

DALIT VOICE

[The Voice of the Persecuted Minorities]

Adviser : Dr. Mulk Raj Anand

Vol. 1

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No. 7

THE DECLINE AND FALL OF INDIAN WOMAN

The much-publicised International Women's Year has come and gone and to flatter the female ego, the year is now stretched to a decade. How long can we go on fooling the fair sex like this? Has the IWY done any real good to India except for those holding seminars? Why should we be so hypocritical that we do not want to get down to brassstacks? What did the women of India gain by the 13-year rule of Indira Gandhi, who has now launched her second hereditary rule? Why not stop bragging of the country's "glorious cultural heritage", the 'Sita image' of the Indian womanhood? Why not make her look into the mirror? It is high time that we ponder over these questions at least after the publication of the 'Report on the Status of Women in India' which laid bare in all nakedness her glamorous 'Sita image'. The report was submitted during Indira Gandhi's first term as the PM but despite being a woman she never implemented this report. Has India succeeded in abolishing prostitution in at least one State? On the other hand religion has justified Devadasi system. Why do we hear of increasing cases of rape of women? The decline and fall of the Indian woman cannot be a sudden discovery. We do not want the Government's official report to prove that the Indian woman has been a chattel and a slave. The trick was played on her as early as 500 B.C. from the days of the Manu Smriti. The Laws of Manu make no bones about prescribing the status of a slave to woman. It is true every organised religion has given a second-class status to woman. No religion allows her to become a priest. No woman has so far become the Jagaduru, a Pope or the Imam. Barring socialist countries,

where god and religion are a taboo, every capitalist-feudal country has treated the women badly and the women have put up with it. We have seen the true liberation of women in China during our visit in 1980. But no religion has committed greater crimes against the women than Hinduism. Let us look into the laws of the Manu. What does chapter 9 of the Manu Smriti say: Manu directs that women must be kept in perpetual dependence by the males of their families 'day and night'. Manu asks man never to trust a woman—whether she be his mother, wife, sister or daughter. "She may tempt them any moment", says Manu. He goes to the extent of saying that woman may be abused, kicked or even killed—no sin. It is a one-way traffic with Manu. Any thing that a man does is right and the woman is always wrong. There is no court of appeal. Why not a single woman did raise her little voice against Manu, who inflicted the most damaging and permanent wound on the Indian manhood? Is he not the enemy no. 1 of Indian woman? Hundreds of causes were cited for the decline and fall of Indian woman and speakers at seminars and conferences during the IWY cried hoarse about them. But not even a single one of them tried to trace the beginning of the

decline and fall of Indian woman. Not a single one of them hit the bull's eye. We Indians are pastmasters in side-tracking the issue. We indulge in hairsplitting arguments without touching the basic problem, because the moment a Hindu touches the basic problem it is he who gets hurt first. So the Hindus leave the basic problem as it is and indulge in sophistry. The Hindus are more busy trying to cure the symptoms rather than the disease. What then is the disease-the basic problem? That brings us to the official "Report on the Status of Women". The report in Chapter 1 cites the "inequalities inherent in the traditional social structure based on caste, community and clan with socially accepted rights and expected role of women which have a very significant influence on the status of women". From this we can make out that the official committee knew full well that the status of woman is indeed linked with our value system, with our hierarchical caste structure. But why did the committee fail to attack this false, dangerous value system? Why this willing-to-wound-but-afraid-to-hurt policy? We can't blame the committee. After all Indians are known for such thing. They can never think straight. Believe in changing only the form but not the content. It is foolish to think of the status of woman in isolation. Her decline and fall is linked with the decay of the Indian masses as a whole of which she is a part. Those who try to separate the two are deliberately going so to divert our attention from the existing realities. It is these elements who try to highlight the "special problems" faced by woman: prostitution, Devadasi, rape, child marriage, dowry, widowhood, suicides, widow-burning, unwed mothers, destitute women. Those who demand urgent remedies to cure these "ills" do not know that legislation both at the Central and State level does exist prohibiting these evils. The official committee itself has made a deep study of each of these special problems & came to the conclusion that despite legislation prohibiting many of these social evils, the practice still persists in a much more disturbing scale. Articles 14, 15 and 16 of the Constitution clearly spells out that there shall be no discrimination against persons on grounds of sex, caste or creed. Further every individual shall have equal opportunities to education and employment. But where are all these freedoms? Only in books. Mere legislation cannot bring about social change. As long as the social-economic inequalities persist any attempt at reform will amount to mere cosmetic changes. The official committee

