

**SOCIO-RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY OF B. R. AMBEDKAR AND
THE GENESIS OF THE NEO-BUDDHIST MOVEMENT IN INDIA**

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Preface

Historical researches on the Depressed Classes and the ideas and activities of Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar are still at the threshold of beginning, and no wonder, there have been hitherto very few studies on the socio-economic, religio-cultural and political background of the Neo-Buddhist Movement in India, which was a part of the reform movement organised by the rising depressed classes for the establishment of a society based on equality, justice and fraternity under Ambedkar's leadership. The Neo-Buddhist Movement though was a reassertion of the positives of a millennia old socio-religious revolution organised by the Budha, it eluded the usually common revivalist trends, and certainly it was a relevant awakening at a historical phase of the dumb millions who had suffered the scourges of ill-treatment and superstitions of the ages gone by. In this proposed thesis, the background of the Neo-Buddhist Movement, the relevant socio-religious ideas of Ambedkar, the nature, philosophy, historical necessity and the impact of the Neo-Buddhist Movement will be meticulously analysed and delineated. This work will fill a gap in Indian historical studies.

India in the nineteenth century and in the first half of the twentieth century witnessed the birth of many socio-religious reformers and reform movements. Of these reformers, some were revivalists and some again were eclectic to the length of conforming the best teachings of all religions. The achievements of all these reformers are well known in history; but unfortunately, hardly any of them belonged to the depressed classes, better known then as the untouchables. Men like Swami Dayanand Saraswati and Vivekanand inspite of their anti-caste utterances, could virtually do the precious little to change the inter-caste hatred and exclusively inhuman treatment meted out to the socio-economically downtrodden or the Sudras. Their ideas and activities being imprecise on this aspect of reforms, left behind the question of arousing the Depressed Classes by a leader of their own in a new way. They had to wait until the second decade of the 20th Century when Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar came to the scene. Though, Mahatma Gandhi, much acclaimed for humanitarian works among the Harijans, flourished in the contemporary period of Ambedkar, yet his was no movement organised among the untouch-

ables against the age-old unjust privileges enjoyed by the caste Hindus; his was to strike a chord of compromise between different Hindu communities. Ambedkar not only struggled for the amelioration of the untouchables, he gave them a message of regeneration and a resurgence through the spread of education, socio-political consolidation and ultimately by heralding the beginning of the Neo-Buddhist Movement.

This work holds on the idea that Ambedkar stood distinct and unique by his tremendous efforts in order to bring a radical change in the socio-economic and cultural awareness, status and self-dignity of the out-caste. Himself being a victim and sufferer of inter-caste hatred and exploitation since childhood, Ambedkar's understanding about the groaning of the Untouchables under the wheel of the caste system and Brahmanical Hinduism throughout the ages, had grown so immense that he struggled for nothing less than equality, liberty and fraternity to be established not only in the body politics of India, but in all spheres of Indian life. Human rights and true democracy formed the inner core of his social reform movement and political activities. For this he wanted the total annihilation of the caste system by way of rudimentary reforming the socio-cultural foundation of Hindu Society in practice. And obviously for this purpose he had ready references to the sermons of the Buddha. "Educate, Agitate and Organise" were his message to the downtrodden.

The present research-investigation detects the fact that primarily Ambedkar wanted to reform Hinduism in theory and practice; and that he with a few lacs of his followers got converted to Buddhism was but his last resort. He tried his level best to change and break the shell of privileges and superiority complex of the high caste Hindus to the effect of setting up a new socio-economic and political code wherewithal caste system would be replaced by equality and justice. For this reason; he began his movement by leading the untouchables to 'water places', 'wells', '*Dharmashalas*' and Hindu temples to which their entry was prohibited. He did not become a Buddhist outright, but much later only in 1956, waiting for twenty one years even after the 13th October, 1935 when he had given a hint at not to die as a Hindu.

Ambedkar's erudition was versatile to match with his fiery spirit of fighting for the cause of the untouchables. Having been a pragmatic philosopher, he could not find any consistency and harmony in the theology of the Hindus, and therefore, assailed the formalistic, irrational and

idiosyncratic practices of the Hindue. He even meticulously criticised the Vedas; the Gita, the Puranas and the Epics for having sanctioned caste and *Varnashrama* as perpetual walls dividing humanity. He considered the Brahmins responsible for the woes , suffering and backwardness of India. Thus doing and saying so much against Hinduism and the Brahmins he rendered himself as the earstwhile enemy of the high caste people in India. Moreover, all his attempts from the thirties of the 20th century to reform Hinduism and change the minds of the Hindus failed. Later on having been increasingly disillusioned by the apathetic outlook of the Congress leaders towards the questions of annihilating caste and the Hindu Code Bill , which he produced in the parliament intending to eliminate many of the evils from society including injustice to women, he consequently determined to get converted and begin conversion to Buddhism , which itself, undoubtedly, had been the earliest protest movement against caste division, inhumanity and social injustice. Ambedkar went a long way justifying coversion to Buddhism on the ground that it was no alienation from Indian culture ; rather it was Buddhism which founded the glory of Indian culture in all the horizons of Asia.

In this dissertation it is analysed why Ambedkar even being critical of Hinduism protected himself and his people from being drifted towards Christianity, Islam, and Zorastrianism. Apart from being afraid of hammering at the fabrics of Indian culture by conversion to any religion of foreign origin, he gave serious contemplation upon the dangers that Pan-Islamism could pose to the peace loving world. In spite of his deep respect to and interest in Sikhism , he discarded the hope of getting converted to it, mainly for its gradually becoming a bit martial in character, though , for historical reasons, and for its occasionally sectarian commitment. The study of all the pros and cons ultimately led him to Buddhism, which by all consideration was the most universal , rational and humanitarian in one hand , and absolutely Indian and oriental on the other.

This work delineates the nature, depth and pervasiveness of the Neo-Buddhist Movement which Ambedkar began in 1956. To what extend it was new and how it maintained connection with the old is explored considerably. As a whole the philosophy of the Neo-Buddhist Movement is analysed. The historical relevance and impact of the Dalit culture and literature are also elaborated.

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CHAPTER - I

Introduction

Ambedkar's socio-religious philosophy aimed at achieving basic human rights for the Depressed Classes of India; and in doing so in the long run he was not only inspired with the egalitarian philosophy of Buddhism but also adopted the religion of *Sakyamuni* along with thousands of his associates. The long struggle of Ambedkar for the establishment of equality, liberty and fraternity in Indian society proved to be a turning point in the history of modernisation in India. Article I of the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" adopted and proclaimed by the General Assembly resolution 217A(III) of 10th December, 1948, says, "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood."¹ The concept of "Human Rights" was 'logos incognitia' in Indian ethos and Hindu social culture inspite of the discourses of the high profile philosophy of the *Upanishad*. Arther Schopenhauer, Max-Muller, Winternitz, Jacobi, Ludwig, Otto de Fries, Sir John woodroff to mention a few of the host of India lover indologists were, of course, enamoured of the *Upanishad*, their faces turned pale and grim at the sight of the caste system that deliberately on some improvised definition of purity and impurity of profession divided the Hindu society into four unbridgeable islands namely *Brahman*, *Kshatriya*, *Vaishya* and *Shudra*. These four castes were further divided into numbers of subcastes and outcastes. *Vasistha Samhita*, *Manusmriti*, *Yajnavalkasmriti* , and *Naradasmriti* etc. amongst other *Samhitas* not only deprived the majority of the Indian population stamaping them as low-castes but also stripped the female-world of legitimate and common sense human rights.

In ancient India the caste hierarchy—the *varna-jati* system had been a peculiar phenomenon where the high 'Varna' or caste could systematically exploit the low-castes. Right to education, religious officiation, the power of owning land, the right of access to the scriptures,

holding the power of administration, legislation and justice and the right to military training and carrying ornaments were only the privilege of the high caste ; the lower castes and *jatis* were deprived of all these rights and powers. The low castes had only the responsibility of tilling land, producing grains in the field, providing food to the high castes and doing all the menial works of industry and commerce. In India the power of making laws for the state and society was in the hands of the Brahmins , and even the Kings were not entrusted with the right to legislation for the people of their kingdoms; they had to abide by the *Dharmasastras* as inlaid by the Brahmins and certainly the laws were always in favour of the high castes in general and the Brahmins in particular. The kings could not change the laws. "According to *Rajadharma* the king was given the power to enforce the law. *Dharmasastras* did not confer or recognise any legislative power in the king....Under the kingship as recognised and established under the *Dharmasastras* the laws were those laid down by the *Dharmasastras* themselves. They did not authorise the king to lay down new laws or amend the provisions of *Dharmasastras*. On the other hand *Dharmasastras* also laid down the laws governing the conduct of the king himself."²

Long had gone by the early *Brahmanical* predominance in polity and society and there came the Islamic rule in the medieval period to be replaced by the colonial administration of the British to be followed by a democratic Government of independent India, theoretically a Government of the people, for the people and by the people . All through the political changes of the ages gone by what did not change noticeably was the caste system and inter-caste hatred. During the Sultani period the activities of the protagonists of the *Bhakti* movement failed to produce lasting affect on the caste-ridden Hindu society. In the British period the ideas of Raja Rammohan Roy, Dayananda Saraswati and Vivekananda did not touch the lives of the downtrodden and the Untouchable at all to the degree of changing their socio-economic condition and socio-political status. The task of arousing the Depressed Classes to the effect of asserting their rights in society remained to be done only by their own leaders. True to this expectation there emerged leaders of the Depressed Classes and following the foot-steps of Jotiba Phooley, Periyar Ramaswami Naiker, Narayan Guru etc., there came up Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar.

Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar was unique in his socio-religious philosophy, in creativity and

criticism. Hindu society and religion came within the purview of his criticism. In fact Hindu society, as it exists today, has been more or less the same since the arrival of the *Manusmriti* which most probably was written in the period between the 2nd Century B.C. and 2nd Century A.D. In the post-Mauryan period along with the revival of Brahminism following the anti-Buddhist activity of Pushyamitra Sunga, social stratification on the basis of the four castes became rigorous. The *Manusmriti* was written in the name of Manu but his original name was Sumati Bhargav. Most probably, Pushyamitra Sunga patronised the writings of the *Manusmriti* which embodied the Brahminical system of social order, and it set the social tradition of the Hindus. The Manu carries on the tradition of the *Sutra* literature, specially the *Apastamba Sutra*. In this *Sutra* the inter-relationship of four castes is stated thus: "Among these *varnas* (*Brahmans*, *Kshatriyas*, *Vaishyas* and the *Shudras*) the preceding one is superior by birth to that which follow it" (*Apastamba* 1.1.1.4-5).³

It may be noted that the *Manusmriti* went a step further in degrading the women folk along with the *Shudras*. Ambedkar has given reasons for this. According to him the women folk presented 50% of the population and if the *Shudras* were added to the number, they would have formed 70% of the population at least. It was the fear of the majority domination by the *Shudras* and the women that influenced the decision to degrade these two categories of people. Besides, there were others namely the *Atishudras* forming the Untouchables of the society.

The *Manusmriti* has accorded inferior status to all castes other than the Brahmins. It is stated in the *Manusmriti* that the Brahmins are the Gods on earth (*Bhudev*). It is because of the excellence of their birth, they are entitled to all the wealth of the earth.⁴ As regards the others, they are to eat the remains of the food left by the Brahmins and to wear the cloths worn by the Brahmins and left off. The whole philosophy of the Brahmins has been to dominate over the other castes and enjoy the life and property without intrusion by the other castes. To keep down the rebellion by the other castes the Brahminical system has introduced what has been called "the graded inequality" by Ambedkar at the time of winding the debate on the constitution of India in the Constituent Assembly on 25th of November, 1949.

Ambedkar has indicated in the constitution that it would give the citizens of India Justice, 'Liberty', 'Equality' and 'Fraternity'. The preamble to the constitution incorporates these principles thus :

“ Justice, Social ,economic and political ;

Liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship;

Equality of status and of opportunity ; and to promote among them all

Fraternity assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the Nation.”

Ambedkar explained before the Constituent Assembly that the caste system is anti-national since it breeds jealousy and hatred . The minimum sense of fraternity is wanting because of inter-caste hatred and exclusiveness mainly propagated and practised by the Brahmins.

The Hindu caste system is the most significant example of Hindu socio-religious hierarchy . The Indian Statutory Commission 1930 (Cmd.3568).Vol.I.,Cap.IV.stated in its Report, that “Every Hindu necessarily belongs to the caste of his parents and in that caste he inevitably remains . No accumulation of wealth and no exercise of talents can alter his caste status; and marriage outside his caste is prohibited or severely discouraged .”⁵ Caste signifies the enhancement and transformation of social distance into a religious or a magical principle . In the Hindu system, the religious doctrine permits caste mobility for the individual, in a re-incarnated life only .

It may be noted in this connection that “caste” and “class” are different. A “class” may mean any category or type within which individuals or units fall . We may speak , for example, of novel readers or social reformers as constituting a “class”. Here we do not deal with a group in the sociological sense. However we may think of artists, physicians, engineers and mechanics as classes . But these are occupational categories . The various occupations make up *vertical* division of the community, whereas the divisions that reflect the principle of social class are the *horizontal* strata, always a graded order. Wherever social intercourse is limited by considerations of status, by distinctions between “higher”and “lower” there social class exists. In this context a social class is any portion of community marked off from the rest by social status. A

system or structure of social classes involve, first , a hierarchy of status groups, second, the recognition of the superior-inferior stratification and finally some degree of permanency of the structure.⁶

The Hindu caste system is basically a fixed order of occupations. Thus Manu describes the man's creation: " But for the sake of the prosperity of the world , he caused the *Brahman*, the *Kshatriya*, the *Vaishya* and the *Shudra* to proceed from his mouth, arms, his thighs and his feet...But in order to protect this universe he ... assigned separate duties and occupations and to those who sprang from his mouth, arms, thighs, and feet."⁷ (manu, 1, 31, 87.)

A solidified caste structure, such as in India, involves the most extreme form of status hierarchy. The separation of caste from caste, however, does not prevent significant status differences from developing within the major divisions. Castes of any size always have their superior and privileged families. Individuals within the caste may differ in wealth, in occupational efficiency, in physical attainment and so on . In short, social classes may form within the broader caste divisions, a phenomenon set apart by strong barriers to social intercourse. The rigid demarcation of caste has been maintained by religious pursuance. The Hindu caste structure may have a reason out of the subjection incidental to conquest and also out of the subordination of one endogamous community to another.

B.R.Ambedkar had been disillusioned of the Hindu social order because of the atrocities committed on the Untouchables. The Manuvites involved with the ideology of the *Manusmriti* carried on this oppression. He came to realise that the Hindu social system was not a place for the Untouchable to take shelter. He was firmly convinced of incorrigibility of the Manuvites in this regard. He drafted the Hindu Code Bill but this could not be passed. Even the prime minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru betrayed him — he did not keep his promise given to Ambedkar in respect of passing the Hindu Code Bill. He, therefore, thought of working for the amelioration of the Scheduled Castes from outside the Hindu religion. In fact religion and society are integrally related to the Hindus. Hence, it is desirable to go outside the Hindu fold so as to bring in reform against the Hindu system. Here he played the role of an iconoclast.

In this connection he attacked the Godmen in Hinduism. On the occasion of the Buddha anniversary in Delhi in 1950, he spoke of the Buddha's religion as being best of morality. It was based on ethics and the Buddha acted as guide and not as a god. Other religions too spoke of gods. Krishna said that he was the God of Gods. Christ said that he was God's son and Mohammad said that he was the last messenger of God. All these religions and their founding fathers claimed infallibility for themselves and the founders called themselves the saviours. It was only the Buddha who spoke his role as a guide. In place of God in Buddhism there was morality, namely *Dhamma*. *Dharma* to the Hindu brahmins was *yajna* and sacrifice to God. The Buddha instituted morality, '*karuna*' and good work as the essence of *Dharma*. The social practice of Hinduism was inequality, whereas Buddhism stood for equality.

In his article entitled *Buddha and the Future of his Religion* which he contributed to the '*Mahabodhi Society Journal*,' Ambedkar summarised his thought on Buddhism thus ⁸ : “ (1) The society must have either the sanction of law or the sanction of morality to hold it together. Without either the society is sure to go to pieces. (2) Religion if it is to function must be in accord with reason which is another name for science. (3) It is not enough to consist of a moral code, but its moral code must recognise the fundamental tenets of liberty, equality and fraternity. (4) Religion must not sanctify or ennoble poverty.”

Ambedkar came to Bombay on May 5, 1950 and told the representative of the *Janata* a weekly edited by his son, that he was inclined to Buddhism, since the principles of Buddhism were abiding and were based on equality. This inclination ultimately led him to accept Buddhism. Meanwhile, Ambedkar went to Rangoon to attend the Third Buddhist World Conference. He declared that he would propagate Buddhism in India when equipped with proper means for the task. He had already achieved several things to that end. He described the provision for the study of Pali in the constitution, the inscription of a Buddhist aphorism on the frontage of the Rastrapati Bhavan in New Delhi and the acceptance of Asoke Chakra by India as her symbol. The Govt. of India had declared *Buddha Jayanti* as holiday mainly through his efforts. The new year, 1955 opened with the news that Ambedkar was going to embrace Buddhism. D. Valin

Singha general secretary of the Mahabodhy Society of India, Calcutta extended hearty congratulation to Ambedkar on his decision to embrace Buddhism in 1956. He observed that Ambedkar's name would go down in history as one of the greatest benefactors of humanity. If six crores of people in India accepted Buddhism, it would bring new life to the country.

A talk by Ambedkar was broadcast in May, 1956, from the British Broad Casting Corporation, London on "Why I like Buddhism and how it is useful to the world in its present circumstances." ⁹

"I prefer Buddhism," he observed, "because it gives three principles in combination which no other religion does. Buddhism teaches *Prajna* (understand as against superstition and supernaturalism), *karuna* (love) and *samata* (equality). This is what man wants for a good and happy life, neither God nor soul can save society. Marxism and communism have shaken the religious systems of all the countries. He claimed that Buddhism was a complete answer to Marxism. Poverty cannot be an excuse for sacrificing human freedom. Once it is realised that Buddhism is a social gospel, its revival would be an everlasting event."

It would appear from the above study that Ambedkar had been protesting against the Hindu social system from the very beginning of his career, Buddhism was in his heart. A life long debate as to its acceptance within himself drove him to his conversion to Buddhism. He announced on September 23, 1956 that his conversion to Buddhism would take place at Nagpur on *Dassara* day October 14, 1956. between 9 A.M. and 11 A.M. To this end he invited Rev. Bhikshu Chandramani of Kushinara, Gorakpur district to Nagpur, to initiate into Buddhism on October 14. Ambedkar's Buddhism was a sort of Neo-Buddhism. After conversion he reminded the audience of his promise taken in 1935 that even though he was born Hindu, but he would not die as a Hindu. On the conversion date three lakhs of his followers embraced Buddhism.

Ambedkar also announced that he would launch a political party named Republican Party of India (R.P.I.). The Neo-Buddhist Movement in India prospered all along this. The R.P.I. was formed out of the A.I.S.C.F., which represented the Depressed and Backward Classes in India. The name S.C.F. was changed to R.P.I. in 1957 to give it a natural look. The R.P.I. initially devoted to the problems of landless labourers, of whom the Untouchables constituted major proportions. Under Gaekwad's leadership struggles of landless labourers began in Dhulia Jalgaon

and Nasik District and in parts of the Nagpur region. Nearly 50 thousand workers went to jail in 1959. Another massive *Satyagrah* was launched by the R.P.I. towards the end of 1964 to press the Govt. to distribute fallow and wasteland near the railway land and canal among the landless peasants. At the time of 1967 election, the Congress leaders worked out an alliance with the R.P.I.¹⁰ This was the beginning of the R.P.I.'s political achievement.

