

# DALIT VOICE

The Voice of the Persecuted Nationalities  
Denied Human Rights

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Representatives :

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Calicut : V. PRABHAKARAN

Vijayawada : K. VIJAYA RAJU

Bangalore : Dr. N. SIRAJUDDIN

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- Fascist feminists and their time-passwala women
- We challenge the Big Shaitan to bomb Iraq
- Who is anti-national in India?
- Fear of Islam & Muslims grips West
- Will the frauds of the Century be convicted?
- India can't live without destroying brahminism
- Nazi chief calls Babasaheb "Stooge" of Nizam
- Eleanor Zelliot new book on Dalit, Dalit literature and Dalit movement

**Foolish to think Caste can be abolished :  
Thus Spake Ambedkar**

## Thus Spake Ambedkar

## It is foolish to think that caste system can be abolished

It might well be asked why should such questions as are raised by these demands of the Untouchables find a place in the Constitution? Nowhere in the world have the makers of constitution been compelled to deal with such matters. This is an important question and I admit that an answer is required on the part of those who raise such questions and insist that they are of constitutional importance. The answer to this question is to my mind quite obvious. It is the character of the Indian Society which invests this question with constitutional importance. **It is the Caste system and the Religious system of the Hindus which is solely responsible for this.** This short statement may not suffice to give an adequate explanation to foreigners of the social and political repercussions of the Hindu Caste and Religious systems. But it is equally true that in the brief compass of this paper it is impossible to deal exhaustively with the repercussion of the caste system on the constitution. I would refer for a full and complete exposition of the subject to my book on the **Annihilation of Castes** which I wrote sometime ago. For I believe it will shed sufficient light on the social and economical ramification of the Caste and Religious system of the Hindus. In this Paper I will content myself with making the following general observations. In framing a constitution the Social structure must always be kept in mind. The political structure must be related to the social structure. The operation of the social forces is not confined to the social field. They pervade the political field also. This is the view point of the Untouchables and I am sure this is incontrovertible. The Hindus are quite conscious of this argument and also of its strength. But what they do is to deny that the structure of the Hindu Society is in any way different from the structure of European society. They attempt to meet the argument by saying that there is no difference between the Caste system of the Hindus and the Class system in Western Society. This is of course palpably false and discloses a gross ignorance both of the Caste system as well as of the Class system. The Caste system is a system which is infested with the spirit of isolation and in fact it makes isolation of one Caste from another a matter of virtue. **There is isolation in the Class system. But it does not make isolation a virtue nor does it prohibit social intercourse.** The Class system it is true produces groups. But they are not akin to Caste groups. The groups in the Class System are only non-social while the Castes in the Caste system are in their mutual relations definitely and positively anti-social. If this analysis is true then there can be no denying the fact that the **social structure of Hindu Society is different and consequently its political structure must be different.** What the Untouchables are asking, to put it in general terms, is a proper correlation of means to ends. End may be the same. But because the end is the same it does not follow that the means must also be the same. Indeed ends may remain the same and yet means must vary according to time and circumstances. Those who are true to their ends must admit this fact and must agree to adopt different means if they wish that the end they have in view is not stultified. In this connection there is another thing which I would like to mention. As I have said, it is the Caste basis of Hindu society which requires that its political structure should be different, and suited to its social structure. There are people who admit this but argue that caste can be abolished from Hindu society. I deny that. Those who advocate such a view think that caste is an institution like a Club or a Municipality or a Country Council. This is a gross error. **Caste is Religion, and religion is anything but an institution.** It may be institutionalized but it is not the same as the institution in which it is embedded. Religion is an influence or force suffused through the life of each individual moulding his character, determining his actions and reactions, his likes and dislikes. These likes and dislikes, actions and reactions are not institutions which can be lopped off. They are forces and influences which can be dealt with by controlling them or counteracting them. If the social forces are to be prevented from contaminating politics and perverting it to the aggrandizement of the few and the degradation of the many then it follows that the political structure must be so framed that it will contain mechanisms which will bottle the prejudices and nullify the injustice which the social forces are likely to cause if they were let loose.

(Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings & Speeches, Volume IX, Rs.50 1991, Govt., of Maharashtra, Bombay). The book may be had from Director, Government Printing, Stationery and Publications, Netaji Subhash Road, Bombay - 400 004.

# Beware of fascist feminists and their time-passwala "women's organisations"

**DV** received a circular letter (July 14) from a woman on the "weaknesses in the women's movement" and she wanted our reaction. And this made us think on the subject and our thoughts need to be shared with our readers.

We have to admit the fact that the ruling upper caste society is not only male-dominated but treats its own women as sex objects, slaves and door-mats.

And this stink of the ruling class is spreading into the Dalit society also. Since every society imitates the ruling class, Dalits also imitating the ruling class is quite natural.

**Contagion :** So, if this contagious disease is contaminating Dalits also the blame goes to the upper caste rulers though the SC/ST/BCs, the original inhabitants of India, are essentially an egalitarian people with their women having a predominant say.

The indigenous SC/ST/BCs, comprising 65% of India's population, are matriarchal and all their deities are mainly female. Male gods are an Aryan import.

The *Manu Dharma Shastra* is an Aryan book of law which is the principal cause of women's enslavement. As per this even the wife of a Brahmin is not twice-born (Brahmin) and hence she cannot perform the

## WE CHALLENGE THE BIG SHAITAN TO BOMB IRAQ

### OUR CORRESPONDENT

**Bangalore:** *The Big Shaitan (Satan) is once again on the prowl and plunder. On Aug. 27, 1992, America, the sole owner of the whole world, imposed a "no-fly zone" on Iraq. And the United Nations, which is reduced to the level of a slave of the Shaitan, was directed to carry out the order. UK and other western white tail of America, all suffering from a schizophrenia, are singing to the Hate-Muslim tune. The UN Secretary-General, the handpicked henchman of the Shaitan, a worthless Egyptian Christian, is acting as the drummer boy.*

*The Shaitan has defied everything. It does not care for a country's sovereignty, world opinion (if there is any), human rights, justice, truth, fairplay. Nothing. What America thinks is right. This is the meaning of the New World Order. Once this Big Shaitan got defeated and humiliated by the brave Saddam Hussain (DV edit. Feb. 16, 1991: "Welcome Gulf War: War of the rich against the poor". And to beef up his sagging morale the Big Bully Bush is using Saddam again.*

**Latest aggression:** *If Bush has the courage let him attack Iraq again. We welcome it. We welcomed it in 1991. We welcome it*

*again. To the West Asian Muslim countries and all other countries including India, purchased outright by the Big Shaitan, the latest aggression on Iraq will come as a lesson. So, we want Bush to bash up Iraq and face the consequences.*

*India's Aryan upper caste rulers are naturally happy over the Big Bully's decision but they dare not express it openly. They will enjoy any persecution of Muslims who have become a sort of a red rag. To the western whites, zionists and India's Hindu nazis, Muslims are the latest nightmare.*

**"Time" praises PVN:** *How America and its ruling class view India and its rulers is evident from the Time Magazine cover story (Aug. 31) on Prime Minister PVN. India is in a total mess and even the American-dictated privatisation has become a flop (DV edit March 1, 1992) and yet the Time pays tributes to the neogi brahmin because he has sold India to the Shaitan and agreed to be its slave so that the Aryans are allowed to remain as the slave masters. Hence all this cover story tributes to the country's most cunning and crafty PM.*

**Despite all the shaitanic stance of its rulers, the American white people by**

**and large are far better than India's upper caste rulers.** *The only problem with the Americans is the way they deal with their Black population (DV edit. June 1, 92: "US white brutality must force Blacks to seek self-determination). The Shaitan stance is that of its white ruling class. The white population as a whole may not share the shaitanic value system.*

**Muslim-baiting:** *But that is not the case in India. The entire upper castes/nazis (with minor exceptions) are one with the shaitanic stance of the American ruling class. The western whites have become Muslim-baiters only recently but India's upper castes are anti-Muslim from the very beginning. Because their religion of brahminism and Islam are like mongoose and serpent. Be that as it may, the Shaitan has been only threatening Iraq. It has not got down to bombardment. To us it looks like a Bush election stunt. If ever the madman were to bomb Iraq (the reports are he will use chemical bombs) it will be cataclysm of unimaginable proportions. Still we welcome it. Because, that will be the end of the Big Shaitan and a test for Islam and Muslims. We are with Saddam - not the Shaitan. (Sept. 3 1992).*

duties of a Brahmin as priest etc. The *mangal sutra* symbolises the female oppression and all upper caste women (exceptions prove the rule) wear this grindstone round the neck either out of ignorance or as a fashion.

We are happy that the said circular has described such a society as fascist. But we would like to know what the circular means by fascism and if it has identified them? If so who are they? We need answer from this Bombay - based organisation.

**Fashionable Women:** In *Dalit Voice* we use the term "Hindu nazism", otherwise known as brahminism, which is the cause of all our problems. Hindu nazis are controlling not only the RSS-BJP etc. but also the Congress, the original brahminical party of India. India's political parties, its press, judiciary, bureaucracy, business interests, education system, banking are all under these nazis.

The title of the pamphlet enclosed in her letter says: "*Feminists have the movement but fascists have the women*". This proves the contradiction inherent in our fashionable upper caste movement. These fashionable "leisured class" women start a "women's organisation" to while away their abundant leisure but not to fight either their own oppression or to relieve our pain.

**Dowry death :** In fact, these upper caste "women's movements" are deliberately engineered by nazis to spread their contamination into our more egalitarian society. Dowry death is a good example. In our society, there is hardly any dowry and much less a dowry death. But lately the Hindu contamination is showing up.

*In DV, we don't waste time trying to convert the black crow into white. Trying to reform the upper castes is a waste of time.* Not one women's organisation has so far burnt the *Manusmriti*. None has asked its members to discard the grind-stone round the neck (*mangal sutra*). So we can't expect anything from them. How many "national" commissions on women have been so far set up? Their reports are gathering dust because these reports had no courage to go into the fundamental problem (that is Hindu nazism) which is not only killing us but also its own Hindu society constituting less than 15% of the Indian population and thereby contaminating the whole country.

**Bombay Red Light area:** What is surprising, nay shocking, is that though the circular letter came from Bombay it has not spoken a word about the living death suffered by the lakhs of women in the Red Light area of Bombay.

This subject is hardly raised by any "women's organisation" and if by mistake it comes up it is brushed aside saying that *poverty is the cause of the*

*prostitution and as long as poverty is there in India, this world's oldest profession will continue.* The time-passwala women's meetings have no time for any unpleasant subjects like this.

We are fed up with such fashionable women's organisations which indulge in what is described as "social service" which is nothing but anti-social service.

**Brahmin prostitute:** If "poverty" is the cause of prostitution, why no "poor" Brahmin girl is found in the Bombay Red Light area? The findings of Sister Rita of the Good Shepherd Convent, Bangalore, reveals that most of the girls found in the Bombay Red Light area are Untouchables. Why these fashionable women's organisations don't take up the cause of these prostitutes or Devadasi, the institution of prostitution blessed by Hindu religion? Are the victims of Devadasi not women? The Devadasi institution is going strong, flourishing. Why the women's organisations are fighting shy?

**DV copies burnt in JNU :** We had to shift our office back to Bangalore from Delhi as the upper caste anti-Mandal (Commission) fake heroes engineered their agitation creating an atmosphere of war and violence. Our house-cum-office in Vasant Vihar was ransacked, DV copies were thrown out and our tribal boy was pushed and locked out. DV copies were burnt in JNU campus. Then we approached some women's organisations and women libbers in Delhi to save us from of the anti-Mandal anti-humanists. But these great feminists excused themselves leaving us as the sole victim of anti-Mandal maniacs. What to say about such women?

**Agents of brahminism :** We can go on giving any number of instances to prove that these women's organisations are not interested in fighting the brahminical social order (BSO). Rather, they are disguised agents of the BSO interested in confusing us and then diverting our attention to non-issues.

All the problems connected with the women particularly upper caste (Hindu) women are caused by the BSO. They want to conduct a "women's movement" without hurting the BSO. What verdict can we pass on such people except to say that they are not sincere. Can a movement succeed without sincerity to the cause?