sheds tears over the poor literacy among the Indian women. This is a devastating comment on the working of our Constitution and our judicial apathy. And let it be remembered that women are not the only victims of this sordid state of affairs. The Untouchables, tribals, OBCs, Muslims and other weaker sections are also sailing in the same boat. If Untouchables are by and large working as slaves, the wife of the Untouchable is the slave of the slave. Therefore exploitation has been always there and it is the bane of Indian society. If Hinduism is the cause of the social degradation of the vast masses of human beings in India, women including Brahmin women have been its first and worst victims. Mahatma Phoolley met with stiff opposition from Poona Brahmins when he arranged for the remarriage of a Brahmin widow. Unfortunately, when our "society women" ignore all this and talk only of the status of women and how to improve it, they are simply copying the Western women libbers. What is the Western concept of women's lib? Throwing away her bra and under garment? It is for these reasons that the western lib movement is petering out since it failed to integrate itself within a larger movement for basic changes in the socio-economic structure. We hope the Indian women libbers will ponder over this and try to destroy the very foundation of the problem-the problem of Indian poverty that flows out of our social and economic inequalities. The proverbial Indian poverty is not so much due to economic exploitation as due to social exploitation. While there has been such a balyhoo during the IWY in the whole of the Western world, why not even a whimper is heard in the socialist countries? Has anybody tried to examine this? Why do our society ladies want to ignore the big strides made in socialist countries in the field of emancipation of women? The way China is treating the women should bring shame to USA & Japan. Those who shout about women's lib in India should not go the Western way at least after seeing the achievements of their counterpart in socialist countries. Let them know that their salvation lies in the total socio-economic transformation in the Indian society. As long as the Manu and his poisonous values pervade our society, Hindu India cannot give a place of honour to woman. Let them work towards basic changes in the socio-economic structure of the country by repudiating Manu the woman-hater. The true woman can rise only from the ashes of Manu. □

CONVERSION TO FIGHT SOCIAL INEQUALITY

(J. R. Antwal, chairman, Federation of the All-India SC/ST Employees, P & T, New Delhi)

Conversion of Untouchables to Islam has assumed great significance in Indian life. Many moralists are vocal on this issue. Dalits have gruesome tale to tell that for centuries they have been denied equal share in society. They have not been considered even as human beings by the Hindus. Never did men suffer such a series of misfortune for so long a time as did the Untouchables. The Hindu Dharma Shastras have prescribed that dalits cannot own land, cannot wear new clothes, cannot enter temples and schools, they cannot read and hear scriptures. They are unseeables, unapproachable. How to survive under these conditions has been a question. They should eat coarse grains and wear worn-out clothes. In no part of the world human beings are subjected to such intense torture, that also in the name of religion. Such is the remarkable feature of Hindu religion. How a true religion can divide humans into touchables and Untouchables? I am not criticizing Hindu religion but pointing out only naked facts. A handful of foreign invaders defeated such a big country as India and ruled over it for centuries, plundered its wealth and valuables. While the high castes managed to adjust with every foreign rule, dalits had to bear the burden. They were driven deeper and deeper into sub-human level. This imparted in them a profound sense of inferiority complex. Hindus missed one vital thing that social cohesion rather than promotion of religious dogmas could strengthen the nation. On the contrary the landlords, businessmen, religious leaders, the fashionable elite conspired against the innocent poor, starving, naked Indian masses, particularly the Untouchables. The dalits indeed are the greatest asset of India and the real producers of wealth. This must not be lost sight of. But dalits are used only as servants of Hindus. They are made to live below the poverty line by drugging them with the dope of Karma theory. It is a wonder how this Karma theory is appli-

