

# Caste identity & social justice



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# "Caste identity", a must to assure socio-economic justice

(1) *DV family pained by Dr. Teltumbde reply*

Healthy and wholesome differences among thinkers and writers enhance the reader's understanding of the subject under scrutiny. But if these differences go astray and become unwholesome attacks and result in a personal satire, they are bound to create a hazy and perplexing scenario before the readers. The allusion here is our Editor's advice to Dr. Teltumbde (DV June 16, 2005 p.25: "*Teltumbde must come out of sinister Socialist Brahmin grip*") and Dr. Teltumbde's reply to the Editor (DV July 16, 2005 p.7: "*Socialist Brahmin calls DV casteist*").

I confess that I have not read Dr. Teltumbde's books nor do I know anything about his age and calling. It is only from the Editor's remarks in the June 16 issue that I came to know Dr. Teltumbde's close relationship with Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and that he is an "honest intellectual".

## MARXIST OVERTONES

The title of these remarks is, "*Teltumbde must come out of sinister socialist Brahmin grip*" which is a bit of advisory in nature and which narrate our Editor's own experiences while working with the marxists, most of them being Brahmins. This, in fact is the Editor's comment on a review of Dr. Teltumbde's book, *Anti-Imperialism & Annihilation of Castes*. The review is titled, "*Dalit intellectuals bid to convert black crow into white*" (DV June 16, 2004 p.24).

While going through the review the general impression the readers gets is that Dr. Teltumbde has marxist overtones in

his book and so he is accusing the Leftists of neglecting Dalit emancipation and the fight against caste. With the help of marxist ideology he expects the Indian Left to dismantle caste and their failure in doing so is attributed by Dr. Teltumbde to the Indian marxists being upper castes.

If this marxist shade of Dr. Teltumbde has propelled our Editor to let lose himself from the grip of "Socialist Brahmins" through the comments, there appears nothing objectionable on the part of the Editor. Being a close relative of Babasaheb, who has profusely criticised marxists, the Editor's comments seem quite on the right track.

#### **D.V. DUBBED CASTEIST**

But the regret is: Dr. Teltumbde has gone astray in his reply to the Editor dubbing the DV as casteist and incriminating the Editor of Brahmin-bashing. He has not stopped here, but cast aspersions on the Editor's "*caste identity*" theory and has gone to the extent of asking the Editor to call *Dalit Voice* as "Shetty Voice" though the Editor has revealed his caste umpteen times through his writings and speeches. This smacks of profanation on the part of Dr. Teltumbde whom the Editor has called with respect as "an honest intellectual"?

#### **(2) Dishonest intellectuals of Maharashtra**

I have not invented the above sub-caption keeping in mind Dr. Teltumbde but this has been my serious observation for the last 20 years. I am, of course, referring to Ambedkarite intellectuals generally, who fall under the categories: politicians, social workers, writers and even monks. They claim that they are staunch Ambedkarite scholars. Some say they are born Ambedkarites. But frankly there has been among them catastrophic ideological disintegration which has

percolated even among the masses. The disarray into which Ambedkarite movement has fallen after the *parinirvana* of Babasaheb, speaks volumes about the intellectual dishonesty and disintegration of these worthies. They have left the marks of this brittleness through their writings and also the sundry institutions they run. The solid mirror of Ambedkarite caravan can show the post-Ambedkarite cracks to those who have eyes to see.

### CONTAMINATED THOUGHTS

Let me point out the dimension of this disintegration in very clear terms. Peculiarly, Ambedkarite thought has been used as a tag to truck it to: 1. gandhism, 2. marxism and 3. Hedgewar's Hindu nationalism. So, the expressions that naturally emanate from such extricate trucking are: 1. Gandhian-Ambedkarites, 2. Marxist-Ambedkarites and 3. *Samrasta*-Ambedkarites.

