

DALIT VOICE

[The Voice of the Persecuted Minorities]

Adviser : Dr. Mulk Raj Anand

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No. 5

Devadasi System

PROSTITUTION THAT IS SANCTIONED BY HINDUISM

Ever heard that prostitution in parts of India is sanctioned by Hindu religion and its gods? Many educated Indians themselves may not know this. Even senior journalists in the "national press" do not know this. Such is our appalling ignorance. Saeed Naqvi, resident editor of the Madras edition of the *Indian Express*, in his column (Dec. 4) was frank enough to admit his ignorance. This shocking system is called the *Devadasi* (meaning the maid-servant of god) by which young girls are "dedicated" to Hindu temples. Discarded by the family, they have to remain there for ever as part of the temple property. Lately these *Devadasi* girls are being transported to Bombay to fill the hell that is "red light area", the officially-sanctioned flesh trade centre. Caste coupled with poverty is killing millions of these unfortunate creatures in this land of non-violence. How cruel the Hindu religion could be! But not one Hindu or its myriad minions like the RSS-sponsored Vishwa Hindu Parishad has so far uttered a word of protest against *Devadasi*. On the other, lovers of Hinduism threatened those social workers who went to investigate this system. Hindu religious leaders have been consistently denying the very existence of this system. How do you like this? Why this hush-hush

drama? And who are these maid servants of god? The lowly Untouchables of India. And these girls live around temples, dance during the day and supply sex by night to the priests and other high caste Hindu custodians of the temples. This system is so widely prevalent in many parts of South India, particularly Karnataka, that the State Govt. was finally forced to come out with a new legislation to curb this atrocious system which has grown into a menacing business. The *Times of India* (Nov. 30) in a tongue-in-cheek editorial comment on the Karnataka legislation says: "It is no secret that after a brief, futile attempt to follow the precepts of the *Devadasi* way of life, most of the girls end up in urban red light areas. One study showed that a third of the prostitutes in Bombay's cheapest brothels were *Devadasis*; almost three quarters of these were 14 and under when they took to the profession". But the Hindu hypocrisy is such that this system of prostitution is given a religious garb & because of this it is well covered, well-protected. Defended by its religious

leaders. It is no wonder that every Hindu temple is decorated with vulgar, erotic sculptures of naked, voluptuous girls, paintings depicting Hindu gods & goddesses in all sorts of beastly sexual poses. Sex perversion has received religious sanction under Hinduism in the name of *Kamasutra*. Nirad Chaudhuri devotes a whole chapter in his book, *Hinduism*, to describe how Hindu gods are lecherous beasts when it comes to sex. In the *Shakuntala* Kalidasa extensively describes how god Shiva remained in continuous coitus with Parvati for a 100 days. The Hindu symbol of *QM* is female organ indicating worship of sex which is a speciality of Hinduism. Therefore, there is no wonder that the *Devadasi* system is paraded as an unique contribution to India's "rich art and culture." Many may not know that some of India's topmost singers & dancers come from *Devadasi* families. When a batch of girls went to investigate this system some *Devadasis* claimed that India's No. 1 film singer Lata Mangeshkar belonged to this stock. So too M. S. Subbulaxmi, described as India's nightingale, they said. If this is true, we are really sorry that these two top Brahminised leaders, who are a household name in India commanding enormous wealth, have done nothing towards their unfortunate fellow women. *Devadasi* system resulted in the creation of a separate "prostitute caste". What is most shocking is that the high caste Hindus do not mind enjoying these Untouchable girls setting aside the Hindu obsession with purity and pollution. It is only the men among Untouchables who are outcastes and cannot come anywhere near temples. It is they who can't be touched. Girls are okay. What a beautiful rule of convenience that is Hinduism! To recruit