cable only to the people living in India where a section is made Untouchables by the god. How can god discriminate between man and man? It is a remarkable feature of dalits that even under most hostile circumstances they earned their living by the sweat of their brow. They worked hard, however menial it might have been, but they never resorted to begging. Therefore, they never became a burden to the society. History bears witness that during the Muslim rule Hindus became second-class citizens and when the British came both Muslims and Hindus became second-class citizens. In 1947, the Hindus regained power. Now, who are the second-class citizens? Not the Muslims. Having ruled the country for centuries they are refusing to yield to Hindu supremacy. Also not the Sikhs, because they have a magnificent history of valour and sacrifice behind them. The dalits alone are left to be the second-class citizens under the Hindu rule. They are starved, naked, illiterate, meek, dumb and deaf. How can anybody say India is a secular state where a Brahmin feels himself polluted even by the shadow of an Untouchable? In order to deny justice to dalits, Hindus have a lot of arguments to offer. They are prepared for anything except social equality. But nothing short of social equality is acceptable to us. This is the crux of the problem. The Hindus monopolise the public services by violating every law and the Constitution. They have always utilised the discretion vested in them by virtue of their position in Govt. services to the gross disadvantages of dalits. Many types of atrocities are

committed even upon those dalits who have nothing to do with reservations just because they demanded the barest minimum for their survival. Conversion to Islam symbolises the extreme frustration of dalits. It has become a fashion with Hindus to speak contemptuously of SC/ST in regard to their intelligence and understanding. "Merit theory" is discovered solely to deny justice to dalits. If dalits think that Hindus would ever concede social equality, it would be the biggest folly. Equality can be fostered only among equals. It is impossible to realise equality among unequals even if they are economically equal. It is foolish to think of reforming Hinduism as long as the corrupting influence remains in their "sacred scriptures". Meanwhile, dalits should leave those professions and occupations which are responsible for hatred and humiliations. □

TERRORISM IN PHILIPPINES

HONG KONG : Since July this year, 16 defenceless Subanons (a tribal minority in the Philippines) have been killed by an armed fanatical religious group known as 'Rock Christ', in Northwest Mindanao, Philippines. People in the affected areas are so terrorised that 373 families have evacuated their villages to seek refuge in nearby towns. Most Rock Christ members have been trained by the military to "kill the subversives". Whereas the majority of the people in the area have boycotted the June elections. For about 13 years the slum dwellers in Rama IV, Bangkok, have been struggling against eviction from the United Bangkok Development Company. As a result of local efforts and international solidarity support, the community has succeeded in winning recognition from the Development Company. Lately the Company has signed an agreement with the Community on rehousing the people on the same site. But the community will still have a long struggle as they will have to work out the details with the Company concerning the rehousing scheme. □

CONVERSION TO BUDDHISM

HELPS DALITS

Bombay : The conversion of dalits to Buddhism has taken them to an altogether new world of fresh air. This is discernible particularly among the youth who have completely shed the psychology of servitude under which his forefathers groaned. The Neo-Buddhist has not only completely thrown away the irrational and superstitious rituals practised by the Hindus, but has adopted a scientific temper. He has given up the Hindu gods and immersed them in the nearby rivers and wells. What we see today in the Buddha-wadas are the images of only Lord Buddha and Dr. Ambedkar. He has also stopped performing lowly duties like carrying carcasses of dead animals, carrying death messages, collecting fuels for cooking, marriageless of caste Hindus, sweeping village roads, etc. The new generation, exposed to the world of learning and knowledge, has become psychologically independent of his counterparts both in urban and rural areas. The conversion, coupled with the spread of education, has thrown up a class of writers whose contribution to the Marathi literature is most positive. (Special correspondent of the *Deccan Herald*, Nov. 3) □

RSS observes Ambedkar Day

The Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad on Dec. 6 observed the death anniversary of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar as 'Social Equality Day' all over India (*Statesman*-Dhc. 7)

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RESERVATIONS TO BUDDHIST CONVERTS: DALIT TEACHERS PLEA

Aurangabad : The All-India Buddhist & SC College and University Teachers Conference held here on Oct. 8-9, 1981 was inaugurated by Dr. Dipak Kumar Barua, Head, Department of Pali, Calcutta University. Dr. B. R. Bhosale, Vice-Chancellor of Marathwada University, presided. Prof. P. I. Sonkamble welcomed the delegates and Prof. M. R. Garud presented a brief resume of the conference. Dr. Barua said that the teachers must play their "role" in the society keeping in mind the saying of the Buddha, "Dhammanam Sabbadanam Jinati" :- The gift of righteous discourse surpass all other gifts. Dr. Bhosale advised teachers to follow the Buddha's moral principles as a code of conduct. Prof. R. K. Kshirsagar conducted the programme and Prof. M. A. Wahul proposed a vote of thanks. It was attended by 300 delegates from various parts of India.

