

# DALIT VOICE

[The Voice of the Persecuted Minorities]

Adviser : Dr. Mulk Raj Anand

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## THE FARCE OF VILLAGE SECURITY FORCE

Quoting Metcalfe's observations on Indian villages, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar told the Constituent Assembly: "I hold these village republics have been the ruination of India ... What is the village but a sink of localism, den of ignorance, narrow-mindedness and communalism", he said snubbing advocates of Gandhian *gram raj* or the panchayat raj. Events have since proved Ambedkar right and Gandhi wrong. The powerful landed gentry belonging to the dominant caste group has captured these "village republics" and so much so democracy is dead long back in the countryside. It is the tyranny of the dominant community over the rural poor. Shyam Benegal's award-winning film, *Manthan*, depicting the plight of the Untouchables in a Gujrat village milk co-operative, speaks of these stinking village republics. It is no wonder that the countryside looks more like an armed camp with each caste and religious group standing in battle readiness, daggers drawn. Official statistics say caste and communal riots are going up year by year. Newspapers daily carry horrid reports of such mass murders. Therefore, we don't want to go into details. Amid this gloomy atmosphere that is getting gloomier if not bloodier, the persecuted minorities of India may feel like seeing a ray of hope in the Govt. of India's decision to set up a "village security force." But the whole thing is so much shrouded in secrecy, that there may be an abortion before VSF is born. It has met with tremendous opposition even inside the Central Cabinet and the Chief Ministers are said to be furious with it. Therefore, the VSF may become yet another farce. To be used more as an vote-catching device. One report said (*Hindu* July 11) VSF "is intended to ensure protection to scheduled castes and other weaker sections. It is to be a small unit, preferably comprising ex-servicemen, with a sizeable number drawn from weaker sections and minorities selected with due care to exclude communal and caste prejudices. The members of the force are to be given weapons and if necessary, trained. Among other things, this force is to inform the police of the buildup of tension likely to cause violence." The report is so mischievous that it only adds to our suspicion. On what basis the personnel of VSF is to be selected? Why the report

is not clear about using VSF to protect Muslims against communal riots? What does the report mean when it says VSF is only intended to "inform" the police? Does it mean that VSF will not be allowed to directly deal with the enemies of dalits and minorities? All these doubts come to us. If the *Hindu* report is to be believed VSF is going to be toothless tiger. But even such a good-for-nothing proposal has met with stiff resistance from the Chief Ministers of UP, MP, and Bihar—comprising the stinking Hindu-Hindi heartland, the playfield of the RSS. The "national press" is hostile. The new Central Home Minister, R. Venkatraman, also did not give any new information on VSF when he replied to the ritualistic Parliament debate on atrocities on Untouchables on July 8, except saying "necessary instructions

have been issued for the setting up of the VSF." Like words in the *Vedas* meant to be recited but not followed, these govt. instructions are never meant to be implemented. Which scheme of the Govt. meant for the weaker sections is implemented in India? Under the existing rotten socio-economic structure of the village, aptly described by Ambedkar, will it be ever possible for any Govt. to see that its instructions are implemented? No force can protect the weaker sections as long as the existing structures are not destroyed. The ethos of the country says: Either be a slave-owner or be a slave, either be a property owner or become a property. Under such circumstances, even village rakshaks (VSF) will turn into village bakshaks. We have to educate dalits and persecuted minorities on these vital matters. □

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## HOW S.S.S. CAME TO BE FORMED TO FIGHT R.S.S. : T.N. DALIT LEADER EXPLAINS

(E. Kadarkarayandi, dt. president, Anusuchita Jati Sangha, Tirunelveli, TN)