these girls to sex trade, caught in the jaws of poverty, a religious garb is given. Just as Gandhi changed the name of Untouchables to *Harijans*, meaning the children of god, these dalit girls are given the new name of *Devadasis*. Here lies the Hindu genius of perpetrating a heinous crime and selling it in a sugar-coated capsule. Even Germans got fooled by this magic of Hinduism. For the first time, the people outside this dancing slave-girls system came to know of it when the Joint Women's Programme headed by Jyotsna Chatterji & her band of dedicated girls conducted an investigation on the northern borders of Karnataka and parts of Maharashtra braving all threats and came out with a well-documented book which incidently happened to be the first of its kind on *Devadasis*. JWP invited to Bangalore Suniti Pungaliya, a Poona-based barrister who had organised the *Devadasi* girls. The Karnataka Dalit Action Committee offered to hold a meeting of *Devadasi* girls as they are mostly Untouchables. It was only then this barbarous system received some publicity, although the State Govt. then stoutly denied the very existence of this system. Please note that no women's liberation wallah's ever bothered about the *Devadasis*. Who bothers about dalits? A dalit DV reader, Krishna Don Sardar, from 24-Paraganas dt., West Bengal, wrote us a 25-page letter after seeing a play on the *Devadasis* staged in his village. He wrote: "Our village people did not know that such a beastly custom exists in the South in the name of Hindu religion. The drama is a clear sign of revolt against caste system & Brahminism". Sardar was so much shocked on seeing this play staged by a Calcutta troupe that

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A NEW ORGANISATION TO FIGHT FOR DALITS AND PERSECUTED MINORITIES

(Our correspondent)

Bangalore : The Indian League for Minorities inaugurated at Patna on March 31, 1982 has adopted the following declaration which is fully in agreement with the policies of the Dalit Voice. The declaration was approved at a meeting of the ILM in Delhi on June 12. The Indian League for Minorities has expressed concern over the growing tensions, disharmony & hatred among the different communities. The Constitution has, however, guaranteed equality to all citizens irrespective of their caste, creed, culture and language and also safeguarded the interests of the weaker sections. But unfortunately its implementation has not been just and equitable as envisaged by the Constitution. The ILM, therefore, recommended a permanent and autonomous authority to be established by law to look after the interests of the persecuted minorities and the dalits to implement and work as a watch dog against the excesses or failures of the Executive or other agencies. The ILM asked the persecuted minorities and the dalits to get rid of their fear of being less in number. The religious minorities together with the dalits and tribes constitute over 40% of the whole population. The percentage of the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) comes to 52. The women to whichever community or caste they belong are counted among the weaker sections. All these sections of the society are suppressed by a microscopic minority. The ILM will help the dalits and persecuted minorities to identify their common Enemy. Once they identify the Enemy the exploited communities will come to know that they are not a minority but a majority and a great force which no caste or community will be able to ignore, howsoever powerful it may be. The problems of minorities is a world problem. However, the problem in our country is different and hence the solution must also be different. It is with this perspective that the problems of persecuted minorities and dalits are taken together in our Constitution. The problem is not only of being economically backward but of being socially treated as inferior and with contempt. The ILM shall adopt effective measures when communal tensions break out, but more than that it shall work out preventive measures in order to foster national integration & harmony. ILM is non-political. It will have friendly relations with the International League of Minorities which has a consultative status with Human Rights Commission of the UNO. ILM will not shut its eyes to the problems of minorities of the coloured peoples in whichever part of the world they may be. It would make common cause with the oppressed minorities throughout the world. We appeal to the people to come forward and work for the cause of the minorities and the dalits. Please write to :-

Indian League for Minorities
No. 2, Mahadeva Road,
New Delhi-110 001 (India)

Sankeshwar : All the heads of the Hindu Mutts should enter politics, said Gangadhar Swamiji of Tawag Mutt here recently. The present generation was inclined towards politics than dharma. □

DR. AMBEDKAR THROUGH LEFTIST LENS

Gandhi, Ambedkar and The Extirpation of Untouchability, by Hiren Mukherjee, Peoples Publishing House, Rani Jhansi Rd., New Delhi-110055, Price Rs. 8.