These anomalous manifestations are visible in Maharashtra glaringly during election times when the fragmented blue flag is attached to different vehicles of upper caste political parties. Not only the political aspect but even social, cultural and literary aspects of Phule-Ambedkarite movement are contaminated by this kind of trucking. And what an arrogance these satellites developed over the years. Some of my collegemates, educated in the institutions founded by Babasaheb himself, wish me *laal salaam* (red salute), instead of *Jai Bhim*, through their letters and writings. And mind well, they are being projected as very great literary figures in Maharashtra. Some worthies have penned books to bring forcibly an affinity between Marx and Babasaheb and have gone to the extent of demanding an evaluation of Ambedkarite thought as Aristotle had done with Plato. Their frenzies do

not stop here but vomit such sweeping statements as:

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar had nothing to do with political power and his conversion to Buddhism has totally failed.

### **TERRIBLE LACUNAE IN AMBEDKAR THOUGHT**

Those under the grip of gandhians work — and they are highly educated — in such organizations as: *Rashtra Seva Dal*, *Yuva Kranti Dal* and *Dalit Yuva Aghadi* — all gandhian fronts. Some from this variety shamelessly throw the statement:

Agarkar was greater than Ambedkar.

Again some highly educated have joined *Samrasta Manch* — a Hindu terrorist RSS outfit — and bathe in the sunshine of *Shiv Shakti-Bheemshakti* slogan-mongering. This is the plight of Ambedkarite thought in Maharashtra. These worthies write and speak in such a manner as if Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar has left some terrible lacunae in his thought and movement and they could be removed only by using him as a tag as these fellows have been doing for the last 50 years.

### **DEADLOCK IN MAHARASHTRA**

There is yet another cult known as "Osho-Ambedkar" emerging in Maharashtra with books on it which surely will bring one more cleavage among the so-called Ambedkarites.

Surprisingly, all these brand ambassadors seem to worry more about what will happen to Brahmins than to their own *samaj*, in future and point out that Babasaheb has worked with upper castes. But the truth was Babasaheb was the leader to these upper caste persons and they were his assistants. So, in Maharashtra it is a clear case of "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" and the suffering of Ambedkarites from split mental personality reaching schizophrenic dimensions.

This is general scenario of intellectual honesty in Maharashtra

which has generated an absolute deadlock in social, cultural and political fronts of Phule-Ambedkarite movement. But the moment you point out their relative brand and call them gandhian, marxist and RSS Ambedkarites, they take it as an insult and explode like landmines hidden underground and strive their nerves to stick up to their fake Ambedkarite guns. I am not writing this to malign anybody but have striven to hold a mirror to the realities in Maharashtra that reflect the fallacious claims of Ambedkarite intellectuals. May sanity dwell upon them to end this factionalism and cult-mania.

### (3) *Post-Ambedkarite attempts to destroy caste*

It was in 1936 that Babasaheb's undelivered speech, *Annihilation of Caste*, was published. This was his last speech addressed to Hindus expecting from them demolition of caste system by adopting two ways: 1. intercaste marriages and 2. destruction of Hindu scriptures that uphold caste system which he was sure the upper castes (Hindus) would not be able to accomplish for the simple reason that the *shastras* were written by Brahmin megalomaniacs to monopolise power and to subjugate all those who did not subscribe to their supremacy. In his earlier writing, *Castes in India*, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar has held Brahmins exclusively responsible for creating the caste-process. According to him the four *varnas*:

1. Brahmins, the priestly class;
2. Kshatriyas, the military class;
3. Vaishyas, the merchant class and
4. The *shudra*, the artisan and menial class – was essentially a class system, in which individuals, when qualified, could change their class, and therefore classes did change their personnel. At some time in the history of the Hindus, the priestly class socially detached itself from the rest of the body of people and through a closed-door policy became a caste by itself. The other classes being subject to the law of social division of labour underwent differentiation, some into large, others into very minute groups. The Vaishya and *shudra* classes were the original inchoate plasm, which formed the sources of the numerous castes of today. As the military

occupation does not very easily lend itself to very minute sub-division, the Kshatriya class could have differentiated into soldiers and administrators.

