

DALIT VOICE

[The Voice of the Persecuted Minorities]

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EDITORIAL

THE FARCE OF VIRAT HINDU SAMMELAN

Virat Hindu Sammelan, aptly described by Jagjivan Ram, India's most famous leader of Untouchables, as the "joint enterprise of the RSS and the Cong. I," has just concluded in Delhi once again assuring the outside world that the Hindus do not believe in change come what way. Maharaja Karan Singh, the Rajput ex-ruler of Kashmir was chosen by the communal Hindus to stage this expensive and massive "Save Hinduism" show of

strength as a reaction to the mass conversion of Untouchables to Islam. But as Jagjivan Ram said the conference achieved nothing. But we are least surprised. If the conference failed to come out with any concrete suggestion to destroy untouchability, it is not because the organisers do not know it. They all know that untouchability can't be destroyed in isolation and without destroying the caste system. And destroying caste means destroying Hinduism. Every high caste Hindu knows this. So what the organisers are trying to do is to fool the gullible masses, deceive the foreigners and further strengthen the high caste fascist rule. Be that as it may, what the educated Untouchable youth want is not temple entry, inter-caste dinners or some crumbs of bread in the shape of petty jobs but self-respect and social status which alone shall ensure them a fair share in the political power. If the Hinduism does not ensure this, they are fully justified in seeking it through other religions that ensure equality. By passing

resolutions, the Delhi conference has not done anything new. Gandhi conducted such a futile exercise 60 years back and finally fell a prey to a Brahmin bullet. How can a small fry like Karan Singh succeed where Vivekananda and Gandhi have failed? As the 21st century is nearing and scientists have succeeded in putting man on the moon, the Hindus of India are still talking about trying to remove untouchability. Even on that there is no unanimity between themselves. What a farce!

They are not even ashamed of the stink in their body. But the angry young dalits can no longer wait. Their impatience has made them to take to militant path. Therefore, Karan Singh and co. need not bother about dalits. They will seek their own liberation and if the communal Hindus come in the way, they with the help of their natural allies—the other persecuted minorities—will fight their way through rivers of blood. If the Hindu leaders are so much worried now because of mass conversion to Islam, where were they

when Belchi, Pipra Kilvenmani occurred? Temple entry is another farce of a solution. But not only the educated dalits are not interested in going to temples but even many educated Hindu youths say it is a waste of time to go to temples. Barring some old people, Hindu youth are rarely seen in temples these days. The Delhi conference has called for ban on conversions. Dalits may be prevented from becoming Muslims or Christians but can anybody stop them announcing that they are not Hindus? Even Sikhs have started saying that they are not Hindus. Is it not possible to remain a human being without being Hindu? Do they mean to say that only Hindus could be human and others are not? The Delhi conference said conversions meant a threat to security. For this Jagjivan Ram said: "Do they mean that it is only Hindus who can keep the country secure? In the old days there were only Hindus in this country. Could they maintain its security?" (Statesman Oct.20) It is only the high caste Hindus who invited foreign invaders. History says this. No secular Govt could have tolerated the Delhi meet and therefore we fully support Ram's demand that the organisers of the conference should be prosecuted for tarnishing India's secular image. We also endorse Ram's opinion that conversions may not improve the economic status of the Untouchables. They know this. But the atrocities on them are committed not because they are poor. If so why no other poor Hindu is subjected to torture? Conversion brings them social status and will automatically end atrocities. Therefore Ram is right in saying conversions to other religions are a definite way to gain social status. Hansraj Gupta, RSS boss of Delhi, was the working president of the Delhi meet and Karan Singh was just a rubber stamp. That hundreds of RSS flags were fluttering and many Cong. I ministers and leaders attend the show, and that no

Leftist party condemned it has only reiterated our belief that when it comes to the question of saving caste, party differences are forgotten in India. Because in India each caste is a separate party; but all of them join when they want to wage a war on the dalits and other persecuted minorities. Therefore, the Virat Hindu meet may be interpreted as a declaration of war against dalits. However, we are glad that Ram, even at the fag end of his life, is fast realising the need to take over as the commander-in-chief of the army of the persecuted minorities. As a brilliant strategist, he knows who are the natural allies of the dalits. The Marathwada and Gujarat caste wars have convinced the dalits that the communal Hindus are itching for a fight. The showdown may be only delayed but the Delhi meet has confirmed that the war cannot be avoided. Dalits and the persecuted minorities know this and therefore they must jointly get set for the impending war—the war of liberation. □