(Book review by J. D. Elangovan, Bangalore)

The book under review is the third in the series of Dr. Ambedkar Memorial Lectures sponsored by the Institute of Constitutional and Parliamentary Studies, New Delhi. The lectures were delivered by Hiren Mukherjee, a Marxist scholar and a distinguished parliamentarian. He has done his home work well when he refers to Ambedkar's attitude towards the freedom struggle- "Ambedkar knew how perfidious and oppressive was British rule, but for many years, facing hideous, sometimes hell-bent, Hindu hostility, he could not bring himself to seek entry into the mainstream of the struggle because he had a lively, well-founded suspicion of its bonafides on the issue of caste....."

What is more interesting is the voice from the Left paying a solemn tribute to the morning star of India's second freedom struggle. The Leftists in India would take all the trouble of analysing the urban problem or Chinese history but when it comes to India they are either apologetic or ignore it. In a few cases where they have made a study, worn-out cliches and jargons are substituted instead of examining and explaining the complexities of our unequal society. By doing this they more often misinterpret Marxism by ignoring the social realities. Marxism no doubt is the system of scientific thinking and analysis for the liberation of all societies, ancient or modern, rich or poor, but it is another matter either to supplant textbook

Marxism or success achieved from another country. India has a unique, complex society. The social setup of India has too many roots and hence a multi-dimensional problem which can be broadly divided into social and economic. Religion in India is the be all & end all of existence. It is not just spiritualism and going to heaven but it has taken roots in the ethos and psyche of the personality. Even Judaism, the most ancient of all religions, pales into insignificance before the Hindu imperialism. The human mechanism is subjugated to jati. Is any religion in the world connected to discrimination and inequality as Hinduism? Caste & Hinduism are the two sides of the same coin. The roots of Marxism are primarily of European civilisation & it could be adapted to India only if the Indian reality is recognised in its entirety. Until this is recognised the talk of revolution will be only a fashion and nothing beyond that and Hiren Mukherjee does refer to it (although briefly). As this is not a thesis or a work written in contemplative atmosphere, many a point is given a touch-and-go reference. Nevertheless Mukherjee has given an impression of a job well done. It looks as if the view held by the Left parties about Ambedkar and his movement has undergone a change, nearer to truth than ever before.

HINDUS ATE BEEF

By B. R. Ambedkar

Price : 50 paise

Write to : Bheem Patrika Publications, Nakodar Rd., Jullundur-144 003

THIS IS THE HUMANITY

(Shashi Pal Shankar, Bombay)

In the garden of King,
 Among other beautiful plants,
 Took birth there,
 A little wild plant.
 One day when,
 The King was walking around,
 This plant was found,
 In his lovely ground.
 "Mali, you are so negligent,
 Never bring any plant-
 I found before me
 A wild barbaric plant !"
 Trembling with fear,
 Mali came near,
 With a cutter in his hand,
 And cut down the lovely young plant.
 This lovely young plant,
 Was thrown on the rubbish heap,
 Where like him,
 Another old plant was dying.
 I was also green,
 And was lovely the same,
 As you,
 But I was thrown away ?
 The old wild plant faintly said,
 Dear brother,
 You were born in wild family,
 So they thrown you away.
 The young plant said,
 "What does it mean - good family ?
 Let anyone from any family come,
 And compet with me".
 The old plant said,
 "Brother, you are innocent,
 Virtue in this world,
 Is measured by family background".
 The young plant exclaimed with sorrow,
 "Is it the humanity,
 They always cry,
 In this nasty world".

