

SACH

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Institute for Social Democracy
New Delhi, **India**

E-MAIL
sach_heritage@yahoo.co.uk

WEBSITE
www.sach.org.in

Recent Libyan civil war is one of the biggest with enormous support and participation of masses in recent memory. Finally the dictator who ruled the country since September 1969 was killed and Libya is heading towards an elected government. This rebellion by the people should be seen in the context of overall situation of Libya under Gadaffi. A country which has been debt-free. A country which provided free and compulsory education, free health care and financial assistance for housing.

On the face of it, people should have been proud of what Libya achieved more so when the neighbouring countries in Africa have much less to show. Yet people revolted. They revolted violently. They fought armed forces and hundreds lost their lives. They fought till they won. They did realize that Gadaffi, though officially proclaimed that Libya was a Jamhuria (democracy) it was actually a tyrant dictatorship which never tolerated voices of dissent. A word against the dictator had become an invitation to death. It should be kept in mind that military coup under Gadaffi was against monarchy and had ousted king Idris. But despite welfare schemes, that government had turned into one of the strongest dictatorship in the region.

We hope that the country now goes to safe hands and people live a dignified life.

After 42 Years



Khaled Mattawa

Five years old when the dictator took over in a coup —
curfew shut our city down
Bloodless coup, they said —
The many who thought this could be good.
The dictator, a young man, a shy recluse assumed the helm,
bent in piety,
the dead sun of megalomania hidden in his eyes.
Could not go to the store to buy bread or newspaper,
could not leave home, visit friends,

the radio thundering hatred, retching blood-curdling song —
Signs that went unread
Factories built and filched, houses stolen, newspapers shut down,
decades of people killed, 42 years.
But that's all over now —
How can you say over when it took 42 years —
I was five when the dictator took my brother away
Over now, 42 years, must look ahead.
His face half blood-covered, half smirking
Like Batman's Joker,
hands raised, fingers pressed together upward
Saying wait, calm down, wait
Wait 42 years — five years old when my father was killed
standing in front of a hotel.
Bloodless coup,
the country like a helpless teenage girl
forced into marriage hoping her groom will be kind.
In between there was blankness
that burned like a million of suns into our eyes,
Death like air, everywhere.
What was it like to be held by his men?
Fingers pulled out, testicles fried,
To be hung from a clothesline rope , the dictator's mistress pulling at my legs?
How many killed by his men over the decades,
The cracked skulls, the mass graves, the uncounted dead?
What and who taught you O sons of my country to be so fearless cruel?
Him, they say, for 42 years, 42 years of him.
Who taught you to be reckless heroic?
The no-life we had to live, under him, the lives we were asked to live as dead.
Alive we want him alive, many kept shouting.
So that they could give him tastes of his own medicine?
Alive, alive!
And many others disbelieving they'd caught him.
Their shrill Allahu Akbars exclamations of astonishment —
What have I done O Lord to deserve the honor of capturing the rat?
Exclamations of disbelief —
The nightmare — GAME OVER — the night-game of breaking into houses, arresting sons; the day
game of civility — we'll bring him in a few hours —
we'll bring him back in 42 years —
Could it be so easy — GAME OVER — the capturing of a 69-year-old rat?
A clown in a rat-colored outfit, a wild mop of hair, a wig
Holding a golden pistol like a child playing hero, high-heeled boots.
Is that what our history amounted to?
No.
Because somewhere there were suns that would never light.
Somewhere, there were holes in the air that was full of death.
We managed to hold our breath and live our lives.

Could it be so simple O Lord to end an epoch? —
killing kidnapping murder massacre slit throats vaginal tests for women he wished to sex vaginal
rapes anal rapes of dissidents he wished to humiliate — humiliation denigration outsourced whippings
money changed on oil tankers boiling water poured on the entreating heads of maids hot iron pressed
on servant flesh slit throats broken ribs feet whipped until swelled like cantaloupes bodies left hanging
in public squares —
I was five when my brother disappeared,
I was thirteen, I was twenty, I was seventy six, I was never
allowed to reach birth.
What will be our aftermath?
One minute and all of that history is found hiding
like a rat, history like a rat,
hiding in a sewer drain.
History too hot to hold —
the magic was in seeing it come to end —
the pain too dark to bear, too light, too cold,
the astonishment unbearable, would kill you if it lasted too long.
He died of his wounds.
No, no, they just shot him dead.
Perhaps he was a magnet and he drew evil out of men's chests,
his hands, his hands saying wait, wait
reached into their lungs and wound and knotted their raw souls,
a magnet now siphoning cruelty to itself.
No, no, they just shot him dead.
But I heard he died of his wounds.
Too much for a young man who could not stop being a killer,
a young man who did what millions wished to do.
To tear him to bits, my mother's friend once said,
to tear him to bits, six millions hearts had prayed —
O God grant me the sight of him dead!
One bullet, or two, some say three,
despite the pleading fingers tainted with their own blood.
Surprised as if he'd never seen or heard of blood,
Surprised that he too would bleed if cut.
One bullet, two, or three and it's done with, our history, our epoch.
The book of misery read
The rabid beast captured, kicked about and shot in the head.
O Lord is that our history tossed into a freezer like a lump of rotting flesh?
O Lord how little our lives must be, when so much can be buried lost, dumped in a
hole, forgotten dust!
No, because
somewhere, an earthly sun is shining on us, with us, again.
There is air in the air again.
What will our aftermath be then?
We wash our hands,
put on spotless clothes.
There is no "after" until we pray for all the dead.

Occupy Wall Street Movement

TODAY'S GOOD NEWS : THE MASSES OF AMERICA ARE REVOLTING AGAINST WORLD CAPITALISM!

Winona Labrador

The name "Wall Street" refers to a district in New York City in which the financial institutions particularly the world's biggest stock exchanges are centered. This name is stuck upon the long street that passes through the eight blocks from the Broadway up to the South Street along the East River in Lower Manhattan in the City.

It became also the name for the US financial markets in general or for the financial interests based in NYC. It is in this place where one locates the NY Stock Exchange, the world's biggest stock exchange in terms of market capitalization of all the companies or corporations in the list. Several other big stock exchanges have their respective headquarters here including the National Association of Securities Dealers Automated Quotations (NASDAQ) which is the world's second biggest stock exchange in market capitalization second only to the NY Stock Exchange, the NY Mercantile Exchange, the NY Board of Trade, and the former American Stock Exchange. Due to the Wall Street's presence, New York City is topmost among the main centers of finance throughout the whole world.

The corner of Wall Street and Broad Street is regarded as the heart of the Financial District or FiDi of NYC which covers the offices and headquarters of several leading financial institutions of the city including the NY Stock Exchange and the Federal Reserve Bank of NY. It was within the district's yard that the former Twin Towers of the World Trade Center were located. In those specific places where the Towers stood and were demolished, new taller buildings expressive of global capitalism are being constructed. At present, the district has homes for 56,000 people, but, during each whole day of work and business, the population expands up to more or less 300,000.

Ten years ago, on September 1, an "inside job" by America's elite and the global elite sacrificed four commercial airplanes, the Twin Towers and a third one, and almost 3,000 American lives just so to create the justification for the "War on Terror" including immediately the invasion of, aggression into and occupation of Afghanistan since 2001 and two years later the invasion of, aggression into and occupation of Iraq since 2003 and the propagation of the "War on

Terror" in other parts of the world since 2001 up to the present. Such "inside job" included, among others, the hi-jacking of four commercial airplanes two of which were piloted to hit the Twin Towers and the planting of bombs and other chemicals which resulted in the series of explosions demolishing the towers and a third one which was not hit by any airplane.

Ten years after such infamous 9/11, in September 2011 (since September 17), a good news was flashed around the world through the internet. This time, an "outside job" by the youth and students, the workers, and the poor people unleashed an occupation of the Wall Street. Since September 17 until the second week of October 2011, at least 15,000 people have joined the Occupy Wall Street Movement. They freely expressed their indignation against the Wall Street capitalists through their marches, rallies, speeches, words of condemnation, streamers, placards, and others. And their anger reached the heavens demanding for justice. "Let justice be done though the heavens may fall!" And, from NYC, the protest movement spread like a wild fire in other US principal cities like Los Angeles, Seattle, Chicago, and others. And, through the internet, it spread to other countries in the world. And, immediately, the masses of the world are in unity with the masses of the US in their protest against the greed of the Wall Street capitalists, the greed of the capitalists of the multinational corporations, international banks and international financial institutions, the greed of the wealthiest and most powerful global elite of the world.

Enough is enough! It's more than what we can bear! Stop it now! Down with US capitalism! Down with the capitalisms of other countries! Down with global capitalism! Such is the message of the Occupy Wall Street Movement!

According to some leaders of the mass actions, theirs is the protest of the 99% against the 1%. It is the protest of the American masses against the wealthiest who are also the mightiest in America and throughout the whole world. They are exposing and struggling against the greed of the US and global monopoly bourgeoisie. The Wall Street capitalists represent the interests of the largest multinational companies and biggest international banking and financial institutions in the world. And the struggle of the American masses confronts not only the US capitalists

but also the global elite of the monopoly bourgeoisie in industry, banking, finance and other economic realms. They confront US capitalism and global capitalism.

