

THE DILEMMA OF  
THE CLASS  
and  
CASTE  
IN INDIA

*V. T. Rajshekar*

1984

*DALIT SAHITYA AKADEMY*  
109/7th CROSS PALACE LOWER ORCHARDS  
BANGALORE - 560 003  
INDIA

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# The Dilemma of Class & Caste in India

## 1. Introduction

We are not social scientists or any expert to write on a subject like this. But we can say it is only the "experts" who are creating all the problems of India. Does it need an expert to say what is "class" and what is "caste" in India? If we open the eyes, unless the eyes are jaundiced, we can see it for ourselves.

In the villages high caste Hindu people address the low caste people not by their names but by their caste names. Localities are divided and demarcated not on the basis of the property they hold but on the basis of caste. This is so all over India, even in the cities. Mylapore is a Brahmin locality in Madras, Malleswaram in Bangalore. Every city has such localities. Slums are reserved exclusively for the Untouchables and Muslims. So anybody having eyes, not jaundiced eyes, can see the "caste" and "class" in cities as well as villages.

Why then all this confusion and unending debate over class and caste? The confusion is not our making. The people, the masses, know who belongs to what caste. It is an essential part of the general knowledge in India. A landlord wants to find out your caste before renting his house. Political parties including the red hot Marxists give party tickets for elections only on the basis of the caste of the candidate. The Chief Ministers and ministers even in Communist states are selected on the basis of caste. So too the judges. Every thing is decided on the basis of *jati* (that is the right word for caste). Everybody knows this in India. Newspapers report this boldly. There is no secret about this.

Therefore, we have no confusion about what is caste and class. The confusion is created by those "experts" whose job is to deliberately create confusion. Why do they succeed in confusing? This is because "thinking" is made in India by those who do not "work" and "work" (action) is done by those who do not "think". The "thinkers" have no time for work and "doers" have no time to think. It is only now quite a lot among the "doers" like Dr. B.R. Ambedkar have started becoming "thinkers". And that is why the "doers" have started challenging the "thinkers"; refusing to accept what the thinkers are selling. Unless we end this dichotomy between "thinkers" and "doers", we can't proceed. That is why we often say more and more "doers" must become "thinkers". And these "thinkers", of India just as it happened during the Cultural Revolution in China, must be sent to hard labour for a five year period in jungle or mountain places. In China, the Cultural Revolution followed political revolution (1951) but in India it will be the other way.

In China, they rightly found these "thinkers" dangerous. Intellectuals and intellectuals alone can lead a society. They can lead but also mislead. In India, our "intellectuals" have not only not been leading but rather misleading. This is because the "intellectuals" in India belong to one single caste - that too a hereditary caste. Hence they are dangerous and, therefore, all these "thinkers" must be mercilessly dealt with by the "doers" so that the country is saved from these "thinkers". As "doers" become "thinkers" this process is inevitable.

## 2. What is Marxism?

What is Marxism? Many people are under the impression that Marxism is what our communist parties are selling.

Nonsense.

Marxism is nobody's monopoly. We are also Marxists. We had been to China twice and had discussions with senior Marxist leaders, who are definitely better Marxists than the Indian communists. In China, they agreed with our assessment of the Indian conditions and, therefore, we need not bother about what some Indian communist leaders say. We can tell you a secret that many

cadres of the communist parties are with us, refusing to be nose-led by their leadership. The one problem with the Indian communists is that they are pro-Soviet, a stand which suits them. But the Chinese communists are better Marxists and as of today they represent the world's most revolutionary country.

Marxism is deliberately misinterpreted by our communists of all brands and colours. They maintain that "economic element" is the only determining factor.

Nonsense.

This is the Russian version of Marxism which lays stress on "economic determinism": trade union, kisan sabha (peasant organisation), conducting economic struggle for higher wages, bonus, leave-travel concessions, perks for wives and such other stupid demands. Our communists don't talk of social or cultural aspects.

This is a mechanical interpretation of Marxism. Engels had argued against such a misinterpretation of Marx. (Engels letter to Joseph Bloch, Sept. 21-22, 1890).

The basic concepts in his passages are five :-

(1) Forces of production, (2) Relations of production, (3) Economic base, (4) Superstructure and (5) Mode of production.

These are the basic concepts to all Marxists. The "economic determinism" is explained further in a 1974 Moscow publication, *Fundamentals of Marxism - Leninism* (pages 318, 319, 322, 323 and 371).

This trend consolidated during Stalin's period and came to be called the Russian version of Marxism, which the Indian communists found it convenient to ape.

Such a misinterpretation of Marxism has led to dangerous consequences. Our communists say: "let us unite on economic issues ("class struggle") and once classes are destroyed in the revolution, caste, religion, superstition women's exploitation and all social disabilities will automatically vanish." This is the stand of our Brahmin communist leadership. Dr. Ambedkar had answered

this Brahmin argument very beautifully (*Annihilation of Caste*, Bheem Patrika Publications, Nakodar Road, Jullundur-144 003, India, 3rd revised edition, 1975, pages 46 to 49).

We have also rebutted this Brahmin argument in our two earlier works, *How Marx Failed in Hindu India and Class-Caste Struggle* (both out of print). And our experience since then has only served to endorse our thinking. In fact, more and more Marxist scholars in India are falling in line with our thinking. Gail Omvedt, a Marxist social scientist working amid Dalits in India, criticising the misinterpretation of Marxism by Indian communists, says :

"While this uses Marx's concepts and while it can find some arguments in occasional one-sided references of Marx, Engels or Lenin themselves, it is basically anti-Marx and against historical materialism. And it can never provide a basis for understanding class and caste in India. (*Samata*, No. 2-1983, a CISRS occasional publication).

Gail Omvedt says Mao has totally opposed the economic and mechanical interpretation of Marxian thought. The new trend in Marxian thinking says the relations of production are more important than the forces of production. As between the base and the superstructure, the elements of the superstructure (state, religion, ideology) can sometimes be primary. Mao in his book, *On Contradictions*, says ... "When the superstructure (politics, culture, etc.) obstructs the development of the economic base, political and cultural changes become principal and decisive." (*In Selected Works* Vol. II. PP. 335-6).

But what do our Indian communists say ? They argue that when the society gets industrialised, people get educated, material prosperity of the workers grow, then caste, religion and all other social exploitations will vanish.

Nonsense.

What happened during the "Gujarat caste war" launched against Dalits on the issue of reservation in medical colleges? The war spread to the Ahmedabad textile mills where a decade-long prole-

tariat bond fractured and Hindu mill workers fought a pitched battle with Dalit co-workers right inside the very mills leading to the closure of all the mills.

What is the use of industrialisation? What is the use of trade union work? If the trade union movement develops comradeship and breaks caste-barriers why in the Bombay textile mills Untouchable workers are still not recruited to weaving sections? (S.G. Sardesai, *Class Struggle and Caste Conflict in Rural Areas*, Communist Party Publication, 1982 reprint, page 12).

The Bombay textile workers have also "one of the oldest traditions of class solidarity." They won many economic benefits to themselves following the different strikes launched by the communist parties. "And yet in the thick of the strike, a violent conflict erupted between the touchable and Untouchable workers. The chawls of Untouchable workers were attacked. While, during day time, the blood of both sections of the workers mingled and flowed in the streets of Bombay in united battles with the police, at night time, they also shed blood in fratricidal clashes." (Ibid page 12).

Sardesai, a top CPI leader from Bombay, therefore, says that the argument that "industrialisation, mass struggles on economic demands can by themselves eradicate caste..... has to be clearly rejected as mechanistic. It has been disproved by the experience of more than half a century." (Ibid page 13).

Does the CPI agree with this assessment of Sardesai? If so, why the CPI has not taken any step towards this?

### 3. The Laws of Contradiction in India :

Since India has not yet passed from feudalism to capitalism, caste system and *Karma* theory (fatalism), superstition etc. interfere with the economy and shape the relations of production. It is true that the Indian society like all other societies is full of contradictions, but we can't go on wasting our time and energy on fighting every contradiction. What then is the principal contradiction?



Amarjit Singh, a Dalit intellectual from London, has beautifully answered this question in his article, "Caste and contradictions," in *Dalit Voice* (May 16, 1983). The Indian people do not constitute a nation as yet, he says. *Jati* keeps us divided. Subjectively, conditions in India are ripe for a revolution. Why then revolution is not coming? Because objective conditions are not there. Lack of unity is the reason. But unity cannot come as long as castes are there. Therefore, caste system is the main stumbling block for unity. Caste is the principal contradiction in India.

We call upon all Dalits and other persecuted minorities to read Mao's book, *On contradictions*, and if possible, translate it to regional languages as a proper understanding of the laws of contradictions is very important. Because we have not understood the laws of contradictions, we get confused and therefore, come to wrong conclusions. We do not know who is our enemy. And the enemy goes on pointing out at our own friends and fools us by impressing that they are our enemies. Here is a classic example:- the contradictions between the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and the Untouchables. Some Dalits vehemently argue that the Brahmins are not killing Dalits in villages but only the OBCs. Therefore, OBCs are our real enemies and they must be fought first, even by joining hands with the Brahmins.

This is a total misunderstanding of the situation because we have not studied the laws of contradictions. There will be unending strife unless we study the laws of contradictions so that we are not misled by our enemies.

There are any number of people to mislead the Dalits. The Communists misguide the Dalits saying that their real enemies are the capitalists and the kulaks. They divide the society into bourgeoisie and proletariat, landlord and tenant, master and servant, factory owner and factory worker, exploiter and the exploited. On the whole, they divide the society into rich and poor, haves and have-nots and their solution to every problem is nationalisation.

Nonsense.

But is the Indian society divided into rich and poor? Or, to put it in other words, where is the fight going on in India between the rich and the poor?

Nowhere in rural India do we witness such a struggle. May be in some cities a trade union struggle may be launched by employees against a factory owner. But such a struggle cannot be described as a fight between the poor and the rich.

If you take the case of atrocities on Dalits in villages and examine each case and find out who the attackers are, we will not find any rich landlords behind the violence. It is only the non-Dalit poor who join hands in committing the crimes against the Dalits. "To put bluntly, this means class brothers attack class brothers, tearing the unity of the rural proletarians and semi-proletarians to shreds." (S. G. Sardesai, Ibid - page 8).

