

Anything to loose

Counterrevolution, it is already taking place. We have to realize that. For example, the sociological terminologies or social sciences, how they define family, as if I am with the wife 24 hours, I am not.

When I am with her, I am with her.

Just now, she is into public service domain in Mysore.

So, she is working there.

I am working here.

So, after 8 hours, I take rest for 8 hours, may be 2 hours to spend with her.

To spend that 2 hours, I imagine that my family is 24 hours. That does not make any meaning for me.

Similarly, I am not working full time for anybody else. I am working there for 8 hours as it is expected of my stomach to earn my livelihood.

Then, other 8 hours is still open for me to rediscover myself. So, as for me, the counterrevolution is already taking place, only we have to realize that and talk about it, conceptualize about it, rationalize about it

I married my partner. Her name is Vidya.

She is from another community called Bunts community from South Canara, that is Mangalore side.

This Bunts community is a dominant group.

They are middle caste or belonging to a dominant caste.

So, her father and family, they tried to dissuade her because I am a Dalit.

I never knew that I was belonging to a caste until I reached my degree studies.

Most of the time, it was during our admission to schools we used to write our castes, but being a Christian, I never wrote my caste. I wrote roman catholic, and today, I totally say I am an Indian Christian than a Roman Catholic.

So Immediately, there is a kind of difference between me and her, but yet, we loved each other. We came together. In 1999, both of us, we got registered marriage.

I belong to a community called Tigala community.

That is a very backward community.

Educationally, just now, I am the first one among them to finish my Ph.D. studies. So, you can imagine the kind of reality that is there, and moreover, to give a little background about my family, my father, he used to tell me;

My father worked as a bonded laborer for 14 years, just for food, not for money as such. So, that was the kind of a context and now also, he is still into that kind of an attitude towards life.

If you give him good food, a small drink, he considers you as a God in front of him. So, with that kind of background, I started growing.

When I was 12 I left my school. I was a kind of a dropout in 6th standard.

I had to walk about 6 kilometers everyday to go for my higher primary school and I never liked it.

I was a small little boy that time having my own fears, anxieties, etc., and it is in that situation I left the school.

I did not write my exams.

Maybe it was because of Christian religion, that must have given me some kind of an opportunity for education, that is what when I think back now, I could rationalize like that.

Otherwise, I do not think I would have got education as such.

As I left the school and I was grazing my little cows and little animals in the house, the little change that took place was the parish priest was there.

He allowed me to read this Bible in the church, you see, and that gave me a kind of a push that I needed.

And suddenly, he found me quite intelligent and he said, why cannot I continue my studies. So, during that time I remember very much that had great influence for my future dreams. I expressed my desire to go back to school, you see.

So, my parents brought me to that school, but it was an orphanage.

I wanted to go there, but then, they said since he is a failed student, they don't admit me.

Later on, the only available school was a government run school next to my village about 1-1/2 kilometers away. It is on Bannerghatta Road.

So, I joined that school, and in the first class, a teacher, Saroja – her name, she wrote something on the board, a Hindi letter, and she asked in the class.

About 40 classmates were there, and nobody knew that answer, you know.

And that time, it came to my turn and I recognized that letter.
Ah! She gave me a great encouragement. She made me to sit.
The rest were standing in the class. So, that was a kind of pushed my education.
So, that was a great experience. Even today, I remember.
I remember whether she is alive or wherever she is.
So, even a teacher could have that kind of an influence.
So, that is one phase of my life to share.

The other phase of my life started in St. Joseph's College. So, I was shifted to a boarding house and that time, I used to pay 30 rupees per month, so 1 rupee a day.
My parents said, "Oh, this is a whole lot of a money. We don't have money. Then, the priest, how he convinced them, you know.
"See. Just 1 rupee a day, he eats more than that in the house here. So, you spend the same thing there."
So, that is how he convinced them and put me there, you see.
So, I came to St. Joseph's College. There was again another priest who helped me to get admission. My parents did not come that time because they are illiterate, but their experience in life is far more matured than any educated person.

During my college days I was with rich students.
All my classmates were from a very rich background, whereas I was a poverty experienced kind of a person. So, when I used to sit and listen to the lecture in the classes, I used to always remember my family; that my father is a drunkard, he used to quarrel, and he used to beat my mother. So, these kind of images I used to get when I used to sit in the class in St. Joseph's College.
Now, I can rationalize it, but how I felt at that time, you know.
And till my 12th standard, my only dream was to become a lawyer or a police inspector. That is simply because I had felt a lot of humiliations both in the village as well as in the classrooms.