BLACK-FLAG TO CHIEF JUSTICE

BANGALORE: The Karnataka Dalit Action Committee staged a dharna and black-flag demonstration before the High Court here on Oct. 20 to press their demands & protest against the "injustices being done to the dalits by the High Court."

A delegation led by its convener D. M. Thimmarayappa, submitted an 18-point memorandum to the Chief Justice.

The demands included the appointment of a scheduled caste judge as the Chief Justice and four more scheduled caste and tribe judges to the High Court.

The committee decided to suspend its agitation on the assurance and encouraging response from the Chief Justice, the committee stated in a press release. (Deccan Herald Oct. 21). This is the second blackflag agitation against the High Court.

RAJAMALLU FAVOURS TRADE UNION STATUS FOR SC & ST UNIONS

(our correspondent)

Madras : A warm reception was given to the Scheduled Caste and Tribes Commission, headed by Rajamallu, a dalit Cong. I leader and MP from Andhra, on its first visit to Madras on Oct 13. The meeting was well attended and workers greeted the commission with the slogans demanding recognition to the SC and ST welfare associations in different

Govt. offices, departments, banks and public sector organisations, on par with other trade unions. In view of the rising atrocities on the dalits, Rajamallu and Sisir Kumar, SC Commissioner to the Govt. of India and a member of the Commission, said in their reply that nothing could stop recognition of SC associations and the dreams of Ambedkar would soon become a reality. Earlier, Elumalai general secretary of the Central Govt. Banks and Post SC & ST Employees Associations Coordinating Council, TN and Pondicherry, presented a memorandum to the Commission. Dr. P. Kuganandam, a student leader of Madras, spoke on the problems faced by dalit students. GS Elango proposed a vote of thanks.

BANGALORE : The Commission later visited Bangalore and the most outstanding event of the visit was a meeting held by the commission with members of the Karnataka Dalit Action Committee headed by D. M. Thimmarayappa who submitted a memorandum. Since the document is important and has an all-India bearing, we reproduce the text for the information of dalits in the rest of India who in turn will have to agitate and fight for these rights. The high caste Hindus who rule India will not hand over anything voluntarily after a "change of heart". The dalits will have to seize what they want :

1. While welcoming the first visit to Karnataka, we wish to point out that the Interim report submitted by your predecessor, Bhola Paswan Sastri, has not been implemented. The Interim report had

recommended setting up of a special police force comprising exclusively of SCs to be rushed to troubleprone areas & recruit such a force in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, to begin with.

Trade Union Rights to SC/ST Welfare Assns. We regret to state that the existing trade unions in India have failed to protect the special interests of SCs and STs. Therefore all over India the SCs and STs employees have formed their own welfare associations. We urge the commission to recommend trade union status under Industrial Dispute Act.

2. Arresting officers under PCR Act for violating Constitution : Right now officers failing to fulfill constitutional reservations in admission to educational institutions and recruitment to jobs and promotions escape without any punishment. As there is no provision to punish such an anti-constitutional Act, we urge suitable amendment to P.C.R. Act to arrest erring officers.

3. Conversion of Untouchables : We regret to note the charge that Untouchables are being bribed to get conversion. Untouchables, who are the original inhabitants of India, are the only people along with tribes who genuinely love the country. The Commission which had sent its Director K. ARUMUGAM, I.A.S., to Meenakshipuram had said that the conversions were due to socio-economic reasons. Arumugam or any other Govt. agency has not so far discovered foreign money. But we are sorry to note that the commission has not so far published Arumugam's

report nor has it come out with its own opinion on conversion. On our part we have given a public call that to get social status, Untouchables must quit Hinduism.

4. Conversion Certificates: It has come to our notice that recruiting agencies are admitting conversion certificates issued by the Arya Samaj, which is now undertaking conversion of Muslims, Christians, Bhudhiets into Hinduism.