D.V. Readers Forum Launched

(Miss Thenmozhi, Coimbatore, TN)

A happy news for DV readers. India's first DV Readers Forum was started here at a simple function on Nov. 21. As TN became the first in starting a Tamil edition of the DV, our State also got yet another credit for launching the first association of the DV readers. And we call upon our comrades in the rest of India & outside to emulate this example and immediately launch similar Forums in your respective towns & cities. The inaugural meeting was attended by about 50 DV readers and other representatives of dalits, OBCs and persecuted minorities & presided over by Feroze, professor of psychology at a local college. Those present included Vasantham Ramachandran, dt. president of the militant Dravida Kazaghham, Ramakrishnan, State secretary of the DK youth wing, Dr. Manokaran, a dalit medical college student, Abdul Jabbar, a leading advocate, leftists, rationalists etc. V. T. Rajshekar, editor of DV, was also present. Miss Thenmozhi was nominated president of the Forum, Gnanamani, secretary, Chellappan, treasurer. The Forum proposes to hold regular meetings to discuss the important issues raised in DV. □

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HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN INDIA

(Dr. Velu Annamalai, Texas, USA)

I wish to congratulate you for publishing the report from Geneva about the U. N. Human Rights Commission. What Dr. Laxmi Berwa represented to the Commission was what is happening everyday in India and how the Govt. seems to be least worried about them simply because the victims of the daily murders, rapes, burning etc are either the poor outcastes and tribals or the other Indian persecuted minorities, such as the Muslims, Christians, Sikhs etc. However, I am least surprised, though terribly angered, to see an Indian Muslim judge telling the UN Commission that there is no human rights violation in India and thus no use of appointing a Human Rights Commission to look into the abuses. It is well known that all the Indian political parties without any exception always play the game of picking up yes-men and other boneless "leaders" among the minorities (Dr. Ambedkar called these as second-class Brahmins) who would do anything for personal gain and tell outright lies to the world like what Syed Masud did in Geneva. Masud should have obviously forgotten the most serious Moradabad riot in which about 1,000 Muslims were reported killed while doing Id prayers? Did he not know the recent killing of the poor Christian fishermen in Kanyakumari by the RSS gundas? How about the killing, raping and burning the poor outcastes in Belchi, Agra, Marathwada, Villupuram, Deoli, Bhagpat & Pulianudi, to mention the recent ones & not even bringing up the numerous bloody massacres of the past? Does he need to be told about the countless Adivasi and outcaste women's breasts being burnt with cigarette butts and their nipples being cut off by the police? Does Masud not know

the series of blinding of men's eyes who belong to the downtrodden society? What does Syed Masud call all these atrocities committed on the poor and innocent people? Are they not human rights violations or in India, according to the Hindu Code, these are not violations because the lives of all persecuted minorities are less important than the cats, dogs and cows. I am not sure on what basis Masud made such a statement that there is no human right violation in India. I am not even asking him this question as a true Muslim, but I am asking him just as a plain human being. I do not think the millions of persecuted minorities including Muslims are going to forgive him for all the sufferings that they go through under the clutches of the barbarous Hindu system protected and patronized by the Government and the police. He has done a great injustice to the human sufferings. If there is any level of human rights violation, that is at its Everest peak in India. Masud can hide today from the eyes of the world but not forever. It is highly deplorable that the Indian Govt. has to get clarification from the British Govt. for Dr. Berwa's simple conversation with Whitakar. Does he not have the freedom to talk to anyone? Does Dr. Berwa need someone else telling him about his people's sufferings in India? Before the Indian External Affairs Ministry sought clarification from the British Govt. it would be sensible for them to get a clarification from the U.P. Govt. why it did not allow the Central Govt.-appointed Minority Commission to visit places where the Muslims were killed in riots! □

Bhim - A New Name for Dalits

(K. Sukumar Bhim, Hyderabad)