**Anti-Muslim hatred :** On the other hand, these women want to become instant heroines by shouting about one Shah Bano or one Ameena just because they are Muslims. **Sati, child marriage, bride-burning, dowry deaths, multiple wives, killing female child are part of the brahminical religion.** Even its gods and goddesses follow these practices. No Shankarachari no Mahatma has gone on a fast-

unto-death against these customs.

Lastly, when the Hindu nazis kicked up a row on Dr. Ambedkar's book *Riddles of Hinduism* (Maharashtra Govt. publication) which they burnt and then forced the govt. to ban the book, where were these women libbers?

**Rama persecuting Sita:** Can these women worship Rama, who left his dear wife in forest for 14 years and again after becoming pregnant knowing full well that she was pregnant? Her both children were born in forest. Can any woman with some self-respect accept Rama as god? How can any woman call Krishna a god who runs after every girl in the town? (*Riddles of Rama and Krishna*, 1986, Dalit Sahitya Akademy, Bangalore - 3).

**Phoolan Devi not woman?** We have many more things to say about these time-passwala women's organisations. However, we cannot resist the temptation of mentioning our great Dalit heroin, Phoolan Devi. She was raped non-stop by some Thakurs and to take revenge on these blackguards, she became a "dacoit" just to get guns. How can she be dubbed a dacoit and kept in the Gwalior jail for years together without trial?

Does it mean she was wrong in punishing these upper caste criminals who molested her human rights just because she was a "low caste"? If she was a dacoit, she must be put on trail and convicted. Which women's organisation has taken up her case? We approached many "women's organisations" but they all excused themselves saying that they would not plead the case of a "dacoit". Poor woman is rotting in the jail. To them she is not a woman, because she is not an Aryan.

So, we conclude that we have no confidence in these upper caste "women's organisations" which are not interested in the genuine problems of the over 85% of the country's population but after some name and fame, and while away their excess leisure, spend their husbands unearned income and thereby divert the attention of the society from serious issues.

It is quite possible we may sound somewhat harsh but all those who are wounded are like this. They cry in agony and shout in pain. Our reaction is natural.

We will be happy if the Bombay-based women's organisation replies to all these point by point so that we may publish them also. ■

## WHO IS ANTI-NATIONAL IN INDIA?

OUR CORRESPONDENT

**Bangalore:** An article by an Aryan/upper caste in the *Deccan Herald* (Aug. 16) holds the following threat to India's state-owned TV:

"Doordarshan cannot even give one channel of clean entertainment and an intolerable ennui is shelled out day after day. The metros prove no better than poor cousins of the national channel.

For variety, there is Star TV but satellite TV in India is definitely not free viewing. A recent survey shows Star TV viewers percentage shooting up to 25% with a similar percentage contemplating a connection.

And once the Star TV Hindi channel is installed, DD will face extinction if doesn't improve considerably, as viewers will switch in large numbers, irrespective of the fact whether they have to pay for satellite TV or not.

What is the meaning of this threat? The author says if the TV - owners (the poor, meaning the SC/ST/BCs don't have TV) don't get entertainment day and night from the DD, they will not hesitate to kill it.

**Muslims anti - national ?:** But DD is the only Indian "national" TV. Star TV etc. are foreign.

The upper castes, who are threatening us day in and day out about Indian "nationalism" and calling Muslims,

Christians, Sikhs as anti-nationals, will kill their own "national" TV?

Yes, why not? When the "national" thing does not cater to the interests of upper castes, they will not hesitate to become anti-national. Because when they say "national", they mean the "upper caste nation". Not our nation.

Did they not invite the Greeks, Huns, Mongols, Moghals, British etc. to India and seek their help to serve their "national" interests? The Aryan "nation" is different from our nation.

So, who is anti-national in India?

(As this is written the news comes about the DD, bowing to the wishes of the Aryan "nation," agreeing to show one stupid cinema every night. ■

### TAMIL KINGDOM AT HARAPPA

Kuruvikarambai Velu

Valavan Pathippagam, No. 4 III Main Road,  
Kasturba Nagar, Adyar,

Madras - 600 020. Rs. 10.

## Fear of Muslims and Islam grips West

OUR CORRESPONDENT

**Bangalore:** The hate-Muslim maniacs of the white western world are losing all mental balance. In the latest killings of thousands of Bosnia Muslims, their pathological hatred has received world-wide publicity.

We reproduce the following report from an American publication in support of our editorial of March 16, 1992: "Why the whole world hates Muslims & Islam?" (DV Sept. 1 page 21)

### MAKING ISLAM THE ENEMY

That Even before the Soviet Union dissolved itself, a new enemy, 'Islamic fundamentalism' was being given life. Warnings of its menace in the Middle East, in Africa, in Central Asia and, vaguely, to 'our' way of life, were dinned into the national consciousness.

Some of the warnings came from media pundits, apparently feeling naked and shorn without an over-arching threat. But Israel and its supporters were sounding some of the loudest alarms. And, while it is always risky to impute a motive that hasn't been admitted or to define a policy that has not been declared, it is obvious that a late 20th century western crusade against Islam would serve Israel well." (*Israeli Foreign Affairs*, March 25 92).

It is obvious that a stepped up campaign against Islam has been going on in the national media. In May, the *New York Times* published a seven - page article titled "The Islamic Wave" in its Sunday Magazine. In June, the *Time Magazine* devote 9 pages to its cover story against Islam. The Australian edition had a minaret and a gun looking like a minaret on the cover and the ominous question: "Islam, Should the World be Afraid?" In June, *Atlanta Journal* published a special 12 - page supplement on "Women Of The Veil".

As a Reuters report indicated in February, the State Department had set up special teams to study the phenomenon of "Islamic fundamentalism" and prepare papers on how to face it without alienating much of the "Moslem" world, in the wake of Algerian elections. According to the report it was decided to avoid the phrase "Islamic fundamentalism". It pits us against Islam. We prefer the phrase 'political Islam', said one official. The most recent media campaigns do show that the suggestion is filtering down. *Time Magazine*, for example, admitted for the first time that Muslims consider the term 'Islamic fundamentalism' a misnomer. *Atlanta Journal* did use the term 'political Islam'. Terms like Radical and Militant Islam are also being tested to see which one will serve the propaganda needs the best. But the debate continues on how to deal with the Muslims both on the ground as well as through propaganda. (*Muslim Media Watch Newsletter* Aug. 5, 92, P.O. Box 1252 Garden Grove CA, 92642 - USA) ■

## Nazi admiration for Neogi Brahmin

OUR CORRESPONDENT

**Bangalore:** The *Deccan Herald* (Aug. 25) heading for its report from Bhopal on the conclusions of the BJP executive meeting reads "BJP harsh on Congress but soft on PVN".

Why "harsh" on the original brahminical party of India? Because the political wing of the nazi party feels that the Thakur Arjun Singh and the Maratha (shudra) Sharad Pawar are not allowing the Congress to come closer to its ideals. Why "soft" on PVN? Because the neogi brahmin has proved a real Chanakya

## Madras seminar on Dalits & Church

OUR CORRESPONDENT

**Madras:** Ram Vilas Paswan will inaugurate a seminar on "Dalits and Role of Church" here on Sept. 26. V.T. Rajshekar, Editor of *Dalit Voice*, will speak both at the seminar and the public meeting that will follow. The function is organised by Dr. Ezra Sargunan of the Evangelical Church of India, No.1, Second, St., Ormes Road, Kilpauk, Madras - 600 016. ■

## Sikhs honour Tamil Tigers

**New Delhi:** The government on July 29 admitted in the Rajya Sabha that a function was jointly organised on May 24 last by Sikh "extremist" groups in the UK in which speeches were delivered eulogising 'Dhanu', the LTTE assassin of the former Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, and participants were urged to follow her example. In a written reply to Dr. Babu Kaldate, the minister of state for home, M.M. Jacob, said an amount of \$ 800 was reportedly collected to be sent to Dhanu's family members in Sri Lanka through the LTTE leaders based in London. He said the Babbar Khalsa and three different factions of the International Sikh Youth Federation at Gurudwara Har Rai Sahib, West Bromwich, West Midlands, UK, besides representatives of the LTTE attended the function. (PTI) ■

## Human Rights leader freed

**Chandigarh :** After four and a half months of detention, Justice Ajit Singh Bains was released on bail on Aug. 18 by the Designated Court at Ropar in Punjab. No stipulations have been put on the bail order. The decision followed from the Supreme Court's advice to the Punjab Govt. not to oppose the application for bail. (*World Sikh News*, Aug.28). ■

# Will the frauds of the century be convicted?

## OUR CORRESPONDENT

**Bangalore:** 1. What is going to happen in the multi-multi-billion rupee stock market fraud? Nothing.

2. Will Harshad Mehta, the Gujarati Bania, V. Krishnamurthy, the Tamil Iyer, the Gowda Saraswath Brahmin Ratnakar's Fairgrowth and scores of other "top" Aryan Brahmins and Banias arrested be convicted and sentenced? No.

3. Because those involved in defrauding the banks and thereby became milli-multi-billionaires belong to the ruling class. Many more frauds are yet to come to light. So, who is going to punish the rulers? Can rulers be punished? The king does no wrong.

4. Then what is all this front-page fuss about the Joint Parliamentary Committee probe, Justice Variava's special

court, CBI investigation, the Custodian attaching the property of all the accused? And this "investigative reporting" in all "national" toilet papers?

It is all drama to entertain us - the ruled.

5. You see the list of Fairgrowth Finance shareholders published on the front page of the "Indian Express" (Aug. 20). Barring 5-6 shudras, (who are also Hindus) all of them are Brahmins and VIPs. Krishna murthy is related to the just retired President Venkataraman. And the RBI Governor is another Iyer.

6. How can anybody put on trail the rulers? Will a section of the rulers try another section of the rulers? Never. Has it ever happened? Never.

7. The whole thing is a hoax. A fine farce. A beautiful entertainment.

8. The front-page coverage with pictures given in the toilet papers is just to hoodwink the idiots who get entertained.

9. When a bigger fraud, also by another section of the rulers, breaks out all these frauds of the country will be forgotten. The "scam" will go into inside pages, and then gradually disappear.

10. Since public memory is short, all of us will forget it. As the brahminical social order has the control on our brains, they can make us forget the "scam" also.

11. If Harshad Mehta and company had committed so serious an offence why no National Security Act was applied to him and his co-conspirators? Is the offence of Veerappan more serious? Was Sant Bhindranwale more dangerous? Who can question the rulers?

## Anti-national : national anthem?

LAURIE NORONHA, BANGALORE.

We Indians are a peculiar people. We fight for our regional language like the cobra and the mongoose and go on to sing our national anthem in Bengali ignorant of the fact that it was composed in the pre-Independence era in praise of 'Adhinayaka', King George V.

The song throughout smacks of servitude and slavery, to say the least. The English rendering of the Bengali hymn is as follows:

"Thou art the ruler of the minds of all people, dispenser of India's destiny. Thy name rouses the hearts of Punjab, Sind, Gujarat and Maratha, of the Dravid and Orissa and Bengal; it echoes in the hills of the Vindhyas and Himalayas, mingles in the music of the Jamuna and the Ganga and is

chanted by the waves of the Indian sea. They pray for Thy blessings and sing Thy praise. The saving of all people waits in Thy hand, Thou dispenser of India's destiny. Victory". (Deccan Herald Aug. 25). ■

### Aryan meritocracy kills a BC woman scholar

**Midnapore:** The executive council of the Vidyasagar University has suspended a brahmin lecturer in anthropology, Falguni Chakraborty, on the basis of the report of fact finding commission on harassment of a woman.

Vice-Chancellor S.N. Ghosh said the commission was satisfied that the allegations against Chakraborty by the country's first woman Lodha

graduate, Chuni Kotal, who committed suicide on Aug 16, another student Mrs. Mahananda Bose, and a few others were found to be correct on a prima facie basis.

Meanwhile, the state govt. has ordered a judicial inquiry into the suicide of Mrs. Chuni Kotal, (27) she was a final year postgraduate student in anthropology in Vidya Sagar University. She was driven to this extreme step unable to bear the humiliation inflicted on her by her teacher because of her "low birth".