What is going on in India, therefore, is a fight mainly between the poor people. Where is the "class struggle" that our communists are talking about? Whom are they fooling?

This leads us to a very important question. The communists say that the problems of the Dalits will be solved once they are economically made strong.

Nonsense.

Why the Dalits in India are kicked, killed, burnt, raped and their property destroyed? Is it because they are poor? If they are poor why the other poor Hindus are not subjected to similar criminal treatment? Are the Dalits the only poor people of India? Dalits (including tribals) constitute about 30% of the Indian population. But the Govt. of India figures say over 50% of the population is living below the poverty line. That means another 20% are also below the poverty line. Why they are not attacked like the Dalits? Are they also not poor? Therefore, poverty is not the cause of attack on the Dalits. The cause is that they are Untouchables - socially, culturally, religiously different from the others. Therefore, the cause is not economic but social, cultural and religious. Where does the question of economic determinism come here?

This much will suffice to call the bluff of the Marxian "class struggle" in India.

#### 4. Indian Communists are not Marxists :

We have our own doubts whether the Indian communists can be called Marxists. Because they have confined their struggle to mere

economic gains. Besides "class struggle", capturing power through parliamentary politics by contesting elections is the be all and end all of the Indian communists. Let us see what Lenin has to say on that. "It is often said and written that the main point in Marx's theory is the class struggle. But this is wrong. And this wrong notion very often results in an opportunist distortion of Marxism and its falsification in a spirit acceptable to the bourgeoisie. For the theory of the class struggle was created not by Marx, but by the bourgeoisie before Marx, and generally speaking, it is acceptable to the bourgeoisie. Those who recognise only the class struggle are not yet Marxists ; they may be found to be still within the bounds of bourgeois thinking and bourgeois politics. To confine Marxism to the theory of the class struggle means curtailing Marxism, distorting it, reducing it to something acceptable to the bourgeoisie. Only he is a Marxist who extends the recognition of the class struggle to the recognition of the dictatorship of the proletariat". (Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, Progress Publishers, 1977, Reprint, page No. 35)

Contesting elections necessarily leads to compromise. In Kerala, the communist leaders attend Guruvayoor temples and Sabarimalai Ayyappa - mad hysteria. In West Bengal, communist leaders including the Chief Minister attend Durga Pooja (a Hindu festival). They failed in their attempt to check obscurantism or communalism.

Why our Indian communists are confined to economic struggles ? Is there a method in their madness ? Yes, it brings lot of money to communist leaders from the trade unions. Not only that. It helps keep the social system undisturbed. And that means the upper caste leadership of the communist party is secure in the hands of the Brahmins, Nairs, Kayasthas, Baidyas, Reddys and Khammas. In Andhra Pradesh, the communist parties are called the Khamma parties because almost the entire leadership is in the hands of the Khammas, a top landed gentry. Karnataka Poet Laureate K. V. Puttappa has said that when Karl Marx came to India, he was given a "sacred thread" round his chest by the Brahmins.

For saying this simple fact, quoting his own words, E.M.S. Namboodiripad, the Indian Left Communist Party (CPM) General

Secretary, became so furious with us that he wrote one whole article attacking our book, *Class - Caste Struggle — Emerging third Force*, in the "Social Scientist" (Dec. 1981)—See Annexure.

We are sorry that our Indian Communist leaders don't want to learn anything new or forget anything old. Learning new and forgetting the old will affect their class-caste interest and hence they stick to the Soviet model of economic determinism.

We have not replied to E.M.S. so far out of sheer respect to a leader whom we respect and hold in high esteem. We have read all his books but sorry to say E.M.S. is a Namboodiri Brahmin first but a communist only in his speeches. Doubts are being expressed whether he is presiding over the liquidation of communist parties in India.

When our Dalit representatives in Calcutta asked Jyoti Basu why Dalits are not adequately represented in his cabinet, his stock answer was "communists do not believe in selecting ministers on caste basis". Surprisingly this is the very same answer of Indira Gandhi and Hindu Nazi Party (RSS). That means on the issue of keeping Dalits and minorities out, all these high caste Hindus think alike.

Do the Indian communists know that it is not enough if they de-class themselves? De-caste is more important. The two communist parties, CPI and CPM, are all opposed to the principle of reservations. "First of all, we have to be very cautious in adding to the list of backward castes that really need protection through the method of reservation. Great pressure is growing in the country, more particularly under the caste-ridden Janata dispensation, to give such protection to castes which really do not need it". (Sardesai, *ibid* page 35).

Look at the unanimity in the thinking. When it comes to reservations to over 50% of the country's population (OBCs), right from the right extreme Hindu Nazis (RSS) to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and then on to CPM, all are one. Even Brahmin conference resolutions sing the same tune. CPI wants the "income yardstick" to measure backwardness (Sardesai, *ibid* page 36) and not caste. Every Brahmin whether he be RSS, Congress or communist thinks in the same way. The Aryans whether they are communists, Congress or RSS have the same thinking.

That is why Periyar E. V. Ramaswamy, the great rationalist crusader of Tamil Nadu, has said that Brahmins think alike and act alike. If it rains in Kashmir, the Kanyakumari Brahmin will catch cold, he said. Because the Brahmins constitute a separate nation. The unanimity in the stand of all our political parties headed by Brahmins only goes to prove what EVR has said.

For these very reasons, communist parties do not inspire us. Not only Dalits, even tribal, Muslims, Christians and Sikhs are not attracted by the communist parties. Because what the communists in India follow is not historical materialism, but mechanical materialism. Dalits being born communists should have been the first to be inspired by Marxism and join it en masse. Their suffering itself is experience. They need no special study of Marxist literature. But, alas, communism did not enter their hearts; did not enter their huts. Because they do not trust the Brahmin and other high caste Hindu leadership of these parties. The Hindus have been all along deceiving the Dalits - from centuries. Now they have started deceiving Dalits in the name of communist parties. Only the names have changed. Those who were once in the right reactionary organisations are today in communist parties. The content is the same. The form only has changed. In fact, communists are a greater danger to Dalits, though they are bound to be benefited by Marxism. They love Marxism but not trust the Indian communists. Brahmins in communist garb are a real danger. That is why we say: "Beware of Socialist Brahmins". Actually these "Socialist Brahmins" are a greater danger to us than the "Orthodox Brahmins".

Justice Chinnappa Reddy of the Supreme Court has uttered the same warning in his Ambedkar Memorial Lectures at Karnataka University. "Ruling classes have always been trying to soften the impact of the contradictions and preventing self-realisation of the oppressed classes by chanting the magic word 'Socialism' and along with it preaching every manner of revivalist philosophy." (*Deccan Herald*, Dec. 28, 1983).

The legal aid schemes being advocated by Justice P. N. Bhagwati of the Supreme Court, the Marxist mantras chanted by another ex-judge of the Supreme Court, V. R. Krishna Iyer, the new interpretations given to Indian (Hindu) philosophy by Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya, are all part of this game to kill the revolutionary zeal of the Dalits and prevent the Indian revolution.

Beware of the "Socialist Brahmins".

But we can no longer be fooled because "doers" are becoming "thinkers". These mantras will no more work.

It is artificial to divide India on class basis. There are no "rich", no "poor" people in India. If anybody speaks on these lines, he is only trying to deceive us. When a rich Maratha sugar baron becomes the Chief Minister of Maharashtra, why even poor Marathas jump to the sky? In this writer's native place (Udupi) when a very rich fishermen leader, Madhwaraj, died (1983) even the poorest fisherman of the coastal South Kanara district abstained from going to the sea for a week as a token of mourning. Why these poor fishermen did not consider Madhwaraj as their class enemy? Why Brahmin conferences are attended by both poor and rich Brahmins? Why no poor Brahmin hates a rich Brahmin?

Such an artificial division of Indian society into rich and poor, exploiter and the exploited, may be made for limited purposes in cities but India lives in its villages where people are divided on caste lines.

In every caste there are rich and poor. But no poor Brahmin is fighting the rich Brahmin. Brahmin and other Hindu high caste associations have both poor and rich of the same caste. There is a tremendous caste solidarity because caste is a nation within a nation. If the Brahmins have their poor, why these poor Brahmins are not joining the struggle of the other poor? Are the poor Brahmins ready to launch a struggle under the leadership of the Untouchables who are the poorest of the poor? Never. Even if the Brahmin is poor and starving, he is not prepared to give up his arrogance. Is he prepared to eat in the house of a *bhangi* (sweeper)? In Bangalore itself, the Brahmin bluff was called some time back when the Karnataka Dalit Action Committee offered to lead a procession of "poor Brahmins", the latter refused to join us. How can "class associations" be formed as long as castes are not destroyed?

Some people argue that with the destruction of feudalism and as the capitalist society emerges, *jati* will disappear.

Nonsense.

Our experience in India has proved that cities are more caste-conscious than the villages. More educated a person the more bigoted he becomes. Today, all those who talk about caste, shout about caste, and protest against caste are all "educated people".

## 5. What Is Caste ?

There is no need to answer this question because every Indian knows caste and she or he is observing caste rules. The basic feature of caste is endogamy or as Morton Klass calls the "marriage circle". *Jati* is also a division of labour. In the rural areas, class and caste is more or less the same. Gail Omvedt says "class takes a caste form in the feudal period". (*Samata*, page 60).

Who are the rich people of India ? Mostly the Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas (Aryans) and other landed gentry. The priestly profession, commanding the highest respect, is still the monopoly of the Brahmins. The Shankaracharya's post is still reserved for the Brahmin. Take a caste-wise census of the ministers, judges, ambassadors, vice-chancellors, secretaries to Govt., heads of industrial enterprises and banks, we will find Brahmins occupying over 70% of the positions. \*The most degrading profession of scavenging, sweeping is still reserved for the Untouchables. Who are the landless agricultural labourers ? Over 40% of them are Untouchables and tribals. Who are the people living in the slums ? Has anybody found a Brahmin living in slums ? Never. Slums are reserved for Dalits and Muslims. Did anybody see a Brahmin beggar or a Brahmin breaking stones or carrying mud ? Never.