After discussing with fellow dalits, we evolved a novel, revolutionary plan which we want to publicise through DV. The dalits though not Hindus are made part of the oppressive Hinduism which is responsible for our slavery. Hence we must get out of this. How to come out? The only way is to have a distinct religion, culture, name, look, dress and finally a separate Dalitastan. Muslims and Christians can be immediately distinguished by their very names. Sikhs have their beard, turban and added *Singh* at the end of their names but we look both in name and culture part and parcel of Hinduism. How to be different? Since it is difficult to change our Hindu names, we can make a beginning by adding *Bhim* at the end of every name. It is the name of B. R. Ambedkar, hence most appropriate. Besides, we have already popularised *Bhim* by greeting a fellow dalit by saying "*Jai Bhim*". This practice has now become an all-India habit. If we want to be different from the Hindus like the Muslims, Christians, and Sikhs, we must adopt this only way out. I and my three fellow dalits have decided to add *Bhim* at the end of our names and write to the Govt. to effect the change. We want our fellow dalits all over India to seriously consider this. In AP and North India even dalits put their sub-caste names. All of them must drop it and add *Bhim*. We want the blessing of DV. □

Caste & Christian

by P. A. Augustine

pages 17 - price not mentioned
write to : Catholic Church, Khagaul,
Patna Dt. Bihar-801 105

Vyasa & Valmiki Were Brahmins ?

(Sitanshu Das, Calcutta)

Caravan of Delhi, (Oct.-II, 1982) has published an important article, "Hindu Dharma & Shudras", by Dr. S. K. Sharma, contradicting the widespread belief that Vyasa and Valmiki were born shudras. It is believed that Veda Vyasa was born to a fisherwoman while Valmiki in a Chandala family. This is factually wrong, says the author. Satyavati, the mother of Vyasa, was not born to fisherwoman but to King Uparichara and brought up by fishermen. Vyasa was born to Satyavati when Parashara, a Brahmin saint, mated with her. So Vyasa was not a shudra. In the *Valmiki Ramayana*, there are two references to the author himself. According to this he was the grandson of god Brahma and by birth a Brahmin. He only lived with bhils (tribes). The author of the *Caravan* article profusely quotes from *Valmiki Ramayana* itself to prove this point that Valmiki was a Brahmin. In all the works of Valmiki he has defended caste system & the superiority of the Brahmins. Therefore, our whole puranas & 'sacred scriptures' have to be re-examined, he says. Will some readers of DV throw light on this? If this is true how could the Punjabi dalits call themselves as Valmikis? □

Latest books on Untouchables

1. *The Scheduled Castes*—Rs. 85
2. *Atrocities on SCs in Post-Independent India 1947-79*, Rs. 150

by the renowned dalit scholar

Dr. N. D. Kamble

Asish Publishing House, H. 12
Rajouri Garden, New Delhi-110027

Wanted Regional Parties

(Syed Asghar Husain, I.A.S., Rtd.
Hyderabad)

In the prevailing conditions, it has become a necessity in the interest of India and its people that each and every State should form a strong regional party to set its own house in order. The Congress has no doubt served the people & the country with credit in the past. Today it is suffering from so many disabilities that it has become beyond its capacity to overcome the existing crisis which is threatening the unity of India and welfare of its people. The main responsibility for creating and developing this situation is on the incompetent and corrupt Congress leadership. Unfortunately, there is no other national party which can replace the crippled Congress. To fill the approaching vacuum, the only alternative left for the people is to establish strong regional parties. The founders of these regional parties should explicitly make it clear to the people that they would not make any changes in the Constitution to affect its secular, democratic and socialistic pattern. They should also make a commitment that they would not bring any changes in the federal structure of the country. To establish these parties on sound basis and to create full confidence among all the people of their respective States, it is essential that honest, educated, capable and secular-minded persons from all the sections of the population should be brought in to the leadership of the party. □

How Brahmnism became Hinduism

(T. M. A. Shanmugam, Erode, TN)

