

DALIT VOICE

[The Voice of the Persecuted Minorities]

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A CONSTITUTIONAL FRAUD ON DALITS

A report of a "Harijan Christian" organisation appearing on page 14 has raised several vital issues on which dalits and other persecuted minorities must deeply ponder and come to a decision. A press note issued by the All-India Scheduled Caste Christian Leaders Council, Bangalore, says: that "constitutional reservations given to Hindu Scheduled Castes have been denied to those SCs who got converted to Christianity. In order to belong to SCs as per the Presidential Order of 1950 and to be eligible for reservations, a condition is put that one should profess either Hinduism or Sikhism. This is an unconstitutional condition. It is nothing but showing preference to these two religions. In a secular state, the State shall not prefer one religion to another. Para 3 of the Order is, therefore, repugnant to and against the fundamental rights under Articles 15 (1) and 25 of the Constitution. The right to change ones religion is a fundamental right and these rights have been infringed upon and violated by the order of 1950", it says. The communal Hindus who led the Gujarat caste war of 1981 against dalits and the earlier caste wars against backward classes in Bihar and UP, the "Oppressed Employees Union" which went up to the Supreme Court challenging the reservations in promotions in the Railways, and many others including those in the govt. are all violently demanding that reservations be made not on the basis of caste but poverty. Many Brahmin conferences have passed resolutions that economic status alone shall be the basis for reservations. The Hindu press is leading this chorus for "economic criterion". Their heart is beating for the poor-irrespective of caste, religion or anything else. All over India one single slogan is magnified: "poverty yardstick" to measure backwardness, "reservations on the basis of poverty". As the communal Hindus own & control everything including the press, the feeble cry of the persecuted minorities demanding "caste criterion" is drowned in this din. But those who demand "economic criterion" should apply it uniformly in all cases. They cannot say economic criterion for some and caste criterion for others as it suits them. They argue that individual or mass conversion to Christianity or Islam will not improve the economic status of Untouchables and tribals. Conversions will not wipe out poverty. When they are so sure of this and when they also shout that all poor irrespective of caste & religion should get reservation & want all poor should be treated equally, why don't they put forward the same argument in favour of reservations to Buddhist and Christian converts? Why did the communal Hindus, so keen about economic criterion, fight for caste criterion when it came to the ques-

tion of recruitment to posts of *archakas* (temple priests) under the Tamil Nadu govt. ? Why the courts, which also join this chorus for economic criterion, rule in favour of caste criterion in the case of *archakas*—a post reserved exclusively for Brahmins ? That means the communal Hindus want to have the cake and eat it too. For denying reservations to converts they apply caste criterion. But to become *archakas* in govt. temples they want caste criterion. Best of the both world. They want both economic criterion and caste criterion. The only criterion is that it must be advantageous to them. What the ruling class says is right, but what the persecuted minorities say is wrong. This is the logic of all fascist argument. Police, prosecutor, judge & hangman all combined in one. How diabolical the communal Hindu mind could be ! While we leave it those "Harijan Christians" and neo-Buddhists to challenge this blatant discrimination on grounds of caste and religion—specifically prohibited under the Constitution—we draw the attention of the persecuted minorities to yet another important issue : how "reservations" have been used by this ruling class to safeguard the interests of Hinduism. This becomes clear if we see the proceedings of the Constituent Assembly. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar has said that Untouchables are not Hindus. And in fact the ruling class of India did not consider them so till the early part of this century. The Congress Party took notice of this centuries-old problem only in 1917. Gandhi entered politics in 1919 & named them "Harijans". It is only Ambedkar's historic fight for separate electorate for Untouchables in 1930s that unnerved the communal Hindus who thought that any breakaway of this vast chunk of obedient and free labour—"hereditary bondsmen", as Ambedkar described them—forming the foundation of the Hindu religion will bring down this mighty edifice of Hinduism. The Poona Pact of 1932, signed

between Ambedkar and Hindu leaders in Yerwada jail of Pune, was the result. Ever since then the communal Hindus stepped up efforts to "Hinduise the Harijans" and tribes. The mass conversion of Untouchables to Islam in 1981 has launched the second phase of their assault to "save Harijans" by attacking Muslims and Christians. Here we would like to draw pointed attention to the constitutional fraud against dalits : how they were removed from the status as "minorities" and declared an integral part of Hinduism. And how the ruling class manoeuvred to use the Constitution and govt. to strengthen Hinduism. It is in the light of this we have to examine the "Harijan Christians" genuine complaint : How the concept of justice to poor sections come to mean privileges to those who remain loyal to Hinduism and how such a double-standard was enforced through reservations which also serve as a double-edged weapon. Loyalists rewarded. Rebels punished. A Delhi press report said a Maharashtra delegation of neo-Buddhists met the then Dy Prime Minister Jagjivan Ram who said that reservation was being denied to them as a punishment for quitting Hinduism & following Ambedkar to Buddhism. Does it not conclusively prove that reservations have been used to punish rebels like Ambedkar and reward loyalists like Jagjivan Ram ? To promote Hinduism ? The "abolition" of untouchability (on paper) in the Constitution but continuing to practice it in real life has served two purposes. It brought international publicity to the "great Hindu sympathy" for Untouchables. But a study of the speeches in the Constituent Assembly will show that leaders like Jawaharal Nehru, Sardar Patel & others agreed to "abolish" untouchability not because of any real concern for this grave problem. Untouchables had been all along considered "minorities". The process of removing them from this cate-