### ARAFAT

In the eyes of the beholder Terrorist or peace-maker

Yasser Arafat, PLO chairman regarded as holding the key to peace in Middle East

John and Janet Wallach  
Mandarin Paperback, London  
1992 pp.524 UK 7.99 pounds.

# India cannot live without destroying brahminism

T.K. NARAYANAN, TRIVANDRUM

At an expert meeting organised by the UNESCO the following conclusions on the biological aspect of race have been arrived at:

1. All people living today belong to a single species, Homo sapiens are derived from the common stock.
2. Biological differences between human beings are due to differences in hereditary constitution and to the influence of the environment on the genetic potential. In most cases, these differences are due to the interaction of these two sets of factors.
3. There is great genetic diversity within all human populations. Pure races in the sense of genetically homogeneous populations do not exist in the human species.
4. There are obvious physical differences between populations living in different geographical areas of the world in their average appearance. Many of these differences have a genetic component.

**Biological trait:** The genetic capacity for intellectual development is one of the biological traits essential for its survival in any natural or social environment. There is no national, religious, geographic, linguistic or cultural group which constitutes a race *ipso facto*: the concept of race is purely biological. The peoples of the world today appear to possess equal biological potentialities for attaining any civilisational level. Differences in the achievements of different peoples must be attributed solely to their cultural history.

**No "inferior" race:** Neither in the field of hereditary potentialities concerning the overall intelligence and the capacity for cultural development nor in that of physical traits is there any justification for the concept of "inferior" race. (*Merit, My Foot, DSA, 1987*).

The biological data outlined above very obviously contradict the assertions of the racists. Such assertions have no scientific foundation.

It is, therefore, incorrect to speak of the English, German, French or Slavic races in the way the racists frequently do. Still more incorrect is it to speak of an Aryan race. (Leon Poliakov: *Aryan Myth*) The term "Aryan" is taken from the sphere of linguistics and signifies a special group of languages. The races have their own names and they must not be confused as in the names of languages. The declaration that the Aryans are a "higher" race has no foundation in genuine science. And such a declaration is of a political and extremely reactionary character.

**Scientific views:** These are the scientific views stated by experts on questions of race and racism. Race must not be confused with nation. Human history is essentially different from zoology. Race is

not everything as it is in the sense of rodents and felines.

In the light of the foregoing scientific facts is there any racial difference between the Untouchables and the Hindus, (Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras) The Punjabi Untouchables and the Punjabi Brahmins, the UP Untouchables and the UP Brahmins?, the Bihar Untouchables and the Bihar Brahmins, the Bengal Untouchables and the Bengal Brahmins, the Tamil Nadu Untouchables and the Tamil Nadu Brahmins, the Maharashtra Untouchables and the Maharashtra Brahmins and the Kerala Untouchables and the Kerala Brahmins are all racially of one stock.

*Indeed there is more racial affinity between TN Untouchables and TN Brahmins than between TN Brahmins and the Punjabi Brahmins.* This is a material fact of science that we have to bear in mind.

*This affinity between the Untouchables and the Brahmins is only a biological fact and not social or cultural fact. The Untouchables are human beings exactly as the Brahmins are human beings.*

**Parasites and Aryans:** This biological relations between the two does not mean that we, the Untouchables and they, the Brahmins, are one people, kith and kin, flesh of the flesh and vein of the vein. We are miles away and a part from the Aryans who are clinging to the Indian society as parasites par excellence.

Differences in the achievements of different peoples must be attributed solely to their social and cultural history. What is the social and cultural history of the Brahmins who have declared themselves as the 'Gods on Earth', "the Supermen" and the "intellectual class of India"?

**Seeds of inequality:** Literature is the mirror of a people reflecting their social and cultural outlook, their way of life and thoughts. Of all the peoples on the face of this mundane earth, probably Brahmins are the only ones who have produced such a large number of literature starting from the Rig Veda which is their first religious scripture also. **It is this Veda that had sown the seeds of graded inequality and untouchability among the people of this country.** *Chaturvarna* is the ideal society of Hindus and it has been created by the Purusha Sukta contained in the 90th hymn of the 10th *mandala* of the Rig Veda.

Purusha means Brahma i.e., Hindu God and Suka means hymn, i.e., mantra.

**The curse of caste:** The word mantra has in its very inception been associated with things that are bad. *It is the Purusha Sukta that fouled the entire atmosphere of this country. Nay, it has committed treason against this country.*

**Indian volcano:** That is why Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar who was the volcano of Indian social revolution has unmistakably said about the Brahmins who were the creators of Brahma and Mantra as follows:

"No intellectual class in the world has prostituted its intelligence to invent a philosophy to keep its countrymen in a perpetual state of ignorance and poverty as the Brahmins have done in India".

History of Hinduism (i.e. brahminism) from the very Vedic period down to this day has positively confirmed that the Hindus would not stand by the noble human principles of equality, fraternity and liberty adumbrated in the Constitution of India. The history of "independent" India covering almost half a century has confirmed beyond all doubts that *Hindus headed by Brahmins will never refute the graded inequality and untouchability*. The untouchables, the unapproachable, the unseeables are rotting in the ghettos of the villages, towns and cities of "independent India" not knowing when they could become real human beings in the Bharat, the land of ancient rishis endowed with the knowledge of triple time (past, present and future).

**Sankara's Poison:** On his return journey from Katmandu, in Sept. 1956 where Babasaheb delivered a speech on *Buddha and Karl Marx* in the 4th conference of the World Fellowship of Buddhists, Dr. Ambedkar spoke at Banaras Hindu University in his usual challenging vein. He spoke on Adi Sankara's philosophy as expounded in the aphorism "*Brahma Satyam Jagat Mithya*". He said that if the Brahma (god) pervaded all, a Brahmin and an Untouchable should be equal. But to Sankara the untouchables were untouchables for ever. If he applied his aphorism on a social level and preached social equality and fraternity, his proposition would have been profound. *But Sankara was a Brahmin par excellence, a Kerala Namboodiri, who dealt the last blow to Buddhism and threw it out of India.* To him this material world was an "illusion", (mere myth) where he could see none and nothing but his own kith and kin sitting idle in their mansions enjoying the fruits of labour produced by the Untouchables working in their far flung paddyfields and coconut farms.

**2,000 Brahmin jatis:** It goes to the credit of the Sankaracharis that in India today there are 1,798 castes, sub-castes, out-castes and incastes among the Brahmins **ALONE** not to speak of the myriad castes existing outside of them. Each of these castes having the "sacred thread" very meticulously observes the god-ordained *dharma* of graded inequality which is the alpha and omega of brahminism alias Hinduism. It also goes to the credit of Adi Sankara and his guru (teacher Kumarila Bhatta of Andhra Pradesh) that they have finally liquidated Buddhism in India.

**Buddha's thought:** Human mind is the centre of everything. The first thing to attend to is the culture of mind. *Mind is the fount of all the good and evil. The cleaning of the mind is the essence of religion* taught

by the Enlightened Buddha. We, the downtrodden masses of India, belong to the human race and not to the race of inhuman exploiters in the name of god, religion and *sanatana dharma* (eternal truth). We know full well that there is nothing eternal in this wide world. Here everything comes into being and goes out of being. Nothing is eternal, everything is in a flux.

**Gandhi trick:** The underlying idea that caste and untouchability are two different things is founded on a complete fallacy. This was M.K. Gandhi invention to confuse and then enslave us. The two are one and are inseparable. *Untouchability is only an extension of the caste system.* There can be no severance between the two. They two stand together and will fall together. Can the Hindu philosophers sunk in the depth of the *sanatana dharma* refute these words of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar? Caste is still the presiding deity of India enjoying the patronage from the seat of power, position and privilege. India became "independent" almost half a century ago and its rulers all these years have been proclaiming in season and out of season that they would establish "a democratic society in India on the principles of justice, equality, fraternity and liberty laid down in the Constitution of India".

We, the Untouchables of India, would like to know whether it would be possible for our rulers to fulfill and realise their lofty ideal without annihilating the **caste that has committed treason against this country.**

**Poisonous weed:** Indian politics is nothing but deception positively based on caste, the poisonous weed of India, generated from the brain of brahminism. *India will never be a land of genuine democracy on the above-mentioned lofty principles unless and until the caste is annihilated root and branch either by law or by revolution.* It is a sad plight for us, the down-trodden masses of India, that inspite of the so-called independence, we have to continue as before, the hewers of wood and the drawers of water in the camp of our rulers. But we are not desperate. We want to be liberated by ourselves from our unending servitude, slavery and untouchability forcefully thrust upon us by brahminism in the name of their god, religion and *sanatana Dharma*.

"To us battle is a matter of joy because we are fighting not for power, position and privilege. We are fighting for justice to all".

**India's No.1 Enemy is caste and untouchability propounded and established by brahminism which is the poisonous philosophy of India.**

What is our way-out? Listen to these words of our Saviour, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar.

"Among the world's religious leaders Buddha alone has the glory of having rightly judged the intrinsic greatness of man's capacity to work out his own salvation without extraneous aid".

Arise, Awake !! And stop not till the goal is reached !!!

## Letters to Editor

**Ma'Osmaimaat**, PO Box 170242, San Francisco, CA 94117 USA: With voices and hearts in harmony, the African-American women of Ma'Osmaimaat bid you greetings. We are an African - American Womens' Spiritual Organisation that is rooted in human community. We are devoted to the holistic well-being of our African sisters around the globe. We extend our hearts, minds, and hands to embrace and offer our assistance and support, by way of exchanging ideas, resources, action and commitment. We would like to establish and build dialogue with the Black Untouchables of India in hopes of learning how we may assist one another and perhaps jointly build a base of socio-economic empowerment. We would like to hear your ideas and present ideas to you, on how we might assist our African sisters on a global scale. We look forward to hearing from you with hopes that this letter will establish this dialogue and international sisterhood.

**Dr. John Webster**, 53 - Oswegatchie Road, Waterford, CT 06385, USA: Hope you have received a copy of my book, *The Dalit Christians: A History*. You will find yourself quoted and the *Dalit Voice* referred to in it in several places. I plan to be in Bangalore in early October and would like very much to meet you again. I am to participate in an institute for church historians on Oct. 9-15.

**James Garret**, President, GEM, Garrett Export Management International Trade Specialist PO Box 928, Temple Hills, Maryland 20757, USA: We are presently promoting a hydroponic agricultural tool called the "Vegetron". We would like the Dalits to be the first in India to get this device. Hydroponics is not a new agricultural concept. I learn India has been using hydroponics for years. However, the "Vegetron" is the latest technology and allows for a very stable environment for plant growth. I am trying to offer the Dalit a means toward self-sufficiency. I am aware of their struggle and to wish to help. This hydroponic system will allow them to provide for themselves vegetables, fruits, herbs and flowers. They can meet their nutritional and economic needs in a grand fashion with the "Vegetron".

**Aditi Sharma**, Campaigns Officer, Survival for Tribal Peoples, Survival International, 310-Edgware Road, London W2 1DY., UK: I am writing to ask if anybody would like to receive Survival's Urgent Action Bulletins

in Hindi. We want to set up a data base of NGOs and individuals working with tribals who would like to receive our Hindi bulletins.

**G.B. Singh**, 112 - Auburn Dr, Waynesville, Missouri 65583, USA: Recently I came across a small booklet, *Apartheid in India*, and a copy of *Dalit Voice*. I read it and read it again. I was impressed with the quality of information put out by you. To bring freedom to the oppressed of India, the help of the western people is a must. They need information from groups such as yours as to what persecution "low caste" and other minorities in India go through. One very important advice. Somehow, if you can provide unimpeded access to your publications to the westerners, it will help a lot for your cause. Have a central location in US or some other place where people in the West can get access to your publications by means of subscriptions. I give lectures on India and Hinduism in US. Many of my participants have shown interest in your literature. If I can help in any way within my capacity, please let me know.