### DOORS CLOSED

This sub-division of a society is quite natural. But the unnatural thing about these sub-divisions is that they have lost the open-door character of the class system and have become self-enclosed units called castes. The question is: were they compelled to close their doors and become endogamous, or did they close them of their own accord? I submit that there is a double line of answer: Some closed the door: Others found it closed against them....". (Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: *Writings & Speeches*, Vol.1, 1979 p.18).

That the Brahmins first closed in and became endogamous was reason enough for the nearer classes to Brahmins to imitate them; has been explained by Babasaheb with the help of Gabriel Tarde's Law of Imitation (ibid pp.19-20). Kshatriyas and Vaishyas, being in proximity with Brahmins in the sociological sense of trade, imitated even the most obnoxious customs of Brahmins like girl marriage and *sati* (Ibid p.20) to maintain and perpetuate endogamy. *Shudras* automatically found the doors closed against them. It was after the codification of caste system that privileges and punishments were prescribed by Manu. It was after this that caste system became terror-culture with legalising hereditary untouchability. The *shudra* class was further cleaved, forcibly, into: 1. touchable *shudras* (present BCs) and 2. Untouchable *shudras* (present SCs).

After having explained to the upper castes: the genesis, mechanism and growth of caste system and after having pointed out the ways to dismantle it Babasaheb expected them to do something substantial in that direction till 1956 and ultimately got himself converted, along with 6 lakh followers, to an egalitarian, casteless religion, Buddhism, and took a pledge to convert entire India to Buddhism.

Now, the very pertinent question for us is: what attempts we have made, what line of action we have taken to fulfil his dream to create "a casteless India" through Buddhism? Ambedkarites are scattered throughout India. Taking into account the pan-Indian presence of Ambedkarites, is it not possible for them to establish a pan-Indian Buddhist organisation in which every Indian state and union territory can be represented and the process of Buddhist India can be accelerated?

### **BRAHMIN MUST FIRST DESTROY HIS CASTE**

Let me acquaint the DV readers with a reality in Maharashtra. A famous tribal writer and leader, Laxman Mane, is ready to convert himself, along with his tribe, to Buddhism. But shockingly, no religious or political and influential organization has welcomed this move. Only a group of employees arranged his programme a month back.

The Buddhist Society of India, (Boudh Mahasabha) established by Babasaheb himself instead of becoming a pan-Indian organisation functions like a marriage bureau. How are we going to convert India to Buddhism? Surely, not just by slogan shouting.

Maharashtrian Ambedkarites do not bother a whit about introspection, evaluation, research and development. The deadlock is dreadful.

That, caste is to be annihilated and done away with once and for all, nobody would deny and for that matter, it would be the most welcome social ideal for India. But what is the reality? The reality concerning caste has been very clearly laid down by Babasaheb throughout the *Annihilation of Caste* from section to section. After pointing out origin, mechanism and



development of caste in the *Castes in India* Babasaheb pointed the way to destroy it in the *Annihilation of Caste*. Who should begin the process of destruction, he has pointed out. The process should begin from the top and percolate to the bottom as per the law of imitation put forth by the sociologist Gabriel Tarde. He has not left the marxists and has explained in very clear terms how caste puts a moratorium on their efforts. Babasaheb says:

To excite the proletariat to bring about an economic revolution, Karl Marx told them: "You have nothing to lose except your chains". But the artful way in which the social and religious rights are distributed among the different castes whereby some have more and some have less, makes the slogan of Karl Marx quite useless to excite the Hindus against the caste system. Castes form a graded system of sovereignties, high and low, which are jealous of their status and which know that if a general dissolution came, some of them stand to lose more of their prestige and power than others do. You cannot, therefore, have a general mobilization of the Hindus, to use a military expression, for an attack on the caste system.

(Dr. Ambedkar, *W&S*, Vol.1, p.72).