The last session dealt with the organisational matter. It was presided over by Principal M. B. Chitnis, Dy. chairman, P. E. S., Bombay. Prof. N. G. Meshram presented the draft constitution of the proposed organisation of Buddhist/SC teachers and it was approved. Principal D. N. Sandanshiv (Siddharth College of Law, Bombay) moved the resolutions which were passed unanimously: The State and Central Government should extend constitutional reservations to the Buddhist converts from SC. A Chair in the name of Dr. Ambedkar be instituted in every university. That the Chair in the name of the late Prof. Beni Madhav be instituted in the department of Pali in the Calcutta University as he was the first Prof. and Head of the Pali dept. there, that Dept. of Pali be established in every University, that the unanimous resolution passed by both Houses of the Maharashtra Legislature changing the name of Marathwada University as Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar University be implemented by the Government of Maharashtra, That the birth anniversaries of the Buddha and Ambedkar be declared as public holidays by the Government of India

and by all the State Governments, that the teachings of the Buddha and Ambedkar be included in the study of all universities, that stern action be taken against those who commit atrocities on the Buddhist and SCs. The Executive of All-India Buddhist and SC College & University Teachers organisation elected Principal D. N. Sandanshiv (Siddharth College of Law, Bombay) as president. □

KARPOORI THAKUR CALLS FOR O.B.C. MOVEMENT

A two-day all-India backward classes delegates' conference was held in New Delhi on Dec 6. Addressing the conference, Karpoori Thakur, former Chief Minister of Bihar, said that there was a need for a strong backward classes movement to get their demands accepted by the Government. It was unfortunate that the Government was reluctant to put the B. P. Mandal Commission report before Parliament. In his presidential speech, Brahm Prakash, a former MP and former Chief Minister of Delhi, attacked the Government regarding the backward classes in the Central services. He appealed to the backward classes to unite if they wanted to "survive". As part of this struggle a big rally would be organized in Delhi in March.

According to the conference spokesman, Surinder Verma, about 1,000 delegates from all over the country attended the conference. Some members of Parliament D. P. Yadav, Jaipal Singh Kashyap and Ram Nihare Rakesh also took part in the conference (*Statesman*, Dec. 7,

Letters to Editor :

Justice V. M. Tarkunde, New Delhi : I heartily congratulate DV for representing the cause of the dalits & all other weaker sections. I wish it all success.

Saifuddin Insaf, Urdu poet, Bombay : I have translated quite a few DV articles in Urdu dailies & journals & pass on DV to some Dalit Panther friends like Daya Pawar, Arjun Dangle, Bagulji etc. We have regular discussion with them on DV. We are all with you in your fight to liberate the oppressed.

Gert Ruppel, Hamburg, W. Germany : We wish you all success for the work you are doing to support the people's struggle for a just & better society.

S. G. Sardesai, CPI leader, Bombay : I appreciate the emotional conviction with which you champion the cause of dalits & other weaker sections as also your uncompromising fight against RSS & other forces of Hindu reaction.

T. P. Kuttiammu, president, Islamic Centre, Calicut : Change of religion can't be done as an expedient or as a solution for some social ills. It is a very serious matter. Buddhism has been absorbed into Hinduism & I wonder if conversion to Buddhism can solve the problems of dalits. Islam will be a revolutionary change. Even that should be done by each individual or groups of individuals after proper study & conviction.

Prem Kumar, Ambedkar Sangham, Nagercoil, TN : We are at the extreme south. Dr. Ambedkar is not at all known in this part as the saviour of Untouchables. Hardly any literature on him is available in Tamil. To join the Panther movement we are badly in need of dalit literature & DV has filled this vacuum. Through that we have come to know the dalits in other parts of India.

S. R. Kuttan, president, Karala Varnava Society, Trivandrum : We are SCs. Our women take to washing clothes and men

climb coconut trees. The Varanavas are suffering discrimination in Kerala.