We demand the Government authorities should stop recognition to such conversion certificates

5. Liasion officers appointed in public sector units to oversee reservations should be from SC and ST only.

6. Reservation in private sector: We welcome the Government decision to enforce reservation in private sector.

7. Arms to Untouchables. In view of the steep rise in organised violence against Untouchables, with the police many a time becoming entirely helpless, we have been repeatedly demanding supply of guns to dalits and their training in civil defence. Bihar has already made a modest beginning but officials as usual are coming in the way of its implementation. We request you to steal a thunder and supply arms to Untouchables and the DAC will be at the service of the Government taking charge of this most sacred task of protecting the life, property and the honour of the most neglected section of the humanity.

8. Special courts to try untouchability offences. We regret to say that the existing courts have no sympathy for the Untouchables and the cases filed in the different courts go on dragging for years. Justice delayed is justice denied. Therefore, we demand constitution of special courts exclusively to try cases arising out of untouchability offences and land disputes and for this purpose Government may create a new post of a special Advocate-General, who shall be a scheduled

caste to be in charge of the whole state. Special public prosecutors may be appointed for each district

9. Tibetan-type model colonies. We regret that while the Govt. is going all-out to please foreigners like the Tibetans and others, its own sons of the soil are being neglected. Therefore, we urge upon the Govt. to establish four colonies on the model of Tibetan colony at Bylkippe. A separate Director of Agriculture may be appointed charged with this special task of acquiring lands to the extent of 5,000 acres in four different areas of the State and resettle landless Untouchables in such colonies by supplying them free seeds, fertilisers, water, irrigation, loans, implements, education, health care—just on the Bylkippe model. This experiment may be extended after seeing the success of this scheme.

10. Watch-dog status to the DAC. In Karnataka there is none to watch the enforcement of constitutional reservations and prevent atrocities in villages. This is because those in-charge of enforcing reservations and preventing atrocities belong to high caste. Therefore, while thanking the commission for recognising the KDAC, we also urge the commission to appoint us as the watchdog in respect of these two issues. □

MINORITIES GETTING DESPERATE IN INDIA

Fr. Joseph Puthenpura says (The Statesman Oct. 12.): "Today, the minorities in India are disillusioned and afraid of their future. By involving some archaic law on withholding state grants, officials play havoc with minority institutions". □

CONVERSION TO BUDDHISM

Bangalore: B. R. Ambedkar's speech delivered on the day he got converted to Buddhism at Nagapur has been translated to Tamil by a local dalit activist, J. D. Elangovan of the LIC Priced at Re. 1, the copy can be had at: 1/6 B. street, Cleveland Town, Bangalore-560 015. Those interested in bulk purchase will get commission.

BRITISH PRESS CONCERN OVER INDIA'S APARTHEID

(Dr. N. Srinivasan, U.K.)

London. The *Voice* is keeping the UK dalits well in touch with the incidents at home. In recent weeks there has been a talk about letting the Yorkshire cricketer Geoff Boycott to play in India for the obvious reason that he was linked with playing, training and coaching in South Africa. The Indian Government and Indian politicians have lost the credibility to talk about Apartheid in South Africa when they cannot put their own house in order.

Dalits here are asking that our counterparts in India are a set of honest, sincere, hard-working people. Why don't the society in which they live mind its own business and let us prosper on our own with the help of the rights provided by the Constitution which needs to be safeguarded by the Government?

The world press is not keeping quiet on heart-rending social degradation of the majority and social awakening of the valiant in India. The prestigious London Times (Aug. 31) has published a story by Kuldip Nayar under the headline, "Hindus concerned over Islamic conversions". The report says Hindus have better relations with Muslims than with Harijans. It was seen in Rajasthan during the recent floods that while Hindus & Muslims would Q up together for medicine, there would be a separate Q for Harijans. The "Guardian" (Aug. 21) carries a report under the headline, "New Life in Islam for Indian Untouchables. Harijans are discovering that they hold potent political lever against Hindu caste system". The report from its New Delhi correspondent Peter Niesewand says Untouchables have gained a lot through Islam. The Indian Constitution guarantees the right to change one's religion. The report quotes Home Minister Makwana, Madras economist C. T. Kurien, defending the Untouchables right to conversion to gain equality. At Kanpur, the police arrested 23 Dalit Panthers threatening to embrace Islam. Niesewand's verdict on Indian untouchability: "Millions of Harijans

not only remain poor but are Hindus in name only. Their untouchability bars them from even the most basic rights of their religion because they are born as out castes." The correspondent quotes an Untouchable, who became a Muslim, saying how he got social status because of conversion. □