We have enough evidence to show that "class" is "caste" in India. There are any number of court judgments and also the reports of different backward classes commissions including the latest, Mandal Commission of the Government of India, to this effect. Apart from this, there are any number of research findings. N. V. V. Sathyanarayana Reddy (Class and Caste in Politics - an Andhra district study - *Mainstream*, Feb. 27, 1982) says after making a case study of East Godavari district that in rural areas "caste" and "class" are the same. "The bulk of upper classes come from the upper castes. The relationship between the lower castes and the lower classes is a two-way relationship : not a majority of the lower classes come from the lower castes but the bulk of the lower caste are the lower classes".

\* Who Is A Casteist ? by Charan Singh, Kisan Trust, 26 Tughlak Crescent, New Delhi - 110 011. Rs. 2.50. 1982.

P. Radhakrishna ("In defence of Mandal Commission", *Economic and Political Weekly*, July 3, 1982) also comes to the same conclusion: "In most parts of India there is close correspondence between caste hierarchy and economic hierarchy".

Marc Galanter in his book, *Competing Equalities*, (Oxford University Press - 1984) considered the best work on the problem of reservations - has devoted one whole chapter to this subject, "Castes or Classes". He quotes several court judgements that equates caste with class and concludes "caste and communal units may be used as classes where backwardness is to be established, (2) caste or communal rank or status may be one of the tests or measures of backwardness by which these groups are selected; ..... " (page 204).

To say that "caste" is "class" in India, it doesn't need a social scientist or any expert. All "doers" know it. If the "thinkers" do not know it, then it is not our mistake. When the "doers" become "thinkers" everything will be alright. All these "thinkers" will be taught that caste is class. Until then those 'experts' who want to create confusion will have some breathing time.

When we were in China, (1983) the Marxist intellectuals there agreed with our assessment. They said without destroying the caste, India cannot destroy the class. But our Indian communists also know this but it is not in their interest to admit it. Some of them merely go on talking about caste. But in their hearts they are extremely caste-conscious.

The Indian communists say untouchability, caste, superstition and oppression of women will all vanish the moment the society gets industrialised and the exploited become economically strong. Our experience has belied these hopes.\* Caste system continues to exist even when Dalits and Hindus both get educated. The MBBS, MS and MD Hindu doctors attacked only their Dalit educated counterparts in the Gujarat anti-reservation agitation. Sawadekar,

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\* Owen Lynch in his forward to Barbara Joshi's book, *Democracy in Search of Equality* Hindustan Publishing Corp., New Delhi - 1982 endorses the author's rejection of the Marxist theory that caste will go with urbanisation and industrialisation.



Director of the Madras TV centre, told us he could not get a house at Hyderabad as he was an Untouchable. Many Dalit doctors posted to rural areas do not get houses because of their castes, although educationally they are much higher than the Hindus. We have hundreds of such cases of caste discrimination even against educated Untouchables. IAS and IPS officers, judges are also complaining of discrimination by their Hindu colleagues. Jagjivan Ram, India's richest Untouchable, was humiliated when he went to unveil a statue at Varanasi as the Deputy Prime Minister of India. Caste will not disappear with education or industrialisation.

## 6. Poverty is not our Problem :

We have made it clear many a times that poverty is not the problem of the Untouchables. Nor is it the problem of India ? The problem of India and the Dalits in particular is Hinduism. If the country is saved from Hinduism, its poverty will be automatically wiped out. That means our poverty is the by-product of our social, cultural and religious oppressions. This has to be clearly understood.

Millions and billions of rupees have been pumped into anti-poverty programmes and particularly of Dalits. According to Dr. A. M. Khusro, Rs. 20,000 crores during the planning decades have been spent (*Hindu*, Jan. 7 1984). Where did it go ? Why it has not touched even the fringe of the problem ? It is because our disease has been wrongly diagnosed as "poverty". It is this wrong diagnosis that is responsible for the patient going from bad to worse and ultimately dead. It was Dr. B. R. Ambedkar who correctly diagnosed our disease and the victims have recovered by this diagnosis and their disease cured. But the problem of India is that the "doers" are not "thinkers". The "thinkers" having not suffered themselves, apart from not being genuinely interested in curing the patient, they have deliberately made a wrong diagnosis. And so much so, the patient is dying, critically ill, if not dead.

It is for this reason Dr. Ambedkar got disgusted with the Indian communists because the leadership of the communist parties is in the hands of Brahmins and other high caste Hindus. The position has not changed since then.

As far as we are concerned, "caste" is "class" when it comes to India. That means the Marxian concept of "class struggle" will have to take the shape of "caste struggle" (of course combining the Marxian class struggle).

But our communists don't agree with us ".....to pit the lower castes against the upper castes is to make a travesty of the life and teachings of Jyotiba Phule. It is like sticking to the shell of his teachings while rejecting their kernel. It can only bring grist to the mill of casteist communalism of the lower and upper castes alike. And to build a theory that caste conflict is the class struggle in India is to make a mockery of Marxism." (Sardesai, *ibid* page 14) See the Brahmin mischief! Beware of Socialist Brahmins.

The communists don't agree with the Ambedkar's theory of "caste struggle" because it is not in the class-caste interest of the communist leadership. Communists go on misleading the Dalits by saying that the atrocities on Dalits are not committed by the Brahmins but the kulaks-the rural landlords and OBCs, both *shudras*.

Though this statement is factually correct, that is not the proper way of looking at things. Those who have studied Mao's contradictions cannot find fault with the kulaks or OBCs for the attack on them. It is true that there are contradictions between Dalits and OBCs but these contradictions are non-antagonistic. But how many Dalits have the ability to understand these laws of contradictions? It is true that the contradictions between the Dalits and OBCs are the sharpest. Dalits all over India are kicked, killed, burnt, raped and their property destroyed mainly by the OBCs and that is why they are naturally angry with the OBCs. The upper castes particularly the Brahmins go on fanning this hatred and keep up this eternal strife. This problem is very acute in Tamil Nadu where Dalit-OBC contradictions are the sharpest.

But it is for the enlightened sections among the OBCs like the Dravida Khazagam and Dalits to look at the problem from the angle of Mao's contradictions. The leg kicks because the brain has ordered it to kick. Without this order, the leg will not resort to kicking. So the leg or the hand is only a servant of the brain. Hence the brain becomes the principal contradiction and not the

leg or the hand. Under the Indian conditions, the leg and the hand are the brainless OBCs and the brain behind this crime is Brahminism. If we blow out the brain then the leg or hand will not act.

A dog hit by a stone will not chase the stone but only the person who has thrown the stone. At least the dog has that much of brain to understand the laws of contradictions. But Hinduism has made the Hindus brainless. The Sikhs took several decades to understand this simple mischief of Brahminism.

The Brahmins and other high-caste Hindus make use of this helplessness of the Dalits and go on instigating them against the OBCs and the OBCs against the Dalits. By such a crooked game of divide and rule they keep the whole masses busy fighting between themselves so that they keep their position safe.

Such tricks will no longer work. Such crooked games will stop because "doers" are becoming "thinkers". Beware.

The Indian society is full of contradictions like all other societies. Every development takes place because of the contradictions inside a given thing. "The fundamental cause of the development of a thing is not external but internal; it lies in the contradictoriness within the thing. This internal contradiction exists in every single thing, hence its motion and development. Contradictoriness within a thing is the fundamental cause of its development while its inter-relations and interactions with other things are secondary causes". (Mao Tse - tung, *On Contradiction*, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, Second Printing 1967, page 5).

Dalits as leaders of Indian Revolution must study the laws of contradiction. Mao says two aspects of each contradiction cannot be treated in the same way since each aspect has its own characteristics. Lenin also said that the most essential thing in Marxism, the living soul of Marxism, is the concrete analysis of concrete condition.

We cannot eliminate all the contradictions at the same time. When the fortress is surrounded by several enemies, what is usually done is to keep all the doors of the fortress closed and finalise a strategy of attack. Find out the most important enemy who should

be finished first instead of engaging all the enemies at the same time by keeping all the doors open. This is dangerous. The enemies will overwhelm us. Hence the need to identify the principal enemy and eliminate him first.

## 7. Beware of Socialist Brahmins:

For the Dalits, the OBCs may appear as real enemies. But in fact they are not. Our enemy is Brahminism of which the OBCs are a mere creature. In other words our principal enemy is the caste system. The chief practitioners of the caste system are the Brahmins and other Aryans. They are our real enemies. So if we eliminate this principal enemy first, the OBCs will either run away or surrender in the battle.

Or a still better strategy is to befriend the OBCs, convince them that they are as much victims of Brahminism as Dalits are and thus take their support to fight the principal contradiction - Brahminism.

As Dalits, we become the natural leaders of the Indian Revolution and, therefore, it is our responsibility not to commit any mistakes. We have to stoop to conquer and hit to kill. No compromises.

We have to convince the OBCs that fighting Brahminism is as much their duty as freeing themselves from the *Shudra* slavery. The enemies of OBCs are not Dalits. Every backward class commission both Central Govt. and State Govt. including the latest Mandal Commission has blamed Brahminism for the plight of OBCs and not Dalits. Similarly, every Dalit organisation is pointing out that Dalits are victims of Brahminism. Dr. Ambedkar nowhere did blame the OBCs. He never said the enemy of Dalits are OBCs. Hence, the contradiction between OBCs and Dalits is non-antagonistic.

The religious minorities like Muslims, Christians and Sikhs are also not our enemies. Their enemy and our enemy is the same. They are ever-ready to join us and, therefore, with the combined strength of Dalits, minorities and OBCs if we destroy Brahminism (eliminating the principal contradiction) then after accomplishing this, winning this major war, defeating the lesser enemies is a peanut. We feel that all the contradictions will automatically get eliminated once this principal contradiction is wiped out.

## 8. The Principal Contradiction in India :

On this, let us hear what Mao says:

"But whatever happens, there is no doubt at all that at every stage in the development of a process, there is only one principal contradiction which plays the leading role.