Navaneetham, Kumbakonam, TN : I don't know which parts of India are covered by DV. But I have a suggestion : DV is in English but the contents are so useful to dalits that it needs to be translated to local language. English can't be understood even by 0.5 pc of dalits. So with the help of other minorities they can plan language editions of DV. Towards this I suggest formation of an association called "Brotherhood of DV Readers" in every State which in turn can plan language editions. TN being the most progressive State, our Madras dalit comrades can make a beginning.

Durai Anbalagan, Dalit Panthers, Bombay : The Maharashtra Govt. is out to smash us with the help of the Shiva Sena and the police.

S. P. Rana, Deesa, Gujarat : DV is coming up very well. We are very much enlightened by reading it.

M. C. Ashmella, Bombay : I like the path taken by DV and the Dalit Sahitya Akademy which has produced wonderful books. We will support you. I am named after a Muslim mosque here. I am the editor of *Ahjamai*, a Tamil monthly, which is now stopped for want of funds. Our relatives got converted as Christians & Muslims. My father hated Hinduism. So am I. In our Tirunelveli dt. dalits are attacked by Hindus. Lot of them were murdered. It is dangerous to live there. DV must write about all these & expose the Hindu treachery.

S. J. Sadiq Pasha, DMK leader & ex-Minister, Madras : Several articles of DV really echo the voice of the persecuted minorities. We wish you all success.

Dr. Mumtaz Ali Khan, professor, Agriculture University, Bangalore : You can always count on my support to the dalits. I entirely agree with your criticism of our social scientists' lack of interest in doing research on the Muslim problem.

Dr. K. V. Pandalai, IIT, Madras : I am glad to learn that the Dalit Sahitya Akademy has been set up at the instance of an eminent writer like Dr. Mulk Raj Anand. The emancipation of the Untouchables of India can come about only by organised caste war just as the liberation of American civil war.

Prof. M. K. Subramanian, Erode, TN : My talk on untouchability for the benefit of students of Madurai University was recorded in the Trichy AIR station on Nov. 19. Programme executives objected to certain portions which I was asked to remove. The broadcast was scheduled for 11 pm that day and the morning bulletin announced the schedule. But the programme was withdrawn.

R. Elumalai, Madras : We are happy that DV has gained the support & sympathy of all sections. How long these high castes would suppress & blackmail us. Regarding the IMF loan for Rs. 500 crores a considerable portion should be earmarked to acquire farmlands to the dalits.

T. Balu, SC/ST Telegraph Traffic Emp. Fed., Madras : Our war against caste should not stop at writing articles & books. Thoughts must go into action. Accept our sincere congratulations at your efforts at exposing the real problems facing the society. DV needs allout support of dalits all over India.

A. J. Shetty, Bombay : Whatever help we are doing to DV, we consider it as a great privilege and joy. It is a real opportunity for us to serve.

V. Balraj, Trichy, TN : There is none to direct the dalits in TN. Even the DK movement is not so much concerned with dalits. We have lost faith in all political parties.

V. Ashok Kumar, Guntakel, AP : I was very much impressed with DV.

Diwakar Kakodkar, Goa : I wish you all success in the gigantic task of fighting caste.

Walter Fernaades, Indian Social Institute,

New Delhi : We have read many of the DSA publications and were very much impressed. I assure our support for your good work.

Idara e Ahasaath, Rampur, UP : Very happy to see DV. Permit us to use your articles in our publications.

Sister T. Gonsalves, Vidya Jyoti, Delhi : In your editorial "Dalit Life is the cheapest" (DV No. 4) you insist that Indian poverty is more due to social reasons than due to economic factors. Some people also concerned with dalits say caste & economic advantage go hand in hand and that the only way to break caste is tackle economic inequality as a people united, thus facing those who make decisions. But I find that the entire body of established myths tend to uphold the status quo and economic relief will be temporary if the myths do not change. What do you say?

Mohd. Abdul Haq, Ahmednagar : DV must be read by every educated dalit & minority as it gives clear picture of their plight & exposes the false propoganda of the "national press." I have shown DV & DSA books to my dalit & minority colleagues & all of them appreciated it.

Y. A. Lokhandawala, president, Indian Rationalist Assn., Bombay : DV is rendering yeoman service by exposing the unadulterated true facts without fear or favour concerning the present conditions of dalits & weaker sections.