The protesters are witness to the reality of the continuous increase in the number and percentage of the poor, exploited and oppressed masses not only in the “developing” and “least developed” countries but also in the “developed” or “advanced” countries like the US and others. They are the representatives of the rapidly expanding ranks of the poor in what has been regarded as the wealthiest, most developed and most powerful country in the world. And the poor are increasing daily, weekly, monthly and yearly, and their poverty is continuously aggravating. That is why they can no longer bear the presence of such trend in their lives and in their society. They deem it necessary to go out to the streets of the major cities and, from the major cities, to all other parts of the US. And they must connect with their class brothers and sisters in the other “developed” countries and especially in the more numerous “developing”, “least developed” and other poor countries. And together they must occupy the whole world with their protest and struggle until they achieve their complete emancipation in a world that belongs to each person and to all humankind.

In fact, it is not only that poverty has spread and has aggravated but also that inequality has also worsened. The gap between the handful of the billionaires and millionaires and the vast masses of those who have nothing but only their labor power and who have less to eat and especially those who are more oftentimes hungry has continuously increased. The reports and the news articles, books and other reading materials produced by the UN, World Bank, International Monetary Fund, etc. and the governments of the various countries about poverty and inequality reduction and alleviation are all lies meant for deception and mind control. The opposites are the truth, that is, poverty and inequality have continuously worsened not only in the “developing” and “least developed” world but also in the “developed” world; and these have reduced the average life span of humans in the “least developed” countries to 33 years.

The protesters have indeed exposed the fact that the root cause of poverty and inequality in America and throughout the whole world is none other than capitalism such as capitalism in America and capitalism throughout the world. And the bourgeoisie on top of the capitalist system includes the global capitalists in the Wall Street of America and their capitalist partners among the “Group of 20”. These wealthiest and mightiest capitalists and

imperialists make up the global elite of today’s world capitalism.

Inherent in the capitalist system, the disastrous periodic global crisis is one that cannot be done with. But the Wall Street capitalists manipulated each crisis. In 2009, through their political representatives who run the US government, the Barak Obama administration launched its \$787-billion stimulus package program for economic recovery. By March 2011, \$633.5 billion has been spent already. But not enough jobs have been saved and not enough assistance has reached the poor. Millions have lost their jobs, several others have lost their homes, and they all have been pushed down to more indebtedness. Assistance from the government has not been adequate. And more additions have been poured into the country’s already enormous debt. The main beneficiaries of the program have been the financial capitalists led by those in the Wall Street who make use of the bail money not only to bail out their banks and financial institutions but even to derive profits from it.

The rich, aided by their government, have saved themselves from the crisis and even profited from it. And, furthermore, they have passed it on to the already devastated poor masses. Indeed, the Occupy Wall Street Movement is a beginning of the American masses’ just and legitimate response to the Wall Street rich.

We, the Philippine proletarian revolutionary movement, express our unity and solidarity with the American people and the Occupy Wall Street Movement. We are one with you in the common struggle against US capitalism and global capitalism.

We call on all the poor people, the workers, urban poor, peasants, indigenous peoples, poor Muslim masses, youth and students, and others throughout the country and throughout the world to unite with the American protesters and American people in the common struggle against US capitalism and imperialism and global capitalism.

Freely and boldly unleash the people’s wrath against the corporate greed! Occupy the Wall Street! And look forward to the necessity of seizing state power, establishing the government of the poor, expropriating the capitalist wealth and putting an end to capitalism.

Expose and oppose the greed of the Wall Street capitalists, the greed of US capitalism and imperialism and the greed of global capitalism!

Globalization of class struggle against globalization of capitalism!

Workers in all countries, unite!

The Philippine Proletarian Revolutionary Movement

October 17, 2011

The real ambassadors : The making of a 'Pakistani-Indian'

Dr. Ilmana Fasih

“Relationships change minds and not knowledge”. Aun, an undergraduate student at the University of Toronto, began his story with this quote from the well-known writer Reza Aslan.

Aun had come over to my place to share his experiences as a Pakistani living in India. He’s among the miniscule percent of Pakistani elite fortunate enough to have received the best education and grown up with adequate exposure and a wide horizon. Until age 16 he lived all over Pakistan as his civil servant father was transferred from on place to another.

Despite his elite education and exposure, he said that he always thought of India as an “enemy” country. The mention of India brought to his mind war, the conflicts between India and Pakistan over the past six decades. For this, he largely blamed his schooling as well as the media that always portrayed India as Pakistan’s adversary.

His views drastically changed when he had the opportunity to actually live in India for some years, after his father was posted to the Pakistani High Commission in New Delhi as Minister (Trade). But Aun’s initial response to India was not very positive. He remembers the

shabby New Delhi airport and “lots of slums and poverty” on the way to his hotel. He also initially hesitated to interact with locals during his first few days.

At the admission test at the British school in New Delhi, Aun met another prospective student, an Indian boy named Saurabh. In the few moments they interacted before the test,

The mention of India brought to his mind war, the conflicts between India and Pakistan over the past six decades. For this, he largely blamed his schooling as well as the media that always portrayed India as Pakistan’s adversary.

they discovered they had the same mother tongue (Punjabi), loved cricket, and craved biryani. From that day onwards, Aun embarked on a

wonderful and fascinating journey of harmony and everlasting friendship with people from his neighbouring country. His best friend at school was Saurabh.

Sitting at my place, Aun recalled his economics teacher telling him of her own change of heart when she visited Lahore for the first time. The fear she felt, as an Indian and a woman, while boarding a taxi driven by a bearded driver melted as the driver, gauging her apprehension, reassured her and took her around the city. And at the end of it all, he refused to charge any money from his Indian ‘guest’. No longer could she stereotype every bearded Pakistani as an extremist.

There are countless such stories of such small but enriching experiences of love and hospitality that counter the hatred and bigotry. I know many instances of shopkeepers at

Lahore's Gawal Mandi, and New Delhi's Pallika Bazar refusing to take any money from the 'mehmaan' (guest) from the neighbouring country.

Aun told me that, despite his apprehensions, he quickly and easily made a fleet of friends among his Indian schoolmates, none of whom had any qualms in accepting him as one of them. His eyes twinkled as he recalled his friends in New Delhi coming over to his home to eat Pakistani biryani.

Two touching incidents he narrated demonstrate the compassion that exists among the people from both sides.

The first case involved an uncle of his, who came to Delhi for a liver transplant, needed about 25 units of blood. A shiver ran through me when I heard that it took barely a few hours for Aun and his Indian friends to collect the required amount of blood: the donors willingly gave their blood despite knowing that the recipient was Pakistani.

The other case was that of a Pakistani baby brought to India to be operated on for a congenital heart disease. Again, Aun's Indian friends got the required units of blood reserved in no time.

"When I visited the baby and his parents back in their village in Pakistan some years later, all the neighbours and extended family came to see me," remembers Aun. "They all were overwhelmed with immense gratitude for the Indians who donated blood and helped the baby to live."

Sitting in that small village in Pakistan, their hearts had changed forever; they were no more gullible to the propaganda of hate spread by the vested interests on both sides.

After finishing high school, as he left for further studies in Toronto, Aun knew that he and his Indian friends were good ambassadors

for their respective countries, creating a positive impression on the other side. They had no hidden agendas or points to score against each other. They had no real differences. All that separated them was a barbed wire. Aun intends on going back to Pakistan and becoming a civil servant like his father. His dream posting? New Delhi.

He wants to do whatever he can to remove misunderstandings between the two nations. "The only way I think that is possible is to allow people from both countries to interact with each other," he says.

Aun told me that his Pakistani and Indian friends in Toronto jokingly call him a "Pakistani-Indian". It's an identity he feels pride in.

As Aun left for Pakistan recently, I tweeted the last two verses from a poem I had written for my blog some time ago:

"Oh! the lines between our lands sketched,

Let them not on our hearts be ever etched."

#IndoPak

A few minutes later I received an equally emotional reply from Namita, a twitter friend in India:

"am waiting on this side of the barbed fence, looking longingly on the other side, waiting for the gates to open.. #India #Pakistan"

I did not reply to her tweet. I had no words but only tears of anguish and helplessness, in response to her affection.

Dr. Ilmana Fasih is an Indian gynaecologist and health activist married to a Pakistani.

Courtesy—http://www.amankiasha.com/detail_news.asp?id=547

A Different Fatwa

Stella Paul

Hyderabad, INDIA

December, 1991. Hyderabad, a city in the southern part of India, was in turmoil: a violent conflict had erupted between the city's two dominant communities – Hindus and Muslims.

A curfew had been imposed, processions and rallies had been banned and shoot-at-sight orders were issued as the rampaging, armed groups clashed. Hundreds of houses had been on fire. Public life had come to a standstill.

One of the worst affected neighborhoods in this riot was Moosa Bowli – a dingy area that hasn't changed much since 1591 – the year Hyderabad was built by Qutb Shahi Sultans. The lanes are dark and incredibly narrow. Houses are small and resemble pigeon coops.