*In Tenkasi, Shencottah, Kadayanallur and Pulingudi of this district, Muslims, dalits, and Thevars (a backward Hindu caste group) are the predominant people. Thevars are the traditional enemies of both dalits and Muslims. If any clash occurs between Thevars and Muslims, the influential Thevars describe it as Hindu-Muslim clash. Dalits, because of the Hindu influence on them, also join Thevars and try to defend Thevars. They used to be in the forefront of any attack on Muslims without realising that these clashes were engineered by the Thevars. RSS and its front organisation, Vishwa Hindu Parishad, used to describe these clashes as Hindu-Muslim fight. Similarly when there was a Thevar-dalit clash, they used to describe it as dalit-caste Hindu clashes. One Raman, B.T. teacher of Kadayanallur, was the target of constant harassment. Even in his school, Hindu teachers used to ill-treat him from the day they came to know that he was an Untouchable. Had he revealed his caste identity, he would have had to face trouble much earlier. Finding his position unbearable, after long thinking, he embraced Islam. Thevars, belonging to the RSS group, did not like this and started a malicious campaign against him. They also started writing scurrilous things against Hinduism and Hindu gods and put the blame on Raman for all this. Such a virulent propaganda against him prejudiced the Hindu students also against him besides the teachers who had already turned against him. Such a situation made the very life of Raman and his other dalit comrades insecure. And it is this situation that forced them to form Samuthva Saha-*

*daratva Sangham (SSS) about which you had editorially commented in DV No. 18. SSS therefore, is solely intended to protect the dalit life and property and the honour of its women and also that of minorities. SSS is not interested in attacking anybody. We are strictly against any type of violence. After the Meenakshipuram mass conversion of dalits to Islam, Thevars belonging to the RSS group have been creating all sorts of problems to dalits in this area. With the influence they command with the police, they have foisted false cases on dalits. On 10-3-1982, there was a clash between dalits and Thevars at Kammepachari, near Kadayanallur, in which a murder case was filed against the dalits. For one and half months, dalits could not get bail but Thevars, who were mainly responsible for the clash, escaped all punishments. Not even a case was registered against them. Since then there had been continuous attacks on dalits in villages around here. Finding their life insecure, they decided to contact SSS at Puliangudi to get a permanent solution to their problems. Dalits have come to realise that no political party would ever come to their rescue. As "vote banks" dalits are to be approached only during elections and conveniently forgotten later. Therefore, dalits have pulled down all party flags and joined the SSS. The mo-*

(Cont. on page 10 Col. 2)

## MANDAL COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS

*(Since the Govt. of India's Mandal Commission has covered a section of the Muslims, Christians, Sikhs & neo-Buddhists, the recommendations are of great importance to delits and it will be also of interest to sympathetic Hindus, social scientists & foreign scholars, we give the full text of recommendations—Chapter XIII, page 57 to 60, though lengthy—EDITOR)(13.1) It may appear that the upliftment of Other Backward Classes (OBCs) is part of the larger national problem of the removal of mass poverty. This is only partially correct. The deprivation of OBCs is a very special case of the larger national issue: here the*

basic question is that of social and educational backwardness and poverty is only a direct consequence of these two crippling caste-based handicaps. As these handicaps are embedded in our social structure, their removal will require far-reaching structural changes. No less important will be changes in the perception of the problems of OBCs by the ruling classes of the country. RESERVATIONS: (13.2) One such change in the attitude of the ruling elite pertains to the provision of reservation in govt. services and educational institutions for the candidates of OBCs. It is generally argued that looking to the large population of OBCs (52%), recruitment of a few thousand OBCs every year against reserved vacancies is not going to produce any perceptible impact on their general condition. On the other hand, the induction of a large proportion of employees against reserved vacancies will considerably impair the quality and efficiency of the govt. services. It is also stated that the benefits of such reservations will be skimmed off by those sections of OBCs which are already well off and the really backward sections will be left high and dry. Another argument advanced against this approach is that the policy of largescale reservations will cause great heart-burning to those meritorious candidates whose entry into services will be barred as a result thereof. (13.3) All the