B.R. Ambedkar played the dual role of a Hindu and a Buddhist. This is reflected in the title of the work : 'Socio-Religious Philosophy of B.R. Ambedkar and the Genesis of the Neo-Buddhist Movement in India.' Had Ambedkar died a Hindu he would still be remembered as a great social reformer, as an educationalist, and as a fighter for human rights. He would be honoured for the political, educational, and occupational safeguards he won on behalf of the Scheduled Castes . He would also be revered for the myth he embodied, the myth of a boy born in the mud of untouchability, who rose to a position of power and national influence without ever forgetting his people . But he did not die a Hindu ; he converted to Buddhism , and in so doing , offered his people some even stronger myths : the myth of spiritual and social rebirth, the myth of the Buddhist revival in India, and the myth of the *Dhamma* Revolution.¹¹

The myths have survived because they have taken roots , not so much in the masses through whom they find their most spectacular impression, but in the heart of each one of Ambedkar's followers. Somehow these great myths have emerged and interacted with millions of individual patterns and personal myths, enriching them, directing them, galvanising them, amplifying the urge to growth and further unfoldment which is innate in us all.¹²

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CHAPTER - II

The Roots of Division : The Hindu Socio-Religious Hierarchy

The Hindu social system is structuralised by the code of religion . It is based on ‘*varna-ashrama dharma*’. *Ashrama* relates to the four stages of life - *Brahmacharya*, *Garhastha*, *Vanprastha*, and *Sannyas*. *Varna* is the four divisions of society on the basis of labour and inheritance . The two schemes based on *varna* and *ashrama* are known as *varna ashrama - vyabastha* that is the organisation of *varna* and *ashrama*. Whereas *varna* deals with the division of society i.e. *Brahmana*, *Kshatriya*, *Vaishya* and *Shudra* ; *ashrama* deals with the nature of training and living in four stages of life . Thus there emerged four Castes and four *ashramas* . The origin of *varna* is still obscure. Literally it is said that *varna* was not hereditary, it was based on the inborn quality, training and profession of an individual; owing to degradation of the concept of *varna* and its practice in later times it became hereditary . For the origin and growth of *varna* more emphasis, of course, is given on the conflict, inter-relations and blood-mixture between the Aryans and the non-Aryans in India.¹

The Hindu Hierarchy consists of two parts as already outlined above .The one relates to the *ashrama*, while the other to the *varna*. The word “ hierarchy” means “ any system of persons or thing in graded order”.²

The Social Psychology of the four *Ashramas*

The Hindu *Sastrakars* or the *Sastra-writers* have taken man into account as a social being with regard to four broad factors that influenced his life and conduct . He is considered in relation to (i) *Desh* (place) which is said to be the regional approach to the study of society; (ii) *Kala* (time), which constitutes the historical approach to the study of society; (iii) *Srama* (effort) which takes into account his nurture and development in his environment; and (iv) *Guna*

(natural traits), which refers to the natural and inherent psychological environment of a man.³

It is advisable for the proper understanding of the *ashramas* that we should look into the theory of the 'Purusarthas' — '*dharma, artha, kama and moksha*'. These are psychomoral bases of the *ashrama* theory . This is so for two reasons . On the one hand, the individual receives a psychological theory through the *ashramas* in terms of lessons in the use and management of the '*purusartha*'; on the other hand, in actual practice, he has to deal with society in accordance with these lessons . It is usual to translate the terms *dharma, artha, kama* and *moksha* in English by such words as morality, wealth, desires or passion and salvation respectively . However, english words are in many cases devoid of the overtones of Sanskrit.⁴

Let us now return to the theory and practice of the *ashrama* proper . The word *ashrama* is derived from the Sanskrit root *shrama* to exert oneself'. Thus it may mean (i) a place where exertions are performed and (ii) the action of performing such exertions.⁵ Literally an *ashrama* is a 'halting or resting place'. The word thus signifies a halt, a stoppage or stage in the journey of life just for the sake of rest ; in a sense in order to prepare oneself for further journey . Thus the '*ashrama*' are regarded as resting places or work-places during one's journey on the way to final liberation which is the final aim of life . The four stages of life, according to Vyas in the *Mahabharata*, formed a ladder or flight of four steps and this flight attaches to *Brahma*. By ascending that flight one reaches the region of *Brahma*.⁶

The *ashramas* are four in number: (1) the *Brahmacharya*— that of student, (2) the *Garhastha* — that of married man, the house - holder, (3) the *Vanaprastha*- that of a retired life in the forest after abandoning the home, preparatory to complete renouncement of worldly relations, and (4) the *Sannyas*- the life of complete renunciation of worldly relations and attachments. The *Brahmacharya ashrama* concerns itself with the management of education as a social institution and the institution is a social and psychological phenomenon . Education is the principal instrument in the hands of a social group by means of which it passes on and hands over to other individuals and posterity's the tradition, discipline and culture it has gathered towards making the best and most important gift of human life . It is evident that amongst all

social institutions the system and outlook of education is of primary importance . In the words of R. H. Lowie —” Conceivably a people could dispense with religion, as the U.S.S.R. has tried to do; conceivably a state might refuse to distinguish fixed forms of sexual union as marriage. But education is indispensable to any society, for without it there would be lost all the accumulated knowledge of the ages and all standards of conduct .Education is the social economy that forestalls such wastage.”⁷

The Brahmacharya ashrama

In the ancient ages the pupil had to live with his teacher and through dialogue got to the tenets of teachings and this stage of learning was known Brahmacharyasrama. After the *Brahmacharya* period was over, the pupil had to take a dip in water and then with the permission of the teacher returned home to start the second stage in his life namely *garhastha* . Because of the dip in water, pupil was called *snatak* symbolizing one who has taken a bath in the water of learning . Nowadays a student after graduation is admitted in a convocation to particular degree and he is charged ‘ to prove worthy of the same’. This means that the student after graduation or after degrees or diplomas has to prove worthy of the same in later life .In ancient time the education that a *snatak* had with his teacher has been finely expressed thus : “Both the teacher and the pupil referring to Brahma prayed thus : Please protect us both and give both of us fruits of education equally . Let us equally acquire the ability to have learning . Let the efforts of both of us in learning be successful . Let us not envy each other”.⁸ But education was not open to all. A *Shudra*, inspite of inherent tendril and ability could not study with a *Brahman* either student or teacher.

The Garhasthasrama

On return to the house the *garhastha* system would come into being .The *Brahmachari* now is to set up his family . To this end marriage became a necessity . It is to be noted that marriage is a social institution with the family or family is a social institution of which marriage is a part. Now *garhastha ashrama* that is the house holder’s life starts . As a social institution marriage has been defined by Wester Marck “ as a relation of one or more men to one or more women which is recognised by customs or law , and involves certain rights and duties both in the

case of the parties entering the union and in the case of the children born of it.”⁹ Such a definition of marriage indicates that some aspects of the family itself are also included in its connotation. Thus when Wester Marck points out that “marriage is something more than a regulated sexual behaviour,” and that “it is an economical institution, which may in various ways affect the proprietary rights of the party”,¹⁰ refers more to the issues connected with the structure and function of the family than to marriage itself. All these considerations are equally true to these Hindu social institution of marriage (*vivaha*).

It has been held by Manu (ix .96): “to be mothers were women created, and to be fathers men; therefore the *Vedas* ordained that *dharma* must be practised by man together with his wife”. ‘*Vivaha*’ is one of the *sarirasamaskaras* or sacraments sanctifying the body through which every man and woman must pass at proper age and time. Manu (ix .25) considers it a social institution for regulation of proper relations between the sexes.

It is difficult to define precisely and briefly the institution of the family. As a social institution the family has emerged to satisfy certain basic biological, psychological and social needs of man. The primary functions are (i) the stable satisfaction of the sexes, and the psychosomatic needs of man and woman; (ii) procreation, care and nurture of the young ; and (iii) the sharing of a home for living.¹¹ The three functions are so united that each of them reinforces and enriches the satisfactions of others.

Psycho-analysts have traced the psycho-social influence of the family on the individual . In this connection one may note Alder’s studies of the child in relation to the family and Freud’s psycho-analytical studies. Comte recognised the deep influence of the family life upon the individual when he said : “ In the family life alone can the social instincts find any basis for growth”.¹² All the altruistic attitude of man could be traced to their roots in the family life; cooperation, self sacrifice, service to humanity, universal brotherhood, love for living being have been traced back to their origin in co- operation in the family life.¹³

The Vanaprasthashrama

Although four grades of training include the recluse and the *sannyasi*, the *Chhandogya*

Upanishad excludes the fourth, on the ground that it is outside the *ashramas*. The house holder's life is very important . In the third *ashrama* the beginnings are made for the yielding of the same for the final *yajna* which is expected to be performed in the last *ashrama*. The individual now gives up his fields of *artha* and *kama* by leaving his near and dear ones, his family (*kula*), his village (*grama*) and by abandoning his belongings and possession. He now goes out into the forest (*bana*), for meditation and service to others and, he trains himself up for the execution of the final *yajna* of the *sannyas ashrama*, the last *ashrama*.¹⁴

Sannyas

The last *ashrama* provides the fullest opportunity for the self expression and self expansion of the individual in terms of the final *yajna* . *Sannyas* means a complete offering of the self (*atmahuti*) for the achievement of the true spirit of life and its perfection . Then the self surrenders all that was nearest and dearest to its lower ego , in order that thereby and thereafter it may enable itself to be one with the real self (the *Paramatma*) . Through *Sannyas* the individual becomes, a *yajnibhakta* . He has undergone the schooling and discipline from stage to stage, *ashrama* to *ashrama*, realising more and more that neither he belongs to this *samsar* (the world in appearance where the self cherishes all desires and longs to enjoy) nor this *samsar* belongs to him . He now realises fully the place and meaning of the self in the midst of *samsar* and he brings himself face to face with the final aim of all existence, namely *moksha* in the last stage.¹⁵

It may be seen from the above that the *ashramas* are regarded as schools of life at several stages of human existence, devised and organised towards the best likelihood for the individual to attain the aim of *moksha*, in accordance with the theory of the ultimate nature of thing . During these different stages of life, the functions of the group and the individual are both different and definite with regard to each other. In the first *ashrama*, the function of the group is to look after the individual . On the other hand as far as the individual is concerned, it is a phase of interaction. In the second *ashrama* the individual has to look after the group— he is the trusty and manager of the social estate, of the social mores. The group here is interested in giving him and taking from him the fullest opportunities, social, economic, physical and spiritual , so that the indi-

vidual should best satisfy these obligations. The third *ashrama* is largely a neutral phase from the point of view of the individual as well as of the group. Here on the part of the individual, efforts have to be made to yield to his spiritual responsibilities towards the manifestation of the power of the self. By and by he is to take to life according to the best lessons acquired in the *Brahmacharya ashrama*, namely, going into oneself and finding the truth out for oneself. The feeling of separation from God begins to make itself felt at this stage. In the third *ashrama* and in the fourth, the function of the individual is to deal with the hidden, the dormant, the spiritual, the supernatural and with life within; and the function of the group becomes gradually thinned out and in the fourth, it comes almost nil. In the last stage, the individual free from all obligation, has to help himself in the search of the true knowledge and being of the self.¹⁶

The four stages of life were not equitably meaningful to all men and women right from the early *Vedic* period of Indian history. The low-castes were deprived of enjoying and practising the distinguished grades of works as demarcated by different *ashramas*. The *ashramas* exclusively meant for Brahmins of course, the *Kshatriyas* having fulfilled the task of defence and administration could enter the last two stages too, though training during the first stage was rather mandatory for the son of a king. The Shudras, who constituted the major chunk of the population had no right to educate themselves in any *ashramas* run by the Brahmins. The *ashramas*, therefore, were not universal-social institutions; these were virtually preserved for the socio-religious aristocracy of the high caste Hindus.

The Four Varnas

In literal sense, in the *varna* organisation the society is considered from the view point of the larger group and the individual's position is defined in this group with reference to his innate nature, tendencies, disposition and profession. There are several passages in the *Rig Veda* dealing with the origin of the *varnas*, generally meaning socio-religious classes and effectively signifying economic and political status also. The *Purusasukta* in the *Rig Veda* (x, 90, 12) says that the *Brahman varna* represented the mouth of *Purusa* (Universal man), the *Rajana* (*Kshatriya*) his arms, the *Vaishya* his thighs and the *Shudra* his feet. Zimmer and others have held the view

that the hymn of the *Purusasukta* was a later interpolation and that the institution of caste was not *Rig Vedic* but of later origin.¹⁷ However, it has been shown that there are other passages, apart from the *Purusasukta* in which the division of society into *varnas*, though not in the rigid form of later times, is mentioned. Thus, in the *Rig Veda* (viii.35.16-18) the three *varnas* - *Brahmana*, *Kshatriya*, and *vaishya* are mentioned. In the *Rig Veda* (I.113.16) the four *varnas* are referred to thus: "one to high sway (i.e., the *Brahmana*) and one to exalted glory (i.e., the *Kshatriya*), one to pursue his gain (i.e., *Vaishya*) and one to his labour (i.e., *Shudra*) - all to regard their different vocations, all moving creatures hath the Dawn awaking".¹⁸ Haugh's opinion on the origin of the institution of caste seems to be correct. According to him, "It has been of late asserted that the original parts of the *Vedas* do not know the system of castes. But this conclusion was prematurely arrived at without sufficiently weighing the evidence. It is true that caste system is not to be found in such a developed stage; the duty assigned to several castes are not so clearly defined as in the law book and *Puranas* but nevertheless the system is already known in the certain parts of the *Vedas* or other pre-supports."¹⁹

In the *Vedic* times there were no restrictions as regards particular occupations for persons belonging to a particular *varna*. Thus a person born as a *Brahmana* could take the occupation of a physician without thereby anyway degrading his social status. With *Som* as their sovereign lord the plants hold colloquy and say, "Oh, King, we save from death the man whose cure a *Brahmana* undertakes."²⁰ A *Brahmana* Rishi says: "I am a poet, my father is a physician, my mother a grinder of corn. With our different views, seeking after gain, we ran after cattle."²¹ It is also seen that there were no restrictions in the *Rig Vedic* society in the matter of diet and drink and in this respect there was no obvious exclusiveness between the different *varnas* such as we find in the later society.²² Whatever food or drink was usual was common to all the *varnas*. So too there was no 'higher' or 'lower' *varna* for matrimonial alliances.²³ But things changed in the later times for the worse and inter-dining and inter-marriages between different castes were precluded.

The *Rig Veda* narrates the '*Deva-Asura*' war. The '*Devas*' were superior in rituals, whereas the '*Asuras*' in military prowess. The difference between the two was related to the *yajna*

(Vedic ritual of sacrifice by burning *ghee* in fire along with the recitation of hymns invoking the Gods for some purpose). The *Devas* performed the *yajnas* while the *Asuras* did not. The *Devas* believed in the power of morality and spiritualism whereas the *Asuras* depended on their own intelligence and this signified their religious differences. Since the *Devas* relied on intuition, they are called intuitionist. On the other hand the *Asuras* or *Dasas* and *Dasyaus* as they were so called relied on their reasoning power and physical strength. In Sanskrit term the intuitionists were called the *Brahmanyavadis*, while the *Dasas* and *Dasyus*, the *Boudhas*.²⁴

The above account of the *Vedic* period shows that the *varnas* had been “open classes” as termed by Cooley.²⁵ They were not water tight compartments, the membership of which was determined by virtue of heredity and that was “more based on individual traits and less upon decent.”²⁶ Generally, however, the *varnas* became more and more marked off and separated from each other. They came to be addressed in four different ways, differing in degrees of politeness as indicated by the terms *ehi*, *agachchha*, *adrava* and *adhava* respectively to be used for welcoming persons of the four different *varnas*.²⁷ Different sizes of funeral cakes (*pinda*) were prescribed for different *varnas*.²⁸

While reciting the *Gayatri mantra* the three *Varnas* were to start each with the different word: the *Brahmana* with *Bhuh*, the *Kshatriya* with *Bhuvah* and the *Vaishya* with *svah*.²⁹ And the *Satapatha Brahmana* says that the *varnas* were created from these words.³⁰ Gradually the distinction between different *varnas* grew in terms of different rights and privileges as mentioned in different passages of the *Vedic* literature including the *Samhitas*, the *Brahmanas*, and the *Upanishads*. In the later period, the *Shudra* still held the position of a menial labourer or slave. Even then there was less restriction upon him. He was at times allowed the liberty of even taking part in sacrificial ceremonies.³¹ Instead of three *varnas* mention is now usually made of the four *varnas* together, the *Shudra* also finds a place along with the three other *varnas*. Though the *Shudra* was now accepted as the fourth *varna* along with the three other *varnas*, he was not yet free from many of the old disabilities. His duty continued to be as in older times, to serve the other *varnas*. He was not allowed to recite ‘*mantras*’ and perform sacrifices.³²

There is a good deal of theorising in the *Epic* and the *Dharmasastra* literature on the problem of the origin and development of the *varnas*. There were no distinct caste or classes of men in the *Treta Yuga* according to the *Mahabharata*.³³ The theory of the origin of the *varnas* from the various parts of the creator's body also finds a place in the *Mahabharata*.³⁴ The theory that the four *varnas* proceeded from the limbs of the creator is also held by *Manusmriti*.³⁵ Manu goes on eulogizing the *Brahmana varna* as the supreme creation of God.³⁶ He positively asserts further that the *Brahmana*, *Kshatriya*, *Vaishya* and *Shudra* are the only *varnas* in existence. And there is no fifth *varna* to which *Yajnavalkya*, *Baudhayana* and *Vasistha* also agree.³⁷

Jatis

Manu's theory of the origin of the mixed castes deserves mention. Intermarriages between these new castes give rise to newer and newer castes so that the process goes on multiplying.³⁸ In a *sloka* (x.11) Manu has used the word *jati* as distinct from *varna*. This *sloka* opens the topic concerning offspring begotten on a woman of higher *varna* by a man of lower *varna*. Thus form of inter-caste marriages, the *Suta*, the *Magadha* and the *Vaideha* are so named as *jati* (*jatitah*). Manu also uses the term *varna-sankara* mixture of *varnas*, in this connection.³⁹ Though Manu refers to four *varnas* only, he mentions about 57 *jatis* as a result of *varna-sankara*.

In the *Rig Veda*, society is said to have been classified according to four *varnas*. Originally *varna* indicated colour or appearance. It is derived from the \sqrt{bri} meaning "to select or occupation". On other hand *jati* is derived from the \sqrt{jan} , meaning "to be born". Hence *jati* relates to caste whereas *varna* relates to occupational class. But the two do not correspond with each other. Subsequently, of course, the two were mixed up, and Senart has admitted it.⁴⁰ However, Senart's classification of *Arya varna* and *Das varna* is not tenable. Actually Manu's *jati-system* has been based on "Mathematical device of permutation and combination."⁴¹ Manu has tried to give an explanation of the mixed castes on the basis of his device. He has accepted the "four-rank system" of the *varna* and explained the mixed castes by a combination of different categories of *varnas*.

Manu's derivation of the mixed castes is as follows. Let us assume that Bb represents the marriage of Brahmin male and female; Kk that of *Kshatriya* male and female; Vv that of *Vaishya*

male and female and Ss that of *Shudra* male and female. If a Brahmin marries a female from each of the three lower castes, the *jatis* would be Bk, Bv, Bs. Similarly in the case of Kshatriyas two *Jantis* Kv, Ks, in the case of *Vaishyas* there would be one *jati* Vs. These marriages are known as *Anuloma*. Six *Jatis* are produced by this. Now if a male of lower castes marries a female of upper caste, the marriage is known as *Pratiloma*. Hence, the number of such mixed castes (*Jatis*) would be twelve. In fact the four *varnas* by two kinds of mixture yield 204 *Jatis* as follows :-

(I) <i>Anuloma</i> and <i>Pratiloma</i> first mixture	- 12
(ii) 6 <i>Anuloma</i> mixtures	- 15
(iii) The same male and female in the reverse order	- 15
(iv) Mixture of four <i>varnas</i> with 6 <i>Anuloma</i> and 6 <i>Pratiloma</i>	- 48
(v) 6 <i>Pratilomas</i> amongst themselves and with mixtures of 4 <i>varnas</i>	- 78
(i.e., ii and iv)	
(vi) 6 <i>Anulomas</i> and 6 <i>Pratilomas</i> in their internal mixtures	- 36
	Total - <u>204</u>

Manu has named some *Jatis* but the list is not exhaustive.⁴²

Recent researches into *Manusmriti* have revealed that the picture of society as depicted by Manu has very little correspondence with the realities of life. O' Malley has observed that the Brahmins in their writings of the *Manusmriti* have given an ideal picture of their own accord.⁴³ *Manusmriti* is the evil deed of Brahmana Pushyamitra who as the chief of the army killed his Maurya emperor Brihadratha and ascended the throne of Magadha and established the Sunga dynasty (187 - 75 B.C.). The motive behind was to give supremacy to the Brahmins. Most probably, there was no author of the name Manu. It was, in fact, a compilation by many.

The West Bengal Government published Ashok Mitra's *The Tribes and Castes of West Bengal* in 1951. Mitra has collected many illusory tales with regard to castes. He has not been able to see through the game of the *Manusmriti*. He overlooked the recent researches of Ramaprasad Chanda and Nihar Ranjan Roy. As a result scientific, social and historical aspects

have been neglected. In identifying the castes, he should have been more meticulous and inquisitive in the study of their origin and multiplications.

The Mixed Castes

According to Manu (x.4) the original development of humanity was confined to *Four Castes*, “The three castes, the *Brahman*, the *Kshatriya* and the *Vaishya* are twice born; the fourth, the *Shudra* is once born, and there is not a fifth.” These divisions of human society are, however, quite inadequate in view of diversities in human society. Considering the variation and evolution of human ideas, creativity and occupation, society can not be confined to the divisions of four castes only. Hinduism recognises such classes, and views them as certain and despises the degraded classes of people as the issues of connivable intercourse and adultery. It calls them mixed castes (*varna sankara*) or hybrid. But according to John Wilson,⁴⁴ “the Mixed Castes must have originated principally from the increase of occupations in the Hindu community brought about by the growing demand and division of labour, and by the circumstances of the dominant people coming in contact with aboriginal tribes, which keeping in the main beyond the pale of Hinduism, have either been ultimately degraded (i.e., untouchables), or have maintained for themselves in their own retreats in precarious independence.”