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A BLACK AMERICAN'S RECIPE FOR REVOLUTION IN INDIA

(M. Mezaruddin, III, USA)

One of the reasons for India's years of backwardness and poverty is Hinduism. The caste system and untouchability and the inhuman treatment by the so-called "high" caste Hindus towards the dalits and other minorities is a big obstacle in the way of progress of India. Suppression, oppression and discrimination of Untouchables and other minorities, who constitute over 50% of the population, does not help a nation to progress and develop itself. A nation cannot develop if a vast portion of its population is harassed, properties looted, houses burnt. Their farms are destroyed and they are persecuted, killed in masses and burnt alive. Emancipation of the dalits and other impoverished SC and ST from Hinduism will lead to the progress and prosperity of the nation and India will be a free country. It is not yet free. Although India got rid of the Englishman, the slavery, oppression and exploitation is still continued by a people called Brahmins and other 'high' caste Hindus. When the caste system, untouchability, oppression, exploitation and persecution of the dalits and other minorities is abolished totally from the scene of the Indian society then the people will have the real freedom. A free country means that its people should be free and not its rivers, its mountains, its jungles. These things are always free and will remain free. It is almost impossible to eradicate untouchability from the Hindu society, because abolishing untouchability means abolishing Hinduism itself. Abolishing untouchability and caste system means that there will be no more monopoly of priesthood of Brahmins. Their livelihood will be finished. Kshatriya and Vaishyas will also suffer because dalits are the cheap labour and perform mean jobs for all of them. It will be a severe blow to the capitalists too who are mostly high caste Hindus. So it is against the interest of all of them and also against the interest of national news media too, because it is

also controlled by high castes. All of them will try hard with all their resources at their disposal to keep untouchability and caste system alive and stop the conversion specially to Islam because so far they did not mind and objected to conversion to other religions. To stop conversion (to Islam) the high caste Hindus are trying to tempt and bribe the dalits by promising them equal treatment, permission to enter their temples etc. It is not their genuine desire but they are helpless. Let them beg the Untouchables. But the dalits must not be deceived by their show business and tactic. They should act wisely. Dalits must put them on trial. To test their sincerity about their promises dalits must demand the following things or some such things from them :- 1. They must discard those version from the Vedas, Shastras, Puranas, Upanishad, Gita and other books which advocate untouchability and caste system, and revise these books, 2. Out of four Shankaracharyas, two dalits must be appointed. 3. At Tirupati, Kashi, Mathura and other big temples Untouchables must be appointed as high priests and Brahmins must be under them, 4. Karan Singh, AB Vajpayi, Balraj Madhok, Bala Saheb Deoras and other prestigious Brahmins must give their daughters in marriage to dalits and start matrimonial relationships with them, 5. Jagadguru Shankaracharyas and other high priests must go to the house of Untouchables and dine and sleep with them and invite the dalits to their mutts as guests and the system must continue 6. All the Shankaracharyas and other

[Cont. on page 5, Col. 2]

THE MARATHA LOBBY BEHIND PUNE COMMUNAL RIOTS

(Our correspondent)

Bombay : The RSS and its Hindu followers have at last succeeded in starting an anti-Muslim communal riot in Maharashtra following their two-month-long "Hindu unity conferences" held in different parts of the State. Pune, Sholapur, Baramati, Pandharpur, Sangli experienced the first violence against Muslims from Feb. 14.

Ever since mass conversions of Untouchables took place in TN, RSS has been riding the waves using this golden opportunity to increase its influence in the country and we have every indication to believe that it has achieved its purpose to a great extent. The conversions helped RSS to kill two birds (dalits & Muslims) with one stone. And the direct result of it is the anti-Muslim frenzy culminating in largescale violence against Muslims. Indications are that many other urban centres may also explode in similar violence. One report said Pune was experiencing its first anti-Muslim riots since 1973. How could Hindus become heroes by attacking Muslim life and property? Does "Hindu unity meet" mean spilling Muslim blood? The police in Pune and elsewhere confirmed that violence against Muslims was the direct result of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (an arm of the RSS) taking out processions earlier on the same day spitting fire against Muslims for having allegedly converted "Harijans". And Pune had such a notorious history of the Peshwa rule of the Brahmin orthodoxy. Godse, who killed Gandhi, belonged to Pune. The RSS top-brass comprising Chitpavan Brahmins, and the cow-worshipper, Vinoba Bhave, the "sarkari sant", also belong to this particular Brahmin caste and to Pune. The RSS had earlier succeeded in turning the Hindu wrath against Muslims in Gujarat. And Ahmedabad had just recovered after a series of communal clashes. BJP, the political arm of the RSS, is trying to replace the ruling Cong. I of Indira Gandhi by becoming the centrist party via its new