### **BRAHMINS WILL NEVER DESTROY CASTE**

And about the priestly class (Brahmins), on whose shoulders Babasaheb puts the onus to destroy it, he has pointed out:

You may argue that there are secular Brahmins and priestly Brahmins and if the latter do not take up the cudgels on behalf of those who want to break Caste, the former will. All this of course sounds very plausible. But in all this it is forgotten that the break up of the caste system is bound to affect adversely the Brahmin Caste. Having regard to this, is it reasonable to expect that the Brahmins will ever consent to lead a movement the ultimate result of which is to destroy the power and prestige of the Brahmin Caste?... In my judgment, it is useless to make a distinction between the secular Brahmins and priestly Brahmins..." (Ibid p. 70).

Now leaving aside the beneficiaries of the caste system who are quite a minority — just 15-20%— and who are deadly against its destruction, should the process of destruction be

undertaken by the *shudras* and *atishudras* who form a whopping 80-85% in the population? If the answer is yet, then what movement has been undertaken? And if no, what is the alternative? Brahmins and marxists have already been written off to accomplish this task. At the fag end of his life Babasaheb pointed out through his movement, conversion to casteless religion, by materializing conversion to Buddhism which was to be a pan-Indian movement. But this process has been abandoned by his followers in Maharashtra, who claim to be Ambedkarites.

### CASTES CAN NEVER BE KILLED

Conversion to casteless religion can, to a great extent, reduce caste hatred, discrimination and blatant exploitation. About the non-Hindu religions, Babasaheb says:

"There may be castes among Sikhs and Mohammedans, but the Sikh and the Mohammedan will not outcast a Sikh or a Mohammedan if he broke his caste. Indeed the very idea of excommunication is foreign to the Sikhs and Mohammedans... Religion does not compel the non-Hindus to take the same attitude (as Hindus) toward caste..." (Ibid p.65).

Castes are to stay in India because the massive movements — by the upper castes, by the marxists and the Ambedkarites are not visible. Though Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar has not called "castes" as "ethnic identities" directly, nevertheless he has described them as "grade sovereignties, high and low..." (Ibid p.72), while describing their dominant power.

It is also true that Babasaheb created consciousness and self-respect, an awareness about their human rights and justice, through "caste identity campaigns", among the Backward Untouchable castes.

If castes are to stay in India, if the Indian Constitution has prescribed caste-based social justice — economic, social and

political, what is the alternative before the majority of Backward Castes which are victims of Brahminism? Brahmins and the allied upper castes have not only closed in by practising endogamy but they have also closed out the *shudra* and *atishudra* castes from the power structure of the country.

### MANU'S PRESCRIPTIONS

Now, the simple question is: Why did the Brahmins and the allied upper castes monopolise the power structure leaving, so flagrantly, the *shudra* and *atishudra* castes high and dry – even after 57 years of "independence"? Now that the occupational compulsions prescribed by Manu are considerably loosened and people of different castes have been empowered through the Constitution to take up any occupation, as a result of which Brahmins themselves have given up their ancestral calling by monopolising the superstructure –to use a marxist term – why are the victim castes prohibited from participation in it? There must be some reason. Is it because of some ancestral hatred and enmity? Neither the Brahmin initiated the caste-eradication process nor he — and his allied castes — has allowed the Backward Castes any participation and share in the power structure. Is it because of any racial jealousy, cultural conflict? Again to quote Babasaheb:

According to well-known ethnologists, the population of India is a mixture of Aryans, Dravidians, Mongolians and Scythians. All these stocks of people came into India from various directions and with various cultures, centuries ago, when they were in a tribal state. They all in turn elbowed their entry into the country by fighting with their predecessors, and after a stomach-full of it settled down as peaceful neighbours. Through constant contact and mutual intercourse they evolved a common culture that superseded their distinctive cultures. It may be granted that there has not been a thorough amalgamation of

the various stocks that make up the peoples of India... Ethnically all people are heterogeneous. It is the unity of culture that is the basis of homogeneity. (Ibid p. 6).

## AMALGAMATION OF STOCKS

Babasaheb has mentioned above that there has not been thorough **amalgamation** of various **stocks** of people belonging to the different race groups. Can we not say that Aryans, Mongolians and Cythians got themselves closed in caste clusters and closed out the Dravidian caste clusters from political, economic, educational, agricultural and industrial power sharing which the *shudra* and *atishudra* castes have been suffering from? What then is the meaning of "there has not been a thorough **amalgamation** of the various **stocks** that make up the peoples of India"?