Syed Asghar Hussain, IAS (retd.), president, A-I. Federation of Minorities & Weaker Sections, Hyderabad : DV is coming up very well. Nanadas & Nagappa, both ex-MPs, are working to popularise DV in Andhra.

S. Sudheer, Amalapuram, AP : A resident of Rolia Palem, Amalapuram, Tq., was killed by Hindus on a charge of theft. RPI has taken up the matter. We demand a full probe.

Shaheer Alam, Ghorakpur, UP : DV must be a propogator of the epidemic of friendship between dalits and minorities. □

RS. 5-CRORE R.S.S. FUND TO RECONVERT UNTOUCHABLES

(Our correspondent)

New Delhi : The Vishwa Hindu Parishad of the RSS has announced its decision to spend Rs. 5 crores in the first phase to "re-convert" Muslims and Christians back to Hinduism and as Untouchables. A spokesman of the VHP told a press conference here on Dec. 19 that this move was to "counter the menace of mass conversion of Harijans in the country." In pursuance of this decision the RSS has already launched a country-wide drive and the pro-RSS "national press" has been daily putting out reports of such reconversions of Muslims and Christians. But one such mass reconversion, or perhaps the biggest, of "Harijan Christians" to Hinduism in South Kanara dt. of Karnataka was found to be a utter hoax. The Bangalore correspondent of the prestigious *Sunday*, a Calcutta weekly (Dec. 20) visited Belthangay and after an interview of the converts said the entire RSS game was a big stunt. The "Harijan converts" to Christianity continue to remain Christians at home but only Hindus for purposes of Govt. record. The *Indian Express* correspondent had reported that Harijan Christians were bribed by R-S agents. This was confirmed by the Catholic church authorities of the area. Similar reconversions claimed by the RSS and its different front organisations are also found to be false. However, the RSS has been spending lakhs of rupees on such reconversion of Untouchables and tribals, and its tempo is likely to increase in days to come. Govt. officers are said be actively abetting in this effort of the RSS. Not only that, the RSS and its agents like the Pejawara Swami, Shankaracharyas and some big business houses have been bribing poor dalits and making them address "Hindu unity" conferences. They are also being coached to say that dalits should not quit Hinduism but be good Hindus. In several parts of India these efforts of the RSS is leading to communal unrest. RSS spokesman said in Delhi that some foreign-based organisations were responsible for carrying out mass conversions. Recently mass

conversions had taken place in Meenakshipuram in TN. Millions of petro-dollars were being utilised for converting Harijans and other sections of Hindus to Islam in this country. The spokesman said that a sinister plan had been formulated by some foreign agencies to convert millions of Harijans and other weaker sections of the Indian people to Islam. Over 1,500 people, mostly women and children, took a pledge to eradicate untouchability at a community lunch and unity conference at Valmiki Colony here on Dec-20. The function, organized by the Virat Hindu Samaj, was presided by Dr. Karan Singh, MP. □

ANNOUNCEMENT

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

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(No. V.P.P.)

CHRISTIAN TRIBUTES TO DALIT VOICE

(John B. Kutinha, National Public Relations Secretary, All-India Catholic Union)

Let me express my sincere thanks as a Christian, for your enlightening editorial in "Dalit Voice" (Oct. 15,) on the plight of the Christian community in India and the cruel and the subtle game being played by some of our communal-minded Hindu brothers in our country. While congratulating you for your excellent and analytical presentation of the case of the Christian community in India, I also admire your courage for your forthrightness and fearless attempt at exposing certain conspiracies that are being hatched to undermine the good work turned out by Christians in India. You have, indeed, rendered a great service to the Christian community as well as to the Indian society by writing such an editorial that transcends the "domestic wall" of caste, creed and ideology. Every Christian in India who wishes to survive and also to continue to render his share of service to the progress and the transformation of society in India must read your

editorial. If only a few more persons like you in India were to come out openly in expressing their minds in unequivocal terms and demanding fair-deal to Christians, it would not only restrain the militant Hindu communalists from their "bear-baiting" of Christians at every level, but it would also, I am sure, encourage the peace-loving Christians to carry on with their humanitarian work of feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, tending the sick and enlightening the ignorant, unhindered and without interference. This is the principle of their religion, the very principle of their life on earth. May God bless your good work and grant you greater strength to carry on with your exemplary work of championing the cause of the dalits, especially by editing the "Dalit Voice"; the voice of the persecuted minorities of India, which should open the eyes of all the dalits* and also the eyes of those who oppress them. □