slogan of "Gandhian socialism". To become a centrist party it needs the votes of the dalits and other low caste shudras. And in this country it is possible to unite the Hindus by showing them an enemy, the Muslim & Christian. The RSS was able to bag its prized catch in Maharashtra, namely Annasaheb Patil, who is a hero among the poorer sections of the Marathas, the ruling caste of Maharashtra. Marathas form nearly one-fourth to one-third of the total population. Patil is the president of the all-India Maratha Mahasangh. The RSS succeeded in bringing him under its influence through the anti-dalit feeling that is riding high among the Marathas. It was Annasaheb who had threatened to launch a Gujarat-type anti-dalit agitation in Maharashtra also on the issue of reservations. He had then addressed a series of meetings in Bombay and elsewhere and the lumpen proletariat among the Marathas were won over by his speeches. On Jan. 23-24 last, Annasaheb addressed a huge meetings of Marathas at Sholapur and saffron flags of the RSS were displayed at the meeting. Gail Omvedt, a noted social scientist and trusted friend of the dalits, writing in the *Economic & Political Weekly* (Feb. 6) says that the Sholapur meeting succeeded in creating "an atmosphere of terror against the minorities and other low castes." She also says that the Maratha Mahajan is adopting a clear anti-Muslim emotionalism and with even greater anti-dalit agitation." Ban on conversions, common civil code and scrapping of reservations are the main demands of the Mahajan. The Maratha tradition is being used

against the minorities and dalits. The RSS has found a very useful leader in Annasaheb. The other important leader who is also serving the RSS interests is Bal Thakrey, the Shiv Sena leader of Bombay who in a recent interview to *Sunday Observer*, spit fire against the Muslims and dalits. RSS is thus building up its base and conversions of dalits to Islam has helped it like anything. Once Indira Gandhi is out of the scene, they know that her ruling Cong. I party would be dead and RSS should be ready to take up the central position and gradually replace it. Current preparations to win over all dominant caste groups in each and every State of India is a step in that direction. The dominant caste groups also form the single largest population. Being the landed gentry, they are not only affluent but had been the ruling community until the Untouchable-Muslim-Backward Class combination experimented by Indira Gandhi displaced it from political power. This had made every dominant community angry with these three groups. And the RSS through its numerous front organisations had succeeded in harnessing this anger to its advantage. The anti-Brahmin movement once led by these dominant castes is dead and gone. Today, the very same groups have joined the Brahmins in attacking the castes lower below. What a wonderful strategy. Arun Sadhu, special correspondent in a dispatch published in the *Statesman* (Feb. 20, 82) under the headline, "Genesis of the Pune Riots," refers to this dreadful communal scenario. The participation of the Maratha youth in the Pune, Sholapur, Pandharpur riots lends a new dimension to the situation. The RSS meetings held under the auspices of "Hindu unity meet" received tremendous response. Maratha youths, formed into "bhajan samaj" were in the forefront of the attack on Muslims. In every town of Maharashtra, the Maratha youths are joining RSS-sponsored organisations in a very

big way, he says. The propoganda against Muslims is that they celebrated India's defeat in the world hockey cup. In Pune, Miraj, Sangli rich Arabs were moving with Indian girls pouring Arab money into Indian Muslims hands. An alarming development is the participation of Congress I leaders in such RSS meetings, he says. The Pune riot "started when a group in the Hindu procession started raising slogan near a place of worship. The import of the provocative slogan was that those who desired to live in India should sing Vande Mataram." □

Reservation demand

Nagpur: The two-day all-India pro-reservationists' conference, which ended here on Feb. 7, demanded the continuation of the reservation system till all the backward classes achieved social equality. The "summit" conference, which was represented by all the political parties excepting the Congress (I), was noteworthy, in that Rajbahu Khobargade and R. S. Gavai, leaders of the two RPI factions, had come on the same platform after a lapse of several years. (*Times of India* 2-9-82) □

[Cont. from page 3.]

A Black American's Recipe for Revolution in India
priests must accept and declare that dalits are more sacred to them than the Go Matha (cow) because they are human beings like the Shankaracharyas. It is obvious that they would not accept these goodies. So the dalits must quit them and the Hinduism and meanwhile to show their solidarity they (a) must observe 15th August as a day of solidarity and liberation from Hinduism, (b) train all the dalits to defend themselves in the case of attack from RSS, Anand Marg and other fascist Hindu groups. (Deoli tragedy would not have happend if dalits were well-prepared) (c) boycott newspapers and other things dominated by high caste Hindus. (d) organise themselves and seek cooperation of other oppressed minorities. Continue struggle untill the triumph of the Dalit Revolution. □

Letters to Editor :

Mohinder Paul, Patiala : Every issue of DV is eagerly awaited and every line read and re-read with great interest. The issues discussed in it are of deep concern to we dalits.