"Hence, if in any process there are a number of contradictions, one of them must be the principal contradiction playing the leading and decisive role, while the rest occupy a secondary and subordinate position. Therefore, in studying any complex process in which there are two or more contradictions, we must devote every effort to finding its principal contradiction. Once this principal contradiction is grasped, all problems can be readily solved. This is the method Marx taught us in his study of capitalist society. Likewise Lenin and Stalin taught us this method when they studied imperialism and the general crisis of capitalism and when they studied the Soviet economy. There are thousands of scholars and men of action who do not understand it, and the result is that, lost in a fog, they are unable to get to the heart of a problem and naturally cannot find a way to resolve its contradictions.

"As we have said, one must not treat all the contradictions in a process as being equal but must distinguish between the principal and the secondary contradictions, and pay special attention to grasping the principal one. But, in any given contradiction, whether principal or secondary, should the two contradictory aspects be treated as equal? Again, no. In any contradiction the development of the contradictory aspects is uneven. Sometimes they seem to be in equilibrium, which is however only temporary and relative, while unevenness is basic. Of the two contradictory aspects, one must be principal and the other secondary. The principal aspect is the one playing the leading role in the contradiction. The nature of a thing is determined mainly by the principal aspect of a contradiction, the aspect which has gained the dominant position." (Mao Tse-Tung, *On Contradiction*, *ibid*, page 43-44-45).

On the Hindu - Sikh war (June - 1984), we supported the Sikhs because the Sikhs were fighting our very enemy.

Once the Hinduism is defeated, the caste system will be destroyed, because caste is Hinduism. Once the castes are destroyed, the next step of destroying "classes" is again a peanut. They will crumble like a house of cards.

The Brahmins, the chief practitioners of caste, know this and they have scented the danger. They know that the RSS approach of "Orthodox Brahmins" will not save them from doom. So the only thing that can save them is "socialism" and that is why more and more Brahmins are becoming socialists and communists. That is what Ambedkar called as "beating extremism with extremism".

Let us hear what Ambedkar says in some other context: "Brahmins had to adopt the usual tactics of a reckless adventure. It is to beat extremism with extremism. It is a strategy which all rightists use to overcome the leftists" (*Dr. Ambedkar on Buddhism* Siddhartha Publication, Bombay, first edition, 1982, page 60).

Ambedkar was referring to the strategy adopted by Brahmins to defeat Buddhism by converting themselves from beef-eaters to vegetarians. Beef-eating was the exclusive privilege of the Brahmins right from the Vedic period but the onslaught of Buddhist egalitarianism brought the collapse of Brahminism. In giving up beef-eating, Brahmins were not driven by any conviction. Because Buddhism did not believe in vegetarianism. The Buddhist Bhikkus were not vegetarians. Why did the Brahmins become vegetarians? As the Buddhist Bhikkus were eating meat, where is the need for Brahmins to become vegetarians? Ambedkar says: "It was because they did not want to put themselves merely on the same footing in the eyes of the public as the Buddhist Bhikkus." (ibid page 66).

They wanted to demonstrate that Brahmins were capable of the supreme sacrifice - of giving up what they loved most, beef-eating and liquor drinking. They knew that only by giving up that two greatest love of beef-eating and drinking they can defeat Buddhism. This is what Ambedkar called as the Brahmin "reckless adventure". Brahmins gave up the most essential part of the Vedic Religion and made the supreme sacrifice. "Worship of cow is the result of the struggle between Buddhism and Brahminism. It was a means adopted by Brahmins to regain their lost position". (ibid page 68).

But what is the "extremism" in chanting now the Marxist *mantra*? This is a million-dollar question. The beauty of Brahminism is it resorts to unpredictable extremism.

Marxism is the enemy No. 1 of Brahminism. Guru Golwalkar in his book, *Bunch of Thoughts*, the Bible of RSS, lists three things as the enemy of Hindus:-

1. Communism
2. Muslims
- and 3. Christians

The "godless" communism is called the enemy no, 1 of Hindus. If Muslims and Christians are internal threats, communism is called the external threat for Hindus. All over India RSS leaders have declared a war on communists. In Kerala, a pitched battle is going on daily between the RSS and Marxists. Over 200 people have been killed in this battle so far. To Brahminism, therefore, communism is the greatest foe because Brahminism doesn't believe in equality. How could then the younger sections of the Brahmins turn to communism? Jawaharlal Nehru, a Kashmiri Brahmin and the first Prime Minister of India, is hailed as India's first and "the most famous socialist" leading India's "Independence Movement". The Brahmins knew that the leadership of the Indian freedom movement will pass into the hands of revolutionary sections led by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. There was a chance of Ambedkar becoming India's Prime Minister. Having scented this danger, "Socialist Brahmins" wrested the initiative of the movement from Tilak, Savarkar and other "Orthodox Brahmins". "Mahatma" Gandhi, a (Vaishya) led the "Socialist Brahmins". The killing of Gandhi by Godse, an "Orthodox Brahmin" is part of this fight between the "Orthodox Brahmins" and "Socialist Brahmins". We have dealt with this question in our book, *Why Godse Killed Gandhi?* (DSA, 1983, price Rs. 2).

The latest game of these "Socialist Brahmins" is to mouth revolutionary slogans, talk about poverty, "dual society", the exploitation of the Untouchables and all those sweet-sounding words but in deeds do exactly the opposite. Words to deceive the Dalits and action to further their own caste interests.

Beware of "Socialist Brahmins" !

Socialism became too mild to defeat Dalits liberation movement and, therefore, they have to take a more extreme posture. That is

what Ambedkar called as "beating extremism with extremism". Marxism became a more handy stick to beat the Dalits with. That is why more and more Brahmins are becoming Marxists.

Beware of "Socialist Brahmins".

Even the RSS is trying to wear a socialist garb by mouthing Gandhian slogans. That means many Brahmins of India have realised the urgent need to take shelter under Marxism. Or whatever you call it.

Therefore, as days pass the attack on the Dalits will be more from the Left. To repeat what Ambedkar has said: "It is the strategy which all the rightists use to overcome the Leftists".

India's liberation movement launched under the leadership of the Dalits, therefore, can be frustrated only through Marxism. And that is why we can safely predict that our future fight will be directed more against the "Socialist Brahmins" than against the RSS "Orthodox Brahmins". Hence we warn our Dalits and OBC comrades : Beware of Socialist Brahmins. RSS is our open enemy but communists are our disguised enemy.

Beware of "Socialist Brahmins".

## 9. What is our Approach?

We have said Dalits are born Marxists and as such we have nothing to learn from these "Socialist Brahmins". Our people are born revolutionaries. We feel India has not yet become independent. The "independence" achieved in 1947 is for the Gandhi and Nehru families, for the Tata, Birla, Singhanian, Goenka, Bangur, TTK, TVS, Mafatlals, Kirloskars. Not for us.

The British imperialism was replaced by a more dangerous "Brahmin imperialism". Our people were much better off under the British. In fact, we have to be grateful to the British but for whom the Indians would have remained barbarians. Hence we have to fight the "Brahmin Imperialism", drive out the Aryan invaders and make the country independent. Therefore it is a war of liberation.

Since the leadership of this freedom movement is given to the Dalits, being the most revolutionary section of the Indian population, we should not repeat any mistake committed by others. Any mistake on our part will further delay the Indian liberation. Hence the urgent need to study the Laws of Contradiction.



## 10. Blending Class — Caste Struggle :

Therefore, we cannot exclusively depend upon "caste struggle" or "class struggle". It shall be a happy blending of the two. The "class struggle" theory of Marx, Lenin and Mao and the "caste struggle" theory of Phule, Ambedkar, Periyar and Lohia, and thus evolve an indigenous Marxism.

We want to make it clear that we have the highest respect for and the greatest confidence in Marxism. Ultimately Marxism will come as our final weapon. But we have nothing to learn from the Indian communists. They are bogus. History has said so.

Therefore, we cannot waste our time and energy in fighting all the contradictions in our society, particularly the non-antagonistic contradictions. To repeat, the principal contradiction in India is caste. In other words, Hinduism, Brahminism.

And like us, there are Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and even Jains who are also engaged in fighting the Hindu imperialism. They are as much victims, if not more, of Hinduism than we are. Hence all of them will be too willing to support us in our fight against Hinduism. Between Dalits on one side and the Muslims, Christians and now Sikhs on the other, we find hardly any contradictions. The interest of the two are same. Therefore, we are sufferers and Muslims, Christians and Sikhs are co-sufferers. They will be too willing to support us in our liberation struggle. Their enemy and our enemy is the same. Both are victims of a common enemy.

Muslim form	12%	(official figure)
Christians	3%	
Sikhs	2%	
Total	17%	

If these 17% join with us forming 30%, then it becomes a formidable 47% of the Indian population.

The Muslims, Christians and Sikhs will be, therefore, our first allies in our liberation struggle.

The OBCs will come and join us only after the "Rainbow Alliance" of the Dalits, Muslims, Christians and Sikhs becomes a

working alliance. The OBCs being very much Hinduised they are a real problem. They are not only a problem to all the three above mentioned sections, but they are a problem unto themselves. Therefore, the OBCs coming along with us at this juncture is doubtful.

But fortunately the Mandal Commission Report has come and to get it implemented they will have to seek our support. This will push them nearer to us. In Andhra and many other places Dalits and OBCs are together. As Brahmins and other high castes are bound to kick them while opposing the Mandal Commission report, the OBCs will be forced to come nearer to us. The OBCs unfortunately are so much drunk and intoxicated with the liquor of Brahminism that they have not yet identified their enemy. They may hate Brahmins. But they love Brahminism much more than they hate Brahmins.

Hence we cannot count on the OBC support at the all India level at this juncture. In many places it is the OBCs who kill Muslims and Christians. Therefore, they can't be trusted. But they are bound to come to us as their liberation is as much part of our responsibility as that of Muslims, Christians and Sikhs. For the time being, however, our best allies are the three religious minorities, Muslims, Christians and Sikhs.

It must be noted that the Dalits by themselves will not be able to do much as our people not only are in a minority every where but very much scattered, unlike tribals who live in contiguous areas. But we are in a better position than all other co-sufferers. Because we have a leader, Dr. Ambedkar, and a ready-made ideology - which the other co-sufferers lack.

Hence the Dalits are badly in need of allies and our allies are the Muslims, Christians and Sikhs.

