AMOFOI: Fighting Caste and Religious Bigotry in India

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By Hippu Salk Kristle Nathan

AMOFOI (Anti-Caste Marriage & One-Child Family Organization of India) is an atheist social reform organization. Founded on 10 December, 1980, AMOFOI has been following the ideology of the Universal Declaration of Human rights, 1948, and the Preamble to the Constitution of India, 1950. It seeks to achieve the goal of a Humanist and equal society in India through “anti-caste marriage”. The caste system is a system of inequality bred and fed by false pride and prejudices. It has been maintained through the endogamous marriage code and blind beliefs perpetuated by religious scriptures such as the Bhagavad Gita and the so-called divine epics of the Ramayana and Mahabharata. Parents have traditionally followed caste patriarchy in deciding and regulating the marriage of their sons and daughters. This ancient tradition continues to pollute the socio-political and economic system of the country. In response, AMOFOI has been organizing atheist love marriages and exogamous marriages that will help to break the caste system and weaken the hold of caste patriarchy. It has, up to February 2002, organized 1455 atheist (priest-less, caste-less, dowry-less) love marriages.

But AMOFOI’s efforts in social development issues do not stop with casteless marriages. India is grossly overpopulated, having about 17% of the world population over its share of 2.3% of the land area of the world. The massive economic inequalities of India have been exacerbated by its rate of population growth. Overpopulation has also led to deforestation and degradation of the environment. To achieve both better standards of life and a greener environment, AMOFOI promotes the idea of the one-child family as the norm.
Religion is the common if not the sole root of many of India’s most profound problems. How much would be gained by the destitute if the vast material resources that lie in the hands of religious authorities were to be utilized for the benefit of the poor! AMOFOI appeals to atheists and Humanists to take an active part in politics, to create their own democratic party, so that they can tell people of the harm perpetrated by India’s religions and the conflicts between them. The damage begins early, with the poisoning of young minds in religious schools, most particularly the Saraswati Sisu Mandirs of the right-wing Hindu [7] Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and the Madrasas run by fundamentalist Muslims. From these spring the communal violence that plagues the country. That is why atheists and Humanists must above all concentrate on education of the young – on freeing the minds of children, the future citizens of the world.

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