above arguments are based on fairly sound reasoning. But these are also the arguments advanced by the ruling elite which is keen on preserving its privileges. Therefore, like all such reasoning, it is based on partisan approach. By the same token, while illuminating some immediate areas of concern it tends to ignore much larger issues of national importance. (13.4) It is not at all our contention that by offering a few thousand jobs to OBC candidates we shall be able to make 52% of the Indian population as forward. But we must recognise that an essential part of the battle against social backwardness is to be fought in the minds of the backward people. In India, govt. service has always been looked upon as a symbol of prestige and power. By increasing the representation of OBCs in govt. services, we give them an immediate feeling of participation in the governance of this country. When a backward candidate becomes a Collector or a Suptd. of Police, the material benefits accruing from his position are limited to the members of his family only. But the psychological spin off of this phenomenon is tremendous; the entire community of that backward class candidate feels socially elevated. Even when no tangible benefits flow to the community at large, the feeling that now it has its "own man" in the "corridors of power" acts as morale booster. (13.5) In a de-

mocratic set-up every individual and community has a legitimate right and aspiration to participate in ruling this country. Any situation which results in a near-denial of this right to nearly 52% of the country's population needs to be urgently rectified. (13.6) Apprehensions regarding drop in the quality of Govt. services owing to largescale induction of SC/ST and OBC candidates against reserved posts may be justified only up to a point. But is it possible to maintain that all candidates selected on merit turn out to be honest, efficient, hard-working and dedicated? At present, top echelons of all the Govt. services are manned predominantly by open competition candidates and if the performance of our bureaucracy is any indication, it has not exactly covered itself with glory. Of course, this does not imply that candidates selected against reserved posts will do better. Chances are that owing to their social and cultural handicaps they may be generally a shade less competent. But, on the other hand, they will have the great advantage of possessing firsthand knowledge of the sufferings and problems of the backward sections of society. This is not a small asset for field workers and policy-makers even at the highest level. (13.7) It is no doubt true that the major benefits of reservation and other welfare measures for OBCs will be cornered by the more advanced sections of the backward communities. But is not this a universal phenomenon? All reformist remedies have to contend with a slow recovery along the hierarchical gradient; there are no quantum jumps in social reform. Moreover, human nature being what it is, a "new class" ultimately does emerge even in classless societies. The

chief merit of reservation is not that it will introduce egalitarianism amongst OBCs when the rest of the Indian society is seized by all sorts of inequalities. But reservation will certainly erode the hold of higher castes on the services and enable OBCs in general to have a sense of participation in running the affairs of their country. (13.8) It is certainly true that reservation for OBCs will cause a lot of heart burning to others. But should the mere fact of this heart-burning be allowed to operate as a moral veto against social reform? A lot of heart-burning was caused to the British when they left India. It burns the hearts of all White when the Black protest against Apartheid in South Africa. When the higher castes constituting less than 20% of the country's population subjected the rest to all manner of social injustice, it must have caused a lot of heart-burning to the lower castes. But now that the lower castes are asking for a modest share of the national cake of power and prestige, a chorus of alarm is being raised on the plea that this will cause heart-burning to the ruling elite. Of all the specious arguments advanced against reservation for backward classes, there is none which beats this one about 'heart-burning' in sheer sophistry. (13.9) In fact the Hindu society has always operated a very rigorous scheme of reservation, which was internalised through caste system. Ekalavya lost his thumb and Shambhuk his neck for their breach of caste rules of reservation. The present furore against reservations for OBCs is not aimed at the principle itself, but against the new class of beneficiaries, as they are now clamouring for a share of the opportunities which were all along monopolised by

the higher castes. **QUANTUM & SCHEME OF RESERVATION :** (13.10) SC/STs constitute 22.5% of the country's population. Accordingly, a pro-rata reservation of 22.5% has been made for them in all services and public sector undertakings under the Central Govt. In the States also, reservation for SC/STs is directly proportional to their population in each State. (13.11) As stated in the last Chapter (para 12.22) the population of OBCs, both Hindu and non-Hindu, is around 52% of the total population of India. Accordingly, 52% of all posts under the Central Govt. should be reserved for them. But this provision may go against the law laid down in a number of Supreme Court judgments wherein it has been held that the total quantum of reservation under Articles 15(4) and 16(4) of the Constitution should be below 50%. In view of this the proposed reservation for OBCs would have to be pegged at a figure which, when added to 22.5% for SC/STs, remains below 50%. In view of this legal constraint, the Commission is obliged to recommend a reservation of 27% only, even though their population is almost twice this figure. (13.12) States which have already introduced reservation for OBCs exceeding 27%, will remain unaffected by this recommendation. (13.13) With the above general recommendation regarding the quantum of reservation, the Commission proposes the following overall scheme of reservation for OBCs :- (1) Candidates belonging to OBCs recruited on the basis of merit in an open competition should not be adjusted against their reservation quota of 27%. (2) The above reservation should also be made applicable to promotion quota at all levels. (3) Reser-