And after this "Rainbow Alliance" is perfected, the OBCs may be taken. Not before that.

This will be the future pattern of India - whether we like it or not. In the latest Hindu war on Sikhs the Indian communists got badly exposed. The communists whether of the Left or the Right failed to assess the Sikh nationality question. Just as they failed to assess the demands of other nationalities like the Dalits, Tribes, Muslims, Christians and other Shudras, they have failed in the Sikhs also. That is why the Communists supported the Ruling Class which is doing its best to help us. It helped us by pushing the Sikhs to our side. All these years the Sikhs were supporting only the Hindus. But the June 1984 Army action against the Sikhs (*Dalit Voice* June 16, 1984) pushed them once for all to our side.

None can change the laws of contradiction. The future belongs to us.

ANNEXURE - I

*Once Again on Castes and Classes*

E M S NAMBOODIRIPAD

(Social Scientist, Dec. 1981, No. 103)

READERS of the *Social Scientist* will recall my article on "Castes, Classes and Parties in Modern Political Development".<sup>1</sup> Ramakrishna Mukherjee, in a recent article,<sup>2</sup> assumed that I based myself on Beteille's book, *Caste, Class and Power*. In a short letter to the editor<sup>3</sup> I tried to show that the conclusions drawn in my paper were independent of Beteille; in fact, I based myself on what I learnt in the course of my own practical activity, supplemented by what humble theoretical work I have been able to do.

A few weeks earlier, I had come across a booklet, *Class-Caste Struggle: Emerging Third Force*, by V. T. Rajasekhara Shetty, published by the Dalit Action Committee of Karnataka. In the author's introduction to the booklet it was claimed, "Even EMS for the first time was forced to admit that the CPI(M) had committed a fundamental blunder".

The "blunder" apparently was that I have been carrying on my practical and theoretical work on the basis of the Marxist theory of class struggle; the alleged "admission of my blunder" consisted in the abandonment of the Marxist theory of class struggle in favour of Shetty's own theory of "Class-Caste Struggle" which is "superior" to Marxism! In another booklet, *How Marx Failed in Hindu India*, Shetty has propounded his view on the superiority of his own to Marx's theory! I am supposed to have given up Marx and become a disciple of *Rajasekhra Shetty!!*

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Namboodiripad is the head of India's Communist Party (left) and a Brahmin as his name suggests.

Shetty claims to have made this "discovery" from my article in the *Economic and Political Weekly* (Special Number, 1979). He also refers to B T Ranadive's article in the same Special Number to make the claim of the CPI(M) having been forced to acknowledge the superiority of his "Class-Caste Struggle" theory. As if this is not enough, he claims, in a subsequent booklet, that A K Gopalan wrote to him "endorsing my (Shetty's) thesis"!

I am not interested in, nor have I the *time* to *polemize* against Shetty. *Let him have the satisfaction of being superior to Karl Marx!* I, however, want to make it clear that my 1977 article published in the *Social Scientist* and the 1979 article in the *Economic and Political Weekly* are the result of my own humble attempt at integrating the Marxist theory of social evolution with the Indian reality as revealed to me in the course of my practical-political life.

This, however, requires a fairly detailed account of how my own thinking and the thinking of my party on the question under discussion evolved in the course of the development of the revolutionary political movement in India. This is attempted in this paper.

### Pattern of Development

I was in my teens when I started taking active interest in public life. I was deeply influenced by two currents in the modern democratic movement of India, as it was spreading to my home state. The first was the growing revolt against the *caste-dominated social life in Kerala* — the outmoded customs and manners, superstitious beliefs, family organization, and so on — even of the highest caste (the Namboodiris) in the state to be specific. The second was the freedom movement, which was at that time going through a new wave of mass struggles led by Gandhi, drawing into its fold hundreds of thousands of young men and women.

While in the beginning I was only an interested observer keenly watching all developments in the two currents, I was gradually drawn into the vortex of both in the latter half of the 1920s. By the time the next wave of anti-imperialist mass struggle — the salt Satyagraha of 1930 — swept the entire country, I had already become a radical in both socio-cultural and political fields.

On the social plane, I went forward from the efforts to bring about moderate reforms in the family life of the Namboodiri community to the *struggle for a radical restructuring of social life* at the top ladder of the caste hierarchy. *This took me emotionally to the anti-high-caste movements of the "lower" castes* in Kerala society, particularly of the Ezhavas who had developed one of the most radical movements of social revolt among the oppressed castes. These oppressed caste leaders being linked with the radical socio-cultural movement led by E V Ramaswamy Naikar of Tamil Nadu, I started imbibing the ideas of rationalism and atheism.

Politically too, I became an ardent supporter of the left Congress leaders headed by Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhash Chandra Bose, even though I had not broken with Gandhism. The years of the Salt Satyagraha and subsequent political developments made me plunge fully into the radical movements of both a socio-cultural and political character. As a college student in those days, I fully participated in all political activities calculated to support the freedom struggle. At the same time, I devoted my time to the furtherance of the radical socio-cultural movement. The columns of a weekly of which I was the *de facto* editor in 1930-31 were used to propagate leftist ideas in socio-cultural as well as national-political fields.

Those activities as a student subsequently landed me in jail as an active Civil Disobedience volunteer. From then on, I transformed myself from an ordinary social reformer and freedom fighter to a young man fighting for a revolutionary restructuring of the entire society — a Socialist to begin with and subsequently a Communist. The story of my development along these lines has been told in my *How I Became a Communist*.

This particular pattern of development of my political personality gave *two distinct trends* to my political thinking. As a freedom fighter and radical nationalist, I was opposed to caste and communal politics. *As a radical social reformer too; I was all for the total elimination of all distinctions based on the caste and the religious community. However, I could see the reality that, whatever the ultimate goal to which we were moving, we cannot wish away differences and distinctions based on the caste and the religious community. Socio-political organizations dedicated to the*

cause of serving the lower castes and fighting for reforming the social and family systems of even the upper castes, therefore, had my sympathy. All the more so when some of these caste based organizations started championing political demands, integrating the movement for political democracy with social justice for the oppressed castes.

An important development of the first half of the 1930s which influenced me was the rise of particularly radical socio-political movement initiated by some leaders of the oppressed Ezhava caste. The late C Kesavan of Travancore unleashed a movement which tried to integrate the aspirations of the democratic people of Travancore for responsible government with those of the oppressed castes and the religious minorities for social justice in the then upper caste-dominated autocratic regime of the state. The majority of nationalists denounced him and his movement as "casteist" and "communal" and, therefore, "anti-national". The weekly paper edited by me then was one of the two organs of the nationalist Malayalam press (the other being the one edited by that patriarch of Kerala journalism, the late A. Balakrishna Pillai) which extended full support to the movement led by Kesavan.

That movement subsequently developed into what was called the joint Political Congress—the political alliance of a few castes and communities directed against upper caste domination. This "caste and communal alliance", it may be added, further extended itself to embrace all the democratic forces in the state and became the Travancore State Congress. "Responsible Government with adult franchise and reservation for backward communities" was the central slogan of this movement.

The same development was taking place in the adjoining state of Cochin too. The first organization fighting for responsible government in that state, like the Travancore State Congress, included in its basic political demand reservation for backward castes and communities. We of the left had given our full support to this in both states. I myself had in my articles (in Malayalam as well as in English) tried to explain how, in the actual social conditions of Kerala, the development of the democratic movement is bound to be linked with the organized struggle against caste-Hindu domination.

We of the Socialist and Communist movement had, in the meanwhile, gone fully into the work of organizing the workers, the peasants, the students, the teachers and so on. The movements unleashed and the organizations formed in pursuance of this activity were, it goes without saying, all-caste and all-communal in composition. The Marxist call, "Workers of the world unite", inspired us all. We, therefore, did not allow the caste, the communal or any other consideration to stand in the way of the workers' unity against the capitalists, the peasants' against the landlords, other sections of the working people for their own demands—all of them against British imperialism and autocratic rule in the princely states. The defence of the interests of the oppressed castes, the championing of the cause of social justice were therefore to be subordinated to the unity of the oppressed classes and of the nation as a whole.

We had then and still have a fight to two-front battle. Ranged against us on the one hand are those who denounce us for our alleged "departure from the principles of nationalism and socialism" since we are championing "sectarian" causes like those of the oppressed castes and religious minorities. On the other hand are those who, in the name of defending the oppressed caste masses, in fact, isolate them from the mainstream of the united struggle of the working people irrespective of caste, community and so on.

This two-front battle became all the more bitter in the post-independence years, particularly after the two princely states of Kerala had their irresponsible Diwan regimes replaced by elected governments and then merged into Kerala. While these developments did not make any worthwhile change in the living and working conditions of the common people belonging to the oppressed castes and religious communities, a narrow upper stratum emerged from them and began to grow in influence and power as years passed. At the other end of the scale, however the majority of the people belonging to all castes and communities (including the "upper" castes and the majority community) were drawn into the ranks of the poor and downtrodden.

Pledged as we were to the defence of the oppressed castes and religious minorities against caste-Hindu domination and at the same time identifying ourselves with the oppressed sections in all



Bochun  
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castes and communities, we had to apply our minds to the impact of reservation for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and backward communities, on the *poor belonging to "forward" communities*. The solution as formulated over two decades ago — unqualified reservation for not only Scheduled Castes and Tribes but for backward communities as well — had to be modified *to keep pace with the reality that growing sections of even the "upper" castes and the religious majority were no more enjoying their old status, prosperity and privileges*. The demand that reservation should be based not on caste but on the economic condition became insistent.

While we were sympathetic to those who raised this demand, we could not accept it, since we were, and still are, of the view that caste oppression, together with the socio-cultural, economic and political consequences of that oppression, has not been removed. We therefore came to the conclusion, as was explained in my 1977 article, that a) reservation as it exists should continue without any modification in relation to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes; b) even in relation to other backward castes and minority communities, reservation on the basis of caste and community should continue at present and until the caste or community concerned has, by and large, overcome its backwardness; and c) since however narrow sections in all these backward castes and communities (other than Scheduled Castes and Tribes) have been benefited by the concessions they enjoy now, those of them who have annual incomes at or above a fixed limit should be denied the benefit of reservation.