The primeval rule for the sons of women one degree lower than their husbands was that they were treated as degraded by the lowness of their mothers. For the sons of women two or three degrees lower the law was as follows. From a Brahmin on a *Vaishya* wife is born a son called *Ambashtha*, subsequently represented a *Vaidya* or physician; on a *Shudra* wife called *Nishad*. Similarly from a *Kshatriya* on a *Shudra* wife springs a creature called *Ugra*. The sons fathered by a Brahmin and born of women of three lower classes, are considered sequentially degraded. In this way Manu by means permutation and combination concocted the mixed castes. The mixed classes of Hindus more numerous than those belonging to the original four castes.

Four Orders :

The Brahmana

The *Sastras* dwell much on the pre-eminence of the *Brahmana*, both by birth and the

original endowment. The very birth of a Brahmin is a constant incarnation of *Dharma* for he is born to promote religion and to procure ultimate happiness. When a Brahmin springs to light, he is born above the world as the chief of all creatures he is assigned to guard the treasures of duties — religious and civil . Whatever exists in the universe is all in effect the wealth of the Brahmin. He is entitled to everything by the eminence of birth. The Brahmin eats his own foods, wears his own apparel and bestows his own in alms; through the benevolence of the Brahmins other mortals enjoy life.⁴⁵

His inherent qualities are “quiescence, self control, devotion , purity, patience, rectitude, secular and sacred understanding , the recognition of spiritual existence , and the inborn disposition of serving *Brahma*.”⁴⁶ In every limb of his body power and glory is resident . The purifying *Ganga* is in his right ear; his mouth is that of God himself, the devouring fire is in his hand; the Holy *tirthas* or places of pilgrimage are in his right foot.⁴⁷ The *Brahmana* is the “first born” by nature (*Agrajanma*); the “twice born “(*Dwija*), by the sacrament of the *Manu* , the “*Diti-on-earth*” (*Bhudeva*), by his divine status ; and the intelligent one (*Vipra*) by his innate comprehension.⁴⁸

The Brahmin thus is as, according to the *sastras* superior to all laws . Even once the code of morality was made subservient to the interest of the Brahmin. Even the truth and honesty must be dispensed with for his peculiar advantage . The *Manu* says, in case of sensual gratification and marriage, food and drink and in owning jewels and wealth all advantage must be made due to the Brahmin.⁴⁹ A Brahmin may without hesitation take the property of a *Shudra*, who has nothing of his own; his master may doubtlessly, take his property.⁵⁰ To this injustice, too, the most horrid cruelty may in his case be added. The point to note is that the Hindu sacred writings are in no degree ashamed of the barbarous treatments of the lower order of people in society. A once-born man, who insults the twice - born one with gross invectives, ought to have his tongue slit.

The Brahmins, as the great authors of the perceptive parts of the Hindu *sastras*, have no feeling of shame in stating their pretension and urging their prerogatives. Their wrath is dreadful

as that of Gods in heaven. They and their wives and daughters are to be worshipped as God on earth.⁵¹ Many opportunities and privileges are conferred on the Brahmins, and these are to be enforced by the state and the ruler . One thing , however, is certain, that as the Brahmin is acknowledged superior, he has little apprehension to account for deviations from his maxims, because no one is at liberty to judge him.⁵²

The Kshatriya

In Hindu caste system, the *Kshatriyas* constitute the class of the warrior, the ruler, the administrator and the prince. According to the orthodox view of castes, the *Kshatriya* sprang from the arms of the God *Brahma*, as the Brahmin from his head. This explanation of the *Kshatriya*, however, is not consistently adhered to in practice as well as in all the codes of the Hindus . In the seventh chapter of the Code of Manu, the creation and glory of a prince is thus set forth :

“ Since the world destitute of a king quaked on all sides, the Lord created a king for the maintenance of this system , both religious and civil forming him of eternal particles drawn from (the Gods); since a king was composed of particles drawn from this chief guardian deities, he consequently surpasses all beings in glory. A king, even though a child must not be treated lightly, from an idea that he is a mere mortal; no, he is powerful divinity who appears in human form.”⁵³

According to the *Bhagavat Geeta*,⁵⁴ the natural duties of the *Kshatriyas* are heroism, splendor, pertinacity, polity, not fleeing from the battle field, liberality and fitness to govern.” The *Kshatriya* is set forth in the Law book as the essence of majesty and power; and as the great dispenser of justice, particularly in the matter of punishment, of which he is the personal manifestation, and which though needed both by God and by men is to be leniently applied to Brahmins.⁵⁵ He is to be the protector of the various castes attending to their various duties.⁵⁶ In discharging his functions, he has to abide by the decision of the learned Brahmin.⁵⁷ He must cultivate humility and be warned by the example of kings, who in the lack of it, have involved themselves in ruin. He is enjoined to seek sacred and secular knowledge from the Brahmin and to avoid various kinds of immoralities and sensualities. He is recommended to choose 8 ministers - some are to be versed in the sacred books and others in the art of war. The ambassador (*dut*)

selected by him should be skilled in the *sastras*. He should live in a capital surrounded by a desert, and other ways difficult to approach and well defended fortifications, his own palace being in its centre. He must appoint a domestic priest (*purohit*), and be liberal in sacrifices and give to Brahmins.

He must be brave, resolute and generous . He must raise taxes from his subjects according to their means . He must not receive any tax from a Brahmin learned in the *Vedas*, while at the same time, he must not allow Brahmins to suffer or die of hunger.⁵⁸ He must choose for warlike campaigns , the season of the year must go favourable for weather and crops . His troops have to march in varied lines. He has to dispose of them in battle according to their capacities . To his neighbours who support his cause, he has to practise kindness. For self preservation, he has to be ready to part with his dominions and even with his family when required. “Against misfortune let him preserve his wealth ; at expense of his wealth, let him preserve his wife; but at all events let preserve himself, even at the hazard of wife and riches”.⁵⁹

From the Brahmin, but never from the *Shudra*, he has to seek the interpretation of law . The king is the guardian of all property, including that of minors and the owner of the half of treasure trove (the other half belonging to Brahmins), except that found by a learned Brahmin , who may take it without any deduction as he is the lord of all . He also receives the wealth of all other classes on the failure of heirs, except that of Brahmin, which must go to their own community without being escheated.⁶⁰ He is the upholder of the last laws and customs of the various classes of the community.⁶¹ In the dispensation of justice the king himself is not to be made a witness. It is his duty to keep the caste bellow himself closed to the works respectively prescribed for them. He should order the *Vaishya* to practice trade or money-lending or agriculture and attendance on cattle; and the *Shudra* to act in the service of the twice-born . The doctrines of Adam Smith were not in vogue when the laws of Manu were reduced to a Code.⁶²

The Vaishya

The *Vaishya* is the cattle keeper, the agriculturist and the merchant. Manu in his code has referred to his function to keep herds of cattle, to sacrifice , to read the scripture, to carry on

trade, to lend at interest, and to cultivate land. The *Bhagavat Geeta*⁶³ assigns to him the duties such as agriculture, keeping of cattle, and the practice of merchandise. In the law Books the general ordinances affecting the *Vaishyas* are the following. After forming the initiatory sacraments, ending with that of sacrificial threads, and marrying a wife of his own class, he should attend to his proper business, specially that of cattle keeping, since the lord of men has committed cattle to his trust in the same way as has committed man to that of the Brahmin and the *Kshatriya*. He has to be acquainted with the prices of mercantile commodities like gems, pearls, coral, iron, cloth, perfumes and liquids. He has to be skilled in sowing seeds, in the qualities of land in weights and measures, in the excellence and defects of articles of traffics, in the advantages and disadvantages of different districts in the probable gain and loss of goods, in the breeding of cattle, in the wages of servants, in the various languages of men, in the best places for keeping goods and in all measures for effecting purchase and sale. He should be vigilant when his wealth increases. Also he should be attentive to the giving off nourishment to all sentient creatures.⁶⁴ In this context the *Vaishya* requires considerable intelligence and ingenuity for the proper discharge of his duties.

The Shudra

The principal duty assigned to the *Shudras* is that of serving the Brahmin, the *Kshatriya* and the *Vaishya*, specially the Brahmin for whose advantage, principally he has been created. In the law book he is viewed as a domestic slave, to whom servitude is natural and of which he can not be divested, and whose property even is at the disposal of his master.⁶⁵ It is obvious from his daily engagement that ceremonial ablution was not required to the consequence of simple contact with him. His religious degradation is complete according to Hindu legislation.

Manu has laid down the following injunction on the Brahmin. He is not to give advice to a *Shudra*, nor clarified butter of which part has been offered to the Gods, nor spiritual counsel to such a man, nor inform him of the legal expression for his sin. Any one violating this injunction is condemned to a hell named *Asamvrita*.⁶⁶ A Brahmin is never to be the preceptor of a *Shudra*.⁶⁷ While the first part of a Brahmin's compound name should indicate holiness; of a *Kshatriya*'s

power ; and of a *Vaishya's* wealth, that of a *Shudra* should indicate contempt.⁶⁸ The *Veda* is never to be read in the presence of a *Shudra*.⁶⁹ No sacrifice is to be performed for him.⁷⁰ They who received property from a *Shudra* for the performance of rites to consecrated fire be condemned as ministers of the base.⁷¹

It is laid down that *Shudras* engaged in religious duties must perform each month the ceremony of shaving their heads ; their foods must be the orts of the Brahmins and their modes of purification the same with that of a *Vaishya*.⁷² A Brahmin is purified by water that reaches his bosom; a *Kshatriya* by water descending to his throat ; a *Vaishya* by water taken into his mouth; a *Shudra* by water touched by an extremity.⁷³ A *Shudra* must not marry in any caste superior to his own.⁷⁴ He must help in carrying the body of a Brahmin to the burning or burial ground so that the funeral rites may not be hindered and obstructions to entire may not occur.⁷⁵ He may drink the spirits of rites, while it interdicted to *Brahmans*, *Kshatriyas* and *Vaishyas*.⁷⁶

It has been held in subsequent times that the two castes namely the *Kshatriyas* and *Vaishyas* no longer exist. In explanation of this doctrine the legend of Parsurama is referred to. In the *Puranas*, specially the *Vishnu Purana* (P.610), it is stated that Parsurama, an incarnation of God Vishnu, killed all the *Kshatriyas* in 21 engagements. Thereafter, king Nanda , son of Mahananda, a *Shudra* became the king.

The above study brings to light the fact that the scriptural, doctrinal and practical background and aspects of the Hindu caste system have dominated all socio-economic and political relations and activities of the Hindus all along the course of the Indian history. In the very structure of Hindu social relations the upper castes in sequence made the lower castes subservient. The Brahmins remained at the top with the political, and military support of the *Kshatriyas*, and the *Shudras* had to render service in subservience to all. Of the *Shudras* , the Untouchable's life was pitiable by all considerations. For embarking on human rights with the coming of the dawn from slumber things had to change, and therefore, there woke up a new beginning with a protest movement which right from its infantile stage was led by Dr.B.R.Ambedkar. No wonder, this protest movement ultimately took a consequential turning with the Neo-Buddhist Movement.

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CHAPTER - III

Socio-Economic, Cultural and Political conditions of the Untouchables in India.

Homo Hierarchicus and Caste Hierarchy

The caste system laid the foundation of Hindu social hierarchy and this distinguishes Indian society from any modern egalitarian society, whose progressive fundamental principle is equalis, that is *homo equalis*. *Homo hierarchicus* meaning graded difference between different groups and stocks of people is prevalent in India, whereas *homo equalis* is seen in Europe. This signifies that inspite of the existence of different racial groups in Europe, there does not exist any caste system. A high sense of equality is observed there. The trend of modern society is, however, towards egalitarianism. Keeping pace with the humanistic outlook of the modern world, the constitution of free India in its preamble however, has incorporated the basic human right to equality regardless of the Indians' differences in caste and creed. The chief architect of the constitution has specially emphasised this equality. The Manuvite attitude is towards, *graded inequality* as encouraged by *Homo hierarchicus* so as to give preference to the Brahmins, *Khatriyas* and the *Vaishyas*. Any egalitarian system is opposed by those who see its effect upon themselves as disadvantageous. Any social hierarchy perpetuated by the privileged and the elite and it is opposed by those who are oppressed.¹

It may be noted that people belonging to different castes are held together by power maintained and exercised by the privileged classes for their own interest. Though the system is obviously to the detriment of the downtrodden, but it holds on implicit consensus on the basis of power relations and integrated pluralism controlled by the higher castes in gradation. This approximates the view of social inequality which Lenski calls the '*radical antithesis*'.² It may be pointed out here that the caste system often succeeded in articulating the activities of diverse groups. But this does not mean that for individuals and groups such system may not be starkly

dysfunctional by limiting opportunities, thwarting aspirations and precluding effective alternatives. Ultimately the caste system is likely to pave its path to conflict as mass media and other appurtenances of modernisation afford opportunity for those who suffer denigration under caste organisation to challenge it or throw it off.

Caste is thus a means for ordering the relations among desperate groups. As a form of pluralism, it is an alternative to assimilation or eradication of groups in contact, although it is not the only alternative. Non-hierarchical pluralism is another possibility, but how often such pluralism occurs is a moot point. Perhaps that hierarchy almost inevitably developed its pluralism persists, for power is never held equally, and group identity, loyalty and self interest may tend to cause it to pass on within the groups, that frequently by birth. Caste organisation can be effective in achieving ordered relations among groups for a time, but its ability to withstand universal education, mass media, egalitarian ideologies, and the elimination of monopolies which it engenders is highly doubtful.³

A number of factors contribute to the possibility, likelihood, or degree of exploitation. This includes the kinds of service performed, by whom, and under what circumstances. Empirically, it appears that exploitation occurs most prominently under the following interrelated and interdependent circumstances:

1. When there is an important disparity between the economic power of *jajman* and worker, especially when and to a considerable degree the latter is directly dependent upon the former for his livelihood, Potential exploitation is increased when the worker is in weak bargaining position in his relationship with his client as a result of: (a) lack of essential services to offer the client; (b) lack of occupational monopoly; (c) lack of assured clientele; (d) lack of independent or alternative sources of income; (e) lack of occupational or residential mobility which would make alternative sources of livelihood or escape from exploitative clients possible; (f) lack of organisation to follow into a cohesive group that can withhold services as a means of obtaining its goals.

2. When there is an important disparity between the political power of the '*jajman*' and the 'worker', especially when and to the degree that the latter is dependent upon the former for his safety, peace of mind etc. Included here is differential access to agencies which may intervene between '*jajman*' and 'worker' or which control their well-being, e.g. councils, police or courts; also the ability to invoke legal, illegal, or customary sanctions. Sheer numbers of cohorts is relevant, for the control of physical force is sometimes crucial. Relative degree of cohesion or organisation is important. Clients who are well organised, often of the same or allied castes, and, therefore, able to present a united front in dealing with their workers, are in a better position to exploit than those who are not, just as organised workers are in a better position to resist exploitation than those who are not.

3. When there is an important disparity in ritually prescribed status, this may be largely due to the co-relation between ritual rank and other factors listed above. It may derive in part from overt majority support of value system, which grants to people of high status many rights and privileges denied to others, including the right to exploit those who are ritually far below them.⁴

A Brahmin priest might exploit an artisan client if the latter were sufficiently anxious to obtain his services, while a wealthy artisan might be in a position to exploit a struggling priest who badly need employment. Exploitation in the *jajmani* system is thus closely related to power, or in Srinivas' term, to caste dominance. It is almost inevitable where clients are relatively well - organised and in complete control of the well - being of their servants.⁵

On this subject of exploitation the literator Sibram Chakraborty has given a vivid description in his article '*Moscow Vs Pondicherry*'.⁶ He observes that -

“The Brahmin is the inventor of the basic permanent policy namely that governance is meant for exploitation. To cover up exploitation governance is to be put up as an ideal. In days of yore Brahmins knew it thoroughly well the underline principle of diplomacy that India was once civilised that is put to shame barbarism is illustrated by the Brahmins.

“The English have tried to mix policies with economics, but very often this mixture collapses and a conflict arises between the two. But the religious policy of the Brahmins of

those days harmonises the principle of religion with those of economics in such a way that this harmony still continues unabated. The exploiting machinery that they set up in those days still has its voluntary victims who of themselves come forward to being crushed under it. Indeed they had divine vision. The reason is they foresaw that their descendant would have to operate the man-crushing machine for their maintenance.

“They prepared the schedule of direct and indirect taxes. Modern economists have no such brains to prepare any such schedule. Thirteen festivals in twelve months , daily worship, peace giving rituals, solar and lunar eclipses — these are already there and to be practised as a routine duties. But which to be the priest in these rituals ! *Brahman* . Whom to be given gifts! *Brahman*. Gifts have varieties of kinds. Gold , silver , elephant, horses, clothing , utensils and lots of money according to the capacity of the ritual observer.

“Not only the gift ! Associated with it are feasts. Along with them there is the money to be given. At this the giver is delighted. To give this to the undeserving people does not stand to reason, yet the giver has no such question in his mind. He believes that his gift will lead him to eternal residence in heaven.”

Incidentally, it may be pointed out that Dr. B.R.Ambedkar on Nov. 25, 1949 in his winding up of the debates on the adoption of the constitution of India pointed out the defects in social democracy in India. He observes thus :⁷

“ On the 26th January , 1950 , we are going to enter into a life of contradictions. In politics we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality. In politics we will be recognising the principle of ‘one man one vote’ and ‘one vote one value’. In our social and economic life we shall, by reasons of our social and economic structure , continue to deny the principle of ‘one man one value’. How long shall we continue to live this life of contradiction? How long shall we continue to deny equality in our social and economic life ? If we continue to deny it for long,... Those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy which this Assembly has so laboriously built up.

“ The second thing we are wanting in is recognition of the principle of fraternity. Fraternity means a sense of common brotherhood of Indian— of Indians being one people . It is the principle which gives unity and solidarity to social life... The United States has no castes problem , in India there are castes . These castes are anti-national : in the first place because they bring about separation in social life. They are anti - national also because they generate jealousy and antipathy between castes and castes. Without fraternity, equality and liberty will be no deeper than coats of paints... Political democracy can not last unless there lies at the base of it social democracy. What does social democracy mean ? It means a way of life which recognises liberty , equality and fraternity as the principles of life. These principles of liberty , equality and fraternity are not to be treated as separate items in a trinity . They form a union of trinity in the sense that to divorce one from the other is to defeat the very purpose of democracy.”

The Untouchables and their Different Groups

About the origin of the castes there is interesting evidence found in the *Rig Veda* itself . Hymn-reciters carried on their duties and convinced the Kings and the richmen that they could carry the wishes to God through praises . In course of time, the hymn reciters or singers became known as “*Purohit*” (Priest Purotrata : *Rig Veda* vii.32.6.) and Vasistha was the *Purohit* of King Sudas and his tribes *Tratsu* (*Rig.Veda* vii.83.4). This is the origin of the Indian priestly class.⁸ The aristocrats could also become priest . This class acted as mediator between the people and the Gods . With the induction of this class the Brahmins turned into Gods. *Vratyas* are denied investiture with thread and made victims of the *Purushamedha* (human sacrifice) in *YajurVeda* (*Vajasaneyi Samhita* xxx,8). *Panchavimsa Brahmana* mentions four kinds of outcasts — (i) *Hina* (depressed) ; (ii) *Nindita* (outcasts for some sin); (iii) *Kanistha* (outcasts by living among them at an early age); and (iv) *Samanicamedhra* (old men, because of impotency, living with outcasts).⁹

The sunken humanity falls into three distinct categories—1. Primitive Tribes; 2.Criminal Classes ; and 3. Untouchables .

The Primitive Tribes

The name Primitive tribes refer to the people, who live in small scattered huts in forests . They live on wild fruits, nuts and roots. Fishing and hunting are also resorted to for the purpose of securing foods . Agriculture is a very small part in their social economy . Since food supplies are extremely precarious they lead a life of semi starvation . As to clothes they economise them to vanishing point .They move almost in a state of complete nakedness . There is a tribe known as *Bonda Porajas* which means *naked Porajas*. Of these people it is said that the women wear a very narrow strip which serves as a petticoat almost identical with what is worn by the *Momjak Nagas* in Assam , the ends hardly meeting at the top on the left thigh . These petticoats are woven at home out of the fibre of forest tree . Girls wear a fillet of beads and of palmyra leaf and on enormous quantity of beads and neck ornaments extremely like those worn by *Komjak* women . They shaved their heads entirely.¹⁰

The second category of Primitive tribes are known as the *Chenchus*, residing near Farhabad in the old Nizam's dominions (now Andhra Pradesh). Their houses are conical rather slight in structure made in bamboos sloping the central point and covered with thinnish layer of thatch. They wore scanty cloth, consisting of a *langoti* and a cloth in the case of men and short bodice and a petticoat in the case of women . They have a few cooking pots and a basket to contain grain . They keep cattle and goats and do a little cultivation . Elsewhere they subsist on honey and forest produce.¹¹

A third kind is the *Morias* . Men generally wore a single cloth round the waist with a flap down in the front. They also have a necklace of beads .When they dance they put on cock's feather in their turbans . Many girls are profusely tattooed on their faces and some other legs. This tattooing is according to the taste of individual and it is done with thorns and needles. In their hair many stick feathers of jungle cocks and their heads are adorned also with combs of wood and tin and brass.¹²

These primitive tribes have no prohibitions against eating anything for example worms and insects and any kind of meat from an animal who have died a natural death or been killed four days or more by a tiger. Their religion is the worship of demons of all denominations and dead ancestors of all antiquity . Witchcraft, sorcery, animal and human sacrifice make up their religion. They are without education and steeped in ignorance and superstition. They live in a savage state . Instead of marching along the path of modernisation they are where they have been so long doing nothing but marking time.¹³

Criminal Classes¹⁴

The criminal Tribes comprised of the *Pindharies* and the *Thugs* . The *Pindharies* were predatory body of armed gangsters. It was an open military organisation of free booters who could master 20,000 fine horses and even more. They were under the command of brigand chiefs Chitu, one of the most powerful commanders had under his single command 10,000 horse, including 500 foot cavalry, besides infantry and guns. The *Pindharies* had no military projects for employing their loose hands of irregular soldiery, which developed into bodies of

professional plunderers. The *Pindharies* aimed at no conquest . Their object was to secure booty and cash . General loot and rapine was their occupation. They recognise no ruler . They were subject of none and rendered loyalty to none. They respected none and plundered all high and low, rich and poor, without fear or compunction.