V. Gunasekharan, Cuddalore, TN : We are very much impressed by the DSA book, *Why Go For Conversion?* and dalits here are asking if it is in Tamil.

Krishna Dhon Sardar, Someshwarpur, W, Bengal : Your editorial, "Reform or Revolution (Sept. 1) was translated by me into Bengali and published in the Calcutta weekly, *Mizan*. "Why Go For Conversion?" was also translated to Bengali. The cyclonic storm that swept over our area caused terrible harm to crops. Many died & saline water entered our villages breaching mud-walls.

Durai Anbalagan, Dalit Panthers, Bombay : The meeting that you addressed in Dharavi slum was very useful to us. Since then DV is read with greater interest.

Miss Dominique Gaillard, Paris : We heard about DV and your booklet, *Apartheid in India*, and much pleased by your approach to the problems of Untouchables. Nobody knows this outside India. We want to make people aware of this serious problem through the French press. Send us full details of the Karnataka Dalit Action Committee & the Panther movement.

Mrs. Yumi Tsuji, Tokyo : DV is a remarkable journal. I want to read it regularly. So I send you my year's subscription. Another friend, Aoki Masuo also has sent his.

Dr. F. Vivekananda, Stockholm : I would like to reprint your editorial, "Can Untouchability Be Removed?" (DV no. 6) in my *Scandinavian Journal*.

Mst. Safura Khatun, Jorhat, Assam : We are very happy with DV and want to help you to further your valuable services to the dalits. We want more copies of the DV no. 9.

J. R. Antwal, chairman, Fed. All-India SC/ST Emp., P&T. Dept. Delhi : I yearn to make the DV strong. Hence shall make an appeal to our members to subscribe to DV & write about DV in their language journals. DV is boldly exposing the myths of Hinduism. We dalits have hardly any media to fight for our cause. I wish the DV marches much faster. Congratulations for making Dr. Mulk Raj Anand, India's most celebrated novelist, as your adviser.

Karamat Ali, editor, *Saptahik Mujahid* Gauhati : Through our weekly we are trying to spread your bold views.

Dr. S. L. Sharma, Chairman, Dept. of Sociology, Punjab University, Chandigarh: Just to say how deeply I appreciate your comments on my article in the *Seminar*.

C. M. Abdul Hadi, Ex- MLA (formerly Ambikapathy) Tanjore dt. TN : I am reading DV with great interest.

Rev. L. S. Pais, director, Mt. Rosary Charitable Institutions, DK Dt, Karnataka : Sending a cheque for Rs. 100 for the good work done by DV.

Alec Walker, Whitefield, Bangalore : I like DV as it expresses the views of those whose voice could not be heard so far. Conditions are much better today. But many more barriers have to be removed before we achieve our objectives. I will introduce DV to friends.

Miss Vibhuti Patel, Bombay : We are very happy to note that DV is getting very good response among many thinkers & activists not only in India but internationally also. Our heartiest greetings.

George Menezes, Bombay : The contents of DV are very revealing of the fate of the under-privileged. Wish you success.

D. Dhanasekharan, New Delhi : I wish the 21st century shall be the Ambedkar Era. But what are the chances? When I have a rub with Hindu friends on the subject, "Who should lead Untouchables?" they say Untouchables are fools, incompetent, inefficient, ill-equipped, lacking in manners etc. etc. They say dalits

should be guided only by Hindus. I don't agree. These educated Hindus have been leading & guiding us for centuries. In what way they have improved us & the country? Besides, where is the guarantee that they will not deceive us? Our educated dalits who are well up are behaving worse than Hindus. Most of my friends are Brahmins. I don't hate Brahmins but Brahminism whether it is practised by a Brahmin or an Untouchable.

Honnappa Kahale, Bangalore: Your editorials, "OBCs & the Ill-fated Mandal Com. Report" & "Can Untouchability Be Removed?" (DV no. 5 & 6) are excellent & thought-provoking. Your thoughts are fast unmasking the mischief & treachery of the "intellectuals". How I wish the Shudras also wake up to understand your thinking.

P. R. Kambale, Bombay: For the third time my confidential service records have been spoiled by three Brahmin officers & therefore I see no hope for me in my dept.

Dr. M. Vasu, Medical College, Trivandrum: We are so pleased to know of your work and publications. We want to become subscribers to DV and read DSA books.

K. S. Dharmaraj, Rajapalayam, TN: I am a new subscriber to DV received through Dr. S. S. Maran of Periyar Hospital. So very thrilled that we now have a voice.

E. A. Ghaffar, Pragram, TN: Our prayers for your success in enlightening the persecuted people of India and free themselves from ignorance.

N. A. Sulaiman, Kasargod, Kerala: I can hardly find any newspaper or journal in India which is kind to minorities and publish their news without bias. This is because the Indian press is controlled by the high caste Hindus. Hence, our only hope is DV, the voice of the voiceless.

Dr. V. C. Parmar, Navsari, Gujarat: Vishwa Hindu Parishad people met me. They want to prevent conversion of dalits. I told them the problems faced by the da-

lits in villages steeped in caste Hindu prejudices. Guide me as to how I should tackle these people.