This was denounced by both the "backwards" and the "forwards". The former denounced it as "abandonment of the caste-based reservation". The latter was furious for exactly the opposite reason. Big agitations were launched by both but we held our ground.

It will be seen from the above that the party and the movement represented by me in Kerala have been dealing with the problem of caste and communal organizations from the point of view of the role they play in the development of the political and mass movement of the working people in the state. In the course of developing this movement, I had to undertake some theoretical studies and came to some conclusions to which I shall now turn.

## *Trade Union, Kisan Movements*

Starting as Congress Socialists first and then becoming Communists, we naturally worked hard to develop the trade union and kisan movements. The progress in both was rapid. Within less than half a decade, we were able to form a number of trade unions in the entire Malabar district of the then Madras Presidency. In Cochin and Travancore too, we were able to forge links with the existing trade unions and organize several new ones. As for the kisan movement, its development was mostly confined to the Malabar part, since the legislation for tenancy reforms had advanced to a larger extent in Cochin and Travancore than in Malabar. The Janmi domination was, in other words, far stronger in the latter.

The growth of the kisan movement in the Malabar area was so rapid that the first Congress government of the then Madras Presidency was forced to appoint a Malabar Tenancy Reforms Committee of which I was a member. Apart from me, there were two other members who adopted the leftist position on question of land reforms. The rest of the committee—over a dozen—were all of the rightist political complexion. The three of us, therefore, had to submit our separate minutes of dissent.

While the suggestions for immediate amendments to the tenancy laws were more or less the same in our three separate minutes of dissent, mine, much longer and more elaborate, discussed the whole question of the origin and development of the Janmi system, together with its socio-economic implications. Basing myself on the studies made by the earlier commission and committees on the question of land reforms in Malabar, and making some calculations of the burden of rent borne by the tenants, I made a strong case for the complete abolition of the *Janmi* system; only if this system is abolished, I said, can the economic, socio-cultural and political-administrative backwardness of the people be removed. Since this is a basic objective not immediately realizable, I suggested certain immediate partial reforms, that is, amendments to the existing laws.

This was my first attempt at raising the day-to-day agitations and struggles of the kisans for the realization of their immediate demands, to the level of the basic question of ending the feudal-*Janmi* system in Malabar. This study and the simultaneous deve-

lopment of the political movement in Kerala, particularly of the democratic movement for responsible government in the two states of Cochin and Travancore, led me to the study of feudalism in its two (socio-economic and political-administrative) forms. The *Janmi* system in the Malabar part and the princely rule in the Cochin and Travancore states were seen as two sides of the same coin. The tenant movement in Malabar area and movement for responsible government in the princely states had to be integrated in a common anti-feudal movement.

This led our party to the political slogan of the reunification of the Malayalam-speaking people inhabiting the three administrative divisions of the Madras Presidency, Cochin and Travancore. *Aikya Kerala* was added to the abolition of the *Janmi* domination in Malabar. This was facilitated by the extension of the activities of the Communist Party to the Cochin and Travancore areas which took place on the eve of and during the war.

This made me undertake another work of an agitational cum-theoretical nature. A booklet under the title, *A Crore and a Quarter Malayalees*, was brought out in 1945, pleading the cause of *Aikya Kerala*. The new state as was visualized therein would be democratic, secular and modern. "Land to the tiller", the central idea put across in my minute of dissent to the Malabar Tenancy Reforms Committee report was an important factor in the *Aikya Kerala* as conceived now. Along with it however were other aspects of the modern democratic, secular state serving the cause of the working people as had been worked out by the Communist Party for the whole-country.

Similar booklets, it may be noted had come out at about the same time in Andhra and Bengal—Sundarayya's *VishaaAndhra* and Bhowani Sen's *Natun Bangla*. Kerala, Andhra and Bengal are the three states where the Communist Party was then very strong, with a mass political base. It was, therefore, natural for the party in these state to raise the slogan of their own linguistic state as part of the free, democratic and secular India of the party's conception—a state in which the working class, the peasants and other sections of the working people would find their interests safeguarded and defended.

Having thus worked out the general outlines of the new democratic and secular state of Kerala as part of the future free

India, I availed myself of the first opportunity to study the historical past of Kerala and its people. The result was the short history of Kerala in Malayalam, written in 1947 and published the following year.

It may be of interest to friends like Ramakrishna Mukherjee and and Rajasekhara Shetty that the term used in the book to describe the medieval society in Kerala was not "feudalism" but *Jati-Janmi-Naduvazhi Medhavitham*, which means the domination of the upper castes, the *Janmis* and local chieftains in Kerala society. "Uplifting the Brahmins socially, the Janmis economically and the Samanta-Nair castes administratively, (it) lowers the position of the overwhelming majority of the people socially, economically and politically; giving birth to a handful of great scholars, poets and artists (from the above top categories), it led to the cultural backwardness of the overwhelming majority" — this was how I described it.

The book brought out then was my first attempt at applying the Marxist theory of class struggle to the history of Kerala. Being the first attempt, it was naturally defective. I received a large number of criticisms and was profited by them. The content of the book therefore, was subjected to more than one revision. The result was my first work in English under the title, *National Question in Kerala* (1952), followed by its revised version under the title, *Kerala Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* (1967). Without extensively quoting from either of these two works. I may point out that in the latter work there is a chapter under the title, "Rise of Feudalism", where I said :

At the time of or even before the Chera empire . . . . class division had started making its appearance . . . . Class division, however, took the form of caste division, those who were in a position to accumulate the greatest amounts of wealth came to be considered the highest caste; the next in point of the accumulation of wealth became the next highest caste, and so on, till we reach the class that is in a position to accumulate no wealth at all which become the lowest caste.<sup>4</sup>

Again

Each caste assembly had its own temple, the deity of which constituted the reflection and representative of the collective

body of the entire caste. And it was in the name of the temple and its deity that the wealth accumulated through generations was held. Gradually, however, the control of the temple and therefore, of its property narrowed down first from the entire caste assembly to the collective body and the heads of families, and then to the head of one family. When it had reached this stage, it remained only to transform the right of ownership from that of the head of that family as trustee of the temple, and through it of the entire caste, to that of the head of that family in its own right.<sup>5</sup>

The origin and development of the *Janmi* domination was, therefore, inseparably connected with the existence and development of the caste hierarchy. I had, in fact, statistically proved in my earlier Malayalam history of Kerala that

1) The Pulayas, the Parayas, the Kanakkers and other depressed castes are the lowest in the matter of ownership of property. On the other hand, the highest caste, the Namboodiri, stands at the top of property ownership. In none of the four Cochin villages whose statistics were my basis for the conclusion was a single caste whose property was more than that of the Namboodiri nor less than that of the depressed castes.

2) Next to Namboodiris come the other caste Hindus. . . . Among them the lowest in terms of property ownership and of caste hierarchy are the Nairs.

3) Next only to the depressed castes, who are the poorest, are the Ezhavas and Muslims, while the Christians are lower than the Nairs but higher than the Ezhava-Muslims.

There was thus a clear correlation between the status in caste hierarchy and the ownership of property at the time of the survey (early 1930) which formed the basis of my conclusions.

The facts mentioned above relate to the mediaeval Kerala society. Changes which are by no means insignificant have been taking place during the last two centuries, particularly since the first world war and still more after the attainment of independence. As generation follows generation, larger and larger sections of families belonging to the "upper" castes get pauperized and are thrown into

the ranks of proletarians. As for the "lower" castes, the overwhelming majority of them, including the Scheduled Castes as a whole, continue to suffer the same socio-economic disabilities as earlier. The non-Scheduled but "backward" castes however throw up from their ranks small groups who are able to improve their lot by taking advantage of the capitalist development since the days of the British rule. A certain amount of fusion thus takes place of the pauperized sections of the "upper" castes, the majority of the "backward" castes and the Scheduled Castes as a whole.

In other words, while the factor of caste still exists and operates in the political life of Kerala (as of course in the rest of India), the mass organizations and political parties based on the unity of classes, and cutting across castes and communities, are acquiring greater and greater importance. The forward-looking elements in public life should therefore base themselves on the classes which are growing, while noting the existence of caste oppression. Uniting of the working people belonging to all castes in the struggle against class exploitation and oppression is therefore the essential prerequisite for the successful completion of the unfinished task of ending the *Jati-Janmi-Naduvazhi Medhavitham*. Forward-looking elements in the "upper" castes for their part cannot afford to adopt a negative approach to the aspirations of the "lower" castes.

Our party and myself as one of its activists have thus been basing ourselves on the Marxist theory of class struggle and subordinating the problem of caste oppression to the needs of uniting the exploited against the exploiting classes, irrespective of the caste to which each belongs.

### *At All-India Level*

Although initially confined to Kerala as described above, my activities gradually extended themselves to all-India politics. I had therefore to deal in the 1940s and 1950s with several questions of all-India importance in day-to-day agitations and propaganda as well as theoretically. Those were the days when I was working as a functionary of the Communist Party in Kerala and taking up some assignments at the Party Centre too.

By the end of the 1950s and in early 1960s, as is well-known, the Communist Party entered a phase of serious inner-party differences. The character of Indian society, the socio-economic content of the Indian revolution and innumerable problems of policy, tactics and strategy naturally arose. I, on my part, decided to undertake a serious study of the economic, socio-cultural and political problems of Indian society and revolution.

The result was the book under the title, *Economics and Politics of India's Socialist Pattern*, written in 1963-1964 and published in August 1966. That, in fact, was my contribution to the evolution of the fundamental programme of the Indian revolution on the basis of which the differences within the Communist movement were sought to be resolved.