The Muslim invaders called all the non-Muslim inhabitants by the common name *Hindu* which practically meant non-Mus-

lims and nothing more. This simple fact contributed to the unification of India more than any other single event but at the same time, condemned the dumb-driven millions of the country to perpetual subjugation to their priestly exploiters. The Indian became *Hindu*, their religion became Hinduism and Brahmins, their masters. The word *Hindu* itself is a foreign one. The word *Hindu* was not found in any Sanskrit writings, those written before Muslim invasion. "When the Mahammadans came they called all people who were in India, but who did not belong to Mahammadan religion, Hindus..... All castes & creeds which did not acknowledge Mahammadan religion were Hindus." (page 22. An Essay on Hinduism : Kelkar) "Thus was the Indian people, by an innocent accident of history permanently subjected to a disastrous social and religious system in the shaping of which they had no hand and could thereafter obtain no choice, but were entirely at the mercy of the Brahmins. Brahmanism became Hinduism, that is the religion of all who were not followers of the prophet of Mecca. Fortified thus in an unassailable position of sole religious authority, Brahmins commenced to establish their theocratic overlordship of all India". *The Menace of Hindu Imperialism*. Swami Dharma Theertha president, Hindu Missionary Society ; Lahore (Page 135, 136).

Just Published !

THE TWICE ALIENATED
(Culture of Dalit Christians)
by Dr. K. Wilson

Department of Philosophy, Osmania
University, Hyderabad
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Letters to Editor :

Daulat Singh, New Delhi : Congrats to your timely & thoughtful editorial, "Asiad Extravaganza : When Tiger Turns A Man-eater", (DV. no. 4). I was present at the Asiad games here and your observations are perfect. The only one thing that you failed to mention was the that the entire Asiad stadia and other work was done by our poor dalits from Rajasthan but alas these poor Untouchables who created the whole thing had no place. Even you failed to pay them tribute. Do you know that most of the youths who won the few medals to India were either Sikhs, Muslims, Christians or dalits who were not treated as Indians? But when it comes to medals the Ruling Class is quick to claim it to themselves. How can sports flourish in such a land of discrimination? High caste Hindus made no contribution to India's little glory. Rather, these Hindus brought us bad name : RSS staged an anti-beef demonstration to spite our glorious comrades from China, Japan and other Muslim countries and displayed their Hindu meanness. Sant Bhindaranwile was right in saying that had more Sikhs been selected for the hockey, India would have defeated Pakistan. What a shame for the Hindus crushed by the Muslims! I watched this game and found that those did the best on the Indian side were the handful of Muslims and Sikhs. They have greater love for India than the Hindus. Muslims and Sikhs were kept out of the Asiad and this was the cause of our defeat. You are right in saying that high caste Hindu have no stamina. Those who really possess stamina are our dalits and tribals. But the Ruling Class kept them out. The Indian

women have done better than men. Asiad has once for all exposed the Hindu cowardice.

Mirza Sultan Baig, III, USA : I very much appreciate your work. DV carries very interesting articles, excellent analysis and objective reporting. Being the editor of a journal, CCIM newsletter, I am well aware of the hard work and dedication that you put in. I am also impressed by the punctuality of your printing and mailing. You deserve our support and encouragement. We are doing our best to spread the message of DV by placing a free advt. in our journal.

Gobinda Mukhoty, president, People's Union for Democratic Rights, New Delhi : DV has taken up a good cause. When there is so much of gap between the rich and the poor, naturally human rights are denied. It is not that dalits are suffering more than the others. It is a fight between the rich and the poor.

Sharad Patil, Satyashodak Communist Party, Dhule, Maharashtra : My book, *Dasa-Sudra Slavery: Studies in the Origins of Slavery & Feudalism & Their Philosophies*, Part-1, is just published by the Allied Publishers, 13/14 Asaf Ali Rd., New De hi-110002. Its Marathi edition was published by Prajna Prakashan, Wai, Dt. Satara, Maharashtra. Part-2 of the same book will be out in a year.

SC/ST Students, Engineering College, Anantapur, AP : The Social Welfare Dept. of the State Govt. is meeting our scholarship amount. But our college office is not spending the money. Nor it is refunding the amount since 1976. This serious lapse is brought to the notice of the principal but no action is taken. Therefore, through DV we urge the govt. to appoint

a special squad to verify this and take action on the culprits.