Undoubtedly, it refers to the deprived Dravidian caste clusters. There cannot be any other meaning of the above statement. And moreover, what does unity of culture mean? It does not, surely, mean that you should marginalise, deprive and exploit 60-65% population of your own country in the name of religion, culture.

### *(4) Caste-based justice only resort*

If annihilation of caste is an impossibility – either by upper castes or by marxists or by Ambedkarites through Budhist conversions – the only alternative that remains to be adopted is the caste-based justice — social, economic and political as enshrined in the Indian Constitution. The expression "we the people of India" in the preamble – which regards "people" as sovereign — means "caste sovereignties" scattered in the nook and corner of the country.

If justice implies equality in social, economic and political sectors, then we have political equality given to each caste

through "adult suffrage" with the underlying principle — one man one vote and one vote one value. Social justice or equality also implies caste-based equality not with a hierarchical and vertical system but with a horizontal positioning of castes and communities operating as "greater but equal".

### CASTE-BASED BUDGETING

The Hindu fascists, in whatever garb they are — fundamentalists, marxists, gandhians etc. — want the system to be vertical with the poison of hatred, jealousy, superiority and inferiority complexes and with all the exploitative mechanism. Economic justice or equality presupposes share of the national incomes to each caste with a participation in the economic sectors: agriculture, trade industry, banking and all other "wealth-producing" professions and occupations. The Indian Constitution wants to bring the caste-edifice to a horizontal position killing its deadly poison.

Babasaheb's warning to the upper caste rulers is, therefore, meaningful in the sense that he appeals them to create social and economic equality with the help of political equality. Now that political equality (right to vote) has begun dismantling upper caste monopoly politics, in future the nature of political economy (annual budget system) will also change.

Editor V.T. Rajshekar has mentioned in his Editorial (July 1, 2005: "*Caste-wise budget allotment to caste based economic planning ensures social justice*") the necessity of caste-based budgeting for economic justice in the country. A country like America — which is not caste-ridden and whose constitution does not contain reservation policy — has recognized the significance of safeguards for its minorities such as Hispanics, Blacks and Red Indians in the name of "affirmative action" and "inclusiveness" in the fields of films, journalism, TV, banking

and industries private and public. But India's upper caste rulers, industrialists and the judiciary have been shamelessly using "merit" as a subterfuge to deny their share to the backward castes and communities despite the fact that the Indian Constitution vehemently recommends reservation policy as the best way to impart social (caste) justice.

Yes. Hindu caste, as it stands vertically, with all its poison, is bad. It is to be destroyed lock, stock and barrel. Babasaheb and many other great personalities wanted its eradication. He wanted the upper castes to dismantle it in their own way –if not the way he had suggested. Babasaheb also told the upper castes that he would strive in his own way — by converting India to Buddhism – to do away with it. But in the absence of a pan-Indian mass movement in that direction what is the way-out to fetch justice to the deprived castes?

### ABSENCE OF ANTI-CASTE MOVEMENT

Let there be no ambivalence regarding V.T. Rajshekar's "*caste identity*" and caste-based budget concepts. It is becoming amply clear that these concepts are sending shivers down the upper caste spinal chords as they have been witnessing their reflection in the present-day coalition politics of India.

The Dalit-Bahujan intellectuals — who claim to be Ambedkarites — should not be in two minds about empowerment of different marginalised castes to materialize the constitutional justice.

If castes are to be imparted justice then their dormant ignorance is to be removed through caste-awakening which ultimately amounts to "*caste identity*" and the overall position of caste in the vertical hierarchical caste-edifice.