ved quota remaining unfilled should be carried forward for a period of three years and dereserved thereafter. (4) Relaxation in the upper age limit for direct recruitment should be extended to the candidates of OBCs in the case of SC/STs. (5) A roster system for each category of posts should be adopted by the concerned authorities in the same manner as presently done in respect of SC/STs. (13.14) The above scheme of reservation in its tota should also be made applicable to all recruitment to public sector undertakings both under the Central and State Govts, as also to nationalised banks. (13.15) All private sector undertakings which have received financial assistance from the Govt. in one form or the other should also be obliged to recruit personnel on the aforesaid basis. (13.16) All universities and affiliated colleges should also be covered by the above scheme of reservation. (13.17) To give proper effect to these recommendations, it is imperative that adequate statutory provisions are made by the Govt. to amend the existing enactments, rules, procedures, etc. to the extent they are not in consonance with the same. **EDUCATIONAL CONCESSIONS :** (13.18) Our educational system is elitist in character, results in a higher degree of wastage and is least suited to the requirements of an over-populated and developing country. It is a legacy of the British rule which was severely criticised during the independence struggle, and yet, it has not undergone any structural changes. Though it is least suited to the needs of backward classes, yet, they are forced to run the rat-race with others as no options are available to them. As 'educational reform' was not

within the terms of reference of this Commission, we are also forced to tread the beaten track and suggest only the palliative measure within the existing framework. (13.19) Various State Govts. are giving a number of educational concessions to OBC students (Chapter IX, paras 9.30-9.33) like exemption of tuition fees, free supply of books and clothes, mid-day meals, special hostel facilities, stipends, etc. These concessions are all right as far as they go. But they do not go far enough. What is required is, perhaps, not so much the provision of additional funds as the framing of integrated schemes for creating the proper environment and incentives for serious and purposeful studies. (13.20) It is well known that most OBC children are irregular and indifferent students and their drop-out rate is very high. There are two main reasons for this. (1) These children are brought up in a climate of extreme social and cultural deprivation and, consequently, a proper motivation for schooling is generally lacking. (2) Most of these children come from very poor homes and their parents are forced to press them into doing small chores from a very young age. (13.21) Upgrading the cultural environment is a very slow process. Transferring these children to an artificially upgraded environment is beyond the present resources of the country. In view of this it is recommended that this problem may be tackled on a limited and selective basis on two fronts. (13.22) First, an intensive and time-bound programme for adult education should be launched in selected pockets with high concentration of OBC population. This is a basic motivational approach, as only properly motivated pa-

rents will take serious interest in educating their children. Secondly, residential schools should be set up in these areas for OBC students to provide a climate specially conducive to serious studies. All facilities in these schools including board and lodging, will have to be provided free, of cost to attract students from poor and backward homes, separate Govt. hostels for OBC students with the above facilities will be another step in the right direction. (13.23) A beginning on both these fronts will have to be made on a limited scale and selective basis. But the scope of these activities should be expanded as fast as the resources permit. Adult education programme and residential schools started on a selective basis will operate as growing-points of consciousness for the entire community and their multiplier effect is bound to be substantial. Whereas several States have extended a number of *ad hoc* concessions to OBC students, few serious attempts have been made to intergrate these facilities into a comprehensive scheme for a qualitative upgradation of educational environment available to OBC students. (13.24) After all, education is the best catalyst of change and educating the OBCs is the surest way to improve their self-image and raise their social status. As OBCs cannot afford the high wastage rates of our educational system, it is very important that their education is highly biased in favour of vocational training. After all reservation in services will absorb only a very small percentage of the educated OBCs and the rest should be suitably equipped with vocational skills to enable them to get a return on having invested several years in education. (13.25) It is also