The Thugs were a well-organised body of professional assassins, who in gangs of 10 to 200 travelled in various guises throughout India , worked themselves into the confidence of way-farers of the wealthier class, and when a favourable opportunity occurred, strangled them by throwing a handkerchief or noose round their necks and then plundered and buried them. All this was done according to certain ancient and rigidly prescribed forms with the performance of special religious rites , in which was consecration pickaxe and the sacrifice of the sugar . They were a staunch worshiper of *kali* , the Hindu Goddess of destruction . Assassination for gain was to them a religious duty, and was considered a holy and honourable profession. They had in fact no idea of right and wrong , and their moral feeling did not come into play. The will of Goddess as according to them came through revelation, apparently seemed complicated. Accordingly they often travelled hundreds of kilometres in the company of their intended victims before a safe opportunity presented itself for executing their design . And when the deed was done, rites were performed in honour of that tutelary deity and a goodly portion of the oil set apart for her.

The *Thugs* had also a jargon of their own as well as certain signs by which its members recognised each other in the remotest part of India. Even those who became of old age or infirmities could no longer take an active part in the operations used to aid to the cause as watchmen, spies or dressers of food . It was owing to their thorough organisation , secrecy and security that they went to work chiefly in the religious garb in which they shrouded their marauding in such a way that they could continue the same for centuries. The extraordinary fact was that the *Thuggee* was regarded as a regular profession by the Indian Rulers, both Hindu and Muslim. The *Thugs* paid taxes to the state and the state left them unmolested . It was not until the British became rulers of India that any attempt was made to suppress them . By 1835, nearly 382 *Thugs* were hanged and 986 transported or imprisoned for life. Even as late as 1879 the number

of registered *Thugs* were 344 and the *Thuggee* and the *Dacoity* Department of the Government of India continued to exist until 1904 when its place was taken by the Central Criminal Intelligence Department.

Criminal Tribes

With the suppression of the professional criminals there still remain in India communities whose occupation is crime and who are listed by government as Criminal Tribes such as the *Kepmariagang*. The Criminal Tribes live in the plains in close proximity, if not in the midst of civilised people. Since they subsist by organised robbery and dacoity, they are proscribed by the Government of India as criminal tribes. Hollius in his *Criminal Tribes of the United Provinces* gives an account of their activities. They live entirely by crime. Their nefarious practices found most scope in dacoity or robbery by violence. But being a community organised for crime nothing came amiss to them. On deciding to commit dacoity in any particular locality, spies would be sent out to select a suitable victim, study the general habit of the villagers and the distance from any effective aid, and enumerate the number of men and fire arms. The raid usually took place at midnight. Acting on the information given by the spies men would be posted at various points in the village and by firing off their guns, attract attention from the main gang, which would attack the particular house or houses previously appointed. The gang would usually consist of 30 to 40 men. It is unfortunate that the government have failed to rehabilitate them.

The Untouchables and Others

The Untouchables also live in the midst of Hindu civilised society and possess a degree of culture and morality which completely separate them from the Primitive Tribes and Criminal Tribes. The Untouchables have the culture of the Hindu community and observe their religious rites. They recognise the sacred and the secular law of the Hindus and celebrate the Hindu festivities. However, they derive no benefit from this. On the contrary they are segregated and slummed because their physical contact is held by high caste Hindus to cause pollution. There is thus an interdict on all their social intercourse except for unavoidable circumstances. They live

in the outskirts of a village and not in its midst. Each village has its Untouchables quarters attached to the village but not a part of the village. Separated from the rest of the touchable Hindus, the Untouchables are bound down to a code of behaviour appropriate to a servile state. According to this code, an Untouchable may not do anything to raise himself above his appointed station in life.

The Untouchable should not dress up himself in a style superior to that of his status, nor should the Untouchable woman adorn herself with ornaments after the fashion of the higher caste Hindu women. He should not have a house better or bigger than the houses of the rest of the Hindus in the village. He should not have tile roof over his house. An Untouchable must not sit in the presence of a Hindu and must always salute him first. He must not wear clean clothes, must not use brass or copper pot and must not wear gold or silver ornaments. When someone dies in the family of a Hindu, an Untouchable must go miles to convey the message of the death to the relatives of the family. This is so because a Hindu feels disgraced in the eyes of his relatives if death news is communicated by post. An Untouchable accompany women folk of the high cast Hindus on their journey from their homes to their parents and vice-versa. Their dignity requires that they should have retinue and the Untouchable is the only available class from which such a retinue can be drawn without any cost.

At every ceremony of the house of a Hindu the Untouchables must come and do manual work. He must not own and cultivate land and lead an independent life. For his livelihood he must depend upon the remnants of foods left over by the Hindu household and upon meat of cattle that die in the village. These remnants of foods he must collect from door to door. Besides, an Untouchable must carry the dead animals out of the village. He should not take to such services as would give him authority and power over caste Hindus. He must be humble and must not ask for more than his lot under this code. Of course, some of the Untouchables have risen above the low status prescribed by the customary code of conduct and have acquired high place. But the majority are still socially in the most servile position and economically in abject poverty.

Such is the condition of the 79½ millions of people of India as recorded by Dr.B.R.

Ambedkar in his writings and speeches (vol.5.pp.133-34). The total population of the three classes — The Primitive Tribes, and the Criminal Tribes and the Untouchables—represented over 60% of the population of the United States and exceeds the population of the Whites in the British empire by 9½ millions, that of Italy by 37 millions, that of Germany by 13½ Millions and that of France by 37½ millions. It is ten times more than the population of Belgium and twenty times that of Denmark. One shudders at the colossal total of this sunken humanity of India.

But the Untouchables are not only the classes subjected to the hardship noted above . There are two other classes namely the Unapproachable and the Unseeables. And a distinction may be drawn among these three classes . The Untouchables are those who cause pollution only by a physical touch, the Unapproachables are those who cause pollution if they come within a certain distance and the Unseeables are the worst of the lot for they cause pollution if they come within sight . Of the Unapproachables the *Nayadis* of Malabar may be mentioned. They are the lowest caste among the Hindus; they are dog eaters . They are the most persistent in their clamour for charity and will follow at a respectable distance, any person walking , driving or boating . If anything is given to them, it must be laid down, and after the person offering it has proceeded a certain distance, the recipient comes timidly forward and removes it . Of them Thurston observes : “The subject (that is the *Nayadis*) whom I examined and measured at Shoranur, though living only about three miles off had, by reason of the pollution which they traditionally carry with them, to avoid walking over the long bridge which is spanned the river, and follow a circuitous road of many miles.

In the Tinnevely district of the Madras Presidency (Tamil Nadu) there is a class of *unseeables* called *Purada Vannas* . It is said of them : “ They are not allowed to come out during day time because their sight is enough to cause pollution. These unfortunate people are compelled to follow the nocturnal habits leaving their dens after dark and scuttling home at the fall of dawn.”¹⁵

The total population of India as shown by the 1935 census was 3567 lakhs of which the Scheduled Castes numbered 513 lakhs . Of them 114 lakhs live in North India (U.P.) , 128 lakhs

in East India (Bihar, Orissa, West Bengal, Assam , Manipur, Tripura) ; 110 lakhs in South India (Madras, Mysore, Travancore, Cochin and Coorg); 31 lakhs in West India (Bombay, Saurashtra and Kutch); 76 lakhs in Central India (Maddhya Pradesh, Maddhya Bharat, Hyderabad, Bhopal and Vindhya Pradesh); and 52 lakhs in North West India (Rajasthan , Punjab, Patiala and East Punjab states union, Ajmer, Delhi, Bilashpur and Himachal Pradesh).¹⁶

The Untouchables and what not

British India and Indian India :

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar has studied Untouchability and advanced the following observations¹⁷:

(i) There is no racial difference between the Hindus and the untouchables; (ii) The distinction between the Hindus and the Untouchables in its original form, was the distinction between Tribesmen and Brokenmen from alien Tribes. It is the Brokenmen who subsequently came to be treated as Untouchables; (iii) Just as untouchability has no racial basis so also has it no occupational basis ; (iv) There are two roots from which untouchability has sprung ; (a) Contempt and hatred of the Brokenmen as of Buddhists by the Brahmins ; (b) Continuation of beef eating by the Brokenmen after it had been given up by others. 5. In searching for the origin of untouchability (v) are must be taken to distinguish the Untouchables from the Impure. All orthodox Hindu writers have identified the Impure with the Untouchables. This is an error. Untouchables are distinct from the Impure; and (vi) While the Impure as a class came into existence at the time of the *Dharma Sutras* the Untouchables came into being much later than A.D. 400.

This conclusion Ambedkar arrived at by way of historical research . He followed the ideal which a historian should place before himself according to Goethe who said , "the historian's duty is to separate the true from the false, the certain from the uncertain, and doubtful from that which cannot be accepted ...Every investigator must before all things look upon himself as one who is summoned to serve on a jury . He has only to consider how far the statement of the case is complete and clearly set forth by the evidence . Then he draws his conclusion and gives his vote, whether it be that his opinion coincides with that of the forman or not".¹⁸

It may be noted in this connection that there was no untouchability in the time of Manu. There was only Impurity. Even the *chandal* for whom Manu has nothing but contempt is only an Impure person. There is a distinction between "Impurity" and "untouchability", Manu recognised physical defilement and also notional defilement. He treated birth, death and menstruation as sources of impurity. Death causes defilement to members of the family of the dead persons technically called *Svapinda* and *Samanoducj*. The distinctions between the Impure and the Untouchable is very clear. In the first case the Untouchable pollutes all, while the Impure pollutes only the Brahmins. Secondly the touch of the Impure causes pollution only on a ceremonial occasion; but the touch of the Untouchable causes pollution at all times.

In this connection it is necessary to get an idea as to the number of communities declared Untouchable. An examination of the *Dharma Sutras* shows that they speak of a class called *Asprishya*. The term *Asprishya* does not mean untouchable as held by Ambedkar. And the question is whether the *Asprishya* of the *Dharma Sutras* are the same as the *Asprishya* of modern India. The *Dharma Sutras* use a variety of other terms such as *Antya*, *Antyaja*, *Antyavasin* and *Bahya*. These terms are also used by the later *Smritis*. The uses of the terms are noted below:¹⁹

I. Asprishya

Dharma Sutra	Smriti
1. Vishnu V.104	1. Katyana Verses 433,783

II. Antya.

Dharma Sutra	Smriti
1. Vasishtha.(16-30)	1. <i>Manu</i> IV.79;VIII.68.
2. Apastambha (III.I)	2. <i>Yajnavalkya</i> I.148.197
	3. <i>Atri</i> 25.
	4. <i>Likhita</i> 92

III. Bahya.

Dharma Sutra	Smriti
1. Apastambha 1.2.39.18	1. Manu 28.
2. Vishnu 16.14	2. Narada I.155

IV. Antyavasin

Dharma Sutra	Smriti
1. Gautama XXXI, XXIII.32	1. Manu IV.79;X.39
2. Vasishtha XVIII.3	2. Shanti Parva of Mahabharata 141;29-32
	3. Madhyamangiras (quoted in Mitakshara on yaj 3.280)

V. Antyaja

Dharma Sutra	Smriti
1. Vishnu 36.7	1. Manu IV ,61; VIII.279.
	2. Yajnavalkya 12,73.
	3. Brihadayama Smriti (quoted by Mitakshara on Yajnavalkya III.260)
	4. Atri, 199
	5. Veda Vyas 1.12.13

The term *Asprishya* occurs in two places²⁰— once in one *Sutra* and twice in one *Smriti*. But no one gives an enumeration of the classes included in it . The same is the case with the term *Antya* . Although the word *Antya* occurs in six places, but none enumerates who they are.

Similarly, the word *Bahya* occurs in four places, but none mentions what communities are included under this term. The only exception is with regard to the term *Antyavasin* and *Antyajas*. But no *Dharma Sutra* enumerates them. However there is an enumeration in the *Smritis*. The enumeration of the *Antyavasin* occurs in the *Smriti* known as *Madhyamangiras* and that of the *Antyajas* in the *Atri Smriti* and *Veda Vyas Smriti*. However the following indicates who they are:

Antyavasin		Antyajas
Madhyamangiras	Atri	Veda Vyas
1. Chandala	1. Nata	1. Chandala
2. Shvapaka	2. Meda	2. Shvapaka
3. Kshatta	3. Bhilla	3. Nata
4. Suta	4. Rajaka	4. Meda
5. Vaidehika	5. Charmakar	5. Bhilla
6. Magadha	6. Buruda	6. Rajaka
7. Ayogava	7. Kayavarta	7. Charmakar
		8. Virat
		9. Dasa
		10. Bhatt
		11. Kolika
		12. Pushkar

There is another form of untouchability observed by the Hindus— it is the hereditary untouchability of certain communities. A list was prepared under the Government of India Act 1935 and was attached to the Orders in Council. The Order in Council had a schedule divided into nine parts relating to the nine British provinces. The list includes 429 communities. It means that there exist in India 50-60 millions of people whose mere touch causes pollution to the Hindus. It has no parallel in the history of the world. Names of such hereditary Untouchables are reproduced below.²¹

Schedule

Part I - Madras

1. Scheduled castes throughout the Province :-

Adi- Andhra	Gosangi	Paidi
Adi- Dravida	Haddi	Painda
Adi - Karnataka	Hasla	Paky
Ajila	Holeya	Pollan
Aruthuthiyar	Jaggali	Pambada
Baira	Jambuvulu	Pamidi
Bakuda	Kalladi	Panchama
Bandi	Kanakkan	Paniyan
Bariki	Kadalo	Panniandi
Battada	Koosa	Paraiyan
Bavuri	Koraga	Parvan
Bellara	Kudumban	Pulayan
Bygari	Kuravan	PuthiraiVanan
Chachati	Madari	Raneyar
Chakkliyan	Madiga	Relli
Chalvadi	Maila	Samagara
Chamar	Mala	Samban
Chandala	Mala Dasu	Sapari
Cheruman	Matangi	Semman
Dandasi	Moger	Thot
Devendrakulathan	Muchi	Tiruvalluva
Ghasi	Mundala	Valluvan
Godagali	Nalakeyava	Valmiki
Godari	Nayadi	Vethuvan
Godda	Pagadai	

(2) Scheduled Castes throughout the Provinces except in any special constituency constituted under the Government of India Act, 1935, for the election of a representative of backward areas and backward tribes to the legislative Assembly of the Province :

Arnadan	Kuttunayakan	Kuruman
Dombo	Kudiya	Malasar
Kadam	Kudubi	Mavilan
Karimpalan	Kurichchan	Pano

Part II - Bombay

(1) Scheduled Castes Throughout the Province :-

Asodi	Dhor	Mang Garudi
Bakad	Garode	Maghval or Manghwar
Bhambi	Halleer	Mini Madig
Bhangi	Halsar or Haslar	Mukri
Chakrawadya-	Dasar Hulsavar	Nadia
Chalvadi	Holaya	Shenva or Sindhava
Chambhar or Mochigar	Khalpa	Shingdhav or Shingadya
Samagar	Kolcha, or Kolgha	Sochi
Chena - Dasaru	Koli-Dhor	Timali
Chunhar, or Chuhra	Lingader	Turi
Dakaleru	Madig or Mang	Vankar
Dhed	Mahar	Vitholia
Dhegu - Megu.		

(2) Throughout the Province except in the Ahmedabad, Kaira, Broach and Panch Mahals and Surat Districts — Mochi.

(3) In the Kanara district — Kotegar.

Part III - Bengal

Scheduled Castes throughout the Province:-

Agaria	Bhumij	Gonrhi
Bagdi	Bind	Hadi
Bahelia	Binjhia	Hajang
Baiti	Chamar	Halalkhor
Bauri	Dhenuar	Hari
Bediya	Dhoba	Ho
Beldar	Doai	Jalia Kaivartta
Berua	Dom	Jhalo Malo, or Malo
Bhatiya	Dosadh	Kadar
Bhuimali	Garo	Kalpahariya
Bhuiya	Ghasi	Kan
Kandh	Lodha	Oraon
Kandra	Lohar	Paliya
Kaora	Mahli	Pan
Kapuria	Mal	Pasi
Karenga	Mahar	Patni
Kastha	Mallah	Pod

Kaur	Mech	Rabha
Khaira	Mehtor	Rajbanshi
Khatik	Muchi	Rajwar
Koch	Munda	Santal
Konai	Musahar	Sunri
Konwar	Nagesia	Tiyar
Kora	Namasudra	Turi
Kotal	Nat	
Lalbegi	Nuniya	

Part IV - United Provinces

Scheduled Castes

1) Throughout the Province :-

Agariva	Chamar	Kharwar
Aheriya	Chero	(except Benbansi)
Badi	Dabagar	Khatik
Badhik	Dhangar	Khol
Baheliya	Dhanuk(Bhangi)	Korwa
Bajaniya	Dharkar	Lalbegi
Bajgi	Dhobi	Majhwar
Balahar	Dom	Nat
Balmiki	Domar	Pankha

Banmanus	Gharami	Parahiya
Bansphor	Ghasyia	Pasi
Barwar	Gual	Patari
Basor	Habura	Rawat
Bawariya	Hari	Saharya
Beldar	Hela	Sanaurhiya
Bengali	Khairaha	Sansiya
Berya	Kalabaz	Shilpkar
Bhantu	Kanjar	Tharu
Bhuiya	Kapariya	Turaiha
Bhuiyar	Karwal	
Boriya	Kharot	

(2) Throughout the province except in the Agra, Meerut and Rohilkhond divisions -Kori.

Part V - Punjab

Scheduled Castes throughout the Province-

Ad-Dharmis	Marija or Marecha	Khatik
Bawaria	Bengali	Kori
Chamar	Barar	Nat
Chuhra, or Balmiki	Bazigar	Pasi
Dagi and Koli	Bhanjra	Perna
Dhumna	Chanal	Sepela
Od	Dhanak	Sirkiband
Sansi	Gagra	Megha
Sarera	Gandila	Ramdasis

Part VI - Bihar

Sheduled Castes :

(1) Throughout the Province :-

Chamar	Halalkhor	Mochi
Chanpal	Hari	Musahar
Dhobi	Kanjar	Nat
Dusadh	Kurariar	Pasi
Dom	Lalbegi	

(2) In the Patna and Tirhut divisions and the Bhagalpur, Monghyr, Palamau and Purnea districts :-

Bauri	Bhumij	Rajwar
Bhogta	Ghasi	Turi
Bhauya	Pan	

3) In the Dhanbad sub-division of the Manbhum district and the Central Manbhum general rural constituency, and the Purulia and Raghunathpur municipalities:-

Bauri	Ghasi	Rajwar
Bhogta	Pan	Turi
Bhuiya		

Part VII - Central Provinces and Berar**Scheduled Castes****Localities**

Basor, or Burud

Chamar

Dom

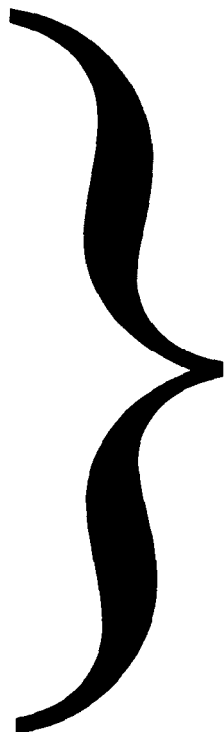
Ganda

Mang.

Mehtor or Bhangi

Mochi

Satnami



Throughout the Province

AudheliaIn the Bilaspur district.

BahnaIn the Amraoti district.

Balahi, or Balai.....In the Berar division and the Balaghat, Bhamdara, Betuol, Chanda, Chhindwara, Hoshangabad, Jabulpore, Mudla, Nagpur, Nimar, Saugor and Wardha districts.