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## "Caste identity" thesis is practical, time-tested & fully Ambedkarite

I am greatly enthused and overwhelmed by the event of international award given to the Bahujan thinker and ideologue, Editor V.T. Rajshekar, for the "path-breaking" and highly innovative book, *Caste — A Nation Within the Nation*. The award was conferred on him on behalf of London Institute of South Asia (LISA) by Rev. David Haslam at a function held on April 30, 2005. Usman Khalid, a noted London-based writer, delivered a speech about why VTR deserved the award.

### A LIFE-LONG CHAMPION

VTR has cherished an ideal, he has ideological ammunition at his disposal and he has aimed at a target to be hit and dismantled. The ideal is the liberation of Dalit-Bahujans, the ammunition to fight comprises the thoughts of Phule, Shahu, Babasaheb Ambedkar, Periyar and the entire cultural struggle running through Indian history against Brahminism and the target to be dismantled is the system of Manu.

What surprises about him is his crystal-clear thinking uncontaminated by diversions and detours and his undaunted courage with which he dares the *Manuvadis*. We do not come across such a challenging voice amidst several so-called writers and thinkers claiming to be Dalit-Bahujans who have got so easily corrupted and co-opted by *Manuvadis* from time to time.

In fact VTR has become a trend-setter for Dalit-Bahujan writings with his sharp analytical proclamations on national and international events with reference to Indian Dalit-Bahujans, with reference to their struggle against Hinduism alias Brahminism and with reference to how deadlocks are

being created in their fight for liberation.

### OBJECTIVE & UNIVERSAL WRITINGS

There are hundreds of Dalit-Bahujan writers in different regional language in India. But majority of them write about their decultured plight in the past and try to gain sympathy and popularity from the Brahminical media. At least it is so with Dalit-Bahujan writers of Maharashtra. They have developed an amnesia toward the fact that their icons Phule, Shahu, Dr. Ambedkar and Periyar have not written a single word about their own suffering, insults and injustice perpetrated against them by *Manuvadis*. These tallest personalities did not care much about their subjectivity and directed all their writings and struggles against the *Manuvadi* system with one pointedness.

VTR's writings fall under the category of objectivism and universalism. Through his writings he links the plight of Dalit-Bahujans with the plight of all those sufferers in different parts of the world irrespective of the countries they belong to and languages they speak and write in.

In a way VTR has become a spokesman of the persecuted peoples of the world through his *Dalit Voice*. He has waged an indomitable fight against slavery, inequality, injustice and discrimination – whether it is native or foreign. It is this objectivism and universalism which has been recognized on international level by awarding VTR.

### MISUNDERSTOOD IN INDIA

The award-winning book, *Caste: A Nation Within the Nation* (BFC, Bangalore, Rs. 140) has been properly understood by a minority of readers outside "the *Dalit Voice* family". That the book prescribes an effective remedy to end Brahminism has



not been accepted by those who juxtapose the book with Dr. Ambedkar's *Annihilation of Caste*.

The critics have neither read penetratively Dr. Ambedkar's book nor have they read VTR's book. They just gone on harping on the tune that becoming conscious of "*caste identity*" will increase casteism and caste conflicts in the country. Such people should answer a simple question: Why is it that in India only a handful of castes fight for their rights and others do not?

Those who have been fighting for their share in power are the castes concious and awakened about their position and place in the caste system.

#### CASTE WAR AGAINST B.S.O.

What VTR has emphasised is that the conflicts in this process will be only secondary or what he calls as secondary contradiction existing for a short while. But according to him, the *caste identity* process will not stop here only. The process will ultimately result in the principal contradiction which will inevitably be against Brahminism or casteism.

The awakened castes have been waging war against the Brahminical Social Order for their rights and share in power. If all castes get their rights and share in proportion to their population, and if they came on the line of equality, Brahminism will automatically subside and vanish. But this cannot happen without "*caste identity*".