*You may contact our Dalit brother at Houston, phone 713 - 550 7580 - EDITOR.*

**MMS Salahudeen**, Doha, Qatar: Distressed to hear that Abdul Nasir Madani was attacked and he lost the right leg. Blood-sucking nazi cruelty is going beyond limits. However, Madani has become more popular than before. His audio cassettes, speeches should be translated into many Indian languages so that Muslims of India would understand the evil conspiracy of nazis. All Muslim localities should organise Islamic Service Society to defend themselves. Like the ISS, every "minority community" should form its own ISS to protect themselves from nazis. The work of the ISS is very much needed as long as the nazi parties remain in India. These parties are anti-national. They are the only reason for the backwardness of our country. They are destroying the country in the name of their fake religion and creating violence everywhere. These are the people responsible for our failure at the Barcelona Olympics. How can we get Gold when we have anti-nationals like Bal Thackeray whose followers dug up the Wankhede Stadium pitch?

**Pon. Muthuswamy**, Coimbatore: I am getting the doubt that the Tamil Iyer, Dr. Subramanian Swamy, is the Zionist agent in India. His statements and behaviour confirm this. His anti-Tamil Tigers actions strengthen this. His efforts to protect the neogi Brahmin by promoting defections prove it. Muslims must keep a special watch on his moves. His secret connections with India's Nazi party, American CIA and Zionists must be exposed by DV.

**T. Ravi**, 10B - Balamani Illam, Court Road, Salem - 636 007: Here is a report on the sorrowful and painful incident of Aug. 16, 92. When Dalits were taking a big procession under the Tiruchirappally - based "Annal Ambedkar Ilaingar Munnani", a group of Vanniyars brutally attacked our people in a nearby village, Gajzalnaickènpatti, 6 km. away. We are sorry that the Vanniyars do not know the history neither they realise the political atmosphere in the the country nor are they conscious, of their position in the nazi Hindu social setup. Though the Vanniyars are oppressed, they are attacking the equally oppressed Dalits.

**Sukumar Pal**, Indian Social Institute, 10 - Institutional Area, Lodi Road, New Delhi - 3: The enactment of the 65th amendment of the Constitution in May, 1990, received the president's Assent on June 7th 1990 as National Commission for Schedule castes and Scheduled tribes. While it is giving full power and status of independent functioning, its finance allocations and power to appoint its own personal has so far been the major handicapped. Therefore, it is necessary to give authorisation of appropriations for its expenditure direct from parliament in the budgetary provision of its own, and not as part of any ministry's grants. It must have full power to appoint its own officers and staff. With transfer of some of the officers and staff under its own control, and also abolishing a large number of vacant post in earlier commission, without ascertaining the views of the new commission is forcing to cripple its own functioning. The matter must be raised before parliament for early enactment of a supplementary legislation spelling out necessary provisions for independent functioning of the new Commission. 073

**Syed Shahabuddin**, M.P., 14 -Janpath, New Delhi - 110 001: With ref. (DV. Sept 1, p.21) to the proposal that the parliament session should begin with *Vande Mataram*, I have already taken up the matter with leaders of various parties. However, I would suggest that you should address your dissent and protest directly to the Speaker, Minister of Parliamentary Affairs, the Prime Minister as well as the Leaders of various Parties in Parliament.

**Prof. Abul Qasem**, 28/7B, C.N. Roy Road, Calcutta - 39: Harish Mondal's suggestion in DV (Aug. 16) to organise a meeting of DV readers in Calcutta with you (also to celebrate your 60th birthday) is interesting. I am applying my mind to this question and hopeful of a positive outcome. (Phone 409168).

**Tayeedul Islam**, ST Hostel, 19- Dargah Road, Calcutta - 17: I am a regular reader of DV for the past 5 years. I agree with 90% of your views. I differ on few points. I congratulate you for setting up the 'Anti-Zionist

Front' and proposing to hold its first national convention in Bangalore. I am asking my friends to participate in the proposed conference.

**T.N. Arivarasu**, Teacher, 64 - Housing unit, College Road, Tirupur, TN - 638 602: Social justice is more important in a vertical society than economic or political justice, said Dr. Ambedkar. Marx said: "A country not only divided between Mohammedan and Hindu but between tribe and tribe between caste and caste. The feudal division of India, the ethnic diversity of its population, the religious and caste antagonism among the people and the perfidy of most of the local feudal gentry". That means Marx knew well about our caste society. Some DV readers have found fault with Dr. Ambedkar. They ask why Dr. Ambedkar wrote the Constitution of India? Why did he accept that work? They raise so many doubts. The existence of caste and race has prevented class consciousness. That is the reason for the absence of class-consciousness in India, said the Editor of DV. We study all these thoughts and that is why we get many doubts. So many contradictory ideas are coming from our readers. We wish to clear our doubts. Hence we want to meet you.

**Bikash Kusum Roy**, 140 - Aswani Dutt Road, New Barrackpore, WB - 743 276: Please consider allotting one or two pages of DV for matrimonial advts. If you say yes it will help inter-state matrimonial relationship among Dalits throughout India to help them come closer. Newspaper reports said 100 brides and grooms were made life mates by Marwadi Jain organisations. But I have never heard of saw such things among Dalit organisations. DV can do the noble job. One handsome IIT engineer (age 30) serving under the WB Govt. as Asst. Engineer wants a bride below 25 years, preferably a doctor of any State but Dalit.

**V. Prasanna Kumar**, Indira Gandhi National Open University Regional Centre, Hyderabad: This is to voice my solidarity with your effort to enlighten the persecuted nationalities. The articles in DV are very spirited. I express my desire to become a partner in this movement.

**A. Pramanik**, convener, Forum Against Casteism, Canara Bank, 25-Princep St. Calcutta - 72: We formed this organisation a year and a half ago. We conducted two seminars on caste in trade unions and the new economic policy. We need your journal which is doing a good service to the movement with its penetrating analysis of the past and present happenings of our society.

**Madhavan K.**, Trivandrum: I was so impressed with your words when you said: "The Hindu nazis of Kerala

might be today rejoicing that they have cut one leg of ISS (Islamic Sevak Sangh) chief Abdul Nasser Madani. But they must know that the one-legged Madani will prove more dangerous than the Madani with two legs. The war has just begun. SC/ST/BCs of Kerala must join this human rights war to liberate Kerala from nazis. If the Muslim League leadership joins in this war well and good. If it doesn't it will die a natural death. The Students Islamic Movement must fully make use of the sharpening contradictions in Kerala.

**Bhaya Maheskumar**, BE final year student, Tumkur: A shocking incident took place at the Sidhartha Institute of Technology here. About 60 students from Jammu are studying here. Of this, about 25 are Dalits. They are intelligent. But the upper caste Brahmin-Bania students from Kashmir are persecuting them. On July 30, there was a bloody clash between the two groups. One Dalit student, Rajkumar Alenge, was badly injured and hospitalised. Only then we (Karnataka Dalit students) came to know that the victims were our own blood brothers. Following this attack, we the local Dalits supported the Jammu Dalit students and punished the ring leader, Hari Sharma, the Brahmin boy from Kashmir. The other two culprits are Baljit Singh and Sanjeev Suri. The Aryan upper castes daily insult the Dalit students saying "Who is financing you? Why should you come all the way from Kashmir to study engineering? What will the Chamaras, who have no brains, do by studying engineering?" We want your representative in Jammu to trace these students and effectively tackle them.

**R. Arul**, Chidambaram, TN-608 002: R. Elumalai wrote (DV May 16, 92): "Dead body of a Dalit near Kumbakonam was not allowed to pass through the Vanniar street". And P.K. Rajan added (DV Aug. 1, 1992): "During Babasaheb's birthday celebrations this April near Kalpakam, the intolerant Vanniars torched about 80 Dalit houses." Yes. This is true. Vanniars and Dalits both belong to the depressed class but they are fighting each other because of the brahminical brainwash. In Balachanthar *papan's* anti-reservation film, *Vaname Illai* (sky is the limit), one character asks a Mudaliar youth (BC): "Why were you born in a Mudaliar caste? If you had been born a Dalit, you would have got a job easily". This is how the *papans* divide the Dalits and Vanniars. All jobs are monopolised by the *papans*. Neither the Vanniars (BCs) nor Dalits have any jobs but the *papans* brainwash the BCs saying that the Dalits get jobs through reservation. I belong to the Vanniyar *jati*. Vanniars are mostly uneducated and poor like the Dalit. They think that the

Dalits gain only because of the reservations which are responsible for the Vanniyar unemployment. So, some poor uneducated Vanniars naturally develop prejudice against Dalits. The *papan* press is doing this job of instigating Vanniars against Dalit. *papans* and other upper castes oppress Vanniars and the Vanniars in turn try to oppress Dalits. Hatred is part of the caste system. Caste means hatred. But our militant Pattali Makkal Katchi is educating the Tamils (SC/ST, BCs, Muslims, Christians) that the sons of the soil as a whole are being oppressed because all jobs and properties are in Aryan upper caste hands. If we (SC/ST, BCs, Muslims, Christians) join hands under the PMK we can recover our human rights. Lot of education is needed. Dr. Ramdoss and Dalit Ezhilmalai are doing it.

**Mrs. Happy**, Solan, Himachal Pradesh: Jats have been quoted as Huns (DV July 16, '92, p. 12) in a "Letter to Editor" by B. Bambiha, Faridkot. Whereas in the *Sarita* (July 11, 92, p. 180) they have been called 'normally Aryans'. Please throw more light on the subject. Can the Jats be included in our non-BSO comprising 85% of our populations?

**Ujagar Singh Sandhu**, Advocate, Ajit Singh Nagar, Punjab: S.D. Sharma cannot be called a true representative constitutional head of the country as one-third voters of India did not vote in his favour. The tradition of upper caste domination has been allowed to perpetuate which is against the democratic ideology and the spirit of the Constitution. There was a keen desire of the masses to give the opportunity of holding the President's office by a person from the oppressed communities but the caste-conscious politicians branded that desire as caste-based. On the other hand, this august office continues to be monopolised by the sheer minority upper castes. India's slavery in the past centuries is attributed to the vice of casteism.

**S.M. Pasha**, 21-Barracks Road, Periamet, Madras - 3: The decision of the general purposes committee of the Lok Sabha to commence the proceedings of the House with the singing of the *Vande Mataram* is unfortunate as it resurrects a long-forgotten controversy (DV Sept. 1, p.21 "*Vande Mataram* will divide India"). In 1937, when the Congress, drunk with victory and having formed provincial ministries attempted to impose the singing of *Vande Mataram* on the Muslims, the latter opposed it tooth and nail. The Speaker of the then Madras Legislative Assembly, Bulusu Sambamurthi, started the session of the Assembly with this song. The Muslim representative from Guntur, Laljan, staged a walk-out and threatened to disrupt the working of the Assembly. It had its effect

and the practice was stopped. Besides, the Working Committee of the Congress came out with a lengthy clarification on its stand on the singing of the *Vande Mataram*. Islam directs Muslims not to bow before any object or being and it is one of the cardinal articles of Islamic faith that Allah, the God Almighty, alone is the bestower of boons. In the *Vande Mataram* one has to declare that one bows to "mother" and that she is the giver of boons. Hence, it is un-Islamic for Muslims to sing the *Vande Mataram*. The country must take into consideration the religious sentiments of the Muslims or else there will be disaster as predicted by DV.

*The nazis facing defeat from all fronts are desperately trying to break up India into pieces so that they can hold on to the cow belt (Aryavarta). But we, who will not allow India's unity and integrity to be broken, have to resist the Aryan move via the "Vande Mataram".* -

**EDITOR.**

## Nazi chief calls Babasaheb "stooge" of Nizam

**Bombay:** The statement by the Shiv Sena chief, Bal Thackeray, in Sangli on Aug.21 about Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's connection with the Nizam of Hyderabad has kicked up a controversy. Thackeray had said in Sangli that Dr. Ambedkar was a "stooge" of the Nizam. Dalit organisations and the RPI, at two separate press conferences, protested against the Sena chief's statement.

We have just received six copies of the famous book,

### **AVERTING THE APOCALYPSE**

(Social Movements in India Today)

By the noted American writer and journalist, Arthur Bonner who is also an esteemed subscriber and admirer of *Dalit Voice*.