N. Srinivasan, Coimbatore : As a dalit poet I wish you devote some space to publish dalit literature. Black literature is the most revolutionary literature. Also write more on Dalitasthan.

S. V. Ramana, Hanumakonda, AP : I have always liked your editorials but the one, "Organise the Rural Poor and Dynamite the Village Values", (DV no. 3) has impressed me most for its analytical depth and dimension. As a research scholar in the field of poverty and rural development I have had occasions to read a lot of literature on it but your editorial has given me some fresh insights. "The fundamental mistake committed by the Govt. is in treating the problem of poverty as an economic issue and not a social problem. It does not want to tell them why they are poor. If the poor come to know why they are poor, they will themselves solve their poverty". How nicely you have exposed this drama that is going on in the name of rural development!

Dr. Aloo Dastur (ex-member, Minority Commission), Bombay : I am reading DV through which I have come to know the dalit agony at first hand. Though I had the utmost feeling for dalits, now I have personal knowledge through DV.

Vijayakumar Makwana, Bombay : The Ruling Class publicity buildup for the multi-million rupee *Gandhi* film is yet another proof that it is desperate & is doing its best to revive the dying philosophy of the high caste Hindus through this film. It is also an attempt to deceive the revolutionary sections. Beware of Gandhi and Gandhism.

R. Elumalai, Convener, Dalit Cultural Front, Madras : Words fail to convey our

heartfelt thanks to your editorial on Asiad (DV no. 4). Every reader of DV says the editorials are excellent but this one on the Ruling Class drama has gone one step forward and exposed the humbugs. DV thus has become the one and the only Voice of the voiceless millions of India. Will somebody come forward to support us in publishing all the DV editorials as a book?

Motlib Chowdhury, Banaskandi, Manipur : DV has caught the imagination of the Muslims of Manipur. We are very poor. The number of rickshaw pullers is going up day by day. There is not a single engineer or doctor from among Muslims here. Yet we have no reservations in education or jobs. DV is our only hope.

Prof. Abdul Qasem, Calcutta : *Mizan*, a Bengali weekly from here, is regularly publishing articles from DV. They have featured DV article, "Ravana Was a Buddhist". DV editorial on Meerut was also published. I am writing all these to show how DV message is catching up.

Dr. M.I.H. Qurashi, Lucknow : We are grateful for your concern on Meerut riots. The fact is due to lack of vision some poor Hindus and even dalits are playing into the hands of Hindu communalists. This tactic is the best way to keep Muslims away from dalits & other poor Hindus. The only way is that sincere, enlightened dalits should go to dalit areas & try to educate & bring dalits & Muslims closer. DV is doing a wonderful job in this direction.

M. N. Talukdar, Calcutta : The courage and far-sightedness of DV is very much appreciated by dalits here. It may be small in size but we regard it as our own mother. The DV policy championing the cause of dalits, persecuted minorities and OBCs is the best. The unity of all these three sections is very urgent. □

Editorial

Contd. from page 11

he sent a detailed review of it for the benefit of DV readers. We congratulate the author of the play, Sailesh Guha Neogi, and the drama troupe, Chandra Lok, of Calcutta. We also commend the efforts of the JWP to produce a film on this. The *Devadasi* religious prostitution is not confined to South. Since it is part of Hinduism, it was prevalent all over India. According to Suniti Pungaliya we have to thank the Muslim "invaders" for putting an end to this. Because idol worship is against Islam, they destroyed many temples which were not only dens of corruption but promoting prostitution. When they destroyed such temples, along with that *Devadasi* also came to an end. Therefore, the credit for ending the *Devadasi* system in the North rightly goes to the Muslims. How we wish they had come to South also to liberate these poor dalit creatures? During the British (Christian) rule they made an attempt to stop this inhuman practice but Hindu leaders asked the British not to interfere in the religious affairs of the people. We can see traces of it even today in the famed Mahalaxmi temple in Bombay. The Karnataka legislature passed the Bill prohibiting the *Devadasi* mainly because of the pressure built by the JWP. Be that as it may, can laws end a system rooted in religion? The law provides for a three-year jail and fine too for those who abet the crime. But we have many such legislations prohibiting dowry, child marriage etc. Untouchability itself is abolished by the Constitution of India. But none of these social evils is eradicated. Therefore, we have no doubt that the *Devadasi* system of offering young girls to gods and through