The Programme drawn up by the Communist Party of India (Marxist) in 1964, as is known, resolved these differences, though a section of the undivided CPI did not accept it. That Programme had to deal, along with other questions, with the extent of pre-capitalist influences on current Indian society. The problem and its solution were explained in the Programme in the following words :

Capitalist development in India is not of the type which took place in western Europe and other advanced capitalist countries. Even though developing in the capitalist way Indian society still contains within itself strong elements of pre-capitalist society. Unlike in the advanced capitalist countries where capitalism grew on the ashes of pre-capitalist society, destroyed by the rising bourgeoisie, capitalism in India was superimposed on pre-capitalist society. Neither the British colonialists whose rule continued for over a century, nor the Indian bourgeoisie into whose hands power passed in 1947, delivered those smashing blows against pre-capitalist society which are necessary for the free development of capitalist society and its replacement by socialist society. *The present Indian society, therefore, is a peculiar combination of monopoly capitalist domination with caste, communal and tribal institutions. It has thus fallen to the lot of the working class and its Party to unite all the progressive forces interested in destroying the pre-capitalist society and to so consolidate the revolutionary forces within it as*

*to facilitate the most rapid completion of the democratic revolution and preparation of the ground for transition to socialism.*<sup>6</sup>

Basing myself on the above understanding of the Party I discussed the question of caste in my above-mentioned book. It may be useful to give a few relevant extracts from it :

It may appear paradoxical but it is true that casteism and communalism are increasingly becoming politically powerful, while their hold on the social life of the people is weakening. These are days when steadily growing numbers of people belonging to all castes and religious groups are breaking the traditional customs and behaviour patterns enjoined on them by their caste and religion. Old taboos are observed less by the present than by the preceding generation, while the preceding generation itself was observing it to a lesser extent than its predecessors. A process of steady disregard in the observance of taboos laid down by caste and religion has thus been going on at least for a century and a half. Rules regarding pollution and untouchability, inter-dining and inter-marriage, etc., are more and more losing their hold on the people.

At the same time, however, the caste, the religious community and the tribe are becoming more and more powerful in the political life of the country. The very people who refuse to observe rules and taboos of the caste as a social organisation use caste tension in order to influence voters at the time of elections, to pull the string at the right quarters to secure job or contracts, etc.

For properly understanding this paradoxical phenomenon, it is necessary to note two facts :

Firstly, modern capitalism, "originally through the instrumentality of the British overlords and next of the national bourgeoisie, carried out revolutionary transformations in the various facets of India's socio-economic, political and cultural life.... There is, therefore, no denying the fact that the British rulers, acting though they were in their own narrow selfish interests, were cutting at the root of the so-called 'soul of India'; they were bringing about revolutionary transformations in the centuries-old Indian society".

Secondly, "the very fact that they were alien rulers made the British dependent on some classes and strata in Indian society who



looked up to the foreign rulers to protect their interests". Since they could not depend either on the masses of the working people or on the rising capitalist class to support their alien rule, "support had to be canvassed from the representatives on the old pre-British regime — princes and landlords, the priestly and other elements of the old outmoded caste-ridden society, the representatives of the religious hierarchy, the leaders of village communities and tribes, etc. They, therefore, have to make compromises with everyone of these strata which represented the old society. They had also to use the backward (caste, communal tribal, etc.) consciousness of the mass of the people".

This compromise between the foreign rulers and the representatives of the outmoded social institutions, including caste, reflected itself in the character of the leadership of the freedom movement. Political radicalism combined with socio-cultural backwardness was one face of the emerging bourgeois democratic movement. The other side of the same coin was socio-cultural radicalism allying itself with political support to alien rulers. Freedom fighters championing the cause of Hindu or Muslim revivalism, pledging themselves to defend the *Varnasramadharm*a or Islamic law as the case may be; radicals and even "socialists" opposing the freedom movement and joining hands with British rulers — these were the two alternatives presented by the political leadership of the rising bourgeoisie.

These two trends eventually got consolidated in the two doctrines of "one and indivisible India" (Akhanda Bharat) and "India consisting of two nations — Hindu and Muslim". It is a measure of the fiasco of the bourgeois leadership of the freedom movement that the consummation of their cherished goal took the form of two sovereign states being carved out of the old, united and British-ruled India.

We of the Communist movement can proudly claim that we took up the banner of revolt against those sections of the bourgeois leadership which brought this about. It is true that we failed in our effort — also that in making the effort we slipped into certain serious errors. The fact, however, remains that, while every other political party, every other organization and group, participating in the freedom movement rallied behind this or that group of bourgeois

leaders, we of the Communist movement fought both. Alone among the political parties, groups and organizations in the country, we championed the the cause of uniting the several nationalities inhabiting India and forming a voluntary federation through which the gains of the anti-imperialist struggle can be consolidated and a new India of the people built. That we were too small a force to have any immediate impact on the total political situation and therefore the country came to be divided leading to the tragic communal carnage, is true. But it is a matter of satisfaction and pride that we made the effort.

Ever since the latter half of the 1930s when the Communist movement in India unified itself and started actively intervening in the national political situation, its leadership, ranks and the masses following it had to fight an incessant battle against the ideologies of the bourgeois-landlord classes which got consolidated in political parties like the Congress, the Muslim League and so on. We had to swim against the current in the 1940s, keeping away from the Quit India Movement but still fighting the British policy of repression against the freedom movement; rallying the people behind the Soviet Union and other forces of the world revolutionary movement, even while fighting British imperialism which for the moment happened to be in the anti-facist camp. The struggle that we waged simultaneously against the Congress brand of Akhanda Bharat and the Muslim League's "two nations theory" was inseparable from the effort to take India's struggle for freedom, democracy and modernization to a successful conclusion.

This struggle often isolated us from the mainstream of the freedom movement. This, however, tempered our will to fight the bourgeoisie and its class allies, rallying larger and larger sections of the working people under the banner of proletarian revolution in India and abroad. That was why, alone among the left forces in the country, we were able to organize such gigantic militant movements as Bengal's Tebhaga, Andhra's Telengana, Malabar, Maharashtra's Warli area, and so on in the post-war and post-independence years. The fact that certain serious errors were committed in the process did not prevent us from securing the support of still larger sections of the people.

This became clear when, in the first general elections that took place under the new Constitution framed after the attainment of independence, the Communist Party became the major opposition group in Parliament and in four states; in two out of the four, the Party, together with its allies, came almost to the point of securing a majority in the legislature and forming a coalition government. Just five years later, the Party actually secured a majority in one legislature, following which it formed its own state government.

This is an honour reserved only for the Communist Party. In the subsequent years when the Party came to be split, the stonger of the two became the major constituent of the coalition and government that came into existence consisting of left and other opposition parties. Today too, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) is heading coalitions and governments in three states - a position which is occupied by no other party, group or organization.

The political developments of 1980 once again underscored the truth of what is stated above. The year witnessed the desintegration of all parties of the bourgeois-landlord ruling classes; the strongest of them, though in power at the Centre and in the majority of states, is riven with internal conflicts and rapidly losing its hold on the people. The same fate is overtaking all those opposition parties which refuse to take the principled position of fighting for democracy and in defence of the interests of the working people and for this purpose cooperating with the left. A movement is, therefore, on to unite all the left and other opposition forces on the basis of a modest programme of serving the people and fighting the ruling classes.

It is, therefore, surprising that some people, including *Rajasekhara Shetty* about whom reference has been made in this article, should talk of "*Marx having failed in Hindu India*". Nearly half-a-century of political developments in India has, on the contrary shown that all bourgeois ideologies, including *Shetty's own "class caste struggle"* have failed in India; the only ideology which has proved its capacity to stand up to the ruling classes, can find reasonable lasting solutions for India's problems, is Marxism-Leninism.

It is just because we of the Communist movement have been trying to apply this ideology to the specific conditions of India that the united Communist movement till 1964 and the CPI(M) since then have won modest victories in the political field. The attacks launched against the Communist movement (as *Rajasekhara Shetty* has launched) would *only help those who want to save the ruling classes out of the crisis that is overtaking them.*

- 1 Social Scientist Vol 6, No. 4, November 1977.
- 2 Economic and Political Weekly, 24 January 1981.
- 3 Ibid 28 March 1981.
- 4 E M S Namboodiripad, "Kerala Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow," Calcutta, National Book Agency, 1967, p. 47
- 5 Ibid p. 48.
- 6 Communist Party of India (Marxist), Programme, 1964. (With amendment by 9th Congress in Madurai June 27 to July 2, 1972), p. 33 Emphasis added.

## ANNEXURE - II

### *Towards a Theoretical Understanding of Caste and Class*

(Sharad Patil, Satyashodak Communist Party, Dhule, Maharashtra)

Gail Omvedt remarks that there is a crisis in Marxism on a world scale —

'..... disagreements exist on a world scale and they are so broad and basic that it is necessary to admit that on a world scale, Marxism itself is in a kind of theoretical crisis .....' (*Samata* 2/1983 - pp. 41-43)

#### **Two Solutions :**

According to her the crisis is due to the Soviet espousal of the unilinear methodology of historical materialism, while the solution lies with the Chinese multilinear methodology.

Anthropology has taken giant strides in the post-Marx-Engels period, especially in England, America and France. But the greatest theoretical advance has been made by French Marxist anthropologists. Two schools have emerged there, one claiming that class methodology is applicable to even primitive societies while the other hesitates to consider inequalities in primitive societies as classes.

The relations of production in a pre-exploitative primitive society are communal or blood relations and hence based on kinship. The Vedic words *bandhu*, *jnati*, *sa-jata*, etc. and the Pali word *sa-lohita* denote blood-relationship or kinship, and as they belong to the Indian tribal society proper, kinship constituted its infrastructure and ideology both.

The same is the case with religion. There was no religion in pre-exploitative primitive societies. What they had was magic. J. G. Frazer, Joseph Needham and George Thomson, the great British savants whom Maurice Bloch totally neglects, define magic as the substitute for technology for these primitive societies. Thomson proves that science, philosophy, literature and arts are products of magic. In this role magic performed the function of forces of production and this magical technology was inseparable from the magical ideology of the primitives. Magic in India was constituted by sacrifice: *yajna*. The *Mimamsakas* define dharma (religion) as commands or directives to perform sacrifices. The Vedic word *karma* means magical labour that was productive and which was performed collectively. Many sacrificial Vedic hymns are called *gana-karma*, tribal labour.

In contradistinction to the French Marxist anthropologists who extend class methodology even to pre-exploitative primitive societies, Omvedt limits it to exploitative societies. She declares that 'wherever there are exploitative relations of production, wherever one section of society toils and produces but is deprived of the fruits of their production while another section of society does not labour but exercise *control* over the means of production and appropriates what is produced—there are classes'. The term 'control', put by me in italics, does not belong to the classical Marxist definition of class. Lenin uses the term 'ownership' and not 'control'. Omvedt has deleted the following concluding sentence while quoting Lenin in support of her above-mentioned definition of class.