Amidst the deafening silence of curfew and occasional gun shots, Anil Chauhan – a 24-year old Hindu man and an aspiring calligrapher, sat inside one of the tiny houses with a twig pen.

With light yet swift strokes of the pen, he was writing the verse 36 of Sura Yaseen on a paper canvas, his heart completely lost in the art of creation. "Glory be to Him, Who has created all the pairs of that which the earth produces, as well as of their own (human) kind (male and female), and of that which they know not," he wrote on, even as the lane outside his reverberated with cries of anger and hatred.

More than 2 weeks later, when the city regained its sanity, people of both the warring communities came together to take a collective look at the scar the riot had created.

What they saw was truly devastating: 150 dead and hundreds more were in hospital, seriously injured. And, as though this was not

enough, more than a dozen mosques and temples lay completely razed. The question that everyone had was, 'Is it going to happen again?'

The question was significant as Hyderabad - city of 8 million people, of which 40 percent are Muslims - had seen at least 4 communal riots in the past 4 decades.

As the community members pondered a solution, they realised that this cycle of violence and hatred, had to stop.

It was decided that citizens of Hyderabad needed to regain respect and faith in each other; they needed to be reminded of their shared history and cultural heritage.

And this is where Chauhan's calligraphy fitted in perfectly: A Hindu artist, painting Quranic verses, amplifying the message of peace and humanity, as they are said in the Holy book.

Says Chauhan, who has done calligraphy on more than a 100 mosques in Hyderabad: "No religion preaches violence. It is the interpreter who gives out the wrong message. Islam is a religion of peace, yet many in my community have misgiving about it. So, it is really important to show people what the Quran really says. Calligraphy is a great tool to do that, so people can see and perceive the message themselves."

But how did Chauhan develop such deep admiration for Islam and the Islamic art? And how did this Hindu man get to learn Islamic Calligraphy?

The story is as fascinating as Chauhan's brush strokes.

"Growing up in old Hyderabad, where the majority of the population is Muslim, I used to walk on the streets and stare at the signboards outside shops. I would also stare at the writings on the walls of a mosque. They looked so

exquisite to me! I wanted to learn to do that.”

But it wasn't easy learning calligraphy, which is popularly perceived as an art for the Muslims alone. There was no formal school that taught the art either.

Chauhan's relentless search for a teacher finally brought some result. 'One day, I learnt of an old calligrapher whom everyone called "Khaja Painter". I requested him to teach me the art and he agreed. I picked up the script with a lot of practice," he recalls.

However, as Anil drew verses of Quran, he developed a deep interest in the holy book itself. "I wanted to read the verses and be able to perceive a calligraphic form to write them."

Chauhan's story is as fascinating as his brush strokes.

So, in next 4 years, Anil taught himself to read and write Urdu and kept honing his skills in artistic writing. The knowledge of the language had helped enhance his skills, he feels.

And indeed, the striking beauty of the jewel-like alphabets and designs inscribed on a sheet of paper grabs the immediate attention of the eyes. As Chauhan wielding two modest tools - a reed pen and ink- begins to write, alphabets transform into gems.

Soon, Chauhan's calligraphy was also taken noticed of and approved by Jamia Nizamia - one of the oldest Islamic seminaries of the subcontinent.

"I wrote the 'Sura Yaseen', one of the chapters from the Quran for Jamia Nizamia Islamic University in the old city and my work was appreciated. The university authorities issued a 'Fatwa' saying that I could carry on these works. It was the proudest moment of my life," he beams.

Syed Ahmed Ali -the secretary of Jamia Nizamia explains the fatwa. "When Jamia Nizamia was celebrating its 125 years, Anil Chauhan created a portrait that contained the entire Sura Yaseen.

"Everyone was impressed with that piece of work and we realized that Anil Chauhan, was not only good at calligraphy, but also had utmost respect for Islam and Islamic culture."

In its 139-year old history, it was the only fatwa that Jamia Nizamia issued allowing a non Muslim to paint verses of Al Quran in mosques and other Islamic shrines.

Today, Anil has painted over a hundred mosques in and around Hyderabad. His service is free, and instead of money, he asks the mosque for a 'few words on a paper'.

The gesture is significant as Chauhan's financial background is extremely modest. In his office cum studio - a small, dusty room on the top of a mosque, there are bundles of such certificates of appreciation, which Chauhan shows off like precious trophies, with the pride of an Olympian.

However, academic and official recognition apart, Chauhan's calligraphy is also aimed at strengthening inter-communal harmony. Has he been able to achieve this goal?

Chauhan's reply is an emphatic 'yes'. "We had a riot even in 2010, but this time, the damage was much less (2 death, 50 injured) and fizzled out rather quickly. The riot had started at a Hindu shrine. Soon after the riot, a new mosque was constructed barely 100 yards from that shrine and I was called to paint Quranic verses in the mosque.

"The mosque authorities also gave me a room right on top of the prayer hall which is now my permanent studio. This shows that a change is happening, isn't it? I have a son who is in class 10. I think, he will never see a communal riot," he wraps up, his eyes shining with hope.

Art, for this man, is never for the sake of art alone, but a divine tool to create a beautiful world of peace and brotherhood.

Courtesy—<http://www.theweekendleader.com/Culture/803/A-different-fatwa.html>

Folk Drama and Folk Entertainments

S. M. L. Lakshmanan Chettiar

INDIA

The folks of Tamil Nadu have their own developed dramas, entertainments and a variety of other arts. These have a built-up tradition and as such have been perfected.

DRAMA

Theatrical plays seems to have begun to be staged from the time of Rajaraja I. earlier dance-dramas have had incorporations of scenes from the life of Krishna and other legendary stories. Several types of dance-dramas were frequently staged in temples.

Each temple had a theatre or at least a stage attached to it, intended for different forms of entertainment. Performances generally took place during religious festivals. They were specifically designed for the masses and their themes were chosen to inculcate among the people loyalty to the sovereign, love for the dramatic art, and attachment to religion.

The Rajaraja Natakam composed during the reign of Rajaraja I is said to be a biographical drama highlighting Rajaraja I's military achievements and the building of the great temple at Thanjavur. Wet land growing paddy was endowed to the actors, and titles conferred on the best among them.

The folk drama of today, called Therukkuthu, is presented with music, dance and long-drawn speeches. The musical instruments include the harmonium, the mirdangam and the flute. The songs are rendered at a high pitch, and are favourite pieces from films. When the audience cries for a repetition, the song is sung again.

The Therukkuthu lasts from about 10 p.m. to dawn. Hence the saying: 'Kuthadi Kilakke Paarppan, Koolikaran Merke Paarppan', meaning that the labourer has to work till the sun sets while the actor has to keep on acting until the sun rises.

The Therukkuthu is held in connection with annual festivals or to invoke rain. Sometimes, it is held owing to factions in the village and the rival groups come to a compromise to conduct the festival on a later occasion. The village square or the frontage of the temple is the open theatre and a temporary dais is arranged. There is no gate collection and the expenses are met by donations collected within the village. The traditional techniques are sometimes altered by introducing screens, wings and costumes, thus spoiling the simplicity and the sobriety of these dramas.

The important themes are the stories of Valli Thirumanam, Pavalakkodi, Arjun's Penance, Nallathangal, Madurai Veeran, Padmasuran, Kathavarayan, Ramayanam and Harischandra Mayanakandam. Harischandra's story is not enacted if the duration of the drama festival is just a single day, as it is customary to avoid tragic themes on the concluding day.

MAVLI NATAKAM

Mavli Natakam is a dance-drama associated with the Vedaranyam Temple in Thanjavur district. The tradition of performing it has disappeared since 1938. The dance centres round the story of a big rat which kindled the dying flame at the sanctum of that temple and consequently received the blessings of the Lord.

NONDI NATAKAM

Nondi Natakam or folk-drama of the lame man is the story of a person who fell prey to prostitute and lost not only his money, but also his health. He became lame, as his leg and arm were cut off as a punishment for theft. Later, he became a devotee of Subrahmanya and, though lame, he managed to walk long distances to the Subrahmanya shrines, overcoming physical handicaps inch by inch. Owing to the strength of his devotion and the

mercy of the Lord, he regained his foot and arm, and this satirical play in cindu metre ends up with his return to normal health and prosperity.

PAGAL VESHAM

Pagal Vesham or Day Costume is performed by an actor of great merit, an expert in the art of make-up who conceals his identity.

In broad daylight, he appears somewhere as a beggar, a schoolmaster or fortune-teller. His wife accompanies him and usually they enact a quarrel. She taunts him; he threatens her and she weeps. Street-goers try to reconcile them, but the quarrel continues. The husband leaves her for good without paying for her maintenance. The onlookers are moved to pity. A hat is sent round and a fund is raised to help the poor wife who has been deserted by her cruel husband.

IRULAR DRAMAS

The Irulars are in illiterate or semi-literate agricultural community of the Nilgris. At temple-festivals, they enact epic stories, without screens, using the verandah of a house as the auditorium and a hurricane lantern as stage-light. The characters get training under a drama-teacher and rehearse the drama for days together. In the Mahabharatha, the most popular scene is Arjuna's penance, which is sought to be spoiled by a woman. In long and eloquent sexy phrases, her beauty is described, part by part. All the Irulars, especially the women, like it very much.