So, that was another big experience that I had, but later on, I recovered that negative experience of my family because the standardized family experience that seems to have been given to me from my surroundings, environment, etc., etc., that somehow had much to do with my later trainings, with my thinking, my studies, etc.
One day, I remember, my mother used to come and see me in the college.

She used to sell vegetables and green leaves in KR Market there. I remember when I was a small boy, I used to go with her to KR Market and we used to sleep on the road, you know. And we used to get up early morning and sell it and immediately, we went back to our houses. I never knew that time this Bangalore has this kind of politics, this kind of communities, this kind of cosmopolitan culture, nothing of that sort. So, my only desire was that I would be... My mother used to take me to a hotel there. For cheap rate, we used to get good meals. So, that was my desire of going with my mother. That is how I used to grow, but in one such days, she came to see me in the college, and as I saw her, I felt bit nervous that she was wearing a very dirty saree. Suddenly, I felt a bit agitated within and I told her "Don't come like that."

So, these two things made me to rethink about myself, I tell you. That time, she never reacted immediately. She gave me fruits and some money, and then, she went away. But, after 2 years, she remembered that incident when one of the days I was talking to her near my farmhouse. She said "Dominic, when you said like that, I cried for 2 months." So, that was a big shock for me and there, I decided that I would never live for the rich people.

Caste system means it is casteist, discrimination based on one's own backgrounds. ,During my degree days, it was my Christian, the other konkanis became Christian friends who said that I belong to this particular community, and though in the beginning it was difficult for me to accept. Slowly I started loving myself and my own community and today, I rather love my community than any community else. I love myself than anybody else because I had to recover that whole negative past that was constructed to me.

So, that first change started occurring where I used to take the classroom reality to understand outside. Again, that outside used to bring in me lot of inferiority complex about me.

Years after, there was a shift. That shift was my own participation in one big Dalit Sangharsha Samithi rally, this Dalit movement.

It was a big massive rally. That gave me a kind of...somewhere I am also belonging to that same context, same situation. So, it was that experience along with another, of my reading and orientation with Marxist terminologies.

To further define what is casteism, that is mast masculinity trying to push itself.

That is where I call "You are not to be touched."

It is the man who practices that, you see. It is not the woman, but later on, the woman who follows this man also gets into the system. But, typically, if you look into the caste reality, it is never the woman, it is the upper caste man against the other man.

It is a mast male domination.

Dalit woman could be easily acceptable to an upper cast man. But whereas, dalit man touching the upper cast woman, that itself was a severity.

It immediately expected severely to be punished.

So, that kind of nuances were there.

Then continuing my studies, I voluntarily went to slum. I took a room there and I started living there. I did not do anything there, but I just wanted to... as I told earlier that my own negative experience about my own self, my own family, and the community that I wanted to recapture, you know. So, maybe that drive was there within me to relook into my own future. So, I opted to live in a slum in Dharwad.

Two years, I stayed there in 2 different slums.

As I stayed there, my thinking about poverty, about people and about studies completely changed because my experiences, the people's love and their relationship, that broadened me so much. It gave me a new life altogether.

So, it is not the rich, it is not my studies, but my living with these communities that recovered my own self.

And from then onwards, I started loving my academy. I started loving my studies. Because till, I finished my PUC, I never liked studies.

Yes. In fact if I am in peace with my community It is because of this experience only. Because they have so much richness with them, it is not that they are exploited a lot. In spite of their exploitation and in spite of their struggle, there is something that drives them to live, to relate to others, their human value system, their practice, that is also another side for me to rediscover.

My difference, my future, as far as it is concerned, nobody can control me because I have to make the choices but for my past, I have to give a justice to that past because that past has been wrongly presented to me.

I never dreamt everlasting dreams. Some years ago, till I reached my age of 40, I thought I shared with my friends that I would like to live till 40. Afterwards, I did not want to live. But, now, I have already crossed 40. So, I had my own struggle with me. Now, how to articulate myself?

Consistency, I see my own mother. Though she is struggling and uneducated, yet, she never gave me an impression that she lost something. Even if she finds 5 paise, that is also a gain for her because there is nothing to lose. See, that kind of sustainability, you know.

Yes, there is nothing to do...

Yes. So, I do not have anything to lose rather to gain or...

Yes. Because I have nothing.

So, that nothing also is something philosophically. Because of that, I can work, I can think, I can talk, I can write. I can do so many things.