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's *Annihilation of Caste* contains some very fundamental solutions for the eradication of caste system. One of these basic solutions is inter-caste marriages. Babasaheb had written this speak to be delivered to the Jat Pat Todak Mandal, an organization headed by upper caste Hindus. The

Mandal people could not tolerate the critically analytical high voltage language and wanted Babasaheb to change some parts of the speech and rewrite them. But Babasaheb refused to do so and the speech remained undelivered and later it was published as a book. Babasaheb had intended that the solutions given in his speech had to be implemented by the upper caste Hindus —those Hindus who sincerely felt the need for abolition of caste. He wanted them to initiate a movement against caste so that their gesture and intention could be imitated by the "lower castes" without any friction. Such a movement was to take place as per the sociological principle: imitation of the higher by the lower.

### **"CASTE IDENTITY" TO END CASTEISM**

But when the upper castes were so agitated over the language of Babasaheb's speech, how could they start the movement? Babasaheb knew that caste abolition would need an honest and concerted movement from the upper castes and upper castes would not begin it because caste abolition would cause them the greatest loss of their privileges and their concrete monopoly over the power structure. As long as upper caste status helped them to manipulate the power structure, they would not do anything regarding caste eradication. They would not end casteism.

If the upper castes have been unwilling to annihilate casteism and their monopoly by destroying caste, what other alternative remains to end casteism and upper caste monopoly? There are some writers and thinkers in the Bahujan Samaj who insist upon achieving "merit" to defeat caste monopoly over the power structure.

But these people do not understand the simple fact that "merit" in India is stamped by caste.

Hence, Swami Ramdas, a Brahmin saint of Maharashtra, says that even if a Brahmin happens to be a corrupted fool yet he is the greatest in all the three kingdoms. What kind of merit these merit maniacs have been speaking of? The most meritorious and greatest personalities and icons of Bahujan Samaj, the Buddha, Asoka, Jyotiba Phule, Shahu Maharaj, Periyar and Dr. Ambedkar and very recently Shivaji — have already been demonised and denigrated by Brahminism.

These tallest of men are being respected outside India by the world because the outside world has recognised their merit but inside India they are regarded as mere scrap. If you are not an upper caste person your merit is rubbish for them.

#### NOVEL THEORY TO END CASTEISM

When your merit is stamped on the foetus in the womb itself where would be the merit maniacs bring it from? So, the merit theory to end caste monopoly is meaningless in India. (V.T. Rajshekar, *Merit, My Foot*, DSA-1987).

So, VTR has propounded an innovative theory of "*caste identity*" to end casteism and caste monopoly. The theory is practical and in keeping with Bahujan ideology of liberty, equality, justice and brotherhood.

"*Caste identity*" is not for fighting with other castes but fighting for the caste share in the power structure as per population percentage of that caste. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar himself resorted to this theory by awakening SC/ST/BC castes through his movement and has succeeded in getting nearly 50% reservations for these caste groups. The "*caste identity*" theory has begun bearing fruits in the Indian party politics as caste-based parties are emerging very fast and dodging Brahminical monopoly politics. These caste-based parties have

been claiming their share not only in the states but also in the centre. In future such parties will certainly instal the non-Congress and non-BJP (Bahujan) coalition at the Centre.

### CASTE INSIDE BUDHISM

When VTR says that "*caste identity*" is time-tested he means that it had been used by the Bahujan icons through their movements from time to time. The only thing VTR has done is through his analytical acumen he has properly interpreted it in his caste book with illustrations. In order to educate the Bahujans he conducted a Debate in *Dalit Voice* for five long years on "*caste identity*". Even if religious conversions renouncing Hinduism take place, the caste apportion will still remain unkilld. It is glaringly visible in Sikhism, Islam, Christianity and Budhist conversions which have already taken place in India. Besides, anti-conversion laws are being enacted in different states by *Manuvadi* rulers. The most marginalised, backward and deprived castes are still waiting to be awakened to get their share in the Indian power pyramid. Parliamentary democracy and the Indian Constitution has given these castes and subcastes an opportunity to struggle for their share.

VTR's award-winning book has generated an opportunity for these unawakened castes and sub-castes to initiate such struggles. The awakened Bahujan caste groups can render their moral and practical support to such castes by enlightening them.

The International award to VTR has recognised the values of Bahujanism on international level. I extend my heartfelt congratulations to VTR.

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