"...Clearly, in order to abolish classes completely, it is not enough to overthrow the exploiters, the landlords and capitalists, not enough to abolish *their* property; it is necessary also to abolish *all private ownership of the means of production.*" (Italics mine-8P)

Godelier realises that the institutions of inequality in non-European primitive societies cannot be characterised as classes and there he stops. He fails to supply the missing link that can bridge the gulf between class societies and pre-class primitive societies. This multilinear methodology, thus, fails to provide a convincing alternative to the unilinear one.

## Pre-class states and stateless class societies:

According to traditional historical materialism, state can come into being only after the emergence of classes in a classless or primitive communist society. (It should be noted that Omvedt accepts the disproved hypothesis of primitive communism).

I have demonstrated in the II<sup>nd</sup> part of my book : '*Dasa Sudra Slavery*' (still unpublished) that state as the instrument of exploitation and administration arose in India during the period of tribal or communal slavery itself, i.e. during the concluding phase of Indus civilization. This *rajaka* (monarchical) form of matrilineal slave state gave way in some parts of the country invaded by Aryan tribes to the *rajaka* form of patrilineal slave state and both these forms of communal slave states were superceded by the *a-rajaka* (non monarchical) form of patriarchal slave state called '*sangha-gana*' by the Buddhist canons. French anthropologists have come across analogous findings in their study of early Africa.

## The missing link:

India has taken this non-class road and continued on it up to the coming of the British imperialism. With the colonial society it has taken a road which is a combination of the old non-class road and the new class-road. The riddle of Indian social revolution could not be solved unless this missing link was located.

All indologists, Marxist as well as non-Marxist, have without exception interpreted the word *varna* as colour. The so-called Aryan theory of colour collapsed as soon as Kosambi demonstrated that the *varna* system had arisen in the pre-Aryan Indus period itself. But even Kosambi went on imputing the same meaning to the word. A breakthrough was made when I proved that *varna* originally meant moiety, half of a tribe, in the first part of my book, *Dasa-Sudra Slavery*.

Morgan himself had shown that a tribe was a unity of opposites constituted by its two moieties. But he considered both the moieties of a tribe to be equal. Engels and Marx agreed with Morgan and paid no attention to Bachofen's discovery of gynocracy though they praised his discovery of matriarchy or mother right. Even for

Bachofen matriarchy was a rule while gynocracy was an exceptional, morbid development. Hence, the myth of primitive communism has remained unaffected up to this time.

Bloch makes a passing reference to J. J. Bachofen and takes no notice of Robert Briffault at all, though the latter also was a French anthropologist. Most surprising is the refusal by Marxist feminists to consider the historical reality of gynocracy. Co-authoring with Nirmala Sathe, Omvedt affirms in the article, 'Sharad Patil va Stri-mukti', that according to most of the modern anthropologists there was no such society as matriarchy or gynocracy.

I have given, apart from non-Indian evidences, Indian evidences for proving promiscuity in ancient Indian society in my book. In the same manner I have given sufficient Indian evidences, apart from evidences from world over, for proving the existence of gynocracy in India. Gurdon's is an eye witness account of the Khasis. Same is the case with Padmanabh Menon's classic, '*History of Kerala*.' It should be noted that Kosambi had not read Menon's great work. The word '*Stri-rajya*' occurs in Mahabharata and it has left to us accounts of gynocracies of Mahishmati and Indra-prastha. I have demonstrated that *vai-rajya* meant gynocracy in the Vedas. In my debate with the Sanskritists, Dr. M. A. Mehendale and Dr. Bal Gangal, conducted in the Marathi monthly *Naibharat*, I have adduced irrefutable evidences from the Sanskrit grammar. Thomson has furnished indisputable accounts of gynocracies recorded by the ancient Greek historians.

I have not claimed that every primitive society passes through gynocracy. Only those primitive peoples who arrive at agriculture without passing through pastoralism have attained to gynocracy. Hitty tells us that the agricultural civilization of the Arabs had given rise to gynocratical states, while the pastoral Beduin Arabs never arrived at that stage.

But the total neglect by non-traditional Marxist anthropologists have prevented them from locating the missing link that impelled non-European primitive societies to pass from non-exploitative stage to exploitative stage by the non-class route. Ancient Indian gynocratic tribal state was a unity of opposites constituted by the two *varnas* or moieties, one of women and the other of



men. It was a non-exploitative society, but because the *Kshatra varna* of women ruled over the Brahman *varna* of men through *sabha* (tribal council) and *samiti* (tribal assembly) it was a state. It was a kinship-based society and hence it was a tribal society.

The contradiction between the two *varnas* of this society intensified as soon as it attained to surplus production. The two *varna* system of the non-exploitative gynocratic society was then transformed into the three *varna* system of the matrilineal non-class slavery. The non-exploitative tribal institution of *varna* was transformed into its opposite – an exploitative tribal institution.

With the anti-slavery feudal revolution led by Buddha the new non-class exploitative institution of *jati* took the place of the old non-class exploitative institution of *varna*.

This is the missing link as far as the pre-capitalist Indian society is concerned. Other non-European countries, especially African, will have to find out their own missing links. Only with this the unilinearity of Marxist methodology will come to an end and only then it can burst forth into a new blossom of multilinearity.

### **The core of Marxist methodology :**

Terray declares in his 'Marxism and Primitive Society' :—

'In my view this kind of definition (of mode of production as a form of classification) is from the point of view of research both unnecessary and harmful. What we need is not a system of classification but an analytical tool, in other words a precise and vigorous definition which will enable us to state clearly the elements we use in the intellectual process of constructing a mode of production from the concrete and real phenomena under examination.'

Terray's demand is for an unchanging methodological tool that is capable of deciphering changing research material, while Omvedt's demand is for such an unchanging methodological tool which is capable of defining a mode of production without undertaking its historical research.

Gail Omvedt says : " The purpose of part I of this article was twofold :

(1) To introduce some basic concept of historical materialism, and (2) to argue that most of what passes for 'Marxism' in India is not really historical materialism, but mechanical materialism which is incapable of giving an analysis of caste, of women, or for that matter of imperialism and the state in India today.

" This theoretical discussion was necessary because it is only on the basis of historical materialism that we can give an analysis of Indian society and history....."(Samata).

An analytical or methodological tool can never remain unchanged while acting upon various types of research material and no methodological tool, however 'perfectly' or 'scientifically' reconstructed it may be, can be a substitute for research of the subject matter.

The core of Marx's historical materialism is not its class methodology but its method of studying a mode of production at a social formation. Marx instructs that the study of a social edifice should start from its base, then proceed to its super-structure and abstracting from its surface study reveal its inner structural laws.

But the task of a methodology is not to show an imaginary inner link. Omvedt imposes such an imaginary inner link on the pre-colonial 'caste-feudal' society of India.

In her total ignorance of indology she asserts that *varna* system did not exist in India. Hence, according to her postulation the so-called caste-feudal system has been in existence in India right since the closing period of the Indus Civilization. If classes have been in concrete (*murta*) existence in India for more than 4,000 years, how is it that neither Sanskrit, nor Pali and Ardhamagadi have any word to denote it? How is it that if castes were 'specific relations of production' along with classes, material and real castes can be relegated to the superstructure of the pre-colonial Indian society and immaterial and unreal classes be said to have constituted its base? This is how the pre-colonial non-class Indian society is forcibly fitted in the class methodology of traditional Marxism I

## The basic social reality of modern India :

If caste was the only basic social reality of pre-colonial India, what is the basic social reality of modern India? The CPI (M) is still not prepared to give any materiality to caste; for it only class is real and material, while *caste exists only in the minds of Indian people*. According to the reflectionist epistemology of Marxist philosophy a mental image or thought is the reflection of a material reality existing outside and independently. How is it that caste, which never had any extramental material reality, has existed in Indian minds since thousands of years? The philosophical contention of M. Basavapunniah, that only class contradictions are antagonistic while other social contradictions, e. g. caste contradictions, are non-antagonistic, arises out of the neo-Brahminical Marxism of the Indian communist leadership. (*Social Scientist*, Sept. 83; my rejoinder in *Satyashodhak Marx-vadi*, Nov. 83).

CPI has now veered to giving materiality to caste along with class. But according to it the basic social reality in present India is class, while caste is secondary. The panacea of traditional Marxism, that class struggle by itself will solve every problem of inequality in India, is smuggled in by this new sophistication.

The Constitution of independent India has granted reservation to the scheduled castes and tribes who constitute 22% of the Indian population. Mandal Commission recommends the same for the Other Backward Castes who constitute 52% of the Indian population. Thus, *the basic social reality of nearly three quarters of Indians is caste*. The same problem posed by Ambedkar in 1936 confronts us today: can a socialist revolution be successfully undertaken without first abolishing the caste system? Though not less important, these being practical problems and thus outside the scope of this paper, I am only enunciating them.

(Excerpts from the paper presented at a CISRS consultation in Bangalore, May 26-28, 1984).

## THE AUTHOR

V. T. Rajshekar was till 1979 the Deputy Chief Reporter of the *Indian Express*, Bangalore, South India. A Marxist, Ambedkarite, a prolific writer, his articles have appeared in several leading newspapers and journals in India and abroad.

Author of about 20 books, many of them translated to different Indian and foreign languages, he is presently the Editor of *the Voice*, considered the only English organ of the Untouchables and other persecuted minorities of India.

Apart from the caste system, the problem of Untouchables, tribals and backward classes, his other field of specialisation is India's Muslim problem.

He was dismissed from the *Indian Express* (1979) for taking up the cause of the Untouchables, Muslims and other persecuted minorities. Since then he is engaged in a study of "class-caste struggle", a theory that is fast catching up in view of the failure of the communist movement in India.

As the first president of the India-China Friendship Association, Karnataka, he led a good-will delegation to China in 1980. Again he visited China in 1983 as a representative of the Indian Untouchables. He is connected with several All-India organisations of Dalits, Muslims, Christians, Backward Classes, Marxists and rationalists.