RESERVATION IN PRIVATE SECTOR

Yet another hoax is played on the SCs and STs who are cheated enough by the country's ruling class. When the constitutional reservations are not enforced in the Govt. and public sector itself, a report is put out saying that the Union Govt. "has decided" to extend reservations of jobs to SCs and STs and physically handicapped in private sector through a legislation. The decision is taken on the basis of the recommendations of the Mathew Committee on improving employment services. From the news point of view, the report is of great importance. But barring the Statesman, which prominently published it on the front page, other chose to ignore the news. When the report itself is ignored, can the dalits hope for any thing else?

TRIBALS DECAYING

BHUBANESWAR: A two-day all India conference on tribal area development held here reached a consensus that the socioeconomic condition continued to remain the same despite implementation of tribal development programmes by official and non-official agencies. About 50 delegates specializing in the field of tribal area development from different States attended the conference. □

WE ARE GETTING DESPERATE

(E. G. Lingam, Hyderabad)

It is an accepted fact that the high caste Hindus even cent per cent are persons-of-letters and they occupy the highest place in society. Even when they go for biksha they command respect by reciting Sanskrit slokas and demand alms. Almost all the temple priests are only from the high caste. May be that the Sanskrit language is sure to pave way for their livelihood having denied the same opportunity to other castes for centuries.

Even the kings with all their wealth could not learn this language. As could be seen in the scriptures, a century ago the Maharaja of Satara had to secretly learn this language at nights. In those days Sanskrit was a monopoly of high castes. When the Govt. opened a Sanskrit school in Poona in 1821, Brahmins became violent. Brahmin teachers not only furiously opposed the new move to admit other caste Hindus but a majority of them also resigned. When this was the plight of caste Hindus themselves what must have been the condition of the Untouchable who were never in the picture of Hindu society. The Christian missionaries took up the cause of education of other caste Hindus as also the Untouchables and taught English through convents. English-medium education became so popular that even to date there is a mad rush for the convent education. Sanskrit, which was once held in high esteem, faded into obscurity. A strong feeling grew in the minds of these castes that foreigners were preferable to the high caste. Even 34 years after the independence, we feel proud to learn this foreign language (English) rather than our own "Hindu" language (Sanskrit), because English has paved the way for better living for other castes as well. Who is responsible for this plight? Dr. Ambedkar, the architect of the Indian Constitution was denied the Sanskrit learning during his school days and later he learnt it by himself and partly from others and became a pandit in Sanskrit. Is it a fact that the high castes are economically backward when compared to other caste Hindus. If so, at what level? Sanskrit

learning always assured their livelihood. Let us look into the Govt. offices, undertakings, teaching profession and so on. Most of the higher posts are occupied by the high castes disproportionate to other lowly castes. There is so much of opposition all over India to the reservations for SCs and STs in education and employment. They are the out-castes under Hinduism though superficially called Hindus.

The Govt. has reserved certain percentage of seats in education and employment for these SC and STs, but is this percentage fulfilled or observed in its true spirit? In many cases the Govt. directives are violated on the pretext that suitable candidates are not available. In the selection committees these high caste Hindus with biased minds invariably disqualify the eligible SC and ST candidates and select those belonging to high caste even through they do not fulfill the basic requirement for the jobs, in the name of merit. What is merit? To a large extent it may be only an opinion as paternity and not a fact as maternity. When these are the facts prevailing in society where is the chance for these downtrodden communities to find place, educationally and economically leave alone socially?. In many a case high castes produce false SC and ST certificates and compete with genuine SC and STs and thus deprive the later s chances. We have recently noticed Gujarat riots against the reservations for SC STs, for admissions to post-graduation courses in medicine. Can we count them in figures, much less the percentage, as to how many post-graduates in medicine, engineering,

[contd on page 7]

MURDEROUS ASSAULT ON DALIT DOCTOR

THREAT TO EMBRACE ISLAM IN COIMBATORE

(Prof V Thangavelu, Udumalpet, TN.)