Published in 1990 (Duke University Press, Durham and London, pages 475), Arthur Bonner, has been a life-long journalist including as special correspondent in the *New York Times*. He had lived in India for eight years and later made extensive tour of India to write this book. Bonner had met the Editor of *Dalit Voice* to whom he has devoted one full chapter.

"Although he (V.T. Rajshekar) apparently was not aware of it his analysis parallels Gramsci's: that hegemony is a product of many factors, including culture", says Bonner. He also agrees with the DV analysis that India's ruling upper castes form 10% to 15% of its population.

It is a must reading for every Indian particularly Dalits.

The Author is trying for a cheaper Indian edition. The price of the American edition is not marked but we can sell it for Rs. 300.

Write to the *Dalit Voice* office.

# DV 10 YEARS AGO

JULY 16, 1982

## Editorial: "How the Ruling Class Divides the Poor: Dalit Minorities, OBCs".

Marxism aims at removing inequalities. When it comes to India inequality means our hierarchically graded caste system. But our communists (CPI & CPM) have chosen to ignore the stark reality and sought to organise the "poor" against the "propertied class". To them trade unionism is a step towards class struggle. There can't be a greater perversion of Marxism than this and the proof of it is that India is nowhere near a "class struggle". While India is a country of "poor" with wealth accumulated in the hands of less than 10% of the population, if our CPM-CPI interpretation of marxism had been correct by this time the country should have exploded in a bloody "class struggle". But what we are witnessing in fact is not a class struggle but a struggle between the "poor". Untouchables, tribals, Muslims, Christians, who constitute the poorest of the poor, are being persecuted by the equally poor "low caste" Hindus mostly OBCs. The ruling upper castes who own the wealth engineer these clashes between two sections of the "poor". The ruling class divides the "poor" "How to Destroy Caste System", 1982 DSA).

### Who Killed Devaraj Urs?

Devaraj Urs (67) died in Bangalore on June 6, 1982 and with it Karnataka lost its most famous leader. How so healthy a man could die so suddenly? The national press is silent though Congress leaders referred to the "suspicious circumstances" in which Urs died on the lap of his "adopted daughter", Nirmala Prasad, an ex-IFS Brahmin woman from Bangalore. None others were present. Foul play is suspected. Backward caste leaders suspect a conspiracy. "After my death there will be no more backward class movement", Urs had said. Upper caste journalists had manufactured all sorts of reports to malign him.

### Secret Christian plan to convert 140 lakh Hindus:

The RSS official weekly, "Organiser" (June 20) "discloses a multi-million rupee US-financed scheme of the Catholic church conversion plan". Father Iyakkara of the CMI, Dharmaram College, Bangalore, is the man behind this mission, it says.

"Letters to editor" from Amrajit Singh, London, Raju Thomas, Madras, P.K. Rajan, Trichy, TN, THP Chentharaserry, Trivandrum, Prof. Abul Qasem, Calcutta, Janardhan Patil, Bombay.

# Dalit — New Cultural Context for an Old Marathi Word

Dr. Eleanor Zelliot

*Dalit*: 1. Ground 2. Broken or reduced to pieces generally. Molesworth's Marathi-English Dictionary, 1975 reprint of 1831 edition.

In the early 1970s, two Maharashtrian movements achieved enough prominence to be noticed by the English language press—the Dalit Panthers and Dalit literature. By substituting the word "Black" for "Dalit" the reader can immediately understand that a phenomenon comparable to the American Black Panthers and Black literature has surfaced among the lower castes in social and literary affairs in western India. Like the American movements, the Dalit Panthers and the Dalit school of literature represent a new level of pride, militancy and sophisticated creativity. The Marathi word *dalit*, like the word Black, was chosen by the group itself and is used proudly; and even in the English press, the unfamiliar Marathi word had to be used. None of the normal words—Untouchable, Scheduled Castes, Depressed Classes, Gandhi's euphemism *Harijan*—had the same connotation. 'Dalit implies those who have been broken, ground down by those above them in a deliberate and active way. There is in the word itself an inherent denial of pollution, karma, and justified caste hierarchy.

The *Times Weekly Supplement* of 25 November 1973 contained the first significant analysis of Dalit literature in English, together with translations of poetry, stories and essays, and it remains the best introduction in English to this school of literature. The *Supplement* also included news of the Dalit Panthers, a militant organization founded by two writers, Namdeo Dhasal and Raja Dhale, in April 1972 and already famous for its celebration of "Black

Independence Day" on 15 August of that year, the Silver Jubilee of India's Independence, and for its mass physical reaction to violence against Untouchables or Buddhists in the villages. In 1974, however, the Panther leadership split, and with the prohibition of demonstrations under the Emergency in 1975, the originization plummeted into near obscurity as quickly as it

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We reproduce chapter IV of the just published book, 'Untouchable to Dalit - Essays on Ambedkar movement by Eleanor Zelliot, a noted American scholar on Dr. Ambedkar and Dalit movement. (1992

Manohar publications, 2/6, Ansari Road Daryaganj, New Delhi-2 pp.300 Rs. 320. An old subscriber of *Dalit Voice*, her Ph.D thesis itself is on Dr. Ambedkar. It is a matter of shame to the Indian "intellectuals" that a foreign scholar should tell us about the greatness of the country's tallest titan and Dalit literature.

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had risen into the limelight. It will not concern us much here, except as an example of the extreme militancy, commitment to action and profound bitterness of many of the Dalit writers.

**Black literature:** The Marathi press had taken notice of the new school of literature four years

earlier with the publication of the editorial in the 1969 Diwali issue of *Marathwada*, published from Aurangabad. The lead editorial presented the issue as "A Discussion: The Literature of the Dalit: Consciousness, Direction and Inspiration", with a drawing of the Buddha placed beside the title to indicate the debt of the movement to the conversion of Untouchables, largely from the Mahar caste, to Buddhism. Articles by M.N. Wankhade, a Buddhist who had received his Ph.D. in Literature from Indiana University; Baburao Bagul and Daya Pawar, both Buddhist writers; and Janardan Waghmare, a caste Hindu professor who studied Black literature for his Ph.D. thesis, as well as essays by several well-known Marathi critics were included, together with poems and stories from Buddhists such as Keshav Meshram, Shankarrao Kharat and Sukharam Hivrle and from other lower caste writers, including P.M. Shinde, who were associated with Dalit literature, along with the work of some of the most prestigious writers in the Marathi literary establishment. The Diwali issues of Marathi magazines are highly popular and widely circulated, and the dedication of a large part of its Diwali number by *Marathwada* to the Dalit movement meant that Dalit literature had arrived on the Marathi literary scene. For the first time since the seventeenth century, a school of accepted Marathi literature had arisen from a non-elite group.

**Definition of Dalit:** The clearest definition of *dalit* in its contemporary usage I have seen comes from a letter written to me by Gangadhar Pantawane, a Professor of Marathi

at Milind College now at Marathwada University in Aurangabad and founder-editor of *Asmitadarsh* (mirror of identity), the chief organ of Dalit literature:

To me, Dalit is not a caste. He is a man exploited by the social and economic traditions of this country. He does not believe in God, Rebirth, Soul, Holy Books teaching separatism, Fate and Heaven because they have made him a slave. He does believe inhumanism. Dalit is a symbol of change and revolution.

The key here is a radical rejection of the religious legitimization of poverty and untouchability by those who have suffered from either, a criteria which pretty well limits the true Dalit writer to a former Untouchable who has embraced Buddhism, i.e., a member of Mahar caste who rejected Hinduism in the movement led by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and joined the Buddhist revival started in 1956, or a low-caste Marxist. *The Marxist, however, would define Dalit in terms of class, generally including women, tribals, workers and agricultural labourers.* There is a Marxist impact on the Dalit school: two of the best known writers are Communists, not Buddhists: (the late Annabhau Sathe, an Untouchable Mang by birth, is usually counted among Dalit writers, while Narayan Surve, an abandoned orphan and hence casteless, is more often thought of as a proletarian poet than a Dalit writer, but his tone is much the same as that of many Dalit poets); some major Buddhist writers are interested in Marxist economic thought or in the Hindi *Samantar* (parallel) literature, which seems Marxist; and an exceptionally able Buddhist poet, Namdeo Dhasal, combines Buddhism and Marxism, and indeed the split in the Dalit Panthers was to some degree due to Dhasal's Communist connections. The history of the Dalit literature movement and its themes, however,

is much more profoundly a part of the Mahar movement and the Buddhist revival.

### BRAHMAN BOYS

**Dr. Ambedkar, the hero of the movement and the guide to Buddhism, wrote off Marxists as "a bunch of Brahman boys" and avowed that Buddhism contained all the economic and social help necessary.** The Pantawane definition of *dalit* will serve for most of the writers I will discuss.

While Dalit literature or, in Marathi, *Dalit sahitya*, as a school, a self-conscious movement, is a product of the 1960s, individual writers from among the Untouchables appear in the fourteenth century and again in the Mahar movement which began in the late nineteenth century. In the long history of Marathi literature before the 1960s, only one school of acknowledged writers included members of the lower castes—that of the Bhakti (devotional religion) saint-poets. Popular entertainment—*lawani* (ballads), *pawada* (panegyric poetry) and folk-dramas called *tamasha*—undoubtedly was produced by low castes, but was anonymous and never considered respectable literature. The Bhakti movement, begun traditionally by Dnyaneshwar in the thirteenth century, was joined by saint poets from almost all Marathi-speaking castes, including the Mahar poet Chokhamela. Two of the most popular Bhakti saints are the Shimpi (tailor) Namdeo, a contemporary of Chokhamela in the fourteenth century, and the last and greatest of the saint-poets, the Maratha-Kunbi Tukaram in the seventeenth century. Dnyaneshwar himself was an outcaste Brahman and another major figure in the Bhakti pantheon, the saint, Eknath of the sixteenth century, kept his Brahmanical standing only by virtue of miracles performed with the help of Vithoba, the God of the

Bhakti movement.

The Maharashtrian Bhakti movement, like Bhakti movements throughout India, was anti-orthodox, inclusive of both women and Shudras, and based on the experience of God rather than on traditional piety or formal ritual. Its radical stance and its inclusiveness, however, were largely confined to the religious plane, and little action for social equality came from it.

### BHAKTI MOVEMENT

Chokhamela himself occasionally protested about his caste. One *abhang* ends:

In the beginning,  
at the end  
there is nothing but pollution.  
No one knows anyone who is  
born pure.  
Chokha says, in wonder,  
who is pure?

But in other *abhangas*, Chokhamela credits his low birth to past sins. Contemporary Buddhists are interested in the Bhakti movement, and indeed it is one of the few places where they can find a rational for pride in their past. Bhau Lokhande of Nagapur wrote his doctoral thesis on the influence of Buddhism on the saint-poets, and several articles in *Asmitadarsh* discuss the attitudes and effect of Namdeo, Tukaram and others. Many believe that there was a connection between Buddhism in Maharashtra and the Bhakti movement, but the general stance of dalit writers, however, is to mourn that even the compassionate saint-poets upheld social distinctions, and that their compassion had little effect.

Throughout the period of *pandit* poetry following the Bhakti period and during the British period in Maharashtra, 1818-1947, the field of literature was dominated by the literate Brahman. There was some concern even in belles-letters for the problems of the lower castes,

beginning in the late nineteenth century at about the time the Mahars were beginning to speak for themselves. Marathi's first major modern poet, Keshavsut (K.K. Damle, 1866-1905) wrote poems entitled "Labourer" and "A Worker Forced to Starve". In "New Soldier" he wrote,

Neither a Brahman, nor a Hindu,  
nor am I of any sect,

Only those who have fallen  
circumscribe the universe.

and in "The First Question of the Untouchable Boy" he states at the end, after a Mahar child's mother has explained to him that the Brahman boy cursed him because "we are low and they are high",

How would she know  
that highness in this world is built  
on sin and glory on  
the degradation of others.