MODI

In Modi, a person conceals an egg within a heap of sand and draws seven lines. The man, who tries to unearth it, is called 'Modi' and the other man prevents it by whipping him. A buffoon intervenes and gives comic relief through light songs.

OTHER FOLK ENTERTAINMENTS

TATTOOING

Pachai Kuthuthal is Tattooing, done by professional gypsies. Arms, hands, foreheads, etc., are chosen to tattoo figures of gods,

scorpions, snakes and any other emblem or to write the person's own name.

Turmeric and Akathik-keerai (leaves of *Sesboina grandi flora*) are powdered together in a grinding stone, spread on a thin cloth and rolled up in the form of a wick. The wick is lighted. Pigments are prepared from the soot of lamps mixed with the ashes of burnt tobacco and the juice of the babul tree (Senkottai-p-pal). Indigo is used for blue dots and vermilion for the red ones.

The pricking instrument consists of three small sewing needles tied together with a thread.

To perform the tattooing operation, the pattern is selected from a bundle of drawings and is first traced on the skin with a blunt stick dipped in the prepared ink which is pricked in with the needles. The part is then washed well with cold water and a cast of Ink rubbed over the surface. To allay the pain, a small quantity of coconut oil is applied. Turmeric powder is rubbed in to brighten the colour and to prevent swelling.

KOLAM

Alpane or Rangoli is called Kolam in Tamil Nadu. Every girl tries to be fully accomplished in making kolams of geometric patterns and floral decorative motifs. The intricate designs are drawn with white powder held between the thumb and the first finger.

Kolam is drawn on the floor, at the frontage of the residence every morning. On festival days, whole streets are full of Kolam drawings. Kolam is also drawn on pots, on marriage platforms, etc.

STREET ARTISTS

Figures of gods and goddesses are artistically drawn by chalkpiece or charcoal on the pavements by handicapped folk and beggars. The proportions of the limbs of each figures and the colour matchings, as also the vivid details betoken great skill and evoke the attention of the passersby who stop for several minutes to watch the artist at work and help him to make a decent collection.

FOLK GAMES

There are several games played in the villages from time immemorial. Here is a brief note on a few of them:

Silambam : To the people of Tamil Nadu, Silambam conjures up visions of the chivalry and the valour of the bygone days. It is an ancient combative activity, peculiar to this part of India. Besides affording good exercise, it teaches men to defend themselves when attacked by enemies. Each participant takes a strong stick, usually a hard bamboo, three meters long and swings it at the other, in different ways. The man on the defensive must be able to ward off blows. Silambam is no mere wielding of the stick or the staff. It involves dexterous techniques-foot-work, precise use of staff in swings, cuts, thrusts, chops and flourishes. Its three-fold virtues are thrilling as a spectacle, exciting as a competition and vital as a combative measure for self-defense.

Chadukudu : Chadukudu is played with two teams. A member of the team recites a statement or some saying continuously holding his breath and crossing the central line enters the zone of the opponent. If he touches anyone in the opposite team and is able to leave the zone without being caught, and without losing breath, the person touched is out. On the other hand, if the player is pulled by an opponent and is unable to return to his zone without losing breath, the player is out. The game continues till a whole team is out. It is thus a competition in holding breath for a longer time.

Pachai-k-Kuthirai or Leap-Frog : In this game one boy stands with bent body and hands touching his feet. He is the Kuthirai or horse. Other boys come running, place their hands on his back, spread their legs sideways and jump over him. The boy who is bending gradually increases the height and the jump is made increasingly difficult, when he attains his full height. If any boy touches the body of the Kuthirai without leaping over him, he will have to be the 'horse' for others.

A variation is for a 'rider', who is carried by another, to hold a ball and bowl it into a pit. If he misses his chance, he has to get down

and become 'the horse'.

Kilithattu : This is a form of cricket played with two bats, a round stick and a small peg four inches long, chiseled at both ends. The peg is placed down, then lifted by the longer stick and hit; it will fly some distance before dropping down. Another person will stand on the spot and, aiming at the peg, hit it. A competitor who catches the flying peg makes the other boy out. There is an element or risk in this game, as the peg may hit the eyes.

Nila-puchi or Moon light play : Two parties try to catch each other, the members of one team being allowed to be caught only while entering into the moon-light and the other only in the shadow.

Nondi or the Game of one Leg : Nondi is a game played by children. A square is marked on the ground and two teams of five or six are formed. One team stands on one side and a member of the other hops with one leg and tries to catch those who are within the enclosure and try to evade him. If he lets down the bent leg, he will be 'out'. On the other hand, if he stands on one leg for a long time, the players inside the square will throw sand on his leg to tire him.

Other Games : Various other games keep the rural folk engaged in their off-seasons and in the afternoons. These include Thayam (a game like chess played with pieces on a board), Pallanguzhi, played with tamarind or other seeds put into 14 small pits on a plank, 'hide and seek' or (blind man's buff), Thiri bommakke, Othaya rettaiya (tossing up and catching a ball or a fruit at odd and even count), Kitti (played with two sets of sticks), kite-flying (in the dry season), making paper-boats and letting them sail in the streets on rainy days, seenadi (a form of wrestling), Varmaniam (a competition for effective control of nerves), etc.

FOLK-SONGS IN GAMES

In some of the games, folk-songs are sung, e.g., a person will say: 'Kambarai Kombarai' (they have horns). The children repeat it. Then the elder says: 'Madum Kombarai, Aadum Kombarai' and so on, listing the horned animals. Children repeat it. In between, he will say that elephant is a

horned animal or that a man has horns. The children who repeat these wrong statements without thinking are deemed to be 'out'.

FOLK ARTS

Folk arts and crafts are best represented in Kanchipuram silk sarees, produced mainly by the Saurashtra and Mudaliar communities.

From the raw cotton stages up to the time of getting the finished product, the entire process—weaving the raw yarn to a country stand of two bamboo pieces, winding it to a cone made of bamboo sticks, twisting the yarn into skeins, de-gumming for the removal of yellow gum and other dirt, and aluppiduthal or warping—is done by manual labour as a handicraft industry and all the members of the family—men, women, boys and girls—are employed on it. The main raw material are pure mulberry silk yarn and gold lace thread. The methods of weaving adopted are traditional; but there is a continuous change of designs.

Several folk arts have been developed and the ordinary people of Tamil Nadu are justly proud of their skill and talent.

These include manufacture of dolls, the making of the world-famous bronze pieces, the inlaying of silver on brass and copper in the art-plates of Thanjavur and chiseling out beautiful images and floral decorations on these plates making a variety of ornamental lamps, manufacture of temple banners, etc., weaving of artistic mats and bewitching carpets. South Indian plaster technique in use in Chettinad represents great masonry skill; it does not develop cracks; walls are reflecting mirrors and they need no white-washing at all.

POTTERY

The art of pottery of Tamil Nadu has been enshrined in folklore. Black and red pottery of Manamadurai and the glazed pottery of Karigiri are noted for beauty of shape and colour. They have won appreciation at international exhibitions.

The left fingers of the potter can produce myriads of beautiful pieces on the wheel. But figures are largely cast in moulds; some are

fired, while others are painted in the raw. Figures of Iyyanar, the deity which keeps watch over the village and can be seen as large painted idols at the entrance, are a rage with foreigners. Midget sizes in terracotta are produced to cater to such foreign demands. However, clay has its own disadvantages. It is fragile and cannot be packed and sent over long distance. The packing itself has to be carefully done and is very expensive.

PAPIER-MACHE

Hence the trend now with the craftsman is to turn to papier-mache. Wherever big sized articles are to be produced, paper is used. It is the same mould work. Papier-mache gives clear features to the pieces and can be painted in realistic hues. They can also be made to look like granite or metal pieces. Further, being light, transport and packing do not present problems. In fact, papier-mache has been taken to diverse fields of production. The 'Alsation' is a typical example of a piece which is so real and true that the live dog in the street starts barking at the pieces kept in the show windows! What attracts the buyer is the colour of the dog, its drooping red tongue, rolling eyes with the realistic eyebrows. There are similar beautiful pieces like the dancing girl, Krishna the charioteer (Geethopadesam), wedding of Goddess Meenakshi, etc., which excel in elegance.

For top class chiseled clean features, plaster of paris is the best. The immaculate white 'Meera' is a marvel in plaster. Shiva-Parvathi is another model which is popular. Plaster has the smoothness and clarity which are difficult to get in clay and papier-mache.

WOODEN TOYS

The range of toys in wood that now flood the shop counters will beat anybody's imagination. A good many of them are the result of turning work done on tiny lathes. The wood used is soft and supple. Innovations like addition of springs and other devices have made the toys life like and animated. Wooden toys include artistic pieces which teach children numbers, shapes, colours, diagrams and geometrical quiz.

