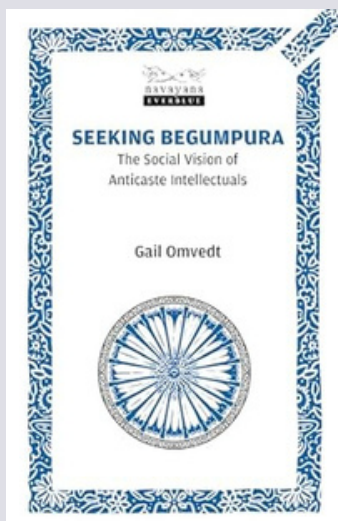
## Seeking Begumpura



On 11th December Dr Elizabeth Joy the Director was one of the three panellists at the Book Club where I reflected on the Book, 'Seeking Begumpura: The Social Vision of Anticaste Intellectuals' by Gail Omvedt. The other two were Trimita Chakma, presenting her views on Kimberle Crenshaw's "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex" and Ali Hussein, presenting his views on Frantz Fanon's "The Wretched of the Earth".

There were about 70 participants mostly from the global south. Tarini, the Staff of Sindhanai wrote thus after the event on 16th December 2024:

*On behalf of the Sindhanai Book Club team, I want to extend our heartfelt gratitude for your thoughtful and engaging contributions during our session. Your presentations brought the works of Gail Omvedt, Frantz Fanon, and Kimberlé Crenshaw to life in such compelling and nuanced ways. We've received several messages from participants appreciating the depth of your insights and how effectively you connected these seminal texts to contemporary struggles. The thought-provoking questions and rich discussion that followed were a testament to how much your perspectives resonated with the audience and we're delighted that the session inspired such meaningful engagement.*



This Book, 'Seeking Begumpura: The Social Vision of Anticaste Intellectuals' by Gail Omvedt first published in January 2008 brings out the socioeconomic vision of the anticaste intellectuals. The views of elite intellectuals are seen over against the views of subalterns (Ravidas and other radical sants). The need for utopias in our time is realised by the utopias given birth to by contradictions of Modernity – Caste, class and utopias. This Books is appealing as it makes us look at the past, present and the future where we need to do what our time needs to overcome casteism.

# Everyday Casteism

Everyday Casteism is supported by Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust (JRCT). It is an umbrella programme which binds together the core functions of DSN UK to:

- facilitate advocacy and lobbying around inclusion of caste as a protected characteristic in the Equality Act 2010;
- engage stakeholders in creating awareness and understanding of caste and caste based discrimination in the UK and other affected countries;
- address caste and caste-based discrimination on UK campuses through its casting out caste from campus campaign; and
- address caste and caste-based discrimination in businesses and global supply chain through its business and human rights work.

The key activities undertaken in the past as part of the grant support from JRCT include:

## 1.Caste Legislation in the UK

DSN UK is taking the lead with a core group from the Stakeholder group that has been active in demanding the inclusion of caste in the Equality Law UK. We plan to meet as stakeholder Group in January or February 2025 and pursue our goal as in yesteryears seen in the following pictures.



## 2.Business and Human Rights: Caste in Corporate Sector in the UK

- A survey, orientation webinar, and training were conducted with company members on caste and caste-based discrimination in the workplace and in global supply chains. These were followed by an event to disseminate learnings supported by University of London – Knowledge Exchange Fund (KEF).
- DSN UK contributed to the Gender Consultation Group for Apparel and Textile Sector of ETI addressing, gender-based violence and harassment in the global supply chain, highlighting the need for companies to look at and address caste and gender intersectionality.
- As part of its work with the NGO caucus of ETI the DSN UK Director participated in Company Progression Meetings member companies – NEXT, Primark and The Foschini Group (TFG) flagging areas for consideration especially regarding addressing modern slavery, gender intersectionality and caste-based discrimination in their supply chain.

DSN-UK has gathered further examples of caste-discrimination in UK HEIs via the submission of reports received on the Everyday Casteism in UK website. This has included, for example, experience of caste-discrimination in halls of residence at UK HEIs. We are in the process of analysing the data and hope to produce a document that includes a few lived experiences in relation to caste-discrimination in UK HEIs to aid in awareness raising and training opportunities. We have continued to focus on building relationships with HEIs and student groups in 2024, and in exploring approaches to awareness raising through roundtable events and other entry points, such as the Advance HE Race Equality Charter.



#### **Editorial Team:**

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*Sincere thanks and gratitude to Rev Sam Rajkumar for designing this Newsletter within a very short time.*