

Third Shiva-Dharma Conference At Chandrapur

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The majority community of Maharashtra —the Marathas, the Kunbis — are holding a series of conferences in Maharashtra to break away from Hinduism and form a new religion to be named as “Shiva Dharma”. The third such two days conference, which I attended for a day, after first and second at Tuljapur and Akola was in Chandrapur. And the next one will be in Chennai in Tamilnadu where the Jayalalita Government has recently promulgated an anti-conversion ordinance. The organizers are “Maratha Seva Sangha”, a prominent organization of OBCs in Maharashtra headed by Purushottam Khedekar. The brain behind the movement which is going on for last few years, is A. H. Salunkhe who presided over the conference. He is writing the “Code of Conduct” and the “Scripture” of the new religion, which they connect with the Indus Valley civilization.

The conference was heavily attended and the big hall on the stadium could not accommodate the crowd, so short circuit TV was arranged for people sitting on open ground outside. The conference was addressed by many OBC leaders in Maharashtra including Ashok Rana, and M. M. Deshmukh.

Parshuram Dhote, a former District President of BJP, editor of a local journal, and the main organizer of “Waman Dahan Programme”, which they hope will be the OBC way to celebrate Diwali in future, was re-christained as “Bali Raj Dhote” during the valedictory function.

The details of Shiva Dharma

Their ideals and idols are Jijau—the mother of Shivaji, the Buddha, Shivaji and other non-Brahmin great personalities like Tukaram and Kabir and Shahu, Ambedkar, Phule and the Periyar. The date for conversion is fixed as 12th January 2005 on the birth anniversary of Jijau at Sindkhed Raja, her birth place. There will be no founder of religion and no priests. Some may believe in “God” or may not, there will be no castes and no restrictions on marriage and dining. There will be no “*Satya-narayana*” puja - an alternative will be reading of biography of Jijau and Savitribai Phule. The religion would be based on science and there will be no blind faiths.

In the first conference, Salunkhe had appealed to the Brahmin brethren that he has no bitterness about them while parting ways from them.

To the Buddhists, he had said that the Buddhists should understand why they are not accepting Buddhism is because of “*samaj vastav*” – the ground realities in the society. The Buddha is a great “bridge” between them and the Buddhists, and expressed the hope that some good day we all would be one.

In the Presidential speech, Salunkhe declaring their movement as a “Movement for Liberation”, said that we need toilets for women in villages rather than temples.

The follow-up

The follow-up story is that there is lot of discussion among Ambedkarites as well about the provocation for their extreme action when as exploiters they have been happy with company of Brahmins. There are many people among the Ambedkarites who express openly or in private the scepticism that this move of Marathas to part ways from Hinduism is just to sabotage the wave among the OBCs to adopt Buddhism. These people point out that wife of Mr. Khedekar is BJP member of Maharashtra Assembly.

But personally, I do not find any such scepticism to be justified, though one can not predict the future. This is because the people like Prabhakar Pawade, Adv. Eknath Salve who have already adopted Buddhism some ten years ago are associated with the movement. Only I find the notable absence of Nagesh Chaudhari.

People like Ashok Rana, M. M. Deshmukh, and A. H. Salunkhe himself have been writing the articles and books awakening the OBCs against Brahminism for long time. It is only recently that the movement of Khedekar’s “Maratha Seva Sangh” is coming up. I am trying to get old issues of “Maratha Marg” to know more about their movement.

As a preliminary and first stage to explain their stand as to why they are going away from Hinduism and forming a new religion, A. H. Salunkhe has published in June 2002 a small booklet of about 30 pages, titled “*Gulama cha aani gulam karanaran cha dharm ek nasato*” i.e. - “Religion of Slaves and of those who made them Slaves can not be same”.

Ten Reasons

Here are ten reasons he gave in the booklet for their renouncing Hinduism.

1. This religion is not created by us. It has not voluntarily sprung up from amongst us. We have not accepted it ourselves of our free will. It has been thrust upon us from outside.
2. We have no authority to frame its rules or to change them as need arises. We have no freedom to analyze it.
3. It does not think of our welfare or wellbeing. But it is tyrannical to us. It erodes away the feeling of humanity from within us.
4. It compels us to commemorate the moments of our defeats as our festivals and celebrations.
5. It impresses on our minds the “*sanskaras*” of self-indignity such that we should denounce our own forefathers and worship the immoral forefathers of Brahmins.
6. It distorts the History.
7. It does not believe that all people in our own religion are equal as human beings.
8. It deprives us from all proper opportunities of development.
9. It has tortured all those who have tried for our cultural freedom. And this tendency has not changed even now.
10. In this religion, there are no ‘*sanskaras*’ to give proper respect to women.

The booklet, which is mainly addressed to those who claim themselves to be Kshatriyas, has discussed various issues in quite frank language, starting from dishonour caused by Mahabharata to Kshatriya women in the legend of Parashurama, which is discussed in detail. Brahminic laws against the non-brahmins are explained giving references.

It says that the Hindus trusted the Brahmins but they in turn proved treacherous and used the Hindus for their vested interests. Many great people tried to free Hindus from Brahmins’ grip but could not succeed because one can not prostrate before Brahmins in religious rites and at the same time complain against them.

He laments that a Brahmin in garb of Vishnu defiles Vrunda — the wife of an *Asur* Emperor Jalandhar — and we every year celebrate the marriage of “*Tulsi*” i.e. Vrunda with the same adulterate Vishnu who compelled her to commit suicide.

He explains how stories are created to destroy the characters of Rama and Krishna and appeals to those who call themselves Kshatriyas to remember how Shivaji was insulted and his son Sambhaji was labelled a debauch and handed over to Moghuls treacherously to grab the political power so bravely captured by the Marathas. He explains how non-brahmin saints were tortured and firmly avers that this Hinduism is not our religion.

Thanks!

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