Nothing can compare with the cloth-dolls in their exquisite display of characters of men and women. The core of the cloth-doll is of paper. The face which is the most important item, making for credibility, is a highly specialized job. These are cast in moulds and then worked by hand, to give a flash of life to the doll. The body is also of paper. The doll is dressed with pieces of cloth in typical fashion. All the patterns of coiffure that exist can be understood only if a row of well-dressed heads is kept on a table. In fact, the enchantment in a cloth-doll will be the face, the hair-do, the dress and the gait. If anyone desires to take the replicas of people in a country, the cloth-doll medium is the best. Fixing them inside glass boxes will add charm to the pieces and prevent them from getting untidy.

WOOD-CARVING

Wood-carving is yet another item of handicraft, well-developed in Tamil Nadu. The art work done on the massive doors of temples will bear eloquent testimony to the ability of the craftsman in carving very intricate and complicated designs. In later days, this skill found encouragement in Chettinad when the community got their dwellings embellished this way.

There are other exquisite pieces of handicraft like pith-work, shell-work, horn-work, all with their individualistic beauty and charm. The number of craftsmen that live on such crafts is quite large. They are changing their production to modern trends and are attempting to combine utility and art. The festivals that are celebrated by the common people keep these handicrafts going. The Government has also been taking keen interest in their preservation.

Ornately-carved wooden doors and ceiling beams can be found all over Tamil Nadu, in temples as also in some private residences. Simple and elegantly styled black-wood tables, with legs in the form of elephant heads, with

extended trunks are also famous in Tamil Nadu. Temple-cars are, of course, famous for their elegance and artistry.

Another world-famous art of Tamil Nadu is represented by the Pattamadai mats, the weft being of Korai grass and the warp of silk or cotton of 80 to 140 counts. The surface is so fine that one can roll the mat in his palm and carry it like a handkerchief.

METAL WARE

Metal ware is still another field in which the craftsmen of Tamil Nadu have excelled, from the famous Kuthuvillaku up to the icons of Nataraj and Ganesh, all have an aesthetic concept entirely unique. The types of lamps associated with the hoary traditions of temple culture will easily run to a hundred. Bronze pieces are something peculiar to Tamil Nadu.

The most exquisite depiction of skill in chiseling is seen in the icons and images of ordinary granite. It is perhaps because of the general availability of this talent that the entire horizon of Tamil Nadu is specked with the rising gopurams of articulate temples. The art and architecture of the temples have kept alive the culture and skill of many thousands of imaginative craftsmen and preserved to posterity the fruits of the native creative genius. Sculpture in temples calls for a deep knowledge of the shastras, nature of different varieties of stone, besides monumental patience.

OTHER FOLK ARTS

These include garlands made artistically out of grain, sandalwood etc. Pith-work also accounts for many artistic products. In decorating artistically the pandals or festival canopies, Thanjavur craftsmen have deservedly made a name for themselves.

In short, Tamil Nadu has a long and unbroken tradition of folk art. It is the duty of all to foster it.

Courtesy—Folklore of Tamil Nadu

From The Book of The True Faith

Preface : 1 April 1889 Published 1891

Translated by G.P. Deshpande

Sarvajanik Satya Dharma Pustak is almost like Phule's final testament. It is the summary statement of his theology and his view of what a rational and scientific religious system could be for India and the Hindus.

The Pustak was published posthumously in 1891. His adopted son Yashwantrao Phule has recorded that Phule did not see it in its final form before he died. The essence of this book and Phule's theological thought was summarized by his colleague and follower, Dr Vishram Ghole:

[Phule] taught the people to think of religion in terms of what is right and wrong and above all in terms of cause and effect. He placed before them an account of current customs and beliefs in terms of their validity. He attacked idol-worship and made the case for monotheism.

But more important than this is perhaps the fact that the Pustak was an attempt at eliminating the middleman between god and man. Brahmans traditionally played that role and thus became an instrument of exploitation. The Pustak therefore attempts a reformulation of the Hindu belief-system which would eliminate the priestly class, the Brahman. This is a radical position to take even today; in 1891, it must have been more shocking still.

Phule argues passionately for reforming Hinduism into a monotheistic, humane, and benevolent system. That we as a people haven't yet succeeded in doing this, demonstrates the relevance of Phule and his Sarvajanik Satya Dharma Pustak. We reproduce here a selection.

THE BOOK¹

BALWANTRAO HARI SAKVALKAR : Does it then mean that there is no religious book that in fact states the Truth, the realization of which would make all living beings happy?

JOTIRAO GOVINDRAO PHULE: All the

religious and revelatory books that man has produced on our planet, one and all, do not contain a consistent universal truth. This is so because in every such book are to be seen passages interpolated into those texts by certain groups of individuals as the situation in their view warranted and as their dogmatism and mulishness dictated. Consequently those religions or faiths did not in the final analysis work towards the good of all. This in turn resulted in sects and sectarianism. Small wonder that these sects hated and turned against each other.

Secondly the Creator of this universe is also the Creator of human beings. It would not be surprising if He, because He is merciful, would want all human beings to enjoy all human privileges and rights. In reality however, this does not happen and human beings suffer unbearable miseries of various kinds.

In sum, this solar system and naturally the planet earth which we inhabit are created by one Creator. Why is it then that the human beings living in different states and nations hate each other? How and why are the foolish passions of religions and national hatreds generated? There are any number of rivers on our planet. All of them eventually meet the sea. How and why then can only one of those rivers be sacred? Does that sacred river ever hesitate to carry dog's excreta to the sea?²

BALWANTRAO : If there is no 'sacred' river, then there should also be no sacred people. How do you then explain that there are certain groups of individuals who are called super-sacred and indeed are worshipped as gods on earth?

JOTIRAO : That is clearly untenable. All human beings on our planet are equipped with similar physical and intellectual facilities. How can some of them be 'sacred' generation after generation? Are they not born and die like everyone else, and do they not have qualities good and bad like everyone else?

PARADISE

MANAJI BALUJI MAGAR: It is generally believed by the ignorant that there are heaven

and paradise. The faithful and the virtuous reach paradise. They enjoy unlimited happiness in paradise. The sinful and the miscreants, however, go to hell and undergo various kinds of suffering as determined as by their sins. What do you have to say on that?

JOTIRAO GOVINDRAO PHULE : In times immemorial when human beings had not yet heard of reform or betterment, some clever people thought of this construct called paradise more to frighten the common people in much the same manner as the peasants use a scarecrow to frighten or scare the birds and animals away from the crops. Later there were reforms of different kinds. But nobody really thought out the concept of paradise.

MANJI : Would you then say that there is no such things as heaven or paradise?

JOTIRAO : Undoubtedly. All religious books talk of heaven and paradise. But can anyone think of a man who has actually seen heaven? Has it ever happened that a certain individual decided not to trust the word of the text unless experience were to endorse it and therefore went in search of paradise and came back to report on its existence? Can you ever find such an experimentalist individual in our midst? The fact is that this concept of Paradise has never been logically thought out.

[...]

WOMAN AND MAN

BALWANTRAO HARI SAKVALKAR : The Creator has created three kinds of beings. Those who move in water, those who move on land and those who move in the sky. Who is the most advanced (or superior) of the three?

JOTIRAO GOVINDRAO PHULE : The human being is the greatest of all beings. Human beings are of two kinds: Woman and Man.

BALWANTRAO : Who is superior of these two?

JOTIRAO : Woman.

BALWANTRAO : Why?

JOTIRAO : The Creator has created in this world sources of pleasure for both man and woman. They also enjoy each other's company. Woman is however self-restrained by nature. She permits a man to make friends with her. The clever man however plays upon the natural desire of the woman. Their closeness grows to the extent

that the woman decides to make him her partner and close friend. The laws of nature take their course. The patient woman carries their child without complaint³. She does not know what the child is going to be like but it does not matter to her. She does her duty and brings up the child. She teaches it to walk and to speak. Don't we have the proverb that one can repay all debts except the mother's debt? Doubtless woman is superior to man.

BALWANTRAO : What else is special about women?

JOTIRAO : Her brother and sisters like her because (unlike man) she stands by them, supports them. Surely you know that the household is not complete without the woman⁴.

BALWANTRAO : That a woman loves her man more than a man does his woman: what's the basis of this logic?

JOTIRAO : When husband dies, it is the woman who leads a life of suffering. She has to suffer widowhood for the rest of her life. Surely you know that in times gone by⁵ many burnt themselves alive and became a sati on the funeral pyre of their husbands. Have you ever heard of a man burning himself alive in the event of his wife's death and became a sata?⁶

BALWANTRAO : Men's love for their women does not quite match women's love for their men. What is the proof?

JOTIRAO : As much faithful and devoted as the wife might be, men can and do marry again and again. You will never find that women likewise indulge in polyandry.

BALWANTRAO : Why do you think women are subjected to such acts of injustice by men?