obvious that even if all the above facilities are given to OBC students, they will not be able to compete on an equal footing with others in securing admission to technical and professional institutions. In view of this it is recommended that seats should be reserved for OBC students in all scientific, technical and professional institutions run by the Central as well as State Govts. This reservation will fall under Article 15(4) of the Constitution & the quantum of reservation should be the same as in the Govt. services, i.e. 27%. Those States which have already reserved more than 27% seats for OBC students will remain unaffected by this recommendation. (13.26) While implementing the provision for reservation it should also be ensured that the candidates who are admitted against the reserved quota are enabled to derive full benefit of higher studies. It has been generally noticed that these OBC students coming from an impoverished cultural background, are not able to keep abreast with other students. It is, therefore, very essential that special coaching facilities are arranged for all such students in our technical and professional institutions. The concerned authorities should clearly appreciate that their job is not finished once candidates against reserved quota have been admitted to various institutions. In fact the real task starts only after that. Unless adequate follow-up action is taken to give special coaching assistance to these students, not only these young people will feel frustrated and humiliated but the country will also be landed with ill-equipped and sub-standard engineers, doctors and other professionals. FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE: (13.27) Vocational communities follow-

ing hereditary occupations have suffered heavily as a result of industrialisation. Mechanical production and introduction of synthetic materials has robbed the village potter, oil-crusher, blacksmith, carpenter, etc. of their traditional means of livelihood and the pauperisation of these classes is a well known phenomenon in the country-side. (13.28) It has, therefore, become very necessary that suitable institutional finance and technical assistance is made available to such members of village vocational communities who want to set up smallscale industries on their own. Similar assistance should also be provided to those promising OBC candidates who have obtained special vocational training. (13.29) Of course, most State Govts. have created various financial and technical agencies for the promotion of small and medium scale industries. But it is well known that only the more influential members of the community are able to derive benefits from these agencies. In view of this, it is very essential that separate financial institutions for providing financial and technical assistance are established for the OBCs. Some State Govts. like Karnataka and AP have already set up separate financial corporations etc. for OBCs. (13.30) Co-operative Societies of occupational groups will also help a lot. But due care should be taken that all the office bearers and members of such societies belong to the concerned hereditary occupational groups and outsiders are not allowed to exploit them by infiltrating into such co-operatives. (13.31) The share of OBCs in the industrial and business life of the country is negligible and this partly explains their extremely low income levels. As a part

of its overall strategy to uplift the OBCs it is imperative that all State Govts. are suitably advised and encouraged to create a separate network of financial and technical institutions to foster business and industrial enterprise among OBCs. **STRUCTURAL CHANGES :** (13.32) Reservations in Govt. employment and educational institutions, as also all possible financial assistance will remain mere palliatives unless the backwardness is tackled at its root. Bulk of the small landholders, tenants, agricultural labour, impoverished village artisans, unskilled workers, etc., belong to SC/ST & OBCs. "Apart from social traditions, the dominance by the top peasantry is exercised through recourse to informal bondage which arises mainly through money-lending, leasing out of small bits of land and providing house-sites and dwelling space to poor peasants. As most of the functionaries of Govt. are drawn from the top peasantry, the class and caste linkage between the functionaries of Govt. and the top peasantry remain firm. This also tilts the socio-political balance in favour of the top peasantry and helps it in having its dominance over others." (EPW-1980) (13.33) The net outcome of the above situation is that notwithstanding their numerical preponderance, OBCs continue to remain in mental bondage of the higher castes and rich peasantry. Consequently, despite constituting nearly 3/4th of the country's population, SC/ST & OBCs have been able to acquire a very limited political clout, even though adult franchise was introduced more than three decades back. Through their literal monopoly of means of production the higher castes are able to manipulate and coerce the backward classes into