BedarIn the Akola, Amraoti and Buldhana districts.

Chadar.....In the Bhandara and Saugor districts.

ChauhanIn the Drug District.

Dahayat.....In the Damoh sub-division of the saugor district.

Dewar.....In the Bilaspur, Durg and Rajpur districts.

- Dhanuk.....**In the Saugar district, except in the Damoh sub- Division thereof.
- Dhimar.....**In the Bhandara district.
- Dhobi.....**In the Bhandara,Bilashpur, Raipur and Saugor districts and the Hoshangabad and Seoni-Nalwa tahsils of the Hoshangabad district.
- Dohar.....**In the Berar division and the Balaghat, Bhandara, Chanda, Nagpur, and Wardha districts.
- Ghasia.....**In the Berar division and in the Balaghat, Bhandara, Biaspur, Chanda, Durg, Nagpur, Raipur and Wardha districts.
- Holya.....**In the Balaghat and Bhandara districts.
- Jangam.....**In the Bhandara districts.
- Kaikari.....**In the Berar division , and in Bhandara, Chanda,Nagpur and Wardha districts.
- Katia.....**In the Berar division, in the Balaghat, Betul, Bhandara, Bilaspur,, Chanda, Durg, Nagpur, Nimar, Raipur and Wardha districts, in the Hosangabad and Seoni - Malwa Tahsils of the Hoshangabad district, in the Chhindwara district, except in the Seoni sub-division threof, and in the Saugor district, exceptin the Damo sub-division thereof .
- Khangar.....**In the Bhandara, Buldhana and Sugor districtrics and the Hoshangabad and Seoni-Malwa tahsisis of the Hoshangabad districtrics.
- Khatik.....**In the Berar division,in the Balaghat,Bhandara,Chanda,Nagpur and Wardha district, in the Hoshangabad Tahsils of the Hoshangabad district, in Chhindwara district, except in the Seoni sub division

there of, and in the Saugor district, except in the Damoh sub-division thereof.

- Koli**.....In the Bhandara and Chanda districts.
- Kori**.....In the Amraoti , Balaghat, Betul, Bhandara, Buldhana , Chhindwara, Jubbulpore, Mandla, Nimar, Raipur and Saugor districts, and in the Hoshangabad district, except in the Harda and Sohagpur tahsils thereof.
- Kumhar**.....In the Bhandara and Saugor districts and the Hoshangabad and Seoni-Malwa tahsils of the Hoshangabad district.
- Madgi**.....In the Berar division and in the Balaghat, Bhandara, Chanda, Nagpur and Wardha districts.
- Mala**..... In the Balaghat, Betul, Chhindwara, Hoshangabad, Jubbulpore Mandla, Nimar and Sauger districts.
- Mehra or Mahar**..... Throughout the Province, except in the Harda and Sohagpur tahsils of the Hoshangabad districts.
- Nagarchi**.....In the Balaghat, Bhandara , Chhindwara, Mandla, Nagpur and Raipur districts.
- Ojha**.....In the Balaghat, Bhandara and Mandla districts and the Hoshangabad tahsils of the Hoshangabad district.
- Panka**.....In the Berar division , in the Balaghat, Bhandara, Bilaspur, Chanda, Durg, Nagpur, Raipur, Saugor and Wardha districts and in the Chhindwara district, except in the Seoni division thereof.
- Pardhi**.....In the Narasinghpura sub-division of Hoshangabad district.

Pradhan.....In the Berar division, in the Bhandara, Chanda, Nagpur, Nimar, Raipur and in the Chhaindwar district except in the Seoni sub-division thereof.

Rajjhar..... In the Sohagpur tahsils of the Hoshangabad districts.

Part VIII - Assam

Scheduled Castes :-

(1) In the Assam Valley :-

Namasudra	Hira	Mehtar, or Bhangi
Kaibartta	Lalbegi	Bansphor

Bania, or Brittial-Bania

(2) In the Surma Valley :-

Mali, or Bhumali	Sutradhar	Kaibartta, or Jaliya
Dhupi, or Dhobi	Muchi	Lalbegi
Dugla, or Dholi	Patni	Mehtar, or Bhangi
Jhalo and Malo	Namashudra	Bansphor

Mahara

Part IX - Orissa

Scheduled Castes :-

(1) Throughout the Province :-

Adi-Andhra	Chamar	Ghusuria
Audhelia	Chandala	Godagali

Bariki	Dandasi	Godari
Bansor, or Burud	Dewar	Godra
Bavuri	Dhoba or Dhobi	Gokha
Chachati	Ganda	Haddi, or Hari
Irika	Mala	Panchama
Jaggali	Mang	Panka
Kandra	Mangan	Relli
Katia	Mehra, or Mahar	Sapari
Kela	Mehtor, or Bhangi	Satnami
Kodalo	Mochi, or Muchi	Siyal
Madari	Paidi	Valmiki
Madiga	Painda	
Mahuria	Pamidi	

(2) Throughout the Province except in the Khondmals district, the district of Sambalpur and the areas transferred to Orissa under the provisions of the Government of India (constitution of Orissa) Order, 1936 from the Vizagapatam and Ganjam Agencies in the Presidency of Madras:- Pan , or Pano.

(3) Throughout the Province except in the Khandmals district and the areas so transferred to Orissa from the said Agencies :-

Dom, or Dambo.

(4) Throughout the Province except in the district of Sambalpur:-

Bauro	Bhumij	Turi
Bhuiya	Ghasi, or Ghasia	

(5) In the Nawapara sub-division of the district of Sambalpur:-

Kori

Nagarchi

Pradhan

During the British period there were two India. One was British India under the direct administration of the British and this related to nine provinces as noted above. There was also a different India called Indian India consisting of 600 and odd Native States. The British compiled statistics in regard to British India. But Indian India had no such statistics. Generally the statistics in British India applies to these Native States also. After the independence of India on 15th August, 1947 and most of the Native States have merged with India and there by with the other States. Only Sahu Maharaj of Kolhapur State from among the Native States introduced reservation in services under the State in 1902 for the Backward Classes.

Impurity and Untouchability

The above list includes 429 communities. This means that there exist in India 50-60 millions of people whose mere touch causes pollution to the Hindus. Surely, the phenomenon of untouchability among primitive and ancient society pales into insignificance before this phenomenon of hereditary untouchability for so many millions of people which we find in India . The Hindu concept of untouchability has no parallel in the history of the world. It is unparalleled not merely by reason of the colossal number of people involved which exceed the total population of many great nations in Asia and Europe but also on the ground of its peculiarity and pervasiveness.

There are some striking features of the Hindu system of untouchability affecting the 429 Untouchable communities and these are not found in the customs of untouchability observed by non-Hindu communities' primitive or ancient. The isolation prescribed by non-Hindu societies as a safeguard against defilement, if it is not rational, is at least understandable. It is for specified reasons such as birth, marriage, death etc. But the isolation prescribed by Hindu society is apparently for no cause.

Secondly, defilement is of a temporary duration which arises out of natural functions, eating, drinking etc., or a natural crisis in the life of an individual such as disease or death. After the period of defilement is over and the purificatory ceremony was performed defilement vanishes and the individual becomes pure and associable. But the impurity of the 50-60 millions of the Untouchable of India is permanent. There is no provision by which the Untouchables can be made pure. They are born impure, they are impure while they live, they die the death of the impure and they give birth to children who are born with the stigma of untouchability affixed to them. It is a case of permanent and hereditary stain which nothing can clean.

Thirdly, non-Hindu societies believing in defilement isolate the individuals affected or at the most those closely connected with them. But the untouchability among the Hindus involves the isolation of a class— the total of which goes beyond 50-60 millions.

Fourthly, non-Hindu societies only isolate the affected individuals. They do not segregate them into separate quarters. The Hindu society insists on segregation of the Untouchables. The Hindus will not live in the quarters of the Untouchables and nor will allow the Untouchable to live inside Hindu quarters. This is a fundamental feature of the untouchability as it is practised by the Hindus. It is not a case of social separation, a mere stoppage of social intercourse for a temporary period. It is a case of territorial segregation and *cordon sanitaire* putting the impure people inside a barbed wire into a sort of a cage. Every Hindu village has a ghetto. The Hindus live in the village while the Untouchable in the ghetto.

Untouchability among the Hindus is thus a unique phenomenon unknown to humanity in other parts of the world. Nothing like this is to be found in any other society—primitive, ancient or modern.

Untouchables Vs. Negroes and Slaves

The Hindus try to defend untouchability on the ground that untouchability was not worse than slavery. Thus Lala Lajpath Roy in his book, *Unhappy India* has used this argument. It is not correct to state that slavery has not been recognised by the Hindus. On the contrary slavery has

been a very ancient institution of the Hindus. This is found in *Narod Smriti* as well as in *Manu Samhita*. The institution of slavery continued throughout the Indian history down to the year 1843 and if it had not been abolished by the British Government by law it might have continued today. As to the relative merits of slavery and untouchability, it is better to compare and contrast untouchability with slavery as it existed in ancient Rome and in modern America. Barrow has written a book named *Slavery in the Roman Empire* (pp.47.49) in which he has described that the rich families in Italy attached to their household such slaves as were trained in literature and art. Clavisices Sabinus had eleven slaves taught to recite the works of Homer, Hesiod and nine lyric poets by heart. A rude friend said : “ Book cases would be cheaper.” “No, for the household knows the master knows “ was the answer. Educated slaves must have been a necessity in the absence of printing. The busy lawyer, the dilettante poet, the philosopher and educated gentleman needed copyists and readers and secretaries. Such men were linguistic also. Amanuensis was common enough. Shorthand writing was in common use under the Empire . Slave Notary was regularly employed. Verrius Flaccus was tutor to Augustus’s grandson. It signifies that the Roman system of slavery was not profession - oriented.

Secondly, the castes of some sections of society demanded that dancers, singers, musicians, montebanks, variety artists, athletic trainers and messieurs should be forthcoming. All these were to be found in slavery.

Thirdly, the age of Augustus was the beginning of a period of commercial and industrial expansion. Agents were employed and they were slaves. In business contracts between the slave and the master were to have been common and the profits were considerable. Renting of land to the slave was frequent. The slave was paid on commission basis.

Fourthly, in the Roman Empire “Public Slaves” came to mean slaves of the state employed in its many offices. The term implied a given occupation and often social position. The work of slaves of the state, slaves of the townships, and slaves of Caesar comprised much of what would now fall to parts of the higher and the whole of the lower branches of the Civil services and the servants of Municipal Corporation would have been doing with heads and hands.²²

The de facto position of the Negro in the United States during the period in which he was slave in the eyes of the law is described by Charles C. Johnson in his book *The Negroes in American Civilisation*. He has stated thus ,

“Lafayette himself had observed that white and black seamen and soldiers had fought and messed together in the Revolution without bitter difference . Down in Granville County, North Carolina, a full blooded Negro, John Chavis, educated in Princeton University, was conducting a private school for White students and was licentiate under the local Presbytery, preaching to White congregations in the State. One of his pupils became Governor of North Carolina, another the States’ most prominent White Senator.”

Secondly , slave labour was used for all kinds of works and the more intelligent of the Negro slaves were trained as artisans to be used and leased. Many slave artisans purchased their freedom by the savings allowed them above the normal labour expected. Some interesting incidents about the Whites and the Negroes may be mentioned here. The contractors for mason and carpenters’ work in Athens, Georgia in 1838 were petitioned to stop showing preference to Negro labourers. In Atlanta in 1858 a petition signed by 2 white mechanics and labourers sought protection against black slave artisans of masters whom resided in other sections. The very next year sundry White citizens were aggrieved that the City Council tolerated a Negro dentist to remain and operate in there midst.

Such was the de facto condition of the Roman slave and the American Negro. Their comparison with the Untouchables in India shows that the latter have been the worst sufferers. But in India untouchability is still extant, and in the West including America slavery has long gone by through gradual extinction. The Hindus come forward to defend untouchability on the ground that the Untouchables have a free social order whereas the slaves in the west had not. Now a comparison may be made between slavery and untouchability. In the first place slavery was never obligatory whereas untouchability is obligatory. A person is permitted to hold another as his slave. There is no compulsion on him if he does not want to. But an Untouchable has no option. Once he is born an Untouchable, he is subject to all the disabilities of an Untouchable. The law of slavery permitted emancipation. Once a slave, always a slave was not the fate of the slave. In untouchability there is no escape from it. An Untouchable is always an Untouchable.

Secondly untouchability is an indirect and, therefore, the worst form of slavery. A deprivation of a man's freedom by an open and direct way seemed a milder form of enslavement. It made the slave conscious of his enslavement and to become conscious of slavery was the first and most important step in the battle for freedom. But if a man is deprived of his liberty indirectly he could not become conscious of his enslavement. untouchability was such an indirect form of slavery. It was a kind of enslavement without making the Untouchables conscious of their enslavement. It was a form of slavery in disguise of untouchability. Of these two orders, untouchability has reasonably been the worse.

In an unfree social order such as slavery the master was bound to provide for training of the slaves. Secondly, there was a security for boarding and lodging. Thirdly, the master was bound to take great care of the wealth and well being of the slave. However, untouchability has none of these three advantages which a slave enjoyed. In the first place the Untouchables have no entry into the realm of higher arts of civilisation and no way open to a life of culture. Secondly, untouchability carries no security as to livelihood. None from the Hindus is responsible for the feeding, housing and the clothing of the Untouchable. Thirdly, the health of the Untouchable is the care of nobody; indeed, his death is regarded as good riddance. There is a Hindu proverb, which says, "The Untouchable is dead and pollution has vanished."

On the other hand, untouchability has all the disadvantages of a free social order. In a free social order the responsibility for survival in the struggle for existence lies on the individual. And this responsibility is one of the greatest disadvantages of a free social order. But an individual in a free social order may have equal opportunity. But in India the Untouchable is deprived of such freedom. In the scramble for work the Untouchable is the last to be employed and that too hardly outside the domain of lowly works. Untouchability is thus cruelty as compared to slavery. The Untouchables unlike the slaves are owned by the Hindus for purposes which further their interests and are disowned by them on pretext of pollution. The Untouchables bear the burden of an unfree social order and are left to bear all the disadvantages of a free social order.²³

The Origin of Untouchability

There is a discrepancy between the communities mentioned in the *Dharma Sutras* (as given on page 20) and the number given in the list in the Order - in - Council (as given on page 21-29). The maximum number of communities mentioned in the *Smritis* is only 12, while the number of communities mentioned in the Order - in - Council comes to 429. There are communities which find a place in the Order in Council but not in the *Smritis*. Out of the total of 429 there are nearly 427 which are unknown to the *Smritis*. On the other hand there are communities mentioned in the *Smriti* which do not find a place in the Order - in - Council at all. There is only one community which finds a place in both . It is the Charmakar community. The question arises how could the 12 communities, if they are Untouchables become 429 communities. What has led to these vast extension and multiplication of the number of Untouchable communities? If these 429 communities belong to the same class as the 12 mentioned in the *Shastras*, why none of the *Shastras* mention them. It can not be that none of the 429 communities were in existence when the *Shastras* were written. May be all were not in existence at the time, but some of them must have been. Why even such as did exist find no mention?

On the basis that both the lists belong to the same class of people , it is difficult to give any satisfactory answer to these questions. If on the other hand it is assumed that these lists refer to two different classes of people all these questions disappear. The two lists are different because the list contained in the *Shastras* is a list of 'Impure' and the list contained in Order- in - Council is a list of the Untouchables. This is the reason why the two lists differ. The conclusion that untouchability is not the same as impurity has an important bearing on the determination of the date of birth of untouchability.

In *Vedic* times there was no untouchability. During the period of *Dharma Sutras* there was impurity but there was no untouchability. A question is : was there untouchability in the time of Manu? This question can not be answered offhand. There is a passage in which he says that there are only four *varnas* and there is no fifth *varna*. Obviously Manu's statement is an attempt by him to settle a controversy that must have been going on at that time. The controversy was about the status of a certain class in relation to the system of *Chaturvarna*. The point was whether this

class was to be deemed to be included within the *Chaturvarna* or whether it was to be a fifth *varna* quite distinct from the original four *varnas*. All this is quite clear. What is, however not clear is the class to which it refers.

Manu's decision is that there is no fifth *varna*. Two interpretations are possible. It may mean that under the scheme of *Chaturvarna* there is no fifth *varna* — the class in question must be deemed to belong to one of the four recognised *varnas*. However, it may also mean that the class in question may be deemed to be outside the *varna* system altogether. The traditional interpretation adopted by the orthodox Hindus is that Manu's statement refers to Untouchables and that it was the Untouchables whose status was in controversy. This interpretation is so firmly established that it has given rise to a division of Hindus into two classes called by different names — (1) *Savarnas* or Hindus included in the *Chaturvarna* and (2) *Avarnas* or Untouchables excluded from the *Chaturvarna*.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar observes that the passage in question does not refer to Untouchables at all and this is so for two reasons. In the first place there was no untouchability in the time of Manu. There was only impurity. Secondly, there is evidence to support that the said passage refers to slaves. It may be noted that the *Naradsmriti* speaks of these slaves as the fifth class. Therefore the *Manusmriti* also should be taken to refer to slaves. In other words we can definitely say that *Manusmriti* did not enjoin Untouchability. Professor Buhler has fixed the date of *Manusmriti* between second century B.C. to second Century A.D. Mr. Daphtary has also come to the same conclusion. *Manusmriti* came into being after the year 185 B.C. and not before. The reason is that *Manusmriti* has a close connection with the murder of the Buddhist Emperor Brihadratha of the Maurya dynasty by his Brahmin commander - in - chief Pushyamitra Sunga and as even that took place in 185 B.C. He concludes that *Manusmriti* must have been written after 185 B.C.

The murder of Brihadratha Maurya by Pushyamitra and the setting up of the Sunga dynasty by him was a political revenge against the Buddhist order of equality and non-violence. It was a revolution — a bloody revolution— engineered by the Brahmins to overthrow the rule of

the Buddhist kings. Ambedkar , after examining the evidence on the point concluded that while untouchability did not exist in 200 A.D. , it had emerged by 600 A.D. Taking beef eating as the root of untouchability it follows that the date of the birth of untouchability must be intimately connected with the ban on cow-killing and on eating beef . We know that Manu did not prohibit the eating of beef nor did he make cow - killing an offence. As shown by D.R. Bhandarkar cow killing was made capital offence by the Gupta kings sometime in the 4th Century A.D. In the words of Dr. B.R.Ambedkar , “ We can say with some confidence that untouchability was born sometime about 400 A.D. It is born out of the struggle for supremacy between Buddhism and *Brahmanism*, which has so completely moulded the history of India.”²⁴

Problems of Untouchability

The Untouchables are treated by the average Hindus as not fit for human associations. An Untouchable is the carrier of evil. As though he is not a human being ; he must be shunned . Naturally therefore he has to face many problems. The Hindus consider the wearing of the sacred thread as the evidence of noble birth. The atrocities committed by the caste Hindus on the Untouchables are enormous. Even now they continue in doing so. As a result the government after independence had to pass the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of atrocities) Act, 1989. Earlier the constitution of India (1950) provided in article 17 that “Untouchability abolished and its practice in any form is forbidden.” In pursuance of this directive the government passed the Protection of Civil Rights Act.. in 1955. In this connection the village comes into prominence. The nature of Indian village life is reflected in the observations of Sir Charles Metcalfe— a civil servant of the East India Company; he was a revenue officer. He observed thus:

“ The village communities are little republics, having nearly everything they want within themselves and almost independent of any foreign relations. They seem to last when nothing else lasts. Dynasty after dynasty tumbles down, revolution succeeds revolutions ; Hindu , Pathan, Moghul, Maratha, Sikh, English, all are masters in turn, but the village communities remain the same. In times of trouble they arm and fortify themselves. An hostile army passage through the country, the village communities collect their cattle within their walls and let the enemy pass unprovoked. If plunder and devastation be directed against themselves, and the forces employed be irresistible, they flee to friendly villages at a distance; but when the storm has passed over, they return and resume their occupations. If a country remains for a series of years the scene of continued

pillage and massacre so that the villages can not be inhabited, the scattered villagers nevertheless return whenever the power of peaceable possession revives. A generation may pass away, but the succeeding generation will return.”²⁵

The Indian village was not a single social unit. It consisted of castes. The following features characterised the village communities even during the British period. (i) The population in the village was divided into two sections—(a) Touchables and (b) Untouchables. (ii) The Touchables formed the major community and the Untouchables a minor community. (iii) The Touchables lived inside the village and the untouchables lived outside the village in separate quarters. (iv) Economically, the Touchables formed a strong and powerful community, while the Untouchables were a poor and a dependent community. (v) Socially, the Touchables occupied the position of a ruling race, while the Untouchables occupied the position of a subject race of hereditary bondsmen. The Untouchables had to face the following offences meted out to them by the Touchables.