JOTIRAO : That's because they are weak. Their lustful and adventurous men push themselves and their desires on to women without their consent. They deprive them of education so as to prevent them from being conscious of their human rights and subject them to oppression. [...] The case of the Arya Brahman widowers is worse still, who even when advanced in age and in shattered physical condition marry young beautiful maidens and ruin their youth. At the same time they have laid down in their books that a young widow should not remarry. This has the following consequences. These Arya Brahmins

unashamedly make advantages on the weak defenceless widows in their household and greedily seduce them. When these widows become pregnant they are forced to abort. This is quite a common practice. You cannot imagine how many abortions and infanticides take place among the Arya Brahmans. [...] Now the other castes also follow the Brahman's example. They also subject their women to the same miseries and expose them to the same dangers.

BALWANTRAO : but haven't the Vedas, so sacred to the Brahmans, banned such practices?

JOTIRAO : Vedas have not laid down that women cannot remarry. Naturally the question of banning infanticide does not arise⁷. In fact if the elder brother died his wife could marry his younger brother and continue to enjoy life. It is reasonable to assume that there were no practices like abortion and infanticide during the Vedic times.

SINFUL CONDUCT⁸

MANAJI BOLUJI PATIL : Hasn't the Creator given any safety devices to the man so that he does not indulge in misconduct and suffer?

JOTIRAO GOVINDRAO PHULE : How can that be? Our Creator is omniscient and merciful. He made these safety devices even before he created human beings. That's not all. These safety devices are the best of their kind.

MANAJI : How is it then that some men have this extraordinary lust for women? Why did not these men use these devices like good and restrained behaviour and save themselves from lust?

JOTIRAO : I am sure that you know the well-known proverb-judge others as you would judge yourself. People who fall a victim to lust reject the power of discrimination that God has given them. They give up the code of proper conduct and become sinful. They have to atone for these failures.

MANAJI : I do not quite follow. Please elaborate.

JOTIRAO : Some lustful men who marry more than once, maintain almost a harem; justify their action with reference to some senseless religious text written by equally mulish men.

How would they take it if some women were to marry more than one man to satisfy their lust? Would not these men think of right and wrong and be critical of their behaviour?

MANAJI : Indeed if some women were to indulge in such filthy unworldly acts, they must be punished.

JOTIRAO : Precisely. If you do not like such behaviour on the part of women, is it surprising that women would dislike similar filthy behaviour on the part of men? Both men and women are equally qualified to enjoy all human rights in equal measure. How can anyone then have one standard for women and quite another for lustful, adventurous men? It amounts to saying what belongs to women must naturally belong to men; the reverse, however, will not apply!⁹ Some of them have codified these kind of selfish formulations about women in their pseudo-religious books.

[...]

CASTE DIFFERENTIATION¹⁰

YASHWANT JOTIRAO PHULE : Is caste differentiation natural to human beings?

JOTIRAO GOVINDRAO PHULE : Originally human beings were not divided into castes.

YASHWANT : How does one know that originally there was no caste differentiation among human beings?

JOTIRAO : There is not such differentiation among birds and animals. Why would it be there among human animals?

YASHWANT : Please elaborate on this.

JOTIRAO : Animals, birds, etc., all differ from each other anatomically. Likewise two-legged human beings are different from four-legged animals. It is said that the Arya Brahman has created the four castes ¹¹. He would have done so far the animals as well. Can you tell me then who are the Brahmans among the donkeys, crows, etc.?

YASHWANT : Evidently nobody can prove that there are Brahmans among the animals and birds. [...] Their scriptures speak of the four jatis having been created from the limbs of the Lord Brahma.

JOTIRAO : Have you read the (sacred) books of the Brahmans yourself? Have you

examined them for authenticity and reliability?

YASHWANT : No. But then the Arya Brahmans do not let us even gaze at them. If we asked for the privilege to hear those texts, the Arya Brahmans would not let us hear a word of them.

JOTIRAO : Why then do you blindly accept what they say on the fraud of the caste-system? Why don't you examine these texts fabricated by the Bhat Brahmans? A characteristic gullibility of the Shudras!

YASHWANT : Brahmans will be Brahmans, and Shudras will be Shudras. No matter what we might try, Shudras cannot become Brahmans. Nor for that matter will Brahmans become the Shudras.

JOTIRAO : Indeed, why not? When these very same Brahmans, the gods of our planet, join the parties in the Christian houses¹², they merrily eat meat and consume liquor with anyone-with the untouchable Mangs and Mahars. Don't they? Aren't these foreigners, mlechhas or atishudras for them? But they will have no problem even marrying their young daughters and living happily ever after. I think you should take the initiative and rebel against the advice that Brahmans, no matter where, are to be worshipped¹³.

YASHWANT : But then this would mean that the caste groups like shepherds, peasants and horticulturists in our unfortunate peasant-land¹⁴ have no legitimacy. How can that be?

JOTIRAO : You will see that that is not true if you were to think a little about it. Look at it this way. A man has three sons. He assigns the responsibility of his goats and sheep to one. The other works on growing fruits and flowers¹⁵. The third son cultivates the land and busies himself with grain production. But then you wouldn't argue that these three sons of the same man constitute three jatis. Would you?

YASHWANT : Naturally not. How can anybody do that?

JOTIRAO : Likewise assume that an Arya Bhat Brahman has three sons. One of them became a percussionist. The other became a doctor¹⁶ who treated patients of all castes and performed autopsies and the third became a professional cook. Would you say that the three of them belonged to three different castes?

YASHWANT : Surely not. But wouldn't you agree that the one who does basic cleaning and deals with dirt and filth belongs to an inferior caste?

JOTIRAO : If that be correct, your and my mother would belong to an inferior caste. Did not they clean our excreta when we were children?

YASHWANT : Who would say that his mother belongs to inferior caste. I do not think you can find such an ungrateful wretch anywhere in the world. But surely it would be possible to determine the jati according to the qualities of an individual. Wouldn't it?

JOTIRAO : No. That's not possible. People make sure that their children get a fine education. Some of them are bright and intelligent and develop into complete individuals. Some are not as bright. They end up doing all kinds of lowly work. But as you can see, good and bad qualities are not hereditary¹⁷. To argue that a shoe-maker's bright son, even when trained properly, cannot compare with a Brahman Sankaracharya flies in the face of all natural justice. No fair person would argue that.

YASHWANT : It might be good if you explained how the cruel and out-of-this-world institution like caste differentiation arose in the first instance. How come castes like Brahmans, mangs and mahars were created in the first place?

JOTIRAO : In this peasant-land there were Kshatriyas, the lords of a given area, Kshetra-astik, Pishach, Rakshas, etc. They were gifted with the martial arts and the use of weaponry. All of them lived happily together. In fact there was unprecedented prosperity in this land. At about that time the Iranians¹⁸, that is the Brahmans, invented the bow and the arrow-weaponry superior to the one in use here in India. Then the adventurous, violent and greedy Iranian Brahmans, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas with their eye on the Indian gold, formed a joined front and invaded our peasant-land several times and harassed the local Kshatriyas. In the end they even peeled the skin off some of them¹⁹. This is documented in the Vedas which are their histories. These Iranians then drove the local Kshatriyas into the Nether-lands, i.e., America, turned the others into their slaves and

untouchables for all times to come. [...]

YASHWANT : If this is so, why is that the Lord, the Merciful, does not sympathize with the exploited Shudras and Atishudras?

JOTIRAO : Indeed, he does. Precisely because of his mercy and his desire to rescue the Shudras and the Atishudras from slavery he sent the monotheistic Mussalmans who do not believe in the caste-system to this land. But then the Mussalmans also betrayed God. They spent their time in banquets, luxurious living and musical concerts. They were busy enjoying the luxuries as if they had almost gained paradise right here on earth. The Creator got annoyed with the Mussalmans. He deprived them of their power and glory.

YASHWANT : And then kept quiet! How could he?

JOTIRAO : No, He did not. He civilized the English primitives²⁰, granted them qualities like extraordinary valour. Now he has sent them to our land to rescue the Shudras and the Atishudras from the slavery of the Arya Bhats. Some English gentlemen among them following the teaching of a sage of their religion are in all sincerity making every effort to rescue the Shudras and Atishudras from their unnatural slavery.

[On being asked who this sage happened to be Phule replied:]

JOTIRAO : Their great sage is called Yashwant²¹ and his great teaching is: You must love your enemy and do him a good turn.

1. The title of the section is 'Dharma Pustak' which would literally translate as the 'Book of Faith'. What he means here is the Book in the sense of the Religions of the Book. Hence I have chosen to render it as 'The Book'.

2. The word pavitra, usually used as a synonym for sacred, also carried the meaning of untouchability. What is 'sacred' is also 'untouchable' Phule seems to suggest that the river which carries dog's excreta cannot be 'sacred' in the conventional sense. The reference here is to the Hindu belief obviously not shared by Phule that Ganga is a sacred river.

3. While the man does nothing: this is the unsaid.

4. Phule uses a line from Sanskrit here: 'na graham

grihamityahur-grihni grihamuchyate' [The house is not a house, It is the woman in the house who makes it a house'].