acting against their own interests. In view of this, until the stranglehold of the existing production relations is broken through radical land reforms, the abject dependence of under privileged classes on the dominant higher castes will continue indefinitely. In fact there is already a sizeable volume of legislation on the statute books to abolish zamindari, place ceilings on land holdings and distribute land to the landless. But in actual practice its implementation has been halting, half-hearted and superficial. The States like Karnataka, Kerala and West Bengal which have gone about the job more earnestly have not only succeeded in materially helping the OBCs, but also reaped rich political dividends in the bargain. (13.34) It is the Commission's firm conviction that a radical transformation of the existing production relations is the most important single step that can be taken for the welfare and upliftment of all backward classes. Even if this is not possible in the industrial sector for various reasons, in the agricultural sector a change of this nature is both feasible and overdue. (13.35) The Commission, therefore, strongly recommends that all State Govts. should be directed to enact & implement progressive land legislation so as to effect basic structural changes in the existing production relations in the countryside. (13.36) At present surplus land is being allotted to SC/STs. A part of the surplus land becoming available in future as a result of the operation of land ceiling laws etc., should also be allotted to the OBC landless labour. **MISCELLANEOUS :** (13.37) (1) Certain sections of some occupational communities like Fishermen, Banjaras, Bansforas, Khatwes etc. still

suffer from the stigma of untouchability in some parts of the country. They have been listed as OBCs by the Commission, but their inclusion in the lists of SC/STs may be considered by the Govt. (2) Backward Classes Development Corporations should be set up both at the Central and State levels to implement various socio-educational and economic measures for their advancement. (3) A separate Ministry/Department for OBCs at the Centre & the States should be created to safeguard their interests. (4) With a view to giving better representation to certain very backward sections of OBCs like the Gaddis in Himachal Pradesh, Neo-Buddhists in Maharashtra, fishermen in the coastal areas, Gujjars in J & K, it is recommended that areas of their concentration may be carved out into separate constituencies at the time of delimitation. CENTRAL ASSISTANCE: (13.38) At present no Central assistance is available to any State Govts. for implementing any welfare measures for OBCs. The 18 States and Union Territories which have undertaken such measures have to provide funds from their own resources. During the Commission's tours practically every State Govt. pointed out that unless the Centre is prepared to liberally finance all special schemes for the upliftment of OBCs, it will be beyond the available resources of the States to undertake any worthwhile programme for the benefit of OBCs. (13.39) The Commission fully shares the view of the State Govts. in this matter and strongly recommends that all development programmes especially designed for OBCs should be financed by the Central Govt. in the same manner and to the same extent as done in the case of SC/STs. (13.40) Regarding

the period of operation of the Commission's recommendations, the entire scheme should be reviewed after 20 years. We have advisedly suggested this span of one generation, as the raising of social consciousness is a generational progress. Any review at a shorter interval would be rather arbitrary and will not give a fair indication of the impact of our recommendations on the prevailing status and lifestyles of OBCs. □

### S.S.S. to fight R.S.S.

(Cont. from page 3)

ment they joined SSS, police atrocities on them came to instant stop. Even the plan to attack Kamapachari was abandoned. Communal tension disappeared in stages. However, on 8-6-82, when dalits of Pulangudi came on trucks to participate in a function of the SSS at Kadayanallur, the Thevars of Chokkampetti attacked them and incited a communal clash. They killed six dalits in the presence of police. The State govt. authorities gave out false reports and sided with Hindus. The statement of Union Home Minister Venkatasubbiah has hurt us. The Thevars are continuing to attack us but no dalit has so far indulged in violence. These are the facts. □

### Dr. Babasheb Ambedkar

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## Letters to Editor :

Dr. K. R. Hanumanthan, Prof. and Head of the Dept. of History, Madurai University, TN : I very much appreciate *Dalit Voice* which is the only voice of the suppressed castes of South India. I wish it all success.

A. P. Nirmal, principal, United Theological Seminary, Poona : We very much appreciate DV. With all good wishes.

R. Elumalai, convener, Dalit Cultural Front, Madras : TN is fast turning into another Bihar. On July 1, there was a very big clash between Vanniyars (OBCs) and dalits at Tindivanam, near Villupuram. Several hundred huts of dalits were burnt. The police and Hindus refused to allow fire engines. Fire raged for 7 hours. We rushed there on SOS from a dalit comrade. Glad to note dalits have become so conscious that they gathered in hundreds, rounded up the whole town, and fought the police & Hindus. Police bullets took a life. In the nearby village Saram, a dalit youth was killed in the police lockup. And his mother not allowed to collect the body. In the Nettapakkam police station dalit youth was killed. In TN the ruling party and the Opposition have no difference of opinion on killing dalits. But we are also getting united. If only we have the minimum resources we would certainly give our enemies a shakeup.