### BURN VEDAS

Brahman reformers, chiefly M.G. Ranade and G.G. Agarkar, were writing at the same time as Keshavsut, and it was also in the last decade of the nineteenth century that documentation for a vigorous Mahar movement appears. An ex-soldier, Gopal Baba Walangkar from the Mahar caste, presented his demands for better treatment of Untouchables and an Untouchable poet, Pandit Kondiram, wrote bitterly of the condition of Untouchables, ending his long unpublished poetic complaint with an injunction to burn the Brahmanical scriptures! **Earlier in that same century, a Mali (gardener) reformer, Jotibha Phule, had begun the Satya Shodak (truth-seeking) movement to attempt to reduce Brahman influence on the lower castes.** Phule backed his preaching with such concrete action as a school for Untouchables and one for women, and seems to have been the first to use the word **dalit** in connection with caste in the term **dalitodhar** (uplift of the depressed). Indeed the second

half of the nineteenth century was full of protest and reform, but only Keshavsut among the literary figures put social consciousness into poetry. And for the next several decades, no proper literature reflected the increasing dynamism of the Mahar protest. As Pantawane writes, "Only one Keshavsut has given expression to the outburst of social greed".

The twentieth century saw the full blooming of the modern Marathi novel, a great emphasis on short stories which still continues, and several schools of poetry. It also saw the blossoming of the Mahar movement into a full-scale effective protest of social, religious and political disabilities, but there was little connection between Literature (with capital L) and the progress and increasing vocality of the Mahars. Kisan Fagoji Bansode of Nagpur, one of the most important pre-Ambedkar leaders, did write poetry which was collected and published after his death by his son. The newspapers of Dr. Ambedkar, the only highly educated Untouchable, which began in 1920, occasionally contained poems and stories, but these were generally read only by those in the movement. Ambedkar's stress, however, was not only on equality in religion and power in political but also on education and cultural creativity. Most of the creativity took the form of material for the movement — *jalsa* (a singing message-performance), songs, poems, polemics, dozens of newspapers and although nothing that was considered Literature by the literary establishment appeared, a regard for literature, the habit of writing and a host of educated young people were well established by the time of the Buddhist conversion in 1956.

It is strange that this dynamic movement brought forth no response from Marathi writers. There is no Marathi equivalent to Mulk Raj

Anand's *Untouchable*, or Sivashankar Pillai's *Scavenger's Sons*, and certainly nothing as historically important as Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The reason

### GANDHIAN REFORM

probably rests in Marathi literature's commitment to realism, which meant that writers, if they wrote about social matters, wrote about what they actually knew—middle class marriage, the position of women, the problem of widowhood, or the independence movement.

This is not to say that there was no mention of the Untouchable. S.M. Mate, a professor of Marathi in Pune, wrote his first two books on the problems of the Untouchable. *Asprishyavicar* (thoughts on Untouchables) appeared in 1922 and in 1933. Mate coined a new word, *aspirshata* (the untouched rather than the untouchable) in his book *Asprishatanca prashna* (the question of those who are untouched). In the intervening period he devoted so much personal attention to the Untouchable community that he became known as "Mahar Mate". In 1941, a collection of short stories entitled *Upekshitanca Antarang* (the mind of the neglected) appeared. Mate was in touch with Dr. Ambedkar in the 1920s and I have seen a copy of one of Ambedkar's speeches with a note to Mate on it asking for the latter's comment. However, Mate seemed to be too radical for the establishment and not radical enough for the Mahar movement. Known primarily as a social thinker and essayist, rather than as a literary figure, he is somewhat neglected today by the Dalits and the high castes alike. I asked the Buddhist Baburao Bagul about him, and Bagul replied, "Mate was sympathetic but he showed the customs of the Untouchables as if they were 'these strange ones'".

## DON'T WANT PITY

Another Brahman writer with great social concern was Sane Guruji (1899-1950), still revered as a Gandhian reformer. In a very influential book, *Shyamci Ai* (Shyam's mother) which appeared in 1935, Sane Guruji's short stories taught courage, compassion and universal love as the true religion. In the story entitled "Devala Sari Priya" (all are dear to God), Sham's mother tells him that he must help an old Mahar woman, and that she will give him a bath afterward so that others will not criticize him. "To God all forms seem pure. He took the form of a fish, a tortoise, a boar, a lion. The meaning of that is that to God all forms are holy. God is in the body of the Brahman, the fish, even the Mahar.....". Sane Guruji put his beliefs into action and is credited with the opening of the chief Bhakti pilgrimage place, the temple at Pandharpur, to Untouchables in 1948. His courageous satyagrah at the temple door, however, took place after the Mahars had vowed to leave Hinduism, and today his pity is totally unacceptable to the Dalit school.

## ANTI-BRAHMAN RIOTS

The rural school of writers, chiefly Vyankatesh Madgulkar and Shankar Patil, do use figures from the lower castes among their characters, but neither makes untouchability a major point of concern. Madgulkar's dispassionate, sharp-eyed objectivity prevails even in his novel on the anti-Brahman riots of 1948 which profoundly affected his own family, and obviously he was not one to present an emotional protest of the Untouchable's condition. Madgulkar's superb stories, however, do reveal much of the life of the village Mahar, and I will compare one with the work of a Buddhist writer of rural short stories later in this article.

While the Marathi literati did not write about the Mahar movement, many did (and still do) give support to it. Among the names of those who either were marginally associated with Ambedkar or, in the current period, helpful to contemporary Dalit writers are some of the best known writers in the Marathi establishment: P.K. Atre, Mama Warekar, Kusumagraj, D.K. Bedekar, G.T. Madhkolkar, Durga Bhagwat, Vijay Tendulkar, Dilip Chitre, Bhalchandra Nemade. But the literary establishment has generally left the passionate description of Mahar life the Untouchables themselves. Only

## COMMUNITY INFLUENCE

recently have the city slums figured in fiction, and one of the best of this genre, Janavant Dalvi's *Chakra* (wheel), was described by a Marathi critic as the work of an "outsider writing for outsiders".

The "insiders" began their serious work in the late 1950s. Although most of the writers have come out of the Buddhist movement, one of the earliest, Annabhau Sathe, who belonged to the Untouchable Mang caste, was deeply influenced by Communism. Although he dedicated one book to Ambedkar and had before his death close connections with Buddhist writers, Sathe's best known novel was not concerned with protest but with the Mang as hero. *Fakira* deals with the anti-British revolt of the Mangs and other low castes in the nineteenth century. A short story, "Savala Mang", which presents the Untouchables as a Robin Hood, is available in English. At about the same time, Shankarrao Kharat's very different short stories began to be published; "Manuskichi Huk" (the cry of humanity) appeared in P.K. Atre's journal, *Navayug*, in 1958. Kharat's book depicting the lives of all the "servants" of the village, *Bara*

*Balutedar* (the twelve Balutedars) appeared the same year. Kharat was very much a part of the Ambedkar and Buddhist movements, serving as editor of one of Ambedkar's newspapers for a time. And although he and Sathe were the only even moderately well-known writers of the time, there was enough interest in writing for a Maharashtra Dalit Literature Conference to be called by Buddhists in 1959.

## CASTE-RIDDEN SOCIETY

In the sixties, the flow of Dalit literary writing increased. Conferences were held almost every year *Asmitadarsh*, a journal devoted to literature in contrast to the more general magazines of the movement, was founded by Professor Pantawane at Milind College in Aurangabad, one of the colleges formed by Ambedkar and the name *Dalit Sahitya* achieved the status of a genuine school of literature with the *Marathwada* issue of 1969. In the 1970s, individual volumes of poetry began to appear. Cokha Kamble's *Pimpalpan* (leaf of the pimpal tree), with an introduction by Durga Bhagwat, who was soon to be President of the Maharashtra Literary Conference; Namdeo Dhasal's *Golpitha* (a slum area of Bombay), with an introduction by the dramatist Vijay Tendulkar; Waman Nimbalkar's *Gao kushabaheril Kavita* (poetry from beyond the village boundary); Daya Pawar's *Kondwada* (cattle pen); Trymbak Sapkale's *Surung*. All were published by the Maharashtra Buddhist Literature Committee, Asmitadarsh Press, or the Marxist Magova Press, with the exception of *Golpitha*. All were well printed and bound and most accompanied by vivid modern art—a far cry from the cheap pamphlets sold at the movement's meeting. Gangadhar Pantawane's books of essays, *Mulyavedh* (the preception of value) appeared in 1974, and a volume of biographical sketches of

"opposition writers", including Annabhau Sathe, the folk-singer Waman Kardak, an early Nagpur writer N.R. Shende, Kisan Fago Bansode, the early Pune leader, Shivaram Janba Kamble, Shankarrao Kharat and Bandhu Madhav (Modak), a writer of the 1930s, which appeared earlier in the popular monthly *Amrit* will soon be published. The work of the proletarian poet, Narayan Surve, began to appear on standard M.A. reading lists in Maharashtrian universities. Baburao Bagul's volumes of the 1960s were printed, his novella, *Sud* (revenge), appeared, and Keshav Meshram's work was published. As the volumes appeared, Marathi criticism followed—praising, scorning, serious, frivolous. Dalit literature was to be found in every bookstore in the Marathi-speaking area, and had become unmistakably part of the Maharashtra literary scene. The 1974 survey of regional literature in the Sahitya Akademi's *Indian Literature* included Vasudha Mane's piece on "Recent Marathi Writing", which began

In a Society which is still caste-ridden, the new crop of writers belonging to castes and classes which were traditionally outside the pale of literature so far, has attracted attention during the past few years in Marathi literature. They come from backward rural areas, from slums in industrial towns and many of them hail from families of labourers and menials. They come with experiences hitherto unknown and unimagined by the most sympathetic and observant of writers in the traditionally literate classes. They come with a language and expression which has trampled all conventions.

The discussion of themes and expression in Dalit literature which follows is a very personal one. During a recent Sabbatical year in Pune, I read and translated as many poems,

stories and essays as I could, with the help of Rekha Damle, Vidyut Bhagwat and Jayant Karve, in the time left from work on another project. I met many of the major writers; attended the Dalit Literature Conference in Nagpur and the Buddhist Literature Conference in Bombay, both in 1976; and checked meanings of words and phrases with Buddhist friends who dropped by. My expertise, however, is in the history of the Mahar and Buddhist movements; literary criticism is not my forte, and I here apologize for misunderstandings or for omitting significant work. I have tended to take my examples from several published volumes rather than search through Marathi magazines, and I have chosen themes which interest me most as a historian rather than attempting a literary analysis based on all Dalit literature.

#### THE LIFE OF THE LOWLY

There is, of course, a focus on the life of the lowly in Dalit literature. The style and content vary, however, from the suffering tinged with hope of the village Mahar in Shankarrao Kharat's stories to the gaunt, stark brutality of life in the Bombay slums described by Baburao Bagul in prose and Namdeo Dhasal in poetry. To take Shankarrao Kharat first—he is himself the son of a village Mahar who did the work delicately described in British records as that of the "inferior village servant"—cutting wood, carrying messages, bringing fuel to the burning ground, working on other's lands, dragging out dead cattle. Kharat managed an education, however, and had a degree in law. His childhood experience and the life he saw in the slums are the subjects of his fictional writing, although he does have other books on Buddhist and Ambedkarian subjects and is writing a history of the Mahars. His first book, *Bara Balutedar*, took all twelve village

servants as subjects for stories, not only the Mahar, and he has continued to deal with characters from many different communities, generally the lower orders, in a dozen volumes.

#### CHOLERA GODDESS

Three stories translated by Pramod Kale in Robert Miller represent Kharat's treatment of the Untouchable. In "The Burden", a Mahar *kotwal* refuses the help of an educated Mahar who has returned to the village, saying "You felt my pain and that's why you held the umbrella over my head in this soaking rain. It's all very well. You may hold the umbrella over my head now. But what about tomorrow. Rain is there. Heat is there. The burden on the head is always there. Yes". In "The Town Crier's Call", the Mahar village servant has to go out to drum and announce the need for all villagers to come to be inoculated by the visiting doctor, even though he himself is so sick he falls, vomits and dies as he attempts to shout and drum. In "Inside the Village Womb", an educated Mahar, returning to his village, remembers himself as a school boy following his father on his humiliating round of duty, and runs from the now "tumble-down houses, that empty *chavadi*, that collapsed shop...wet with perspiration". In an as yet unpublished (in English) story, "Potraj" (the servant of the cholera goddess), a Mahar school boy outwits the villagers who demand that he take his father's place in placating the goddess by arranging a "miracle".