Shreyasker, Bhim Sena, Gulbarga: DV is enlightening us and doing great service to dalits.

C. R. Bashyam, Bangalore: DV is very useful to us. Glad to note at the recent Dharmapuri DK conference 55 persons became subscribers to DV. Photographs of DK general secretary, Veermani, presenting you the subscription amount was published in the *Viduthalai*.

Dulal Mahato, Murshidabad: We persecuted minorities of W. Bengal had no organ before the advent of DV. Wishing a bright future.

Dr. S. S. Maran, MBBS, Rajapalayam, TN: DV is the real voice of the Untouchables. It must come up fast. I am sending subscriptions on behalf of 10 dalits. More will follow.

Sushil Saha, Calcutta: It was a pleasant surprise to read one whole article in the Dec. 1981 issue of the *Social Scientist* by EMS Namboodiripad criticising your book, *Class-Caste Struggle-Emerging Third Force* (Karnataka Dalit Action Committee, Rs. 3, pages 40-1980). This is a unique honour bestowed upon you by India's topmost Marxist leader. The article clearly proves that the high caste Hindu leadership of the Indian Marxist movement has taken serious note of the thesis propounded by you in that book. While we dalits here have fully endorsed the thesis, the anti-dalit stand taken by the Marxist Govt. in West Bengal has further convinced us that you are right. EMS article has once for all proved that the high caste leadership of Indian Marxist movement will never change. Let our Chinese comrades note this. Indian Marxist leadership is anti-dalit.

Hou Tong, Peking: Happy New Year from the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries. □

WOMEN'S LIBERATION & CLASS-CASTE STRUGGLE

(Flavia D'Mello, Vibhuti Patel, Amar Jesani & Sonal Shukla, Bombay)

In the context of your editorial in the DV No. 7, Jan. 16-31, 1982, we would like to make some comments. You rightly said that the much-publicised International Women's Year (and now Decade) has not done anything to make a dent on the problem of

women. We also agree with your contention that the status of women can't be seen in isolation. But at the same time women's struggle against their specific oppression has to be fought as dalits and tribals have to fight against their specific oppression by the caste Hindu chauvenists. To our understanding there is lot of similarity between the problems of the oppressed caste i.e. Untouchables, oppressed nationalities i.e. tribals and the oppressed sex i.e. women. All the three will have to fight simultaneously against their SPECIAL PROBLEMS over and above class problems. Dalits have to face humiliation, segregation and discriminations in socio-cultural life even if they are better off. The same way women from any class are prone to rape, molestation, wifebeating, harassment by the inlaws. Dowry death is predominantly a middle class problem. Rape within the family can occur among poorer and richer class-caste both. How do you look at the problem of rape within the working class men raping the working class women, common problem in city slums? Won't we raise voice against rampant wife-beating among the working class and concentrate our fight against economic injustice only? Whether we do or don't, slum-women of Bombay, Kanpur, Poona so on and so forth and tribals women of Dhulla, Dhanu, Santhal Paragana, Chattisgarh are protesting against atrocities on them by not only the class-enemy but also their own caste brethren. It is no use harping on mere "socio-economic transformation" in air. The traditional Left has done it for ages and their bankruptcy was revealed when during the nationwide anti-rape movement masses of women refused to work under their leadership and

formed autonomous women's organisation. Even in China because the women were mobilised against foot-binding, concubinage, prostitution and wife-beating simultaneously with the class issues, millions of women joined the People's Liberation Army for the total socio-economic transformation. In conclusion, class struggle is inevitably linked with the women's movement. Unless autonomous women's groups linked themselves actively and concretely with the wider political movement, they will at best have minimal impact. We believe women's demands have to be fought on a day-to-day basis. This is not something to be achieved after the revolution as the traditional Left believes. The revolution is the process through which new ideology, new morality can be worked out in the process of a struggle against hostile social forces. Thus the role of women's group is to fight against all forms of oppression and inequality in a class-society with its class-exploitation, caste and sexual oppression. So it is inevitable that women joined hands with the urban and rural working class as a whole and supported struggles of all oppressed nationalities, adivasis, dalits for human liberation. □

ANNOUNCEMENT

We regret to note that some comrades have not remitted their yearly subscription of Rs. 10. We are bringing out the journal with great difficulty. We need your support. Subscription through MØ may be sent to the DSA address given on page 12.

PUBLISHERS.