R.S.S. CRITICISES DALITASTAN

(Express News Service)

COIMBATORE: K Sudarsan, RSS leader, warned the nation against international conspiracies to create a 'Dalitastan' in India by instigating Harijans. Addressing a public meeting here, he said a recent conference of 36 Islamic nations held in West Asia had chalked out a 10-year plan to 'Islamise' the eight-crore Harijans in India. Another conference of Christian missionaries held at Bangalore, which was attended by delegates from 14 countries, had also called for international effort in support of India's Harijans and tribals. Sudarsan said the recent events of mass conversions at Meenakshipuram should be viewed in this background. (Indian Express Dec-20) □

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BLACK-OUT & BLACKMAIL BY BRAHMIN - BANIA PRESS

(Kanshi Ram, President, BAMCEF, New Delhi)

The so-called national press or the monopoly press is in reality the Brahmin-Bania press. In this Brahmin-Bania combination, Banias supply the funds and the Brahmin the pen. Such a press always stands for the value system that benefits the Brahmin-Bania combine. It is, therefore, the bounden duty of such a press to either blackout or blackmail those who work against that value system. BAMCEF is such an organisation that works for the oppressed and the exploited and thereby against the value system that benefits the Brahmin-Bania combine. News regarding BAMCEF was, therefore, blacked out during its formative years. Now that BAMCEF has grown big and does big things, blackout of its news is, therefore, ending and black-mail must start if the press is to protect the interest of its masters. During the tansitory period there may be mix-up of both the blackout and blackmail. Some thing like this happened to BAMCEF during its 3rd National Convention at Chandigarh. The two leading English dailies interviewed me on Oct. 15, 1981, the second day of the convention. Some portions of the interview were so twisted that they gave impression of BAMCEF working against the very objectives for which it was constituted and so much pain has been undertaken by so many years to bring it to the level where it is seen today. The twist in the reporting of the interviews was explained to the delegates during the coming sessions itself. For future, our stand will be to give the explanation only through our own publications. We cannot depend upon the Brahmin-Bania press even for fair reporting of the explanations. Let us, therefore, build our own strong press and news service as quickly as possible to counter the anticipated blackmail by the Brahmin-Bania monopoly press. While inaugurating the convention, Karpooji Thakur, former Chief Minister of Bihar, launched all-out attack on the roots of

Hinduism—Brahminism. He said: "There are two currents of ideologies prevalent in the Indian Society—one is liberal, patronised and led by Maharshi Balmiki, Sant Ravidas, Kabir and Guru Nanak in olden days and by Mahatma Jyotiba Phoolle, Narayna Guru, Periar EVR and B. R. Ambedkar in the recent; while other is the orthodox & discriminatory blessed and brought up by Brahminism—spirit of inequality. This is the ideology which has deprived all of us our rights for our self-development and led us to demoralisation and destruction of independent identity. Since this path has caused our demoralisation, we must make all efforts to up-root Brahminism from this land. Then only we shall be able to enjoy the real fruits of democratic life".

Reacting to the reception given to him, Thakur said: "I am really very fortunate to be present among you on this auspicious day on the occasion of 3rd National Convention of BAMCEF. I was not aware that the employees of the oppressed and exploited communities could ever build such a biggest and tremendous organisation in the shape of BAMCEF. I never witnessed such a big and systematic arrangements like this. Hinduism does not teach equality, fraternity and respect for all. It for their duties but never allows to have rights. Under this religion no Shudra could hear Vedas, what to speak or read. If any Shudra found hearing, or reading Vedas, his ears were dumped with hot lead liquid and his tounge was cut-off. This would have continued for any number of years, had Dr. Ambedkar not taken birth among us. No body would have dared to take education. It is only Hinduism which is full of inequality. Mr. Thakur said (courtesy: *Oppressed Indian*, Nov. 1981.) □

CHRISTIANITY FAILS IN BATTLE AGAINST CASTE IN S-INDIA

(M. E. Prabhakar, Bangalore)