5. Phule specifically says purvi i.e. in times gone by. This means that there was no practice of sati in Maharashtra during his time. Strangely he does not refer to Bengal or other parts of India.
6. There is, of course, no such word. It is an ironical coinage by Phule to suggest a male sati.
7. Since remarriage would legitimize the child.
8. Paap, the title of this section, is quite often translated as sin. Sin, however, has a specific meaning in Christianity. Indian or Hindu notion of paap is not the same as Christian sin. Phule seems to be using the term (especially papacharana, sinful conduct) in the Hindu sense. The notion of absolute or original sin does not exist in Hinduism. The opening section relating to men and women and polygamy is translated here.
9. Literally translated, this sentence would go like this: 'Women's (rights) belong to men. Men's rights, however, are Ha, Hu, Ha, Hu!' (Monosyllables. Natural rights do not need elaboration!).
10. Jatibheda.
11. Phule means the varnas and the reference to the account in the Purusa Sukta of the Rig Veda. See pp. 47-49 of the present volume.
12. Phule refers to the Brahmans accepting invitations to dinners and banquets with the British Officials.
13. Phule uses a Sanskrit aphorism: Brahmanh sarvatra pujyah.
14. Bali-Sthana is Phule's semi-mythic term for peasant-land. For him the peasant was a Bali Raja.
15. The actual phrase Phule uses refers to the operation of planting trees. I have preferred this simpler expression.
16. The original has vaidya.
17. Whereas, of course, caste is.
18. Phule believed firmly that the Aryans were the conquering people from Iran.
19. Phule translates here a line presumably from one of the Vedas: twacam krsnamarandhayat. It is not clear to me where the line is from and what incident it refers to.
20. Phule uses the word atiranati which would mean extreme primitives.
21. Phule has turned Yeshu (Jesus) into a Marathi name which means the successful one.

Courtesy—Selected writings of Jotirao Phule

The New Footsoldiers!

The Ideological and Institutional Incorporation of Dalits into Hindutva Maelstrom

Subhash Gatade

Delhi, INDIA

...Continued from previous issue

THE TRAJECTORY OF DALITHOOD

Babasahebanchya Mage Kuni Kay Kele/

*Kuni Jhale MLA, Kuni Jhale MLC, Aamhi Rahilo
Upashi*

(What we did after Babasaheb's Demise, Somebody became MLA, somebody became MLC, We remained Hungry)- A Marathi song famous in 70s.

The lifeworlds of the Dalits in the wee hours of 21st century present a contradictory picture.

On the one hand we have before us a majority which is poor, which is landless, which is subjected to deprivations and injustices of different kinds. Caste discrimination still persists in most parts of the country. Untouchability might have been officially abolished more than half a century ago but it still exists. Crimes against this section of society are rampant. Ranging from the police to the administration to the judiciary, one very well witnesses the continuing stranglehold of *Varna* mindset.

A number of-protective and developmental measures have been initiated in accordance with Constitutional provisions by the government for providing protection to untouchables (Scheduled Castes or SCs) and the tribals. Under the 'protective' sphere, untouchability was legally abolished and its practice in any form forbidden by the Protection of Civil Rights (Anti-Untouchability) Act of 1955. To protect the category of SC and ST in a more effective and comprehensive manner a few other legislations were introduced. Policies of reservation and

representation were adopted to improve the access and participation of these sections in the economic, educational and political spheres.

But as Justice V.K. Krishna Iyer, the legendary human rights activist and a former Supreme Court Judge puts it, all such 'half hearted legislation has proved to be impotent and ineffectual in practice'. He also added that the aim behind these attempts was to have a 'more effective, more comprehensive and more punitive provisions of law'. However 'the ruling classes saw to it that, at the functional level, the legislations were paper tigers' (All quotes from 'Forward by Justice Iyer to a book ' *Dalit Utpidan aur Vidhik Upchar*, by P.L.Mimroth, Nov. 2000, Delhi)

As it is clear from many other reports, the overall impact of all such measures leaves much to be desired. But there is no denying the fact that a minority among the Dalits has definitely benefitted from such measures instituted by the government. The affirmative action programmes - comprising of viz. seats in educational institutions, quotas in employment opportunities, political representation at various levels - undertaken by the state in the post-independence era, coupled with the changes in the economy has definitely impacted the lifeworlds of a section of Dalits in very many ways. Despite the fact that the implementation of such schemes and policies has been tardy which still faces resistance at various levels, nobody can deny that a new middle class has emerged from among these oppressed communities, which was unthinkable in the pre-independence era.

The overall impact of Ambedkar's movement is noticeable in the fact that education has spread in almost all the Dalit castes. Quite a few of these educated Dalits have joined government services, public

enterprises as well as teaching profession. A significant section of this middle class is not a first generation middle class. Of course, looking at the stranglehold of the age-old system of purity and pollution in the minds of the people, their entry into new vocations has not completely eliminated the possibility of their being subjected to discrimination.

The difference in class locations and consequent social-cultural attitudes has led to a state where despite coming from similar social origin, one does find a perceptible difference between the experiences, grievances and aspirations of the Dalit masses and that of the Dalit middle classes. The way in which the internal dynamic of the Dalit movement has unfolded itself, where radical transformatory slogans have given way to the idea of 'capturing power' in any manner, has also created an ambience which has reinforced this divide. The explosion of religiosity, which is evident among different cross-sections of society, has also impacted the Dalits.

Talking about Dalit middle class, Sandeep Pendse puts it in one of his articles (*The Dalits and Hindutva: Gainers and Losers*, ed, Anand Teltumbde) : *It has now come into its own and developed distinct interests. It now aspires not for a distinct and separate identity but for assimilation and acceptance within the mainstream, including the Hindu fold. It no longer even promotes democratic, radical culture expressions. It wishes above all integration.*

In fact instead of wholesale rejection of the Hindu order, they seem to opt for this path in a belief that this would enable them to claim their due in matters of both faith and social status. As Nalini Pandit puts it in her above quoted writeup *'These middle class Dalits have a desire to assimilate with the upper caste middle class which at least in Maharashtra is extremely communal. Naturally the Dalits imitate them in their thinking and behaviour.'*

At general level the very dynamics of caste has also manifested itself. The caste system as is widely known is basically a system of social hierarchy based on the twin concepts of purity

and pollution which is sanctified and legitimised by religion. Looking at the whole process of social mobility there are only two options open before the lower castes. They can either reject or renounce the whole edifice of religion which sanctifies this system and strive for an alternate identity or they can strive to climb the social hierarchy by imitating the way of life and ritual of the dominant castes.

Mr. M.N. Srinivas rightly explains : "The caste system is far from a rigid system in which the position of each component caste is fixed for all time. Movement has always been possible and especially so in the middle regions of the hierarchy. A low caste was able in a generation or two, to rise to a higher position in a hierarchy by adopting vegetarianism and teetotalism and by sanskritising its ritual and pantheon. In short, it took over, as far as possible, the customs, rites, and beliefs of Brahminism, and the adoption of the Brahminic way of life by a low caste seems to have been frequent though theoretically forbidden.'

It would not be incorrect to say that the cumulative impact of deradicalization of the Dalit movement coupled with the growing hiatus between the broad sections of Dalit masses and a stabilized Dalit middle class, the overall spurt in religiosity has led us to a situation where it is not easy to map the dynamic of Dalithood in a linear fashion.

One could even say that the dynamic of Dalithood has simultaneously traversed a terrain which has contradictory features. While one of its stream is showing a newfound enthusiasm for Hinduism or the political project of Hindutva, the second stream has aligned itself with democratic or radical forces and is involved in struggles of dignity or livelihood, including political power. The 'guest actor' role (to quote Prof. Gopal Guru) of the Dalits and their leaders in the unfolding dynamic of Indian polity is long passe, today they happen to be the most vibrant section of Indian society able to make choices for themselves.

Ofcourse apart from the internal logic of the Dalit movement which has created a basis

for the spread of statusquoist ideas gain wider currency, there has been a sea change in Sangh Parivar's whole strategem as far as coopting Dalits in its hate project is concerned. One can see for oneself that it has shrewdly modified its focus keeping its essential understanding intact. Gone are the days when Dalits were abhorred like during the reign of Hedgewar-Golwalkar and Ambedkar was a hated figure in the Sangh circles, today not only Ambedkar has found a prominent place in the Sangh pantheon (*Pratahsmaraniya* - worth remembering in the morning). The Sangh patriarchs have of late been talking about Hindu community getting organised under Dalit leadership. In an editorial in the RSS Hindi organ *Panchajanya* it said (The Statesman, July 24, 2006)

"So long as those believing in caste hierarchy continue to dominate among the Hindus, it would be difficult to instill courage in their spines ...Hindu society too can jump over this ocean of crises, challenges and self-ignorance if they start viewing Dalits as Ram and Hanuman, touch their feet, organise under their leadership and as disciples form an aggressive organisation. Only Dalits and the deprived can uplift us, this is an undoubtable truth."

GENESIS OF UNTOUCHABILITY - PEARLS OF WISDOM!

Notwithstanding the attitude of the Brahmin scholars, I must pursue the task I have undertaken. For the origin of these classes is a subject which still awaits investigation ... That the Hindus should not have undertaken such an investigation is perfectly understandable. The old orthodox Hindu does not think that there is anything wrong in the observance of untouchability. To him it is a normal and natural thing. As such it neither calls for expiation nor explanation. The new modern Hindu realises the wrong. But he is ashamed to discuss it in public

for fear of letting the foreigner know that Hindu Civilisation can be guilty of such a vicious and infamous system or social code as evidenced by Untouchability...