Ravi Nair, *Pratipaksha Hindi Weekly*, New Delhi : We congratulate you on the magnificent work being done through DV.

C. M. Madhava Panicker, Lohia Vihar Veda, Piravom, Kerala : In DV no. 16 editorial you say barring Dravida Kazaghram, nobody else is interested in the Mandal Com. report. If you see Parliament pro-

ceedings, you will notice ever since Mandal report was submitted, Maniram Bagri, Ram Vilas Paswan, George Fernandes, & other Lohiates who did all the shouting about the Mandal report. It was Dr Lohia, the greatest crusader against caste, who took pains to study the history of Hinduism and wrote his famous book, *The Caste System in India*, wherein he predicted that "class struggle" in India will take the form of "caste war". B. P. Mandal, chairman of the Mandal Com., was a Lohiate and hence the report reflects the views of the Indian Socialists. Besides, it is the Socialists in the Janata who fought for the appointment of the Mandal Com. It is the Socialists who are organising the dalits to rise up in armed struggle against the high caste oppressors. Not DK alone.

N V. M. Fazalullah, Areacode, Kerala : Congratulations on your struggle for the persecuted minorities of India. We have all your books and read them with great interest.

Narendrasinh M. Chavda, Talal, Gujarat: We pray Lord Buddha to give you more strength.

R Govindan, Erode, TN : I have read your book, *Who Is Ruling India?* It gives a real picture of the Indian social setup. Keep it up.

Gurudev Singh, Patiala : I have no words to express my gratitude for the wonderful editorials depicting the true picture of dalits and persecuted minorities in this so-called democracy.

Prof. Khader Mohideen, Trichy, TN : In this part the best friends of Muslims are dalits. We have the best of relations with them despite the efforts of RSS to woo them. □

## ASSAULT ON D.K. LEADER VEERAMANI SENDS SHOCK WAVES

(Our correspondent)

Madras : The well-planned assault on K. Veeramani, general secretary of the cadre-based mass organisation, Dravida Kazagham, near Rajapalayam, Ramnad dt., TN, on July 20 night has sent shock waves throughout India.

The attack resulting in bleeding injuries is understood to have been made by some high caste Hindu goondas coming in the guise of friends. Waving DMK party flags, they first cheered Veermani and raised "Long Live Periyar" slogans which made him stop his car and get down. The moment he stepped out he was brutally assaulted resulting in bleeding injuries to nose, face, hands etc. He immediately withdrew into the car and asked the driver to proceed but goondas smashed the car. The attack on Veeramani—successor to Periyar, editor of *Viduthalai*, the popular mass-circulated Tamil daily, author of several books, a brilliant orator, saviour of the shudras, a darling of the downtrodden—further confirms our fear that "caste war" is fast developing in TN. High caste youths had already threatened his life and vowed to outrage the modesty of his wife. At Trichy, just a week before the State-level conference of the DK on June 12, some

Brahmins had allegedly assaulted DK boys. The multi-edition *Hindu* has been running a series of "letters to editor" daily condemning DK. These "letters", which according to DK sources were manufactured inside the *Hindu* office, were put in the name of Muslims and Christians to deliberately prejudice the minorities who are increasingly rallying behind the DK. They said these letters virtually amounted to inciting violence against DK and this must have resulted in the assault on Veeramani. Dalit Cultural Front convener in a statement here condemned the attack on Veeramani and said whatever might be the differences of opinion between the OBCs & dalits, in such hour of crisis, dalits would support DK. High caste exploiters are the common enemies of dalits, minorities & shudras also. Instead of coming as cowards & posing as friends, these exploiters must come for a face-to-face fight. R. Elumalai said.

EDITOR : V T. Rajshekar  
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