


How Do People Fight Marginalisation?


In the last chapter, we saw how groups like Dalits, Adivasis, and Muslims face discrimination. This chapter shows how they fight back – through law, protest, writing, and action.

Marginalised people don't all fight in the same way. Some use religion for strength, others focus on education or raise their voices through the Constitution.

 Marginalisation – The process of being pushed to the edges of society; excluded from development, voice, and respect.


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Using the Constitution to Demand Rights

 Fundamental Rights – Basic rights given by the Constitution to all Indian citizens.

Marginalised groups use these rights in two key ways:

- To expose injustice (e.g. Dalits denied temple entry)
- To force the government to take legal action

 Article 15 – No citizen can be discriminated against based on religion, race, caste, sex, or birthplace

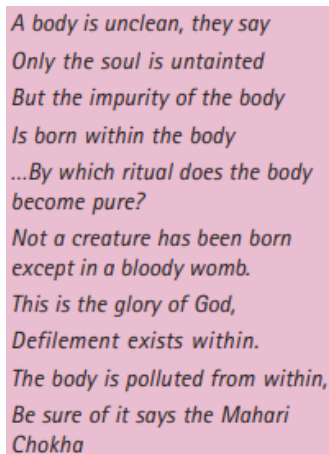
 Article 17 – Abolishes untouchability; such practices are illegal and punishable

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 Example – Soyrabai's Poem

She questioned the idea that some bodies are “pure” or “impure.”

She asked: “If we are all born from the same womb, how can any body be less pure?”




*A body is unclean, they say
Only the soul is untainted
But the impurity of the body
Is born within the body
...By which ritual does the body
become pure?
Not a creature has been born
except in a bloody womb.
This is the glory of God,
Defilement exists within.
The body is polluted from within,
Be sure of it says the Mahari
Chokha*

 Fig. – Soyrabai's message challenging caste ideas

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Cultural and Educational Rights


 Article 29–30 – Minorities (like Muslims and Parsis) have the right to preserve their culture and manage their own schools and institutions.

This protects cultural diversity and stops majority culture from dominating.

Laws for the Marginalised

The government creates both:

- Laws (like banning untouchability)
- Policies (like scholarships, reservations, hostels)

 Reservation – A system where seats in education and jobs are kept aside for Dalits, Adivasis, and other backward groups.

How Reservation Works:

- Government has a list of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and OBCs
- People apply with caste/tribe certificates
- There are ‘cut-off marks’ for college admission
- Scholarships and hostel facilities are offered

 This ensures groups denied opportunities for generations get fair chances now.

Story: Rathnam’s Refusal

Rathnam, a Dalit student in Tamil Nadu, refused to perform a “temple ritual” his family had done for generations — washing priests’ feet.

- He challenged the tradition and questioned why Dalits weren’t even allowed inside the temple.
- The upper castes got angry and attacked his home.
- His family was ostracised.
- He filed a police complaint under the 1989 SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act.
- Media coverage made Rathnam a symbol of resistance.


The SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989

This law was created to punish violence and humiliation against Dalits and Adivasis.

Why was it needed?

- In the 1970s–80s, many Dalits began rejecting caste duties
- In response, dominant castes used violence
- Dalit groups demanded strong laws to punish such acts

Key Provisions of the Act:

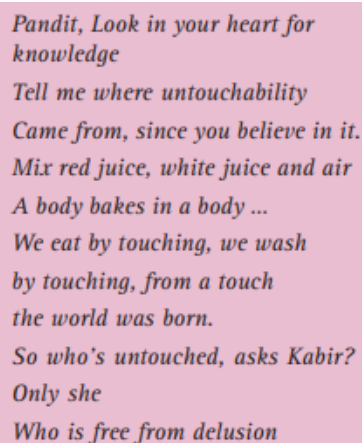
- Bans forcing SC/ST members to eat disgusting things
- Punishes stripping, parading, or harming someone's dignity
- Punishes land grabbing and slave labour
- Recognises and punishes violence against SC/ST women
 -  Morally Reprehensible – Acts that are disgusting and violate dignity

Example – Kabir's Poem


Kabir questioned the idea of untouchability by asking:

“If everyone is born the same way, who is really ‘untouched’?”

He gave the word “untouchable” a new meaning – free from narrow thinking.



*Pandit, Look in your heart for
knowledge
Tell me where untouchability
Came from, since you believe in it.
Mix red juice, white juice and air
A body bakes in a body ...
We eat by touching, we wash
by touching, from a touch
the world was born.
So who's untouched, asks Kabir?
Only she
Who is free from delusion*

 Fig. – Kabir's words questioning caste-based exclusion

Manual Scavenging – Still Exists

📖 Manual Scavenging – The practice of cleaning human waste by hand, mostly done by Dalit women.

Even though it's banned, over 1 lakh people (mostly Dalits) still work in such jobs. They face:

- Infection and poor health
- Discrimination and low pay
- Exclusion from villages and temples

📖 1993 Act – Banned dry latrines and manual scavenging

📖 2013 Act – Strengthened ban and forced departments to end the practice

📖 Example – Safai Karamchari Andolan (2003 PIL in Supreme Court)

- Filed a petition demanding full end to scavenging
- Court ordered time-bound rehabilitation of workers



📷 Fig. – Manual scavenger carrying waste

🌳 Adivasi Struggles & Forest Land

📖 Adivasis use the 1989 Act to protect their land from being taken by outsiders.

- Law prohibits selling tribal land to non-tribals
- Adivasi leaders like C.K. Janu demand protection from timber companies and forest evictions
- If displaced, they ask for compensation and resettlement

📖 Forest Rights Act (2006) – Recognises rights of tribal people over forest land and resources

📖 Dispossessed – Losing one's land, home, or rights

📖 Ostracised – Socially boycotted and excluded

Conclusion: Law on Paper ≠ Justice in Reality

Even though laws exist, people still face discrimination.
They have to fight continuously to turn rights into action.

- Voices like Kabir, Soyrabai, and Rathnam show the courage of marginalised people
- The fight for equality and dignity is ongoing
- We all have a role in recognising injustice and supporting justice

Glossary

Term	Meaning
Marginalisation	Being excluded from the main society
Reservation	Special seats in education/jobs for weaker groups
Manual Scavenging	Cleaning waste manually; banned practice
Dispossessed	Losing land or home
Ostracise	Socially boycott a person or group
Morally Reprehensible	Completely wrong and disgusting behaviour
Fundamental Rights	Basic rights guaranteed by the Constitution