1. The Untouchables must have to live in separate quarters away from the habitation of the caste Hindus. It was an offence for the Untouchables to break or evade the rule of segregation.
2. The quarters of the Untouchables must have to be located towards the South the most inauspicious of the four directions. A break of this rule was deemed to be an offence.
3. The Untouchables must have to observe the rule of distance pollution or shadow pollution as the case might be. It was an offence to break the rule.
4. It was an offence for a member of the Untouchable community to acquire wealth, such as land or cattle.
5. It was an offence for a member of the Untouchable community to build a house with tiled roof.
6. It was an offence for a member of the Untouchable community to put on a clean dress, wear shoes and put on gold ornaments.
7. It was an offence for a member of the Untouchable community to give high sounding names to his children. Their names could be only to indicate contempt.
8. It was an offence for a member of the Untouchable community to sit on a chair in the presence of a caste Hindu.
9. It was an offence for a member of the touchable community to ride on a horse or a palanquin through the village.
10. It was an offence for a member of the Untouchable community to take a procession of Untouchables through the village.
11. It was an offence for a member of the Untouchable community not to salute a caste Hindu.
12. It was an offence for a member of the Untouchable

community to speak a cultured language especially the classical language Sanskrit. 13. It was an offence for a member of the Untouchable community to come into the village on a sacred day which the Hindus treated as the day of fasting or about the time of the breaking the fast, on the ground that their breaths might cause pollution in the air all around. 14. It was an offence for a member of the Untouchable community to wear the word marks or symbol of a Touchable and pass himself as a touchable in that guise. 15. An Untouchable must have to conform to the status of an inferior and he must have to wear the marks of his inferiority for the public to know and identify him such as —(a) having contemptible name; (b) not wearing clean cloths; (c) not having tiled roof and (d) not wearing silver and gold ornaments. A contravention of any of these rules was an offence.

The Untouchables had to perform the following duties without remuneration:- 1. A member of an Untouchable community must carry a message of any event in the house of a Hindu such as death or marriage to his relatives living in other villages no matter how distant those villages might be. 2. An Untouchable must have to work at the house of a Hindu when a marriage was taking place, such as splitting fire-wood and cleaning the dirty places. 3. An Untouchable had to accompany a Hindu bride when she would be going from her parent's house to her in-law's house no matter how distant would it be. 4. When the whole village community would be engaged in celebrating a general festival such as *Holi* or *Dasara*, the Untouchables must have to perform all menial acts preliminary to the main observance. 5. On certain festivals, the Untouchables had to submit their women to the members of the high caste communities for the purpose of making them objects of indecent fun.

To realise the significance of the above duties it is necessary to note that every caste Hindu in the village regarded himself superior to the Untouchable.²⁶ The difficulties that the Untouchables had to face and still have to bear with are detrimental to the natural growth of a human being. The stratified Hindu society does have no public conscience. As a result the Hindus have indulged in violence against the Untouchables where the latter fight for equal freedom to all. For the obstructions created by the high castes, the Untouchables never could put forward their demands for human rights. It is unthinkable that inspite of the high profile teaching

of the *Upanishad*, the Hindu social stratification on the basis of caste system, has practically negated all humanitarian aspects of human life in society. Social service and the wisdom of interdependence, which go a long way in building corporate life seem to have no weight in Hindu social ethics. Each social stratum is an insulated structure where the higher one always exploits the lower ones. For doctors not to treat a patient because of his being an Untouchable, for a gang of Hindu villagers to burn the houses of the Untouchables or to throw human excreta into their wells can only be described in terms of inhumanity.

The Hindu observes untouchability, because, his religion enjoins him to do this. If he is ruthless and lawless in putting down the Untouchables rising against the established order, it is because his religion not only tells him that the established order is divine and therefore sacrosanct but also imposes upon him a duty to see that the established order is maintained at any cost. If the Hindu does not listen to the call of humanity, it is because his religion does not enjoin him to regard the Untouchables as human beings. If he does not feel any qualms of conscience in assaulting, looting, burning and other acts of atrocities against the Untouchables, it is because his religion tells him that nothing is sin which is done in defence of the social order. All these are to be found in Manu's commands.

Law and religion are two faces, which govern the conduct of man. At times, they act as handmaids to each other. At other times, they act as check and counter check. Of the two forces, law is personal, whereas religion is impersonal. Law being personal, it is capable of being unjust and iniquitous. But religion being impersonal can be impartial. If religion remains impartial, it can defeat inequality committed by law. This happened in Rome in regard to slaves, that is why religion is believed to ennoble man and not to degrade him. However, Hinduism is an exception. It has made the Untouchable sub-human. It has made the Hindus inhuman. There is no escape from the established order of the sub-human and inhuman.

Many of the Hindu social reformers moved by the deplorable condition of the untouchable begin by saying, "we must do something for the Untouchables." But past experiences proved it undoubtedly that most of the reformers had been very mild and even hesitant as to the question

of caste and untouchability . Some of them, of course, wanted to remove untouchability but then again seemed tolerant on the issue of caste. They uttered voices for reforming the Untouchables rather than abolishing the social stratification and its structures or changing the attitude of the higher castes towards the deprived ones.

The best test of the absence of conscience in the Hindu towards the Untouchables may be found in *Sagram* in its issue of 10th July 1946. One of its correspondents reported that a woman died on the 8th July 1946 in the *Anath ashram* situated in a village in Goa and maintained by Christians. The woman was believed to be a Hindu. As there was no one to dispose of the dead body, the Hindus of the village came together and raised a subscription for the performance of the last rite. They brought the dead body out of *Anath ashram*. At that time some Untouchables, who knew the woman, stated that the woman belonged to the Untouchable. At once the Hindus who had gathered there deserted the dead body and started walking away. The Untouchables requested the Hindus to give the amount they had collected for buying the coffin and the shroud. The Hindus refused to part with the money saying that it had been collected from the subscribers on the representation that the deceased was a Hindu woman. Since she was not a Hindu but an Untouchable, they could not spend the money on her funeral. The Untouchable then had to do their best to dispose of the dead body.

A moderate section of Hindu social reformers holds that untouchability is separate from the caste system. According to them it is possible to remove untouchability without attacking the caste system. The orthodox Hindu is opposed to the removal of untouchability as well as the caste system. He is opposed to dealing with social reforms in two stages as he is in dealing with it in one stage. However, the political- minded Hindu is tremendously fond of the idea of reform for two reasons. In the first place, it gives him the chance of showing himself to the world as a better specimen of democracy ; secondly , by leaving caste alone there is no risk of the caste Hindu's forsaking the political party he is in. Those who propose to deal with untouchability without damaging the caste system, rest their case on verse 4 of Chapter X of the *Manusmriti*. In this verse Manu says that there are only four *varnas* and there is no fifth *varna*. This verse is

interpreted to mean that the Untouchables are included in the fourth *varna*, that they are part of the *Shudras*. Since there is no objection to touching the *Shudras*, there could be no objection to touching the Untouchables. This interpretation is pleasing to the political-minded Hindus.

But there is another interpretation. It indicates that Manu was not prepared to enlarge the *Chaturvarna* system and make a *Panchmvarna* by recognising these communities which were outside the four *varnas*. In short Manu did not want to incorporate the outsiders (others than the four) into the Hindu Society. This intention is clear by speaking of a category of people as *Bahyas* (Manu.X.28) which means those outside the *varna* system. If Manu wanted to include all persons within the four *varnas* there was no reason for speaking of some people as *varna Bahyas*. However, Manu recognises two sub-divisions within the class of *varna Bahyas*—*Hinas* (Manu X. 31) and *Antyavasayin* (Manu.X.39).

An ordinary uneducated Hindu knows only two things. One thing is that there are three barriers in the matter of social intercourse which he is to observe. They are—(1) prohibition against inter-dining; (2) prohibition against inter marriage and (3) prohibition against free social intercourse and physically touching certain classes of people. The first two barriers make up the caste, while the third forms untouchability. Psychologically, caste and untouchability are one integral system based on one and the same principle. If the caste Hindus observe untouchability it is only an extension of the caste system. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan expressed his bitter views about the caste system and untouchability practised by the Hindus. In his words, “There are some Hindus even today — happily their number is diminishing — who are frightened defenders of caste and untouchability which are an offence and a scandal.”²⁷

Untouchability may be a misfortune to the Untouchables. It brings fortune to the Hindus. It has provided them a class of people under their command. The Hindus do not want a system in which nobody will be anybody. They also do not want a system in which everybody may become somebody. They want a system in which only they will be somebodies and others will be nobodies. The Untouchables are nobodies.²⁸

The Untouchables had to face the antagonism of the administration. The laws of the country were made and administered by the caste Hindus. It was their Manuvite bias against the low castes that led to oppression which even now continues. The government as recent as in 1989 had to pass the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of atrocities) Act 1989 which came into force on 30th January, 1990. In ancient India, except the periods of the Buddhist rulers, laws were codified by the Brahmins and the kings had to rule the country in consonance with those laws. In the eyes of laws all people were not equal, differences were made on the distinctions of castes. The Brahmin was exempted from taxation and from all kinds of stern punishments including capital punishments. Punishments for the *Shudras* even for equal crime was all the time more, and beside the regular tax payable to the state, the lower castes had to pay money in the form of *dana* and *dakshina* to the Brahmin. This state of discrimination continued till the establishment of Islamic rule in India in the wake of the twelfth century, even then the muslim rulers for their own interest had to adjust with the age-old privileges of the high caste Hindus, and at local levels they failed to effect much observable changes in the outlook of the high-castes towards the low-castes. No wonder, after the coming of the British, the new colonial Government in the task of imparting secular and equal justice to all indiscriminately had to codify new laws doing away with many of the inhuman conventions in the laws and regulations of the Indian caste-based administrative system.

This may be illustrated by Section 2 of the Indian Penal Code which reads as follows ;
 "Every person should be liable to punishment under this Code and not otherwise for every act of omission contrary to the provisions thereof, of which he shall be guilty within British India."
 The Law Commissioner preparing the draft Penal Code in their address to the Secretary of State thought it necessary to draw pointed attention towards "Every Person". They observed thus :

"Your Lordship in Council will see that we have not proposed to except from the operation of this Code any of the ancient sovereign houses of India residing within the Company's territories. We observe that every such exception is an evil; that is an evil that any man should be above the law; that it is still greater evil that the public should be taught to regard as a high and enviable distinction the privileges of being above the law ; that the longer such privileges are suffered to last, the more difficult it is to take them away; and that we greatly doubt whether any consideration except that of public faith solemnly pledged, deserves to be weighed against the advantages of equal justice."

The expectation was that the principle of equal justice would strike a death blow to the established order but the established Order continued to operate inspite of it. But, why the principle of equal justice failed to have effect ? The answer is very simple . To enunciate the principle of justice is one thing , to make it a practice is another thing . Whether the principle of equal justice is effective or not must necessarily depend upon the nature and character of the Civil Service administering the principle. In India during the British period the civil services were mostly manned by the high caste Hindus who had a bias against the lower castes. As a result, India was ruled by the British, but administered by the Hindus.²⁹

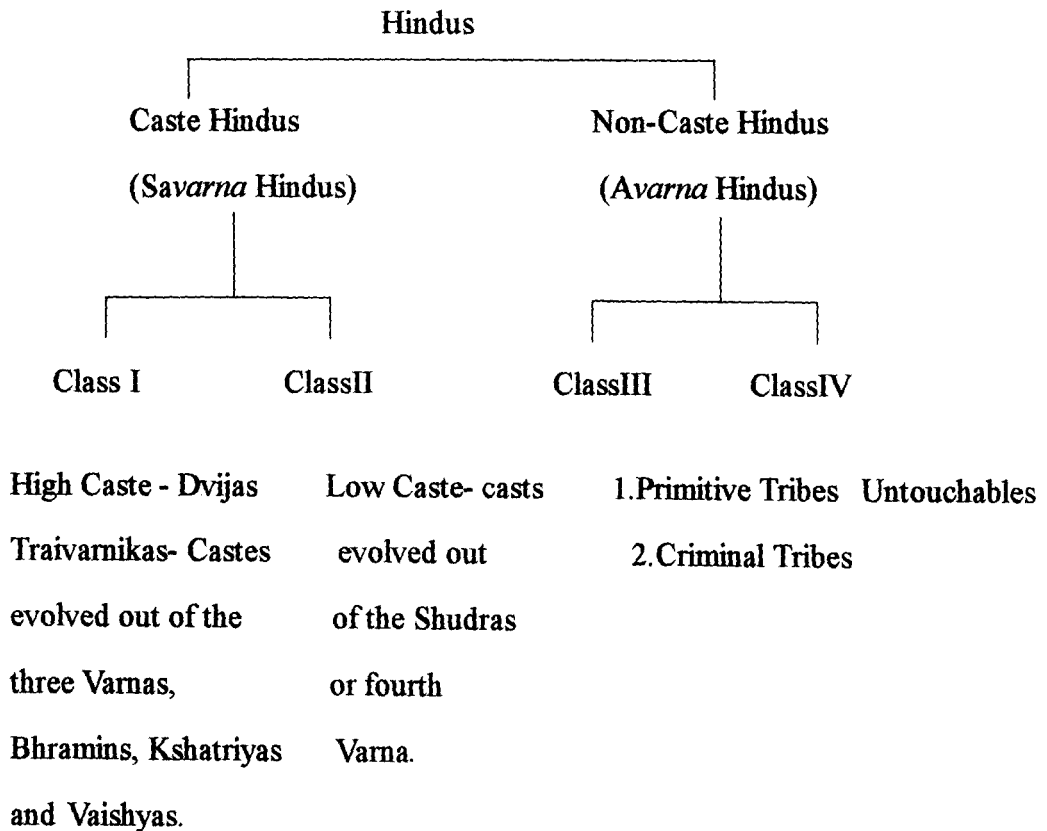
Much has been made of India's freedom struggle against the British . Before the adoption of resolution for complete independence in 1929 the so called struggle was nothing but to have only administrative powers and not the elimination of colonialism. This is evident from Tilak's observation of the Home Rule Movement. According to him, "Home Rule is nothing but to have the management of our Home in our own hands. All that we asked for was not a change in the rulers but administrators. We distinguish rulers from administrators. We have been deprived of the powers of administration and that should be restored to us."³⁰ In other words, Tilak's Freedom Movement related to the retention of the British rule under which he wanted to be an administrator.

The point is that the so called caste Hindu administrators showed discrimination where the Untouchables were concerned. This discrimination assumed the most virulent form. In social relationship it took the form of barriers against dancing, bathing, eating, drinking, wrestling, and worshipping. It put a ban on all common cycles of participation. In public facilities, this spirit of discrimination manifests itself in the exclusion of Untouchables from schools, wells, temples and means of conveyance. There was a third form of discrimination though subtle, nonetheless, real. Under it a systematic attempt was made to lower the dignity and status of a meritorious Untouchable. Thus a Hindu leader was described as a great Indian leader, whereas a leader of the Untouchable was referred to as the leader of the Untouchables. A Hindu singer would be described as a great Indian singer but if the same person happened be an Untouchable would be described as an Untouchable singer. This type of discrimination lowered the dignity

and status of a meritorious Untouchable. Even in free India, things have not changed too much for the better. This type of discrimination originates in the Hindu view that Untouchables are inferior people and, however qualified, their great men are only great among the Untouchables. They can never be greater nor even equal to the great men among the Hindus.

Besides, discrimination is merely another name of the absence of freedom. In the words of Tawney: "There is no such things as freedom in the market, divorce from the realities of specific time and place. Whatever else it may or may not imply, it involves the power of choice between alternatives ... Reduced to its barest essential, (man's) freedom consists in the secure by him, within the limits said by nature and the enjoyment of similar opportunities by his fellows, to take the action needed to order to ensure that these requirements are satisfied."³¹ In other words, society in which others can do little of what they please, while others can do little of what they ought, may have virtues of its own; but freedom is not one of them.³²

Lastly, the Untouchables face the problem of isolation. To understand this one has to know the social structure of the Hindus as shown bellow.³³



The above list shows that there are innumerable castes among the Hindus and they can be grouped under four classes. Of these four the Class I formed the ruling Class, and Classes III and IV formed the subject people. The laws of the Hindu social Order was created by them. They alone derived benefit from it and wanted to maintain it as long as possible. The laws of the Hindu Social Order were as repulsive to Class II, the *Shudras* as they were to Class IV, the Untouchables. It is interesting to know the status of the *Shudras* in the Hindu Society as prescribed by Manu the law giver and the architect of Hindu Society.

The rules regarding the status of *Shudras* is given by Manu as follows. He asks the *Brahmans*, the *Kshatriyas* and the *Vaishyas* : IV.61 "Let him not dwell in a country where the rulers are *Shudras*." XI.24. "Brahmin shall never beg from a *Shudra*; property for (Performing) a sacrifice i.e., for religious purpose."

All marriages with the *Shudras* were proscribed. Marriage with a woman belonging to any of the three upper classes was forbidden. The name of a *Brahman* should denote something auspicious, but that of a *Shudra* should express something contemptible. It was so done that only by hearing the names caste distinctions could easily be understood .

It is obvious that the three castes — Brahmin, *Kshatriya*, *Vaishya*— were more interdependent for mutual interest. This brought about a solidarity between the three castes. The *Shudras*, the Criminal and Primitive Tribes were more hostile to the Untouchables than to the Brahmins. Indeed it was the *Shudras* to act as the police force of the Brahmins for repelling the attack of the Untouchables on the Hindu social order. This is a strange phenomenon, indeed. The reason for this want of solidarity among the lower strata of the society is to be found in the system of "graded inequality" whereby the Brahmin is above everybody, the *Shudra* is below the Brahmin and above the Untouchable. For this "graded inequality", the *Shudra* who he is anxious to pull down the Brahmin is not prepared to see the Untouchable raised to his level. The result is that an Untouchable is completely isolated.

In the political sphere the Depressed Classes including the Untouchables had been deprived of political rights all along the course of ancient Indian history. During the medieval

period under the Muslim sultans and the Moghals their condition did not turn for the better, though thousands of them converted to Islam, it was mainly because the Muslim aristocracy did not like to engender the anger of the high caste Hindus whose service and co-operation in collecting taxes, running trade and commerce as well as managing the business of the state were earnestly sought by the Muslim rulers. In the British period, the tradition continued basically unhindered for the high caste Hindus by dint of their being educated in the western line not only grabbed Government services but also organised themselves into political parties namely the Indian National Congress, the Congress Socialist Party, the Communist Party of India etc, whereas the Depressed Classes owing to the lack of education and mass-consciousness fell way behind in clustering themselves for any meaningful political objective in terms of equality even during the course of the freedom movement. The Communist party of India, though was expected to stand by the Depressed, failed to understand the depth of the caste system in orienting economic class formations, on the other, the leadership of this party too remained in the hands of the caste Hindus, of course, there were a few Muslims too. The communists neglected social reforms, which should have preceded political movements, for the purpose of bringing the Indian poor of all walks of life together. No wonder, even some Indian communists, like most of the congressmen, in their secret agenda wanted to retain caste-based privileges.

In post-independent India things have grown for the worse. Now in politics the dominant parties take the lead to achieve the welfare of their own partymen. An important thing in regard to politics is revealed by Milovan Djilas in his book, *The New Class*. *The New Class* is a significant analysis of communism. Djilas is interested in the reality of communism as social, economic and political system. The originality of his analysis rests on the fact that he applies Marxist criterion of economy and polity to show what the reality of communism is like. Marx argued that the concentration of economic power in the hands of the capitalist inevitably entailed political control. Djilas argues that the absolute political power of the communist ruling class inevitably entails economic power and privileges, notwithstanding the legal fiction of "Public ownership". The so called socialist ownership, Djilas argues, "is a disguise for the real ownership by the political bureaucracy"; since it is the political bureaucracy that "uses, enforces and

disposes of nationalised property." This New Class of "Owners and exploiters" decides in an arbitrary way how the national income is to be distributed, what wages are to be paid to the workers, and how property is to be used : This is the way it appears to the ordinary man who considers the communist functionary as being very rich and as a man who does not have to work. Because this new class combines within itself absolute economic and political power, its power over men is the most complete one known to history."³⁴

In India the New Class has appeared in regard to all political parties. As a result the ruling Junta carries on the trade of the New Class. Here the victims are the Untouchables and other Depressed Classes. It is deplorable that the ruling Junta has been dominating over these Classes since they came into power in the past. It is the political power that the parties exercise over other communities. In the process the party becomes weaker than the cadres who formed the New Class. The tragedy of India is that democracy has not been able to come in full reality because of the existence of the Cadres ruling as classes and they are more powerful than the parties themselves. The Braminical system has been operating in the guise of the New Class with full-fledged power. This is evident from the ideas of no-less a person than B.G. Tilak. Tilak's view of Swaraj may be described in his own words while he was explaining the Home Rule Movement in his speech on 7th October, 1917 at Allhabad. He said , "Home Rule is nothing but to have the management of our home in our own hands . All that we asked for was not a change in the rulers but administrators. We distinguish rulers from administrators. We have been deprived of the powers of administration and that should be restored to us."³⁵

Against the injustice meted out by the Hindu social order to the Depressed Classes including the Untouchables Ambedkar carried on agitation in Maharastra in respect of the Chawdar Tank . This incident marked the beginning of a great revolt of the Untouchables against the Caste Hindu . This was followed by the burning of the *Manusmriti* at Mahad on 25th of December, 1927 . But the Congress and its leadership did not favour the revolt of Untouchable. In spite of his Harijan movement , Gandhiji was apathetic to the Untouchables' revolt. Ambedkar has described the part played by Gandhi and Patel in this regard.³⁶

The Poona Pact in 1932 and its background brought to the sight of the Untouchables the very attitude of Gandhiji as to the question of emancipation of the Untouchables. That is why Ambedkar wrote the books named *What Congress and Gandhi have done to the Untouchables*, and *Mr. Gandhi and the emancipation of the untouchables*. From the treatment meted out to the Untouchables by the Caste Hindus Ambedkar has concluded that Gandhi could not emancipate the Untouchable, since he paid only lip service to the Untouchables without sympathy for them. In a similar vein as to the leadership of Gandhiji Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose observed, "India's salvation will not be achieved under his leadership."³⁷

It is generally held that religion is individual , private and personal. But simultaneously, religion is very much social; and in India, the Hindu social structure is moulded by religious code and dicta. According to Ambedkar,³⁸ religion like language is social and the either of religion and society is essential to each other, and the individual has to have each of them. If religion is social in the sense that it primarily concerns society, it is natural to know the purpose and function of religion. The best statement and function of religion has been furnished by Prof. Charles A. Ellwood ³⁹ as thus :

"Religion projects the essential values of human personality and of human society into the Universe as a whole. It inevitably arises as soon as man tries to take valuing attitude towards his Universe. Man is the only religious animal, because through his powers of abstract thought and reasoning he alone is self-conscious in the full sense of that term ... The religious processes are nothing but the *rationalising processes* at work upon man's impulses and emotion rather than upon his precepts. What the reason does for ideas, religion does for the feeling. It universalises them ; and in universalising them , it brings them into harmony with the whole of reality."