DALITS OBSERVE R.DAY AS BLACK DAY

(Our correspondent)

Bangalore: Militant Ambedkarites all over India observed Jan. 26 (Republic Day) as Black Day and this has now become a regular pattern. Dalits have come to realise that Aug. 15 (Independence Day) and the R. Day are not days for rejoicing but meant for mourning. On these days they take silent, some times noisy processions waving black-flags, wearing black badges and hoisting black flags. In Bangalore, the Karnataka Dalit Action Committee took out an impressive procession waving black flags. In Visakhapatnam, AP, the Ambedkar Mission used it as a protest day to highlight the mass murder of dalits at Deoli and Sadhupur. According to a press note of Pavna Murthy, chairman of the Ambedkar Mission, they took out a big procession urging dalits to fight for arms for self-protection. Similar reports came from Madras, Nagpur, Hyderabad and parts of Maharashtra. In Kerala also in some parts dalits in small groups observed Black Day. We call upon dalits to observe Black day in a big way during these two days to educate their sisters and brothers, exposing the high caste imperialists who rule the country. Dalits and other persecuted minorities have not yet become free. It is these high caste exploiters who have become free to suck our blood more freely. These points must be properly explained on these two days. □

P & T DALIT MEET AT MADRAS

Madras: The executive of the All-India SC/ST Federation of the P & T Employees, South zone, met here recently and decided to hold a conference of its members here on March 14. A steering committee was formed with dalit employees in Railways etc., says D. Jayapal, general secretary, in a press note. J. R. Antwal, chairman of the Federation,

has given a call for all dalits to cooperate in making the conference a big success.

Hyderabad: A press note issued by the All-India SC-ST Employees Coordination Council says its general secretary, T. Sarangapani, has been acquitted of a criminal case pending against him at the Gulbarga munsiff magistrate's court. □

Myth about Muslim Population

Pune: Muslim population despite its polygamous system is not growing in India, according to social researcher M. P. Mangudkar. Talking to newsmen here Dr. Mangudkar on Feb. 17 contended that the Muslim population based on the census figures for 1951-1971 did not increase even by one per cent. He said that Muslims constituted 10.2 per cent of the total Indian population in 1951 came to 11 per cent 1971. Dr. Mangudkar, who is the principal of the Jain arts and science college at Pimpri-Chinchwad, said he surveyed the census population figures to disprove the much-publicised notion that Muslims attained a higher rate of population. The assumption that Muslims usually had more than one wife was not correct. The ratio of men and women was 1,000-941 among the total population of India. In Muslim community it was 1000-934. This nullified the significance of Muslims having more than one wife. (Indian Express 18-2-82) □

Court backs dalits

COCHIN: The Kerala High Court has held reservation of posts for SC/STs once made, operated continuously until the reservation itself was terminated. Justice U. L. Bhat disposing of petition by an employee of the Kerala State Electricity Board said the reserved posts whenever vacant had to be filled up by special recruitment. Board employee K. L. Pappu in his petition had sought a court directive to the board to promote him as a senior superintendent, as the post which had been filled under special recruitment by a SC candidate had fallen vacant following the candidate's promotion. □

WHY I BECAME A MUSLIM ? A DALIT OFFICER SPEAKS

(M. Kumaran-Nagpur)

(Vittalrao Wankhede (52), a top officer of the Maharashtra Govt. (Superintending Engineer in the Irrigation Dept.) based at Nagpur recently embraced Islam even as the RSS and its front organisations were claiming re-conversion of dalits back to Hinduism and as Untouchables. His conversion right in Nagpur where both the RSS headquarters and the diksha bhoomi, the place where Dr. B. R. Ambedkar embraced Buddhism with lakhs of fellow Untouchables are situated, has given a rude shock to Hindu orthodoxy. That is why the high caste-controlled Indian press tried to suppress the news of Wankhede's conversion. Our representative was the first to interview Vazirji-Editor)

I was curious to meet Vazir Wankhede after his conversion to Islam on Jan. 9, 1982, at Nagpur. I desired to get introduced to him and therefore took friend S. G. Suradkar, a retired IAS officer & also a close friend of Wankhede. When on Feb. 14, a Sunday evening, our vehicle reached a spacious bungalow at Civil Lines I noticed an old friend whose name I had forgotten. To my great surprise the same person turned out to be Wankhede. We laughed for a while and I enquired about his father, who belonged to our "family of railwaymen". I felt sad to hear that he was dead. After a few minutes we came down for a brief conversation. I asked a straight question :

Q : At what stage in your life you desired conversion to Islam & why it took place on Jan. 9 ?

A : In my younger days itself when I read the editorial of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar in the *Bahishkrit Bharat* of March 15, 1929, "Notice to Hindu Dharma", guiding his followers that they would require to convert to Islam for getting free from social discrimination. I began to think of becoming a Muslim. Later, I had read his declaration that he would not die a Hindu. On Jan. 13, 1969, I wrote to Sheik Abdullah of Kashmir indicating my desire to embrace Islam. He replied to my letters. My letters were then intercepted in Kashmir and there was a CID inquiry. (He showed us the two letters and the original from Sheikh Abdullah's secretary). Suff-

erings of Untouchables from Belchi to Deoli brought me to the final decision and I decided to embrace Islam on Prophet Mohammed's birth day immediately after the Sadhupur massacre of our dalit brothers.

Q : What were the after-effects of Ambedkar's conversion to Buddhism ?

A : Conversion to Buddhism has not changed the social status of dalits. Even after the conversion, they are considered as Hindus and therefore Untouchables. Ambedkar after his conversion was preaching the dalits to get liberated from alcoholism and from idol worship. But his words had no impact even on the younger generations. Dalits continued to remain as slaves even after conversion to Buddhism.