Tamil Nadu has over a crore of Untouchables having 124 castes and sub-castes. The sub-caste system is giving lot of headache to all educated employees. In Coimbatore district a Dalit woman's head was cut off by a Hindu. The reason was she refused to have sexual relations with a Hindu. A Hindu was riding a motorcycle in a muddy road. He saw an Untouchable youth walking on the same road. He tied the youth to a tree and beat him. Even educated, employed engineers, doctors, class I and class II officers, working women are attacked by Hindus. On 18-8-81 Dr. Krishnaswamy, M. B. B. S., was attacked by Hindus in Poolavadi, Udumalpet taluk, Coimbatore district. Dr. Krishnaswamy (29) is a follower of EVR Periyar. Being fair and well-built, nobody can mistake him to be an Untouchable. He became a popular doctor loved by the poor. A local Hindu school teacher, who was jealous of an Untouchable doctor becoming so popular, decided to murder the doctors family. He was attacked by a mob of 100. His family members were also injured. Dalits in TN are not running any daily newspapers. The press is in the

hands of Hindus. They blacked out the news and put out coloured news. Malai Malar is the largest circulated evening Tamil daily of Coimbatore. I do not have faith in Hinduism which was brought to India by the Indo-European hordes. Hinduism has no founder whereas in Islam, the creator stood apart from his creation ordering and presiding over his work. The Hindus worshipped all sorts of gods whereas the Muslims having one god, Allah and the Koran forbade the faithful to represent him in any shape or form. I am propagating and supporting "Harijan" conversion to Islam in Tamil Nadu. If the Government fails to render justice to Dr. K. Krishnaswamy, definitely hundreds will embrace Islam. After this sensational news was published in Malai Malar, we got surrounded by CID's CBIs and police people. Islam alone can help internal and international trade. The converted Muslims are getting proper guidance from born Muslims in TN. If the Government fails to give proper justice, we Dalits will embrace Islam from Kashmir up to Cape Comorin. □

[We are getting Desperate. Cont. from Page 6]

research wing, etc. are available among genuine SC and STs. They suffer humiliation in these institutes by the caste Hindus. Look at the plight of the dalits in villages. Are they treated as human beings? They are illiterate indentifying themselves with slush and living on the remains of food thrown by the caste Hindus. If at all the high castes are facing any problem in the recent years it is purely their own making. Recently all the religious leaders of various

mutts in South India held a conference for reconverting "Harijans" into Hinduism from Islam. What is wrong if the Harijans get themselves converted into Islam or Christianity when the doors of Hinduism are shut for them and living itself is at stake? □

RSS Warning to Muslims: If the Muslims want a quiet atmosphere for their worship five times a day, they should build their mosques & mazars in more secluded places. (ORGANISER, OCT. 18.)

Letters to Editor :

Honnappa Kahale, Bangalore : Hindu solidarity conferences held throughout the country proclaimed that the recent conversions are not genuine. A plot by the Arabs and Muslims, using foreign money to entice dalits is suspected. Dalit leaders are being forced to condemn conversion and warn their brothers against losing reservations and benefits. The Govt. was urged to ban conversion. Conversion is a sure way to achieve equality. The caste system is essential in Hinduism to maintain purity of Brahmanism. For centuries violence was used to uphold casteism. Love and equality cannot exist here, so it is impossible for casteless dalits to remain in this fold. Where reformers like Buddha, Ramanuja, Gandhi failed, less sincere leaders at Hindu brotherhood conferences and politicians, can hardly succeed in changing views. Centuries of sufferings by dalits has been a great enough sacrifice for the Hindu cause. Now carefully considering the pros and cons they have opted for conversion with full conviction. So it is both unfair and detrimental to attribute monetary inducement or coercion as the reason. During the course of such conversions if by chance they get some financial benefit, it cannot be termed a bribe. It is unreasonable to suppose that only individual conversions are genuine. Illiteracy and backwardness can result in mass conversions, but only a genuine conversion lasts long. In India many religions exist. It indicates that none of them are perfect. Hence conversions will occur. Religions that preach equality and love will attract the oppressed. One cannot ban conversions. Religion is a fundamental right and India is tolerant. Conversion will emancipate 1/5 of the Hindu fold. They will emerge as strong self-respecting citizens and strengthen the country. Total equality can become a reality only with conversion.