Religion not only universalises social values but it also spiritualises them . In the words of Professor Ellwood:⁴⁰

"These mental and social values with which religion deals, men call 'spiritual'. It is something which emphasises spiritual value, that the values connected specially with the personal and social life. It projects these values into universal reality. It gives man a social and moral conception of the universe rather than a merely mechanical one as theatre of the play of blind, purposeless forces. Religion is , therefore, a belief in the reality of spiritual values and projects them into the whole universe."

The function of religion in society is also clear. In the words of Prof. Ellwood,⁴¹ "It is to act as an agency of social control, that is of the group controlling the life of the individual, for what is believed to be the good of the larger life of the group. Very early, any beliefs and practices which give expression to personal feelings or values of which the group did not approve were branded or 'black magic' or baleful superstition. We can not have a thing as purely personal or individual religion which is not at the same time social. For we live a social life and the welfare of the group is after all, the chief matter of concern."

Prof. Ellwood has observed in his *Society in its Psychological Aspects* (1913, pp. 356-57) thus:

"The function of religion is the same as the function of law and government. It is a means by which society exercises its control over the conduct of the individual in order to maintain the Social Order... Without the support of religion, law and government are bound to remain a very inadequate means of social control."

In view of the above humanistic and universal outlook of religion, Hinduism in practice falls short of moralistic and religious essence. The Hindu caste system and its entailing attitude towards the Untouchable is obviously inconsistent to any rational approach to humanity. In Hinduism there is no hope for the Untouchables. Untouchability is the lowest depth to which the degradation of a human being can be carried. To be poor is bad but not so bad as compared with an Untouchable. The low can rise above his status but an Untouchable can not. This is the reason why the Untouchables wished to quit Hinduism. There is no liberty, equality and fraternity in Hinduism. That Hinduism is inconsistent with the self-respect and honour of the Untouchables is the strongest ground which justifies the conversion of the Untouchables to another or a noble faith.⁴²

Moreover A. E. Porter, the census Superintendent of Bengal and Assam for 1931 revealed in his report the condition of the then "Depressed Classes", now the Scheduled Castes as follows:⁴³

"In general use the term in India (the Depressed Classes) is used to describe those members of the community who in common social estimation are considered to be

inferior, degraded, outcastes, or not fit in any way for social and religious intercourse on reasonably equal terms with members of the clean or higher castes. It represents a problem which arises only within the fold of Hinduism, viz., the problem of those Hindu groups who by accident of birth are denied and never can by any individual merit achieve social consideration or spiritual benefits which are the birth right without consideration of personal merit equally of all persons born into the higher castes.”

In this context Ambedkar has observed : “ Hinduism, thy name is inequality.” The Depressed Classes are really depressed because of untouchability and other impediments imposed upon them. The Government of India Act 1919 for the first time introduced the expression. In 1926 the composition of the Legislatures of all the provinces indicated 8.6 percent non-official nominated to represent aborigines, backward tribes, Depressed Class, anglo-Indian, Labour etc.⁴⁴

But the nomenclature that is the Depressed Classes was not liked by Ambedkar. As a result in his supplementary memorandum on the claims of the Depressed Classes for special representation to the Round Table Conference on November 4, 1931 he commented on the nomenclature as follows :

“We would like to point out that the existing nomenclature of Depressed Classes is objected to by members of the Depressed Classes who have given thought to it and also by outsiders who take interest in them. It is degrading and contemptuous, and advantage may be taken of this occasion for drafting the new constitution to alter for official purposes the existing nomenclature. We think that they should be called ‘Non-Caste Hindus’, ‘Protestant Hindus’ or ‘Non-Conformist Hindus’, or some such designation, instead of ‘Depressed Classes’. We have no authority to press for any particular nomenclature. We can only suggest them, and we believe if properly explained the Depressed Classes will not hesitate to accept the one most suitable for them. We have received a large number of telegrams from the Depressed Classes all over India supporting the demands contained in this memorandum.”⁴⁵

The Government of India Act 1935 was framed in the light of the above observations of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. As a result the expression, the “Depressed Classes” was replaced by the expression like ‘Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe’ and the same was maintained in the Constitution of India 1950. Thus articles 341 and 342 define the “Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes” and the so-called Untouchables of whom much has been said earlier.

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CHAPTER - IV

B. R. Ambedkar and the Socio-Cultural Reforms in Hindu Society

Early Life and Education : The shaping of Revolutionary Mind

Ambedkar was born an Untouchable at Mhow in Central India on April 14, 1891. He was a Mahar by caste—a robust, intelligent, brave and leading community. It is believed that the Mahars were the original inhabitants of Maharashtra and the name Maharashtra is derived from the term *Mahar-rastra*. The Mahars were very early to come in contact with the Europeans in India. They were a part of the the army and their recruitment in the army was discontinued after 1892. Ramji Shakpal, the father of Ambedkar, protested against this unjust order of banning and approached M.G.Ranade and interviewed the Governor of Bombay. The order banning the Untouchables in the army was withdrawn on February 6, 1917 and a Mahar Battalion III was raised in the First World War (1914-1918). Ramji was a Kabirpanthi. In the army Ramji rose to the rank of Subedar Major and was a head instructor in a military school for about 14 years. After retirement in 1891 on a pension of Rs.50 per month he settled at Dapoli in Ratnagiri district. In 1894 he was re-employed as a store - keeper in the Public Works Department in Ratnagiri and was later transferred to Satara.¹

There is a confusion as to the question of the exact date of birth of Ambedkar and this is clear from his own statement. Babasaheb Ambedkar delivered a speech on 28th October, 1954 at Purendare Stadium, Bombay when he was presented a purse of Rs. One lakh and eighteen thousand on the eve of his 60th birthday . This gives date of birth sometime in October 1894 and contradicts the usual date of birth on 14th April 1891. On this he said : “My father was in the 6th Pioneer Battalion, then he moved to 7th . At that time he never felt any importance of me as his son. He did not record my date of birth therefore, today, nobody can say that it is my real date of birth.” He wanted to write a book on his childhood. But this did not materialise. He told his

audience some home truths. He said :”The way my life was going, had I allowed to go like that, I would have at the most become some virtuous man, but I had my own self-instinct.” This gives a clue to his life.²

Bhimrao entered the Government High School , Satara , in 1900, in the first Standard . His name in the School was Bhima Ramji Ambedkar. The original sub-name of the family was Sakpal, however his ancestors preferred to call themselves after their ancestral village Ambavade which is in Khed taluka in Ratnagiri district. One teacher named Ambedkar in the Satara High School loved Bhimrao very much and often fed him. He was very obliging and kind to Ambedkar. As a token of love and respect Bhimrao began to call himself Ambedkar. And this name remained attached to him throughout his life.

During his school days Ambedkar realised what the stigma of untouchability meant. Some instances are cited below. One cart-man refused to associate with him and his brother in a bullock-cart. This happened when Ambedkar and his brother were travelling from Masur railway station to Goregaon. They had hired a bullock-cart. After sometime the cart-man could know that the two boys were Untouchables. The boys paid the cartman double the fare. Bhim’s elder brother drove the cart since the cart- man was unwilling to drive it. As a result the cart-man followed the cart on foot for fear of pollution, while the elder brother had been driving the cart . They could not get drinking water during the whole journey.

No barber would cut his hair for fear of pollution. Hence Bhim’s sisters would cut their brothers hair. All such insulting treatments were just common to the Untouchable. This humiliating and inhuman treatment at the hands of co-religionist in Ambedkar’s school days gave birth to his sense of hatred for the caste Hindus. Being an Untouchable by birth Ambedkar was forced to sit apart in the school. He could not associate with other boys or take part in games and sports. Even the teachers would not touch his note-books. Some of the teachers would not ask the Untouchables to recite poems or put questions to them for fear of being polluted. When the Untouchables felt thirsty in the School they turned their mouths upward and then somebody would kindly pour drinking water into the mouths as if through a funnel. Ambedkar was prohib-

ited from learning Sanskrit. The Sanskrit teacher was adamant and reluctant to teach Sanskrit to the Untouchables. As a result Ambedkar was compelled to take Persian as a second language in the High School.³

Since Ramji's job was terminated in 1904, he shifted to Bombay. And Ambedkar joined the Elphinstone High School, a Government institute. There was no such restriction in Bombay and he could play games. The caste Hindu students used to keep their tiffin boxes behind the black board. Once Ambedkar was asked to write on the black board. The boys feared that their food would be polluted by Ambedkar's presence near the board. The boys at once ran to the black board and hurled their tiffin boxes aside before Ambedkar could reach and touch the black board. The teacher discouraged him. Ambedkar passed the matriculation in 1907 and this was an event to be celebrated in his family. A congratulation meeting was arranged under the presidentship of S.K. Bholey, one of the leaders of the Satyasodhak movement. K.A. Keluskar who later wrote a biography of Shivaji took a fancy to Ambedkar and presented him a book on the life of Goutam Buddha. He was in the fifth Standard and on the 14th, when he was married to Rama Bai who was then only 9.

At that time the Maharaja Sayajirao of Baroda was a progressive ruler and announced help to be given to any promising Untouchable students for higher studies. Ambedkar got this help and joined the Elphinstone College. He was granted a scholarship of Rs.25 per month. Professor Muller lent him books and gave him clothings. However the old insulting environment had not changed. The Brahmin hostel-keeper of the College would not give him tea or water. Ambedkar did not mind such inconveniences and humiliating treatment. He concentrated his energies on studies and passed the B.A. examination in 1912 with English and Persian. He became a scholar later but in the College examination he could not secure any class. After graduation he joined the Baroda State service. But his father did not approve of this decision. The reason was that the higher officers of the Baroda State were orthodox upper class Hindus. Because of Hindu injunction against pollution, the peons in his office used to throw files at him lest they should be polluted. He could not get residential accommodation in a decent locality. He had to stay with

Pandit Atma Ram , an Arya samajist. The social conditions became so unbearable that it was not possible for him to continue in service. As a result he decided to resign his post at the earliest opportunity.

Meanwhile his father died on February 2,1913 and it was a shock to him. His father, Ramji, had to sacrifice much to provide education to his son and had to incur debts. He was unfortunate that he did not live to see his son going abroad for higher education. The Maharaja of Baroda, at the time, thought of sending some student to the U.S.A for higher studies at the Columbia University. And Ambedkar became his choice. On June 4th,1913 he signed an agreement with the Baroda State authority . In the third week of July, 1913 Ambedkar joined the Columbia University as Gaekwad scholar. Ambedkar was the first Mahar to study in a foreign University. He joined a cosmopolitan Club where some of the Indian students lived. He could move freely with a status of equality. He found it a new world. It helped enlarge his mental vision.

His teacher was the well known economist Professor Seligman. In June 1915, Ambedkar obtained the M.A. degree for his thesis *Ancient Indian Commerce*. In May 1916, he read a paper on *The Caste in India , their Mechanism, Genesis and Development*, at the Anthropology Seminar sponsored by Dr. Goldenweiser. It was published in the *Indian Antiquary* in May,1917. It was published in the form of a brochure, the first published works of Ambedkar. In it he observed that endogamy was essence of the caste system. A caste is an enclosed class and it existed before Manu. Manu codified the existing rules with *Brahmanical* bias. As a result the *Shudras* and women have been degraded in the *Manu Samhita*.⁴

In June 1916, Ambedkar submitted his thesis for the degree of Ph.D. , entitled *National Divident of India : A Historical and Analytical Study*. Eight years after this was published under the title : *The Evolution of Provincial Finance in British India*. However, the original doctoral dissertation was reviewed in the light of the Montagu-Chemsford Reforms of 1919 with reference to finance. The Book was dedicated to Maharaja Sayajirao with an introduction by Professor S.A. Seligman. The Professor stated therein : ‘Nowhere to my knowledge, has such a detail

study of the underlined principle made .” In the thesis Ambedkar stated that the whole policy had been dictated by the interests of British industries and manufacturers. He concluded that in every country there is social oppression and social injustice. This does not mean that the country should be without political power. Ambedkar’s book was so indispensable that during the budget session of the Indian legislature used this as a reference book . To the students it was a guide. He was called to give evidence before the Hilton-Young Commission on Indian currency. He was filled with pride when he saw that every member of the Commission had his book for reference.

Ambedkar left the Columbia University and joined the London School of Economics and Political Science as a graduate student in June 1916. Professor Seligman gave him introductory letters to professor Cannan and Sydney Webb. In October 1916 he was admitted to Gray’s Inn for law. But he had to face a crisis. He had to return to India before the completion of his thesis for the M.Sc.(Econ.) degree, because of the termination of Maharaja’s scholarship. Ambedkar tried to persuade to reconsider his decision but without any success. However, he obtained permission of the London University through recommendation of Professor Cannan to resume his study within a period not exceeding four years from October 1917.⁵

In July 1917 Ambedkar was made Military Secretary to the Maharaja of Baroda with a view to being groomed for the post of the States’ Finance Minister. It was unfortunate that none received him in the State. He could not get accommodation in a hotel or hostel. He had to take shelter in a Parsi Hotel and stayed there incognito. In the office also the same treatment awaited him. Peons flung office files on his table. Drinking water was not available to him. This was unbearable to Ambedkar . He sent a note to the Maharaja, but the Dewan expressed his inability to do anything in the matter. This humiliation at the hands of the Caste Hindus compelled him to leave Baroda. He then came to Bombay in 1917 . At this time he published a brochure : *Small Holdings in India and their Remedies*.⁶

The Depressed Classes held two conferences in November in Bombay. A resolution at one of the conferences was passed, requesting the government to protect the interest of the

Untouchables by granting them the right to elect their own representatives to the Legislature in proportion to their population. Another resolution supported the Congress - league Scheme with a view to impressing upon the Caste Hindus the necessity of removing of all disabilities in the name of custom and religion. The second conference opposed the transfer of power to the Caste Hindus and appealed to the government to grant them the right to choose their own representatives. But Ambedkar thought that the Congress - League Scheme was unsound since the Executive and the Legislature in it derived their mandates from and were responsible to different powers.⁷

The First All India Depressed Classes Conference was held on March 23 and 24, 1918 in Bombay and attended by prominent leaders. Maharja Sayajirao of Baroda presided . The conference appealed to the country for removing untouchability. The national leader Tilak threatened that he would not recongnise God if he were to tolerate untouchability. Ambedkar was very sceptical about the movement started by the Caste Hindus for uplift of the Untouchables. In Bombay he tried to mould his life anew. Through the good offices of a Parsi gentleman, he became a tutor to two students . Moreover he started a business firm to offer advise to dealers in stocks and shares. However, he had to close it permanently as the customers were not ready to go to an Untouchable for advice. In November 1918, he joined the Sydenham College as professor of Political Economy. His lectures were so attractive that students from other colleges attended them. But social treatment accorded to him remained unchanged . "The High Caste Professors objected to him drinking water from the pot reserved for the professorial staff."⁸ He served in the college from November 11, 1918 to March , 1920. Thereafter he resigned his post to resume his studies in law and Economics in London. The Maharaja of Kolhapur, Shahu Chhatrapati also helped in this regard.⁹

When the South Borough Commission examined the representatives of different interests and communities for the preparation of the Montagu-Chemsford Reforms of 1919, Ambedkar and V.R. Shinde were called upon to give evidence before the commission for franchise. Ambedkar demanded separate electorate and reserved seats for the Depressed Classes in proportion to their

population. He stressed social equality before the demand of Home Rule. He remarked that Home Rule was as much the birth right of Mahar as that of a Brahmin. He emphasised the need for marked change in the attitude of the Caste Hindus.

On January 31, 1920, Ambedkar started a weekly paper, *Mooknayak* (leader of the dumb) to champion the cause of the Depressed Classes in India. In the editorial of the first number he remarked that the existing news paper had been looking to the interests of certain castes. In his words: “ Devoid of power and knowledge , the non- Brahmins and the Depressed Classes can not make any progress.”¹⁰

Conferences of the Depressed Classes were held at Nagpur(1918) and at Kolhapur (March 21,1920) under the presidentship of Shahu Maharaj and Ambedkar attended them. At Kolhapur conference Shahu Maharaj stated that Ambedkar had the potential for becoming an All-India leader. The conference ended with an intercaste dinner. At the Nagpur Conference held in May, 1920, Ambedkar criticised V.R.Shinde and his Depressed Classess Mission supported by Sir Narayan Chandravarkar. The servants of India Society had sympathies with this cause. The Nagpur Conference passed resolutions of no-confidence against V.R. Shinde and others. Ambedkar declared:”Institutions and individuals have no right to defend the interest of Depressed Classes, if they are not run by Untouchables.” The Nagpur Conference laid the foundation of Ambedkar’s future work. In his weekly paper Ambedkar wrote that the Depressed Classes were justified in their opposition to the rule of the Brahmins in the case of transfer of power to Indian hands. In case the protection of the British was withdrawn the caste Hindus would trample upon the Depressed Classes and the Swaraj constitution must include fundamental rights for the Depressed Classes.¹¹

Marathi lexicographer Dr. S.V. Ketkar requested Ambedkar to join him as a contributor to the Marathi *Jnanakosha* (encyclopaedia). But Ambedkar refused. He also refused the invitation from the principal of Sydenham College, Bombay, to read paper at the Economic Conference to be held in December, 1918. These events reveal the attitude of Ambedkar towards the movement started by the caste Hindus. In September, 1920, Ambedkar had been in England and

re-joined the London School of Economics and Political Science. He also entered Gray's Inn to qualify as a barrister. He got some helps from Shahu Maharaj. As regards his studies in London, he joined several Libraries, for example , the London University General Library, Godsmith's Library of Economic Literature, the British Museum Library and the India Office Library. In these libraries he used to sit throughout the day even without a break for lunch, since he could not afford a lunch. He avoided all kinds of diversions, such as excursions, theatres and restaurants. He asked his wife, Ramabai, to sell even ornaments in case of difficulties . Many admirers voluntarily offered help but Ramabai refused to accept it.¹²

In June, 1921, the University of London accepted his thesis - *Provincial Decentralisation of Imperial Finance in British India*- for M.Sc. (Econ.) degree. In 1922-23, Ambedkar had been to the University of Bonn to read Economics for sometime. In March 1923, he submitted his thesis: *The Problem of the Rupee - Its origin and its Solution* — for the degree of D.Sc(Econ.) . It was published in December, 1923, by P.S. King and Company, London. It had an introduction by Professor Canan. He paid glowing tributes to Ambedkar for the freshness of his views. This book was re-issued by Thacker and Company, Bombay, in May, 1947 with the title *History of Indian Currency and Banking*, (Vol I). Ambedkar was called to the Bar in April, 1923. While in London he met E.S. Montagu, Secretary of State for India and Vithalbai Patel and discussed with them the grievances of the Untouchables.¹³

Influence of Protestant Religions and Reformers on Ambedkar

Ambedkar spoke of three Gurus or preceptors and three deities as shaping his personality. The first preceptor was the Buddha (623-544 B.C.). Ambedkar passed the Matriculation Examination in 1907 from the Elphinstone High School. His father made him read the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharat* etc. earlier. Now to celebrate the event of Ambedkar's passing the examination the residents of his Chawl decided to felicitate him with the help of Dada Keluskar (Krishnaji Arjun Keluskar), Maratha author and social reformer. The function took place much against the wishes of Ambedkar's father and Dada Keluskar presented a book on the life of the Buddha to Ambedkar. On reading this book Ambedkar got a new enlightenment. As he himself put it: "Maruti , Sita,

Rama had gone to jungles ; on a washerman's complaint Rama abandoned Sita. Krishna had 1600 wives, all these things could not create any impact on me. But after a study of Buddhism thorough that book, I felt like studying it more and more. The impact of Buddhism is very much firm on my mind and I firmly believe that it is only Buddhism which can emancipate the world. If Hindus want their country to survive, they must accept the path of Buddha.”