—Dr. Ambedkar, *The Untouchables: Who Were They and Why They Became Untouchables?*

The speech delivered by the Supremo on the foundation day of RSS has a special import in the eyes of its *Swayamsevaks* as well as the rest of the country. With the growing acceptability of RSS or the political project of Hindutva in a significant sections of Hindus, the message delivered by the Supremo on the day of *Dusshera* is deciphered for what it said and what remains unsaid. But the chilling message which the present Supremo delivered on *Dusshera* in the year 2003 had few parallels which underlined what was being played on the grounds in the RSS Shakhās and outside.

The longish speech presented a new 'theory' about the genesis of untouchability.

Mr. Sudarshan said :

...But the irony is, the descendents of that great saint - the Valmiki community - has been relegated into untouchable community today. How did it happen? In fact the people of Valmiki samaj were originally from warrior class.

Some historians maintain that the Islamic invaders used to place two options before the vanquished Hindu warriors; accept Islam or work as scavengers cleaning their toilets. While many so-called upper caste people opted for Islam, these warriors demonstrated their uncompromising commitment to their religion by opting for the mean jobs rather than giving up their religion...

Any layperson would notice that with this new 'theory' it tried to kill two birds with one stone. Forget *Manusmriti*, forget the age old Varna vyavastha which denigrated the Shudras-Atishudras and women to a less than human status, it plainly stated that the 'Untouchability'

had its genesis in the 'Muslim rule' only. As a 'proof' of his sincerity he even 'apologised' for the behaviour of the Hindus.

Instead of bestowing them with the highest honour, tragically the Hindu society chose to accord them the lowest place only.

Sangh watchers would tell you that it was not for the first time that any higher up in the fraternity had given such a spin to the genesis of Dalithood. Another senior leader from the Sangh Parivar, who happens to be the International working President of VHP had stated in 'Organiser' (20th August 1995) that the Muslim rulers wanted that the Dalits embrace their religion, but with the consistent refusal by the Dalits, they confiscated their lands, expelled them from villages and thus the Dalit community came into existence.

People would remember that the six year BJP tenure at the centre was marked by a similar attempt vis-a-vis women on behalf of the Sangh Parivar where it had tried to 'discover' similar 'origins' to the secondary status of women. In one of the documents released on behalf of 'National Commission for Women' then, it had plainly stated that women in India enjoyed all rights before the advent of the Muslims and the situation drastically changed after 'Muslims entry into India'

Definitely neither Mr. Sudarshan or Mr. Ashok Singhal nor any of their other comrades in the Hindutva family could be considered innocent that they deliberately exhibit their ignorance about India's past and the manner in which this purity and pollution based graded hierarchy took shape. Neither they could be said to be oblivious of the ongoing struggle in Indian history challenging Brahminism and its rule which at times took shape of a religious challenge to the authority of the Vedas. An organisation which took shape basically to counter the *Shudra-Atishudra* challenge to Brahminism and which couched its struggle in the language of hatred of minorities could not be expected to forget all these relevant details. In fact, they very well know the ramifications

of what they mean.

Any student of history or society can easily comprehend that if this understanding of genesis of untouchability is popularised and gains acceptability, then it serves multiple purposes simultaneously as far as the majoritarian Hindutva right is concerned.

- It absolves the custodians of *Varnashram* from any complicity in its construction and sustenance and thus refuses to even acknowledge let incorporate any sort of anti-caste struggle in its agenda. The essence of this new 'theory' which externalises the origin of untouchability is that there is no need for reform or reconstruction (including annihilation) of the caste laden structure.
- It provides an important rationale for the further consolidation of the Hindutva chauvinist forces which cannot brook any association of Hindus with Islam and Muslims.
- It brings into disrepute the rich local tradition of popular religion that defied the sternly Brahminical Hinduism that the Hindutva forces were so ardently seeking to impose on the country. Despite the ascendancy of the majoritarian Hindutva right in our country since last around two decades one is still witness to Hindus - mainly belonging to the lower castes - still flocking to Sufi shrines in large numbers.
- It serves the purpose of striking at the root of the composite heritage by pitting two of its strongest pillars who also happen to be the staunchest opponents of the project of Hindutva against each other.
- It helps the Hindutva right in construction and imposition of a monolithic Hinduism-Brahminical Hinduism - which is self-contained, completely apart to other religions, in fact antagonistic to other religions.
- It paves the way for the cooption of Dalit icons into Hindutva pantheon and helps their projection as 'anti-Muslims'.

To be continued...

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IN PARTNERSHIP WITH :

Asmita Resource Centre for Women

Teacher's Colony, East Marredpally,
Secunderabad 500026,
Andhra Pradesh, India
Phone : 040-27733251, 27733229, Fax : 040-27733745
E-mail : asmitacollective@sancharnet.in

Christian Children's Fund of Canada

India Liaison Office
Vinoth Vetri
Flat F2 (First Floor)
New No 37, Old No 73&74
Govindan Street, Ayyavoo Colony,
Aminjikarai, Chennai - 600 029, India.
Tel : +91 44 2374 0742 / Direct: + 91 44 2374 0743
Fax : + 91 44 2374 0741
Email : vmuniyasamy@ccfcandada.ca
Website : www.ccfcanada.ca

Cathe Foundation Pakistan

Peace Palace,
B-III, Street # 3, House # 3, Youhanabad
Near Stitch Craft Factory 20 KM Ferozepur Road
Lahore 54760 Pakistan
Tel: 0092-42-5273735, 7048155 Fax: 0092-42-5270151
E-mail : peace@cathe.org.pk, website : www.cathe.org.pk

Centre for Social Development (CSD)

Palace Compound (west)
Imphal 795001, Manipur, India
Phone : 0385-2230004
E-mail : secycsd@sancharnet.in

Church's Auxiliary for Social Action (CASA)

4th floor, Rachna building 2,
Rajendra Place, Pusa road,
New Delhi-110008, India,
Phone : 91-11-25730611, 612, 25080758
Fax : 011-25752502, 25733763
Email : indrani@casa-india.org

**Christian Commission for
Development in Bangladesh (CCDB)**

88, Senpara, Parbatta,
Mirpur-10, G.P.O., Box 367
Dhaka-1216, Bangladesh
Phone : +88-02-8011970-3
Email : ccdb@bangla.net, ccdbhope@bangla.net

Cornerstone

31, Teeds Garden IV Street,
Perambur, Chennai-600011, India
Phone : 91-44-45058270
Email : richidev@yahoo.co.in, cornerstonetrust5@gmail.com

Community Development Centre (CODEC)

47/H, R#1, Ispahani Park, South Kulshi,
Chittagong, Bangladesh
E-mail : codecprg@spnetctg.com

Deenbandhu Fellowship

Deenbandhupuram Via Vemgal Raja Kuppam
Distt.- Chittoor
Andhra Pradesh – 517599
Phone:00919-445269445
Mobile : 919443596651
Email : ajeetdeenabandu@yahoo.com

EED

Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst e.V. (EED)
South and Middle Asia Desk
Ulrich-von-Hassell-Strasse 76,
D-53123 Bonn, Germany
Phone : 49 (0) 228 81 01-0,
Fax : 49 (0) 228 81 01 - 160
E-mail : eed@eed.de,
Website : http://www.eed.de

Institute for Social Democracy (ISD)

110, Numberdar House, 62-A, Laxmi Market, Munirka
New Dehli 110067, India
Telefax : 91-11-26177904
E-mail : notowar.isd@gmail.com, suryanwar@hotmail.com

Maleya Foundation

North Kalindipur
Rangamati – 4500
Bangladesh
Phone : 0351-61109
E-mail : maleyafoundation@yahoo.com

Nagorik Udyog

4/1/A, Block-E Lalmatia,
Dhaka-1207, Bangladesh
Phone : 88-02-9141511 (0) -8115868 (0) - 8111156 (0)
E-mail : nu@bdmail.net

Peoples Action for Development – PAD

No. 4/124, Roachpalayam, VEMBAR - 628 906,
Thoothukudi Dist., Tamilnadu
Telephone: 04638 262388
Email : info@padgom.org, padgom@gmail.com
Website : padgom.org

Taangh Wasaib Organisation

House number 43, street 1, Gulshan-e-Bashir
Sargodha, Pakistan
Phone : 0092-451-215042
Fax : 0092-483-215042
Mobile : 0092-300-9602831
E-mail : twasaib@yahoo.com, rubinaferoze_bhatti@yahoo.com

Tariq Zaman

Res. Add : House # 271/B Railway Road Bamus City,
N-W.F.P Pakistan
Phone: 0092-333-9747161, 0092-928-613417
Email: tariqzaman@lawyer.com

Trinamul Unnayan Sangstha

Marma Samsad Bulding.
Pankhaiya Para
Khagrachari-4400
Phone: 0371-61179
E-mail : trinamulcht@yahoo.com

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