A Mahar story by the Brahman Vyankatesh Madgulkar is included in the same Robert Miller article. Many of the same themes that Kharat uses enter Madgulkar's story, "Nirvana"—the separate quarters of the Maharwada at a distance from the village; the distinct greeting *jahar*, used by Mahars to higher castes; the traditional duties; the

lack of true communication between Untouchables and caste Hindus—but the figure of the Old Mahar who alone does not convert to Buddhism and who dies trying to perform his duties for the uncaring village is an unlikely subject for a Dalit writer. Old mad Bavarya is honored after his death by the caste Hindus for his loyalty; the Dalit writers, including the gentle Kharat, would say that **honor must come in life and that true honor is not possible without change.** Pantawane has put it this way, "In short, the Dalit story's essence is not individual commitment, but social commitment".

### BOMBAY PROSTITUTES

The city world of the Dalit is most cruel in the poetry of Namdeo Dhasal and Baburao Bagul's prose. To set the stage, let me quote from Vijay Tendulkar's introduction to Namdeo Dhasal's *Golpitha*, in part because Dhasal's poetry is far too complex for me to even start to translate (Tendulkar himself lists twenty-six words and phrases he could not understand). Tendulkar, perhaps the best known of the contemporary Marathi dramatists, writes:

In the calculations of the white collar workers, "no man's land" begins at the border of their world, and it is here that the world of Namdeo Dhasal's poetry of Bombay's *Golpitha* begins. This is the world of days of nights; of empty or half-full stomachs; of the pain of death; of tomorrow's worries; of men's bodies in which shame and sensitivity have been burned out; of overflowing gutters; of a sick young body, knees curled to belly against the cold of death, next to the gutter; of the jobless; of beggars; of pick-pockets; of Bairaga swamis; of Dada bosses and pimps; of Muslim tombs and Christian crosses; of film star Rajesh Khanna and the gods on the peeling wall above the creaking bed; of a hashish cot and a beautiful child asleep on the edge of that cot and a tubercular

father employed at a cathouse nearby still cherishing the ambition that his child may become a "sharif", a gentleman; of hermaphrodites; of home-brew liquor; of records of philosophical Quwali; and of hot sticky blood running at the price of water at any moment; of steaming tasteless cups of bright red tea; of smuggling; of naked knives; of opium....Dhasal's *Golpitha*, where leprous women are paid the price and fucked on the road, where children cry nearby, where prostitutes waiting for business sing full-throated love songs, from where one cannot run to save his life, or if he runs, he comes back—that *Golpitha*. Mercy-grace-peace do not touch *Golpitha*. Dhasal says, here all seasons are pitiless, here all seasons have a contrary heart.

Tendulkar's view through Namdeo Dhasal's eyes is more complete, more picturesque, less personal, than that of the true insider. Baburao Bagul's story of Bombay, "Death is Getting Cheaper" is as violent and as stark; his characters are Christian, Muslim, Maratha, Madrasi, Mahar, all in one way or another defeated by hopeless poverty, crushed by the system, but they are real people and one cares about them. In "Lutalut" (the looter looted), prostitutes quarrel, and the air around them is heavy with vulgarity and violence. But Bagul himself is not at all a defeatist. He has written, "Dalit Sahitya is not a literature of vengeance. Dalit Sahitya is not a literature which spreads hatred. Dalit Sahitya first promotes man's greatness and man's freedom and for that reason it is an historic necessity". He told the Dalit Literature Conference held in Nagpur in 1976, "Anguish, waiting, pronouncements of sorrow alone do not define Dalit literature. We want literature heroically full of life for the creation of a (new) society".

### MANU STILL LIVING

Perhaps the contrast between Bagul, the man of hope, the Bagul, the writer of stark despair, can be explained by yet another quotation. Daya Pawar's report on the 1976 Dalit Literature Conference

quotes Bagul this way:

Even if democracy has been placed over government power, even if Manu has been thrown into darkness, he did not die. He is living today in books, in holy scripture, in temple after temple. He lives in mind after mind. The structure of society's arrangements are under his control. And only his loving people are at the center of power. **So in India at this time there are two worlds, two powers, two life traditions, two scriptures.** He who wants victory, he who wants influence, must take a role in determining the future. We must bring our role to completion with literature and art.

It seems to me Baburao Bagul's purpose is to present the world of the lowly in all its harshness in order to make the middle class understand. Heroism and hope come in facing and acknowledging what is, in order that something better may be created.

### THE SPEECH OF THE DALIT

Dalit writers at times use speech from the Mahar past or the city slum present that is incomprehensible or offensive to the high caste reader. This may be in part simply a new trend in Marathi literature; the non-Dalit novels *Chakra* by Jayavant Dalvi and *Vasunaka* by Bhau Padhye were considered by many to be obscene. But it is true that some words and images genuinely represent the Mahar past. Dhasal most of all, but also many other writers, use phrases that the average city dweller does not understand. There seems to be a certain pride in this, a lack of the sense of dual pressures of speech depicted in a poem of Arun Kamble which appeared in the *Times Literary Supplement*

Dalit issue, translated by Gauri Deshpande:

Bone-chewing grampus  
at the burning ghat:  
permanent resident  
of my own heart:  
with the weight of tradition  
behind his back  
yells: Saddling bastard  
I tell you,  
stutter with our tongue!  
Picking through the Vedas,  
buttering his queue,  
the Brahmin teacher at school  
bellows: Speak my pure tongue  
whoreson!  
Now you tell me which speech  
am I to tongue?

The Dalit poet makes an effort to use images as well as words which come from his own experience. In his introduction to a collection of poems, *Kondwada*, Daya Pawar reflects on his growth as a poet. At first, after his move to the city, he wrote romantic poetry, and then when he realized that he was being untrue to both past and present, that he had no acquaintance with the "holy gourd" he had used as an image, that his beloved slept on the ground and had no pillow to stain with tears, he stopped.

My uneasiness grew. I was now satisfied with the kind of poetry that I had published. I read poetry continually from the collections of respected Marathi poets. Mardhekar is understood to be the sculptor of the new poetry. At that time I was not touched by Mardhekar's poetry nor did he seem to me to be different. Men had been made insects by the machine age, so he thought, but the machine age had not touched me. Actually we were waiting for the machine age. We were convinced that our slavation was in the machine age. I thought that the angry generation coming after Dilip Chitre was controlled by "form". I thought their poetry was vapid, caught in a tangle of images, and I could not write such poetry. I think it well that I did not get a B.A. or M.A. in Marathi at a university. Otherwise

I would have written such flaccid poetry swollen with images. Muktibodh, Vinda Karandikar, Kusumagraj—I liked the progressive thought in their poetry. I was mute until the poetry collections of Narayan Surve, *Thus I Am Brahma, My University*, appeared. Surve's writing style, his straightforward language, told me much...

Nevertheless, few Dalit poets apart from Dhasal, break many Marathi poetic convention. I could wish for some experimentation in carrying over the "low" Mahar cultural tradition of the past, of *tamasha*, of *jalsa*, but this is found only in the comparatively unsophisticated poetry of the folk-poet, Waman Kardak (1972). Pawar has written, in prose, more vividly than any other Dalit writer of the cultural influences of his childhood—the difference between the music and literature in a Brahman and in a Mahar home, his father's band, his boyish imitations of *tamasha*, the mime and music of the nomadic Rayrandi who stayed in the Maharawada, the *jalsa* groups inspired by the Ambedkar movement who would sing such things as "The child of a Mahar is very, very clever; in all the world you will not see his like. Come on, look up, look up!" But even Pawar does not use these rhythmic influences in his poetry.

True, there is no Freud, or T. S. Eliot fallout in Dalit poetry. But on the subjects, a certain straightforward quality, the attitudes, some special words, and the references to history and myths from a dalit point of view, mark Dalit poetry as dalit—not its inherent structure.

### BLACK LITERATURE

Dalit writers are extremely interested in Black American literature and see their own movement as a parallel phenomenon. Gangadhar Pantawane began his major essay on Dalit literature with a quotation from James Baldwin in English: "Our

...The words *a peculiar institution* describe the untouchability created by the caste system....The Negro should not change the colour of his hide, nor the Untouchable his caste. There is no difference between the *place* of the Negro in America and the step or level of the Untouchable in India. And so for a long time both were caught in the whirlwind of self-denigration and self-hatred. Both were confined in the prison of fatalism. To prolong this imprisonment, the whites found authority in the Bible's myths and symbols, and the clean castes in the Vedas and Manusmriti.

### LOVE POEM

There is an occasional reference to the Black world in Dalit literature, such as in Daya Pawar's poem entitled "Harlem," which is a love poem to his wife with full realization of the life-destroying world around them. There seems, however, to be no imitation of Black literature and its two strongest fields, autobiography and drama, are not yet developed in Dalit literature. A Buddhist amateur playwright, however, B.S. Shinde, who has previously produced plays based on Buddhist legends with an amateur caste in the off-hours of the

### PROSTITUTES

prestigious Bal Gandharva theatre in Pune, is fascinated by James Baldwin's *Blues for Mr. Charlie* and would like to do a Marathi version of it. But the chief influence of American Black literature is as support, as proof that a group similar to the Dalit can become militant, can become creative, and can progress in a hostile society.

This section and anti-traditionalism might as well be started off with lines from the most condemnatory of the poets, Namdeo Dhasal. Even the best of orthodoxy is unacceptable to him:

Their traditional pity is no better than the pimp on Falkland Road.

and even well wishers get not sympathy:

The very intelligent people...  
those who don't even know  
the darkness under their asses  
they should poke their noses  
like fifty-cent prostitutes  
even today  
at men who are burning.

Daya Pawar is equally condemnatory, though less scurrilous, in "Sanskriti" (culture):

In hut after hut, total darkness.  
Then the siren went off.  
From the fourteen story Damodar  
comes—what's this—a gleam of  
light.  
What do you say:  
They've got a permit for light.  
Sh! Sh!  
Don't peep into their windows  
They've taken shelter under their  
beds.  
Generation after generation  
has arranged the plastic pastime  
of that Great Divine Culture.  
Now then they  
stuff balls of cotton in their ears.  
In huts after hut, whimpering,  
the weeping of a broken heart  
disturbs their peaceful life.

And in "He Mahan Desha: (O great country), he ends:

O great country  
how can you be called great?  
You don't see the charred waste  
burning at your feet.  
Like Nero you play the sarangi  
and sing sweetly of the Himalayas.

### BURN SCRIPTURES

*Manu, the Brahmanical law-giver, is seen as the arch enemy.* Indeed the earliest recorded modern Mahar poet, Pandit Kondiram, cried out for the burning of the Brahmanical scriptures way back in the late nineteenth century. The *Manusmriti* was actually burned at the Mahad Conference of the Depressed Classes in 1928, at the hands of a Brahman who worked closely with Dr. Ambedkar. It was a gesture which shocked (and still shocks) many pious Hindus. Waman Nimbalkar

uses the image of burning in a reversed way in "Itihas" (history) which begins

O heirs of Manu! For millennia  
we have watched our own naked  
evening. In half a dozen huts on  
the village  
boundary our countless bodies  
have been burning, set  
afire by your feeble thoughts.  
(Translated by Grahman Smith  
and Eleanor Zelliot)

Shashikant Lokhande puts in this way:

When you try to heat the bread  
of your sweat or pull up  
the lungoti of your pain they slash  
at your buttocks,  
yours breast, your hand, they  
bind on your neck the  
burden of Manusmriti.

Daya Pawar, in "Ye Hemangi" (come, gold-skinned one), is more optimistic:

By the mixture of our blood  
Manu's wall will be demolished  
brick by brick.

The great Hindu epics are seen quite differently from the Dalit viewpoint. The *Mahabharata* calls up not an image of heroism and performance of duty but the figures of Karna, the illegitimate son of Kunti, who was scorned by his Pandava brothers for his unknown parentage, and Eklavya, the low born, who cut off his thumb at the command of the guru he had followed from afar, lest he might triumph over the guru's favorite, Arjuna, in archery.