that to the Gods of Earth will continue. Since the perpetrators of this crime happen to be influential people belonging to high caste we don't expect any change. Social change will not come in India either through legal change, economic change or political change. The people at the famed Yellamma temple (Karnataka), the citadel of the *Devadasi* system, had the cheek to say that there was no longer any *Devadasi* system. If there was no *Devadasi* system at all why the Govt. now came forward with an Act prohibiting the same? Why did legislators who participated in the debate on the legislation, spoke about the Untouchable girls being made prey to this even now by these temples? Has not the JWP proved right finally? Since we have said we have no confidence in the newly-passed Act, it is for the dalit youth themselves to take up the challenge with the help of the sympathetic sections among Hindus, minorities etc. In the Karnataka-Maharashtra border a number of militant dalit groups have come up and it is these youths who organised a conference of *Devadasi* girls at Poona, Sholapur, Belgaum, Nipani etc. A number of *Devadasi* girls themselves have revolted against the system. By organising all these people it is possible to picket such of those temples housing this flesh trade. The State Govt. has come forward with some relief and rehabilitation schemes under this Act. Dalit youths may take advantage of that. These *Devadasi* girls must be rescued and rehabilitated. Those coming in the way must be properly dealt with. Will Mrs. Savita Ambedkar herself take the initiative in bombing these *Devadasi* dens and liberating the fallen women? □

MARXIST ATTACK ON CHRISTIANS

(Our correspondent)

Bangalore : Even as the Indian Marxist (CPM) party is losing its militancy, revolutionary fervour and becoming reformist, CPM is turning against dalits, tribals and other persecuted minorities. The CPM attack on the Kashtakari Sanghatna, a militant organisation of Maharashtra tribals, was reported in this column. The latest is the CPM-led West Bengal Govt. action against Christians making many feel that there is hardly any difference between Marxists and RSS when it comes to the question of dalits and persecuted minorities. Durgapur Bishop Rev. S. K. Kisku has issued a pamphlet about the CPM assault on the principal of the Bankura Christian College, Prof. A. K. Kisku, a noted tribal leader and former Dy. Union Education Minister in Janata Govt., twice during the day on Sept. 20 in the college premises. The assault was led by Partha De, a former Education Minister in the CPM Govt. The Bishop described it as "assault on the fundamental rights of religious minorities". Kisku was appointed fully in conformity with the State Govt. regulations. The assault sparked off public anger and the people of Bankura organised a protest fast on Sept. 22 & 24. But the State Govt. gave a distorted statement in the legislature forcing the Church to go to court. CPM did not condemn the assault in which Kisku was injured. Bishop says the CPM has engi-

neered similar trouble in the Sarenga Hospital. The *Statesman* (Sept. 29) reporting the above incident said the West Bengal Principals Assn. in a statement said Kisku was assaulted in the presence of Partha De. The Church was within its right to appoint the principal, the Govt. admitted in the legislature. Meanwhile, we have received complaints from Bengal scheduled caste & tribes representatives that the CPM Govt. is not implementing the constitutional reservations in jobs, education, etc. In the Jyoti Basu Cabinet there are only two Ministers from SC/STs although their percentage is over 30. The *Telegraph* (Nov. 4) published a picture of several thousand tribals taking out a procession in Calcutta shouting slogans against the CPM policies. □

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