Mrs. M. R. Bhatt, Nagpur : I read every number of the Voice through with great interest, because of its forthright expression of the dalit point of view.

Baren Ray, New Delhi : The struggle of the members of the SCs is both economic and social. Since the oppression is based on religion, it is the religious base which has to be reformed. It has to be a vast cultural movement which should turn the direction and value system of Hindu society. I have a concrete suggestion : change the name of your organisation (both words are meaningful and significant). I suggest you should launch a cultural movement which should turn the direction and value system of Hindu society. I have a concrete suggestion : change the name of the movement which should be named Ekalavya Vidrohi which would reflect the challenge of the scheduled castes masses freeing themselves of the mental bondage which had accompanied the socio-economic exploitation for centuries. SC youth organisations may be formed as Ekalavya Vidrohi Samitis. Ekalavya days or weeks may be observed to propagate and explain the idea. Another idea is to prepare for political protest strikes (not for any economic demands) specifically against discrimination, for the restoration of full human dignity and the full implementation of the Indian Constitution. Such issues as some municipalities still insist that the sweepers carry the night soil on the head, not providing wheelbarrows etc. must be highlighted in such actions.

N. Flangovan Cuddalore, T.N. I was invited by some 'comrades' to the ALPSO held here recently. When I asked its aims I was told that it was for promoting peace. All the speakers were communists. They talked about US imperialism. But none spoke about India. Before they go for world peace they must settle peace at home. □

ON THE QUESTION OF CONVERSION

(Amarjit Singh, London)

Suddenly the dalits' conversion to Islam in India is big news. Just about everybody who is anybody and who is an enemy of the dalit has made a comment or two about these conversions.

The masters are refusing to accept the the dignified, consciously free, Untouchable. So what is behind the sudden wave of conversions to Islam? First of all, there is nothing new about the dalits' leaving the dung heap of the so-called Hindu society in search of equality, fraternity and human dignity. This happened in the Buddha's time when millions of dalits sought refuge in Buddhism escaping from the torture and degradation of the Hindu caste society. The very popularity of all the medieval saints lay in their emphasis on the equality of man. Most of the Indian Muslims are descendants of the converts. Militant Sikhism arose because of the revolts of the dalits. In the 20th century Dr. B. R. Ambedkar led above 20 lakh people to the path of Buddhism as a last resort in his search for dignified status for the dalits. No positive proof has emerged regarding the allegations about foreign money being behind the conversions. It is possible that the host Muslim community would tend to help the new converts as is natural. Comparatively speaking, the Muslims are better off and theoretically there is such a thing as equality in the brotherhood of Islam which Hinduism denies on theological/political grounds. The fact is that Tamil Nadu tops in atrocities on the dalits. The practice of untouchability is so extreme, so barbaric and so inhuman that even the Apartheid system of South Africa seems like a mere misunderstanding between the races.

"In Travancore some of the Untouchable castes were literally slaves or serfs, and were given away, bought, sold and mortgaged like other property" (Indian Caste

Customs, L. S. S. O. Malley). It was not till 1855 that the slaves were nominally freed. Nevertheless: "In this state the untouchables were subjected to various vexatious restrictions, such as being forbidden to wear shoes or carry umbrellas; but what was most felt and resented was a state order that Shanam women should not wear any clothing above the waist." The Shanam women's right to wear clothing above the waist was won through hundreds of deaths and widespread rioting. In the second half of the 20th century the dalits are still denied the right to use public facilities, to wear ornaments and good clothes, to walk the public highways and in some cases to breathe the same air as high caste Hindus, as the breath of an Untouchable still pollutes! It is not too long ago that Kilevenmani happened. The so-called high caste Hindus incinerated hundreds of Untouchable men and children by burning 25 huts, for daring to go on strike for an extra 2 rupees a day (one rupee—6 pence). The murderers were allowed to go free because in the words of the trial judge "Owners of cars and good houses are incapable of committing such acts". (*Times of India*, Bombay, 14 June 1973).