*The Ramayana* evokes the image of Shambuk, who was killed because he heard the Veds, not the models of the perfect king Rama and the perfect wife, Sita. **Eklavya and Shambuk as archetypal symbols of suffering appear in dozens of poems**, though these references to minor epic characters are often tucked in the poetry without explanation, as in Waman Nimbalkar's "Kavita" (poem) which ends with a reference to the Buddha through the use of one of his names, Tathagatha, and to Eklavya

as an oath of resolve:

Gathering the sky in my eyes,  
I cast my glance forwards,  
—and so on to Tathagatha.  
On the horizon I will erect  
the rainbow arch of mankind.  
I am conscious of my resolve.  
The worth of the blood  
of Eklavya's broken finger—  
This is my loyalty.  
I will not barter my word.  
I stand today at the very end  
of the twentieth century.

Tryambak Sapkale also uses the image of Eklavya as strength:

Round earth.  
Steel oar  
in my hand  
but no oarlock?  
O you ideal disciple  
Eklavya!  
Give me  
your slashed finger  
for support.

Waman Nimbalkar expresses the attitude toward the epics in general:

O Gods of Words!  
You have created great epics—  
those eating gold, walking with  
the wind,  
wearing gold-bordered cloth—  
heaps of words were dampened  
in leaves, flowers, fragrance,  
the intoxication of Madira.  
This dire, crushed life of the  
outskirts of the village  
never became the subject of your  
poetry.

### CRUSHING HINDUISM

Even the beloved Maharashtrian saint-poets are not free from scorn in the poetry of the Dalit. Daya Pawar's poem "Pay" (legs or feet) refers to the Rig Vedic hymn of creation, the story of Eknath giving water to a donkey, and the legend of Dnyaneshwar, who produced the sacred Vedas from the mouth of a buffalo to show that these sacrosanct texts should not be confined to the high castes. The imagery of "Pay" shows Hindu culture as a pyramidal structure, crushing those on the bottom, and ends:

The legs of those born from the feet  
were snapped like green buds.  
Everyone says: "The safety of  
the pyramid is worth fifty  
legs. O come on, bear a little  
pain".

They paint the pyramid's pinnacle,  
your name is not mentioned.  
Someone cuts the ribbon.  
The pitchers of Ganges water  
come and are poured  
into the mouth of a donkey.  
If the water vessel is filled, they  
say,  
Dnyaneshwar's buffalo will come!

But the picture is not entirely negative.  
Even in the same poet one can find  
both condemnation of Hindu culture  
and the demand for a place in it.  
Daya Pawar in the introduction to  
the collection which contains the  
above poem wrote: "I am intensely  
conscious of the chasm in Indian  
cultural life. If my poetry is sacrificed  
for the removal of cultural duality,  
then that's all right. I came to that  
conclusion and I wrote:

Like the elephant leading the  
charge  
on the pike-studded doors of the  
fort,  
let us die laughing".

Tryambak Sapkale puts it another  
way in a poem addressed, As I read  
it, to Mother India.

Your whole life you were simply  
a woman;  
You never became a mother.  
Your hunger for motherhood  
I can satisfy  
Would you be a mother?  
I am ready to be adopted.

and ends his collection with an  
exquisitely wrought poem so simple  
it is difficult to put into interesting  
English:

Don't despair.  
This day will depart too.  
Now, this day is pregnant with  
day.  
Our day is not far away.  
Look, from the day is born the  
day.

And Waman Kardak, the folk poet,

sings: "We will burn, but we will light  
the earth"!

### BRAHMIN CULPRIT

The way in which Dalit writers evoke  
their own past, the references to  
"Babasaheb" Ambedkar and to  
Buddhism, the use of recent events,  
are the most interesting themes at  
least as far as the historian in me  
is concerned. Although most of the  
poets are educated, many are city-  
dwellers, and some have entered at  
least the lower reaches of middle-  
class comfort, the Mahar past is not  
far from even the young generation.  
Arun Kamble's poem, translated by  
Gauri Deshpande in the 1973 *Times  
Weekly Supplement*, is addressed  
to the Brahman:

If you were to live the life we live  
(then out of you would poems  
arise).

We: kicked and spat at for our  
piece of bread.

You: fetch fulfilment and name  
of the Lord.

We: down-gutter degraders of  
our heritage

You: its sole repository and  
descendants of the sage.

We: never have a paisa to scratch  
our arse

You: the golden cup of offerings  
in your bank.

your bodies flame in sandalwood  
Ours you shovel under half-turned  
sand.

Wouldn't the world change, and  
fast,

if you were forced to live at last  
this life that's all we've ever had?

Although the Brahman, as originator  
and protector of the caste hierarchy,  
is still the arch-enemy to the Dalit,  
the dominant agricultural caste, the  
Marathas, who are far more closely  
associated with the village  
Untouchable, are also seen as  
tormentors. Prahlad Chendwankar's  
poem, translated by Gauri  
Deshpande in the *Times Weekly  
Supplement*, attacks the Maratha  
headman, the Patil:

When Patil sent  
for me, I went  
"Siddown", said, yet  
ground was wet.  
Threw at my head  
torn sacking jute  
still there I stood  
quite mute.  
Patil cracked betelnut  
yelled, 'why aint this runt  
bloody scum, dancing on boards  
to fill its gut'.  
Paunch-scratching, spewed  
forth filth-abuse  
I went on standing mute  
rooted still within my boots.  
Wonder now, why did I stand  
hadn't eaten no fodder  
at his father's hand.

Dr. B.R. Babasaheb Ambedkar re-  
ceives much less direct attention in  
sophisticated Dalit literature than in  
the movement literature.

Often the reference is to a 'sunflower-  
giving *fakir*', our *sannyasi*, or to the  
sun which has set. J.V. Pawar, in a  
poem which appeared in Magowa,  
uses the image of the conference at  
Mahad in 1928, which many see as  
the turning point in Ambedkar's  
movement, to turn from despair to  
militancy:

Even the sea has a shore.  
Why doesn't my grief have limits...  
Amantra was given to start some  
Mahad...  
I have become an ocean.  
I stand erect, I roll like the ocean,  
I have started to build your tombs...

The literature which does deal  
directly with Ambedkar and the  
conversion to Buddhism seems  
less sophisticated, more in tune  
with the earlier movement literature.  
A rather charming story by Waman  
Howal in the Diwali issue of  
*Asmitadarsh* in 1974 illustrates  
this. In "Angara" (sacred ash), an  
old Mahar village *devrishi* is  
converted to Buddhism and gives up  
all his magic. But when pressed by  
the villagers, he rather scornfully  
throws ordinary ash from his stove  
on the sufferer, and laughs quietly

underneath his moustache. It is doubtful if a story like this would be accepted by any but the journals associated with the Ambedkar movement. (Later: I am now not sure about this point)

A recent novel on the life of Buddha's wife, *Yasodhara*, by a Buddhist has been well received by the Marathi press, but most Dalit writers deal as obliquely with Buddhism as they do with Ambedkar. I asked Baburao Bagul for an explanation, and he said something to the effect that experience must be completely absorbed and understood before it can become literature. He also stated that Dalit literature began with the Buddhist conversion, that only that release from the psychological imprisonment of untouchability freed the poet, the writer, to create. Daya Pawar's poem "Jhad" (tree) places this belief in the symbolism of Hindu and Buddhist trees:

This tree I saw mangled with  
sorrow  
had roots as deep down as the  
Bodhi-tree's.  
But the Bodhi-tree flowered,  
and this tree through all seasons  
was barren.

Recent violent events involving Buddhists and the Dalit are quite often used as subjects for poetry. The Worli riots of 1974 which saw Dalit Panthers and Buddhists opposed to their Maratha neighbors and the poli 'evoked a long poem from Daya Pawar. It ends with the image of a soldier of the Mahar Battalion (founded at Ambedkar's plea in 1942) lying in his Worli room filled with tear-gas:

Mahar-battalion Kamble, legs lost  
in service,  
stares in the dark with gas-burned  
eyes.  
Who did I fight for there on the  
border?  
Why was I crippled for this  
country?  
The question pierces like the  
scream from the soul.

Now his hand gropes near the  
pillow  
for the long-missing gun.

The blinding of the Buddhist Gawai brothers in January 1975, during a 'dispute with Marathas in a village, brought forth a bitter poem from the usually gentle Spakale which has been translated by Vidyt Bhagwat:

The other day I heard your  
speech—  
you condemned America  
for bombing Vietnam—  
Workers of the World unite  
you roared.  
The next day your brothers  
condemned Russia  
and wept for the Hungarians  
Gawai brothers lost their eyes.  
not a tear I saw  
in your eyes.  
No protest meetings.  
Just a small news in a couple of  
dailies  
and everything is so peaceful!  
Quiet! Quiet!

Such internal matters as splits and quarrels among the Buddhists themselves also receive attention. The most explicit example I have seen is from the folk-poetry of Waman Kardak. I heard him sing this song at the Nagpur Dalit Literature Conference, and the young Dalit Panthers in the front rows of the audience demanded that he sing it over and over again, hardly letting him stop for breath. "Bhim" in the poem is a reference to Ambedkar through a shortened version of his name, and

#### DO DALIT WRITERS PROTEST TOO MUCH?

"Mother Bhim" follows an old Marathi convention of feminizing a deity or a saint to evoke the sense of creation and protection:

All are children of Mother Bhim.  
I weave the garland of unity.  
Build this nest again.  
Oh become a friend of Waman.  
On the stem of the heart  
engrave the name of Bhim,  
live happily here is unity.

That headline is from the *Times of India*, 30 May 1976, and although the news story itself is sympathetic, the editorial lead reads: "It is inevitable for early Dalit literature to have given expression to the torments of an oppressed people. But one note of continued protest and indignation is beginning to pall,....and writers should give a new direction to the Dalit literature movement". Most Dalit writers would not agree. One of the best received poems spoken in an open session at the Nagpur Dalit Literature Conference contained these lines:

In a song full of hope in the  
evening  
there is no meaning.  
This is a time to breathe battle!

It was recited by the late Mina Gajbhiye, a very young woman, and so far the only feminine poet highly regarded in the new Dalit school. But there are also signs of new sorts of creativity. At the same time that the Dalit school appeared, a Mahar poet who does not belong to the Dalit school, who writes brilliant lyric and nature poetry, who refuses to mention caste, achieved status as a major Maharashtrian poet using the pen-name of "Grace". The urge to creativity is there among the formerly inarticulate lowly. Their voices may find different instruments in the future, but they will not be stifled. ■

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Justice Varadarajan, a retired Dalit judge of the Supreme Court, in his foreword, says all those interested in knowing that brahminism is the cause for the plight of a majority of Indians must read this book which was for long out of print. Few copies available here and there were burnt and destroyed by those *sanatani* serpents afraid of truth.

This is the fifth edition of a historic masterpiece, which the *Dalit Voice* had described as "Gem of a Book", - first published from Lahore in 1941 appropriately titled, *Meanace of Hindu Imperialism*.

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### DR. AMBEDKAR ON RESERVATION

Shyamal Kumar Biswas

A very important book for every SC/ST/BC and minorities who are assured of their human rights through reservations by its founding father, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar. Brahminism reduced them to slavery after robbing their human rights. In the name of "merit and Efficiency", the handful of Aryan/upper castes started riding on us.

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The book also is a critique of MK Gandhi, the Enemy No.1 of the Untouchables, and his mahatmahood. To Gandhi and the brahminical social order, education of the SC/STs and other non-Brahmins "is a cause of pain and heart-burning". To frustrate the efforts of Babasaheb, the cunning Aryans introduced the dangerous "economic criterion" when it came to BCs who, according to the Mandal Com., formed 52% of our population. If 15% SCs and 7.5% STs can have 15% and 7% reservation in proportion to their population, why 52% of the BCs should get only 27% reservation to conform to the brahminical court order, asks the author.

Giving a caste-wise analysis, he says the Aryan brahminical classes are a mere 17.02% (p.155). He puts the Muslims, Christians and Sikhs among the SC/ST/BCs who together form 82.9%.

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