Q : By conversion to Islam, will there be a change in them ?

A : Definitely. In the Muslim brotherhood, alcoholism can be eliminated & the foolish mentality of bowing head before every stone will disappear. Under Islam there is no casteism which has crept into Christianity also in India.

Q : By your conversion to Islam your family will continue to be Buddhists. How can there be harmonious family life as such ?

A : We experience no difficulty. There is no coercion in Islam. In one family, there can be members belonging to different faith. Islam stands for liberalism in religious faith. Ambedkar had

also said on the next day of his conversion that his followers should think independently and decide as to which religion he or she should accept after quitting Hinduism.

Q : What will be your advice to your former community members ?

A : They should follow the guidelines given by Ambedkar. If they feel that Buddhism has not made any change in their social status, they should decide to change to any other faith where their degraded status can be redeemed.

Q : What is your experience in the present circle of work and life ?

A : As a supdt. engineer, I had to get a better type of quarters, but this was denied to me. After the conversion, I got it easily. A pro-RSS engineer-colleague, Thatwavadi, wrote to me saying that my salvation now was with Pakistan and that I should go there. I paid him back in same coin. I asked him to search the place from where he landed to plunder and loot the original inhabitants of India. I asked him to first quit India and then only raise the question as to who should remain. Another engineer, AB Shyamkul, wrote from Bombay about how he was interviewed by an export firm which offered him Rs. 1,500 per month. But as soon as they came to know that he was an Untouchable, the firm refused to take him. I feel I have a better footing even in official circles after the conversion.

Wazir Wankhede said that days are not far when the Untouchables will shake their lethargy and get liberated from Hinduism. □

Gujarat Conversion

Ahmedabad : Rameshchandra Parmar, president of the Gujarat Dalit Panthers, writes : Our friend Hasmukh Parmar recently got converted to Islam. His new name is Hanif Mohammed. We have published his interview in our journal, *Panther*. You may translate and publish in DV. Let the Muslims of India know

this. The Hindu-Muslim clash in the crowded Daryapur, Shapur and Raikhad areas of the city is over. Panthers were active in the struggle joining with the Muslims. The police did their best to control the situation. □

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gory & making them part of Hinduism became complete when the Constituent Assembly abolished reservations to all categories of minorities (except Anglo-Indians) but continued it to Untouchables. Does it not amount to putting official seal on the crime committed against Untouchables in the Poona Pact? Accordingly reservations were granted only to those who "profess Hinduism". And by this the ruling class is in fact trying to cement the crumbling edifice of its religion. Ambedkar had repeatedly drawn attention to this mischief. But alas he died within two months of his conversion to Buddhism and the country did not produce a second Ambedkar to carry on the battle. Subsequent events have confirmed his fears. We are thankful to Dr. Jose Kananaikil of the Indian Social Institute for having drawn our attention to this grave constitutional fraud through his valuable study, *Scheduled Castes in the Constituent Assembly* (ISI, 1982, Lodi Road, New Delhi-110 003, pages 60, price Rs. 15). How did the Untouchables classified as "minorities" come to become part of Hinduism? A careful reading of the CA debate on the Report of the Minorities Committee headed by Sardar Patel will show that SCs were considered "minorities" until then. Kananaikil says: "This change came through the amendment moved by K. M. Munshi of Bombay and Shiban Lal Saxena of UP concerning the Hindu status of the SCs, and which was accepted by the House without much discussion. The minority communities — Muslims, Sikhs & Christians either did not realise the significance of the amendment or preferred to be silent about it. Later, when reservations for minorities were abolished, the rights & benefits for SCs would remain intact. K. M. Munshi, explaining the object of this amendment, stated that the word 'minorities' as used in international law referred to racial and linguistic minorities. The SCs, according

to him, did not fit into this category. He felt that the extension of the term to the SCs as Samuel Hoare (then Prime Minister) did in Govt. of India Act, 1935, was a mischievous extension of the term. He stated that the Harijans are part & parcel of the Hindu community, & the safeguards are given to them to protect their rights only till they are completely absorbed in the Hindu community. He further explained that any safeguard as a minority, so far as SCs are concerned, is illogical & will possibly prevent their complete absorption in the Hindu fold," says Kananaikil. This is the crux of the whole problem. Why Sardar Patel was quick enough to concede the Sikh demand for reservation to Mazhabis, Ramadasis, Kabirpanthis & Sikligars, recent Untouchable converts to Sikhism, after saying that "in the Sikh religion there is no such thing as untouchability"? Patel's fears expressed on the floor of the House have let the cat out of the bag. He said: "there was considerable opposition to the Sikh demand from the Hindu SCs who had justifiable fear complex that if they agreed to this, or if the House accepts this position, there is really a danger of forcible conversion from their class to SC Sikhs." What does it mean? If Buddhist & Christian converts are given reservations, then Hindus know that no conscious Untouchable would remain in Hinduism. This is a fact. Even with reservations, Untouchables are defecting to Buddhism, Christianity and Islam. The Hindu net is so full of holes that fish of all varieties are escaping. Kananaikil raises two questions: when there was an unanimous opinion to abolish reservations "how was it that the requests from the SC members that reservations in their case be continued was accepted so readily by Sardar Patel? Once it was accepted that reservation should continue for them because of the peculiar position of the SCs, why was the notion of the SCs restricted only to those