The TN conversion reports speak of Harijan Christian converts to have said in reply to the question, "Why do you want to become Muslims?" that "The Catholic Christians are already divided into three major groups: Nadar Christians, Pillai Christians and Fernando Christians (fishermen). The Protestants are also riven with caste differences. Even the Christian religious heads of the Tirunelveli district are appointed keeping the majority community of the area in mind. Communalism is rampant. Thus even if a Harijan becomes a Protestant or Catholic he has to remain a Harijan for ever" (*Indian Express*, 1-6-81). Arthur Pais in his article, "South India's Casteist Catholics", refers to Adi-Dravida Catholic Association in Trichy saying: "We are discriminated against in life, our corpses are no better", referring to the separate cemeteries for Harijans and caste-Christians. I myself came across a situation in K. K. district when a dead Harijan Christian could not be buried anywhere except under the tamarind tree of his landlord, to enrich the yield! My shocked comment was that the poor labourers enrich the fields of the landlords with their sweat while they are alive, and enrich their masters groves by the same minerals derived from his decomposing body, even after their death! Arthur Pais reports of discrimination against the nuns of Harijan origin, since they could not bring the requisite dowry to the church. They were given all the dirty jobs to do, "all in the name of Christian humility and to commemorate the suffering of Christ". The conflicts are between the Catholic Vellala and Wadiyar Christians or the Camorones and Tabelites among Fernando Christians; Nadar and Syrian Christians or Vellalas. The Harijans join the smaller churches or believers groups, often to escape caste-domination and some have even gone over to Hinduism. Add to this the Mala-Madiga conflicts in AP or Holeya-Madiga conflicts

in the Karnataka Church, or Syrian Christian domination over the Harijan Christians (Izhavas, Pulayans) in Kerala, and Nadar-Harijan divide in the Madras area, the South Indian picture appears rather hopeless! And yet, the question of caste is not publicly acknowledged or debated, and of more concern is the silence of the churches over the TN conversions and indictments against the churches. □

ಪೆರಿಯಾರರ ವಿಚಾರಧಾರೆ

(ಚಿಂತಕರ ಚಾವಡಿ, ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ, ಇವರ ಪ್ರಕಟನೆ)

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ANTI-WOMAN & ANTI-LOW CASTE TRENDS IN CHURCH

(Jyotsna Chatterji, Bangalore)

The Church by and large has failed to have the right perspective concerning woman and the society in general. The same social evils are reflected in church, the same discrimination towards the lower castes, classes and women. Those attitudes are reflected in all aspects of life-family relationship, marriage, appointments, social relationships, church affiliations etc. All the traditional and cultural prejudices of the society have been adopted by the Christian community. The church policy is dominated by the elite sections of the Christian community. This strengthens the ideology of the powerful and the caste-class domination within the church. To this day, the church has not been able to do away with sexism within the church structure and in its thinking. Though there are many women who have made a mark in various fields including theological education in the church they are not given adequate representation. They have been customarily given inferior positions even in religious orders specially those from the lower caste-class background. The Joint Women's Programme, therefore, cannot ignore the women in the church while it is concerned with women in general especially those church women who are in the rural areas and urban slums. The organisation of women in the church must have the twin objectives of involvement in the struggle of women in society and in the Church. However the JWP must avoid the trap of being confined to the elitest group of women in the church. Just as in the case of society in general, its thrust is towards the weaker sections of women in the grass-roots. In the church also its emphasis has to be on

the majority of the women in the congregations who are poor, oppressed and powerless. This explains our emphasis in the various regions, where we are working with Christian women, more and more our conferences, training and action programmes are through the regional languages at the grass-roots level around the issues that are of importance to them. At the same time we also work with more fortunate and educated among the women in the hope that they may gain the right perspective and become involved in the struggle for a community. □

STRENGTHEN BRAHMINISM: BRAHMINS TOLD

MADRAS Dec. : A three-day all-India Brahmins convention opened here on Dec. 25 with a call for all the sections among the Brahmin community to unite in the fight for equal rights in employment and other benefits. In his inaugural address to the 1500-odd delegates from all over India, Patten Sivaramakrishna Aiyar of the Kerala Brahmins' Association, asked the Brahmin intellectuals to find ways of raising the Brahmins' standard of living while strengthening the foundation of 'Brahminism'. Growing unemployment, 'unethical' dowry system and the neglect of the aged were among the prime issues before the convention, Aiyar said.

(Indian Express Dec 26) □

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