Some newspapers have pointed out that the villages where widespread conversions took place are precisely the locations which were not subjected to mass terror, burning, rape and looting by the high caste Hindus, thus implying that atrocities and oppression are not a factor in these conversions. While this contains a germ of truth, the very opposite is the case. It is precisely the most conscious elements among the dalits, namely the Dalit Panthers, who have encouraged these

conversions ; the very same Panthers who were traditionally pro-Ambedkar and pro-Buddhist ! Ambedkar had embraced Buddhism and rejected Islam because he thought that Islam was a non-Indian ideology. If conversion for the change in religion was the aim the Dalit Panthers would be encouraging their brothers to adopt Buddhism instead of Islam. So why the conversions to Islam ? There is no doubt that the Indian Muslims suffer from social oppression, whatever their economic class may be. In Tamil Nadu Muslims are a small minority. Also their class character ranges mostly from poor peasant to that of petty bourgeois, the elements which can be helpful in the people's democratic revolution. It is natural for the people who suffer from the same exploiters to group together. The reason why the Untouchables have not been able to win over the so-called high caste poor peasants is the *very real, and barbaric* aspects of the caste system. It is the combination of class and social oppression that has brought the two communities together in TN just as it did in the recent Gujarat riots. (See the article on Reservations in the Punjabi section of Lalker.) The reason why it has taken so long for this to happen is to be found in the backwardness and very low political consciousness of the dalits who are not only economically but politically, socially *psychologically* oppressed as well. Hence the Dalit Varg's reason for conversion to Islam is not for the love of Islam but for consciousness, the right to take water from the village well and for the right to walk on the public road without being whipped or cut to pieces for this 'offence'. (The reason these converts can now draw water from the same well is because they have the muscle of the whole Muslim and Untouchable communities. If any so-called Golden Hindu gives them a hard time they risk starting a communal riot.) Times do change

Some Untouchables are demanding equality on the threat of leaving Hinduism and embracing Islam. It is in this context that the hysteria generated by the enemies of the dalits becomes understandable. They do not care one atom for mere conversion to Islam. That in itself does not change anything. What is being felt dangerously in their minds is the idea that for the first time in their lives the slaves are feeling that they are slaves. What is more they are daring to voice the opinion that Hinduism and by implication the present political/social system is rotten to the core, by the practical act of embracing a religion which is diametrically opposed to all the worst aspects of Hinduism. So it is not Hinduism that the Dalits are giving up but the mentality, for dalits by the very definitions of the Hindu sages were never a part of the swarana (golden) Hindu community. They were outside not only theoretically but also practically, as is amply reflected in the custom of Hindus of forcing the Untouchables to live outside the villages. Conversion to Islam or Buddhism in itself will not bring any fundamental change to their economic/political status. As a matter of fact the converts lose the "reservations". The Dalit Panthers know this, the converts know this and the Govt. is also very much aware of this fact. The conversions are also a kick in the teeth for the Govts' double-edged reservation policy ; a policy which promises a great deal, gives more or less nothing but in turn not only turns the so-called high caste Hindus against the Untouchables but also corrupts the most educated segment of the dalits by making them dependent on the Govt mercy. The Govt is also aware of this fact as well. The conversions indirectly are also exposing and exploding the myths of reservation (The Chief Minister of TN. said he would "not hesitate" to ban conversions if caste differences are exploited. Away from TN in Kanpur the authorities have invoked the

National Security Act which permits detention without trial, against the Dalit Panthers involved in backing conversions.)