SCs who professed Hinduism? What are the motives behind this unique gesture to SCs? Is it not to divide & rule, a game in which communal Hindus are past-masters? He says SCs were treated as first-class citizens and minorities demoted to second-class status, "tolerated until they could be fully assimilated to the dominant group." Is this the way to establish a secular state? Can the dominant group identify its culture as the national culture? Can a country's constitution & govt. be used to further the interests of one religion to the detriment of others? By "abolishing" untouchability in the Constitution but practising it in real life & assuring reservations on paper but denying it in practice, the ruling class has inflicted two mighty blows on the Untouchables. Not only it separated them from their co-sufferers, the persecuted minorities, but further consolidated the ruling religion. Kanaikil says: "As far as the SCs were concerned the Constituent Assembly made them like orphans adopted to a royal family. Those SCs who paid allegiance to Hinduism became legally part of the great Hindu family. Those who refused to offer allegiance to it did not exist in the law. Yet the adoption was far from being a generous outpouring of a royal bounty to the SCs. It did not make them members of the royal family. The acceptance of the Hindu SCs as part of the Hindu community & the granting of special rights to them seem to have been more the result of a Hindu apprehension & a response to the growing disenchantment of the SCs with Hinduism. Granting reservations to Hindu SCs, & only to them, was one way to check the leakage from Hinduism". We thank the author for shedding light on this vital issue. We had said in an article in the *Statesman* (Feb. 19, 1978): that the short-range reason for continuing reservations to SCs is to see this vast interest-free "vote bank" keeps the Congress party in power. "And the dalits will continue to vote for the Party in power as long as

these reservations continue. Who is prepared to lose such a cheap and trustworthy friend? The initial effect of scrapping the reservations may be politically disastrous for the major parties - the dalits will no longer vote for a party whose leadership is not in their hands. Once they lose the hope of getting the discarded pieces bones & skin, dalits will turn militant & seek remedy through other means. Any abrupt withdrawal of reservations, which have pampered them so long, will rouse them to action. They will join hands with other exploited sections, particularly the Muslims, & the new political scenario that may emerge in the country would have tremendous potential for speedier socio-economic change." The ruling class knows this full well. That is why reservations are opposed only by "reactionary Brahmins" but supported by "socialist Brahmins". As more and more of them are getting converted to the latter category to check the Indian revolution, we expect the very sections which once led the Gujarat anti-reservation war, to shortly lead a pro-reservation agitation when the conscious dalits realise the harm done by it. Reservations have thus helped the ruling party and the ruling religion. However, the biggest sufferers are Muslims, Christians and neo-Buddhists who have kept their head high despite denial of reservations & continued Hindu aggression on them. If they have anything in common it is with these minorities because they are their real blood brothers. Most of those who have become Buddhists, Muslims, Christians are Untouchables. As original inhabitants they have nothing in common with the alien Aryans. By dumping them into a hostile Hindu bandwagon, Untouchables have been made to lose many things - the greatest loss is their minority status which, which alone shall bind them to the persecuted minorities, who alone shall be their friends in distress. It is for the dalits to fight this constitutional fraud, & regain their lost identity. □

"HARIJAN CHRISTIANS" DEMAND RESERVATIONS

Bangalore: The All-India Scheduled Caste Christian Leaders Council, Bangalore, has urged the President of India to remove the constitutional disabilities to enable SC Christian converts to avail reservations. M.S. Arockiadas, secretary of the Council, writes while the govt. is eager to help all economically weaker sections why should it discriminate against the equally poor Christian converts? A vocal section of the society wants "backwardness" to be decided not on caste basis but economic (poverty) yardstick. But when "Harijan Christians" demand reservation on ground of their poverty, they change the argument saying Christians are not entitled for reservations as it is restricted only to Hindus and Sikhs. If untouchability is the chief criterion to decide who is a SC, then "Harijan Christians" are as much SCs as Hindu SCs. The Kaka Kalelkar Commission and different reports of the SC Commissioner have confirmed that "Harijan Christians" also suffer from the stigma of untouchability even after the conversion. The Constitution says that the State shall not discriminate on grounds of religion and caste etc. How then we could be discriminated on grounds of religion? Of the Christians in India a large chunk (at least 50%) is drawn from the Untouchables and the denial of reservation has put us into great hardship. The Presidential Order of 1950 says that to belong to SC, a condition is put that one should profess either Hinduism or Sikhism. This condition is unconstitutional. That means the State wants to encourage only these two religions. The right to change one's religion is a Fundamental Right under the Constitution and these rights have been infringed under the Presidential Order of 1950. This historical wrong which has brought great hardships to "Harijan, Christians" must be set right, he says. □

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