But why not conversion to socialism? What is stopping the dalits embracing the path of Karl Marx, Lenin and Mao? This is a question which has never been debated seriously by the communists in India. The reasons for the dalits not embracing communism are complex, but in the final analysis very simple. "Workers and oppressed people of the world unite", was Lenin's motto. How far is this motto applicable to India, the land of Manu Smriti, the land of 18,000 major dalit atrocities every year, the land where you can still buy a man or woman for Rs 200, the land where one may be hacked to death for polluting someone? The answer is that India is still very backward. To talk about socialism to a dalit is tantamount to discussing micro-chip technology with a person whose only tool for counting is his ten fingers. Before socialism can be achieved, people's democratic revolution is a must. Before that the unity of the people is mandatory. Before that can happen, an active struggle against the practice of caste, though not its total annihilation, is essential. Otherwise in the context of India, Marxism becomes a textbook formula; dry, meaningless, dogmatic and as far removed from life as a Vedic mantra □



With Best Wishes to the

DALIT VOICE,

the voice of the persecuted minorities
of India

The only journal of its kind for the
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Muslims and Christians
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WHY GO FOR CONVERSION ?

by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar

[Pages 20, Price Re-1]

Excerpts from the historic speech delivered on May 30-31, 1936, while addressing a conference of Untouchables, making his stand clear on conversion. The document is topical in the context of the current controversy raised by the communal Hindus on the issue of conversion. It is the most authentic voice of Dr. Ambedkar on conversion.

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Orders awaited



Confederation of the Depressed Classes Organisations of India (C. D. O.)

The VIth All India Conference of the CDO will be held on Dec. 12 & 13 1981, at Vijayawada.

It is also proposed to convene a THOUGHT SESSION and to invite Dalit intellectuals from all over country.

Dalit organisations sponsoring delegates for the conference may send names.

Bheem Bhavan,
NELLORE-4. AP.

E. V. Chinniah
PRESIDENT.

P & T DEPT. DALITS GETTING READY FOR FIGHT

(Our correspondent)

New Delhi : Dalit employees in the Post and Telegraphs Department are getting restive and hundreds of them are denied promotional chances. While on one side communal Hindus are sabotaging the chances of dalit recruitment to higher positions, which continue to be the monopoly of high castes, those lower below are made to rot life-long.

The Federation of All-India SC and ST Employees, P & T Dept. New Delhi, in a communication has called upon its members to fight for a Special Implementation Cell in the P & T Department. Dalits in the Dept. are wondering that though the Dept. is headed by a noted tribal leader Kartik Oran, Minister of State in charge, he is being made helpless because of the machinations of the high caste officials. The Sp. Implementation Cell is meant to monitor the various reservation orders. But this Cell, which is in existence on mere paper, is not functioning because the high castes have managed to provide it with no staff. Trilok Chander, MP, raised the issue in Parliament many times but the stock reply given is that the Finance Ministry is not giving funds for the extra staff needed. The Federation headed by J. R. Antwal has given a call to its members to take up this issue. The Federation communication (Oct. 9) has stated that it has succeeded in getting relaxed qualifying marks for Departmental JEs. implemented. The qualifying marks for JE. to become AEs now are 35% instead of 40%. The Federation has to be congratulated for this achievement. To avoid de-reservation of

reserved post through qualifying/competitive exams, the qualifying standard has been relaxed to the extent that no post is de-reserved. Besides, all SC-ST employees of the Dept. can now meet the DGMs, DPs or SEs directly for settlement of their complaints and grievances relating to service matters. Because these officers have been designated as liaison officers to look after the dalit employees welfare. However, one thing has to be correctly understood. Not even the mother will give the breast milk without her child crying. Dalits will have to note that the high castes of India, so selfish, will not give them anything without a fight.

"MASS MOVEMENT" SOUVENIR

'Mass Movement', Bombay, has designed a souvenir named 'Bahujan Hiray'. Its patron is Ven. Dr. Anand Kauslyan. This will be published on the auspicious eve of silver jubilee of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's DHAMMA CHAKKA PAWATTAN DAY, - 1981, Bahujan Hiray is being brought out under the editorship of Aushman Raja Dhale who, will be the Chief Editor of this volume.

EDITOR : V T. Rajshekar

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