His second Guru was Kabir (1440-1518). His father was a follower of Kabir . As a result the life and philosophy of Kabir influenced Ambedkar's life to a great extent. In his opinion Kabir could understand the real significance of the philosophy of the Buddha. Ambedkar never regarded anybody great and he did not recognise Gandhiji as 'Mahatma'. Ambedkar's third Guru was Jotirao Phooley (1827-1890) . He was a pioneer of reforms among the Untouchables. Phooley's mission was to educate the Depressed Classes such as the Darji, Kumbhar, Nais, Kolis, Mahars, Mangs and Chambhars, which Ambedkar acknowledged with gratitude.¹⁴

Phooley was a social reformer in the 19th Century in Maharashtra .He was the first man in Poona who openly made arrangements to give drinking water to the Untouchables. He established schools for women in 1848 and for Untouchables in 1851. For this Sri Shahu Maharaj of Kolhapur called Phooley the 'Martin Luther' of Maharashtra. Phooley opposed Brahminism, but he was not a *Brahman*-hater. Men like Justice M.G. Ranade helped him in the cause of social reform. In 1873 , Phooley founded the *Satyashodhak Samaj* (Society of the truth Seekers). It preached three principles: (a) God Almighty is one, All beings are his children, (b) There is no need for any middlemen between man and God, and (c) Greatness should not depend on the conditions of birth i.e., in what caste a man is born. Sri Sayajirao Gaekwad of Baroda assisted him in his cause and called him the "Booker T. Washington " of India. When Tilak and Agarkar were released from Dongari Jail in 1881, Phooley received them courageously and led them into Poona City in procession.¹⁵

Besides the above Gurus (preceptors) Ambedkar had three deities. His first deity was *Vidya* (knowledge). Mankind, he said , can not get peace and human dignity without knowledge. In the Hindu society knowledge had been withheld from the *Shudras*, *Ati-shudras* and women

for thousand of years. As a result they had remained illiterate. The Brahmins had been reluctant to impart knowledge to non - Brahmins . It was the so-called religious dogmas that stood in the way. Ambedkar stated that he had a library of 2 lakh books and worshipped knowledge all the 24 hours. In the words of Aldous Huxley: "Knowledge is a function of being. When there is change in the being of the knower, there is a corresponding change in the nature and amount of knowing, what we know depends also on what, as moral beings, we choose to make ourselves."¹⁶

Ambedkar's second deity was " Self -respect." Habits are the flying wheels of society . They are formed in the service of sentiments and instincts. In fact, the genesis of a sentiment consists in the habitual functioning of an instict through a particular channel of expression . Sentiments thus make for greater consistency of conduct. It is the great principle of cohesion that works here as one of the main powers of the mind. However, the sentiments gradually organise themselves into a hierarchy under one dominant sentiment. Only one sentiment is capable , from its very nature, of including all the others. It is the sentiment of 'self-regard' in which all the instincts and sentiments are organised round the idea of self. In the normal man the two main tendencies of self -regard, that is, the impulses of self-assertion, are duly balanced and the sentiment is properly called " self-respect." When self-assertion tendency is unduly preponderant, it is called "pride". When the superiorities in which satisfaction is chiefly found are trivial, it is known as "vanity". When this impulse assumes a more active role and seeks to compell the admiration of a larger number of men, the sentiment is called "ambition" or in extreme cases *megalomania*.¹⁷

In regard to his own case Ambedkar said : "I never begged of anybody, saying that I should be given this post or that." Further he added : "I want to tell you that one should not be so much submissive. He must consider himself that he is only somebody. My "self-respect" is so burning that I consider even 'God ' inferior to me."

Ambedkar's third diety was "*Shila*" (Character). In his own words:- "In my life I have not comitted any forgery, cheating or some sin for self - interest. I visited England many times, but never drank wine, never smoked a cigarette. Books and cloths — these are the only two things

I like. To preserve a *shila* (Character) is a very big virtue.” A question arises : “What is character?” According to Mc. Dougall :” Character is the system of directed conative tendency. The better organised and the richer intellect, the more efficiently will character work toward the realisation of its goals.”¹⁸ The unit of character are sentiments or complexes . The word ‘sentiment’ denotes all acquired conative trends, while “complex” sentiments are out of harmony with the rest of the character. Ambedkar showed both the sentiment and the complex in his character. Sometimes he wept at the thought of losing his eye-sight, for then life would be meaningless for a person to whom “books were the breath of life.” He said, and sighed :”It is a sin to take birth in a country whose people are so prejudiced. I have done a lot in spite of abuse hurled at me from all sides. I will continue to do so till my death.”¹⁹ So saying he burst into tears.²⁰

Impact of his Teachers on Ambedkar’s Ideas

In regard to education Ambedkar had some teachers in foreign lands for example in the U.S.A. and the U.K. Ambedkar cherished high respects for some of them. Three names come up and he mentioned them. One was Professor Seligman and the other was Professor John Dewey. The third was Professor E. Cannan. Professor Seligman and Professor Cannan belonged to economics and Professor Dewey to philosophy and logic.

Malthus wrote the first edition of his *Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798). Any articulate statement of the Malthusian population theory must be interpreted as implying the law of diminishing returns. According to Malthus the production of food stuff goes on in arithmetical progression, whereas increase of population goes by geometrical progression. As a result the food supply can not keep pace with the increasing population. To strike a balance between the two positive checks on the population must be restored to. Otherwise there would be wars, famines, pestilence and the like. The Malthusian theory was attacked by technical experts suggesting that technical innovations could check it by improved standard of cultivation and other technical gadgets in food production. But this is not the whole solution. Here professor Seligman gave a solution thus : The problem of population is not one of size only, but of efficient production and equitable distribution.

In regard to the law of the diminishing returns Professor Cannan had something to say. He maintained that Malthous' original reasoning (1798) about the geometric and arithmetic progression moved on a plane different from that of law of diminishing returns. However, this was not convincing. What mattered was that any trully articulate version of the Malthousian theory did imply diminishing returns.²¹ Professor Cannan wrote a forward to Ambedkar's Book— *History of Indian Currency and Banking*(1947). He wrote as follows :

“ I was one of the few economists, who believed that the rupee could be kept at fixed ratio with gold by the method then(1893) proposed , and I did not fall away from the faith when some years elapsed without the diesired fruit appearing. I do not share Mr. Ambedkar's hostility to the system , nor accept most of his arguments against it and his advocacy. But he hits some nails squarely on the head, and even when I have thought him quite wrong, I have found a stimulating freshness in his views and reasons. An old teacher like myself learns to tolerate the vagaries of originality , even when they resist ‘ severe examination’ such as that of which Mr. Ambedkar speaks. In his practical conclusion, I am inclined to think, he is right.”²²

His professor was also John Dewey (1859-1952) the philosopher, born in Burlington , Vermont. He taught at the University of Michigan and thereafter at the University of Chicago, where he established a famous experimental school to try out his ideas on education . From 1905 till his retirement in 1929 he was a professor of philosophy at Columbia University. Ambedkar entered the Graduate school in Columbia University in 1913. So he had contacts with Professor Dewey and he stated : “John Dewey was my teacher and to whom I owe much.” Ambedkar applied Dewey's maxim to Indian conditions. India is a country tied to the past traditionally (*Esho Dharma Sanatana*). Ambedkar wanted to break that tradition. In this he got help from professor Dewey. Thus he quoted his professor while discussing the *Annihilation of Caste* (third edition, 1944): “ Every society gets encumbered with what is trivial, with dead wood from the past, and with what is positively perverse...As a society becomes more enlightened, it realises that it is responsible not to conserve and transmit the whole of its existing achievements , but only such as make for a better future society.”²³

Ambedkar has summed up the baneful effect of the worship of the past. In professor Dewey's words thus : “ An individual can live only in the present. The present is not just something which comes after the past; much less something produced by it. It is what life is in

leaving the past behind it. The study of past products will not help us to understand the present. A knowledge of the past and its heritage is of great significance when it enters into the present, but not otherwise. And the mistake of making the records and remains of the past the main material of education is that it tends to make the past a rival of the present and the present a more or less futile imitation of the past.”²⁴

In this context one has to remember what Ambedkar has said about the Hindus: “ The Hindus must consider whether the time has not come for them to recongnize that there is nothing fixed , nothing eternal, nothing *sanatan*; that everything is changing , that change is the law of life for individuals as well as for society. In a changing society, there must be a constant revolution of old values and the Hindus must realise that if there must be standards to measure the acts of men there must also be a readiness to revise those standards.”²⁵

Professor John Dewey’s influence on Ambedkar led him to burn *Manusmriti* on December, 25, 1927. John Dewey began as a Hegelian in philosophy. But his studies of Darwin’s biology led him to a new conception of the nature of thought which he called “instrumentalism”. Thinking, he said, is an activity of the organism, which, like swimming, walking and climbing, was generated as a means to adjustment and survival; it is an instrument brought into play when instinct and habit break down, in order to surmount obstacles in the way of behaviour. Hence its true test is practical — whether it succeeds in reaching the specific end for which it was adopted (*Studies in Logical Theory, 1903*). This insight required, he held , a reconstruction of philosophy. The speculative thought of the West since Plato had been dominated by a “spectator’s view” of knowledge; the business of thought was to contemplate an eternal and changeless order. Repudiating this , Dewey substituted for contemplation ‘Creative intelligence’, whose business was to transform the condition of life so as to achieve the greatest practicable fulfilment for all. Since evolution implies continual change, our ideals themselves must be tentative; the ideal that is fixed and final tends to arrest advance (*Reconstruction in philosophy, 1920*). His instrumentalism followed his views on education, politics and religion.²⁶ *Data*, in the sense in which they are understood by the empiricists are rejected by professor Dewey as the starting point of knowledge. There is a process of inquiry in the course of which subject and

object change. The process is in some degree, continuous throughout life, and even throughout the history of a cultural community. Nevertheless, a problem has a beginning and this is called a 'situation'. A situation is a "qualified essential the whole of which is unique". According to him: "Every situation, when it is analysed, is extensive, containing within itself diverse distinctions and relations which, inspite of their diversity form a unified qualitative whole". Moreover, "Singular object exists and singular even occurs within a field or situation."²⁷ We point out rather than point at. There is no such thing as passive receptivity; what is called the given is selected , and is taken rather than given.

We are told that sense-data are not objects of knowledge, and have no existential reference. Three common errors are to be avoided : (1) that the commonsense world is perceptual; (2) that the perception is a mood of cognition ; (3) that what is perceived is cognitive in status . Professor Dewey denies *immediate* knowledge and its supposed indespesibility for mediated knowledge. But he admits *apprehension*, which functions as immediate knowledge. What is most distinctive in professor Dewey's logic , namely the emphasis upon *inquiry* as opposed to *truth* or knowledge. Inquiry is not for him a search for truth. It is an independent activity defined as follows: "Inquiry is the controlled or directed transformation of an indeterminate situation into one that is so determinate in its constituent distinctions and relations as to convert the elements of the original situation into a unified whole."²⁸ It is admitted that inquiry alters the objects as well as the subjects : "Inquiries concerned with objective transformation of objective subject matter."²⁹

The influence of Prof. Dewey left a profound impression on Ambedkar's world of thought. The ideation of a changing world, society and history as against the concept of traditionalism moulded the life and activity of Ambedkar. Idea as a form of response, and response for change remained as a guiding force throughout Ambedkar's life. It seems , therefore, Ambedkar had a practical implication of both pragmatism and instrumentalism on his life. Moreover, Dewey's ideas of education capable of transforming human mind and society and of democracy capable of uprooting overcentralization of political power in the hands of the exploiting few inspired Ambedkar to struggle for democracy as a remedy to the exploitative society in India.

Ambedkar was a voracious reader. He had a powerful thrust for books. He purchased books even sacrificing his daily needs. In New York he bought about 2000 old books. During the Second Round Table Conference he bought books in London and sent them to India in 32 boxes. It is significant that he built a Bungalow in Mumbai and named it 'Rajgriha' after the name of the place where the Buddha had spent a long period of his life. He remained and slept in the library and often took meals there. His great library had a store of up-to-date books on various topics, namely law, philosophy, religion, socialism, economics, politics, constitutional law and parliamentary affairs. There was a special division containing political biographies.³⁰

It may be noted that many distinguished persons had private libraries. Mention may be made of Shripad Balaji Thakur (first Maharashtra Member of the Indian Civil Service), V. N. Mandlik of Bombay, Dr. Bhandarkar's eldest son, Justice K.T. Telang, M.R. Jayakar and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. Ambedkar's name may be added to the list.³¹ Ambedkar used to say: "For a man like me who is socially boycotted these books took me to their hearts".³² His love of books resembled that of a lover for his beloved. Ambedkar himself said that he took special care in respect of two things, books and dress. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya expressed his desire to purchase Ambedkar's collections for the Banaras Hindu University for two lakh rupees but he refused. Ambedkar stated that books had constituted his life: They were the life-blood. There is no hesitation in describing Ambedkar as an erudite person. He distinguished himself in many subjects for example, history, economics, politics, law and constitution. In these subjects he acquired the highest degrees of three universities in England and America.³³

During his stay in America, Ambedkar was impressed by two important things. One was the fourteenth amendment to the U.S.A Constitution, giving freedom to the Negroes. In India the Untouchables resembled the Negroes but had no freedom of their own. The second thing was the impact of Booker T. Washington, a great social reformer who educated the Negroes in America. Washington was the founder and president of the Tuskegee Institute. And this Institute spread education amongst the Negroes. The Institute also broke shackles of the bondage which had been crushing the Negroes for centuries.

England is a model for Parliamentary Democracy . Ambedkar also fought for the liberation of the Untouchables and dreamt of Parliamentary democracy . He came to the conclusion that the Western system had the capacity to break the shackles of the Untouchables in India. He began preaching, by his own example, that 'Worth', and not the 'birth' shaped the life of an individual in a country . His own example proves that 'worth ' shapes the life of an individual more than his 'birth' . It is 'worth' that made Ambedkar a D.Sc. Prior to his entry into Indian Politics Ambedkar was fully equipped with the Western ideas of democracy , liberty, equality and fraternity. His living in England and America revealed to him that the existing Hindu Social System could never free the Untouchables from social and political oppression. It is not the laws of Manu that would be of help to the Untouchables but the constitutional safeguards that would lead them to a free life.³⁴

Ambedkar's Building of the horizons of Ideas of Socio-cultural Reforms

It is interesting to delve into the evolution of man from the primitive stage to civilisation. There is no evidence that any of the early primates or the Ape-man and the sub-man of Pleistocene or even the dawn men of Palaeolithic and Neolithic cultural epochs lived in organised 'States' under governments. It is evident that *Homosapiens* knew nothing of such matters during the first few tens of thousands of years of his existence as a recognisable denizen of the turning of the earth. There was apparently no 'Civilization' whatever among human beings prior to a time which began not much more than 7000 years ago.³⁵

Generally three terms are used in day to day conversation of mankind. These are — civilisation, culture and mentation. Roughly these three are different . Civilization aims at physical comforts. What produces these comforts are known as civilization and these relate to outward things. What yeilds mental happiness is known as culture and what reveals intellect and knowledge is called mentation. Examples will make the distinction clear. Mahenjo-daro seals and other articles discovered by way of archeological excavations are examples of ancient civilization of the inhabitants of the Indus valley. *Varatanatyam* illustrates the culture of the ancient Hindus. And lastly mentation relates to the expression of numbers by the *Vedic Aryans* with the

help of nine digits.³⁶ Incidentally White Head has defined culture thus : “Culture is activity of thought and receptiveness to beauty and human feeling.”³⁷

A major unsolved problem of social science is the question of how and why men, living for ages as ‘animals’ among other animals , finally developed cultures and “how and why men, living for many millennia in primitive culture, at length arrived at the peculiar cultures called ‘civilization’. Three conditions distinguish this civilization. The first is that the earliest primates lived as beasts. That is to say their equipments for solving problems consisted primarily of ‘instincts’ or biologically inherited patterns of response to stimuli, built slowly and solidly into nerves, glands and muscle via the genes, through the mysterious process of organic adaptation over many generations.”³⁸

The early ancestors possessed also some talents for individual learning through trial and error monkeying or fumbling with a strange and dangerous situation. Only those who learnt survived . To learn is to change the pattern of response fixed by instinct or previous habits. Ape-man probably hit upon the use of fire and of simple weapons and tools before they arrived at words. The Apes of today can not learn to talk, but they readily learn to use tools and occasionally seem able to invent them . ‘Culture’ is the totality of learned devices for problem solving , as distinct from hereditary or instinctual equipments. It may be noted that culture is impossible without effective communication between individuals and between generations. Communication in turn creates community, which means no more or less than the sharing of the expenses. To this end comes the invention of words.³⁹ In this context there is the origin of the state and of civilized government based on the war and conquest theory . Reduced to its elements it holds that the crucial events in shift from barbarism to civilization was the subjugation of primitive farmers by hunters and herdsmen . A decision was taken that the victors should carry the victims and utilise them as tillers of the soil . All these are typical features of the earliest literate culture. Writing and religion, no less than the arts of politics and war, enabled the masters to consolidate their mastery by winning the religion of their victims. Through the adroit use of forces, fraud and favours, sanctified by the usage of magic, the new arrangement was perpetuated and developed into the first stratified societies of the first territorial state.⁴⁰

There exists a distinction between the state and society. The state is a definite space or territory inhabited by a distinctive human stock engaged in a nexus of co-operative activity under the protection and auspices of a government of its own. It seems that the state or nation is an amalgam of space and its people, with a nexus of co-operative activities. The people of the state generally follow two orders concurrently and simultaneously, the one is the social order of society and the other is the legal or compulsory order of the state.

By 'society' is meant the wholesome of voluntary bodies or associations contained in the nation with all their various purposes and institutions. Taken together and regarded as a whole, these associations form the social substance which goes by the general and comprehensive name of society. Taken separately and regarded in themselves, they generally show and share two features: first, they are essentially voluntary in origin: secondly, they are essentially specific in purpose, or for some one purpose, namely, religious, economic, educational, charitable or 'social' in a broader sense.

By the state is meant a particular and special association, existing for the special purpose of maintaining a compulsory scheme of legal order, and acting therefore through laws in force by prescribed and definite sanctions. The state capital, as a rule, is national in a scope, just society also is national. In other words, most states are what we call 'National State'. On this point the state agrees with society or more exactly, is co-extensive with society. However it also differs from the associations other than itself which we call, in their sum, by the name of society. It differs in two respects. First, the state includes all the members of the stock living in its territory, and it includes them all as a matter of necessity. Other associations include only on voluntary basis. Secondly, the state has the power of using legal coercion, the power of enforcing obedience under the sanction of punishment, to ordain rules of behaviour. Other associations by virtue of their voluntary basis, can apply only social discipline, and can expect only voluntary obedience to agreed ways of behaviour.⁴¹

In the evolution of man there developed the state, and morality entered the scene. Oppenheimer suggests that the state was at last founded when the ruling group put to death one of its

own members for committing an act of prohibited violence against one of the conquered.⁴² In other words the state was based on common morality. Subsequently the state deteriorated and politics developed. It consisted in “Who gets what , when and how”.⁴³ This developed further so as to yield “force, fraud and favours” as noted already. This is illustrated by the *Manusmriti* (200 B.C. - 200 A.D.). It is one of the misdeeds of Pusyamitra ,the Brahmin General ,who assassinated the Maurya emperor Brihadratha and ascended the throne of Magadha and set up the Sunga dynasty (187-75 B.C.). Pusyamitra wanted the Brahmins to rule over others and got the *Manusmriti* written by one Bhargava. Actually there was none of the name of Manu. It was a fictitious name of a person by whom the attitude of the Brahmins was expressed.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar has criticised the institutions of Manu (*Manusmriti*) and he has condemned it. Some of the *slokas* are quoted below to show how undignified and vulgar they are: II.31- Let (the first part of) a *Brahman*'s name (denote) something auspicious ... but a *Shudra*'s (express something) contemptible. II.32-(The second part of) a *Brahman*'s (name) shall be a word implying happiness ... and of a *Shudra*'s (an expression) denoting service.⁴⁴

Regarding the wealth that a Brahmin may possess, the following *slokas* testify as follows: I .99- A *Brahmana*, coming into existence, is born as the highest on earth, the lord of all created beings, for the protection of the treasury of the law. I .100- Whatever exists in the world is the property of the *Brahmana*; on account of the excellence of his origin the *Brahmana* is, indeed, entitled to it all.⁴⁵

As regards the wages to the *Shudras*, Manu says, X.124. They must allot to him (*Shudra*) out of their own family property as suitable maintenance, after considering his ability his industry, and the number of those whom he is bound to support. X.125. The remnants of their food must be given to him, as well as their old cloths, the refuse of their grain, and their old household furniture.⁴⁶

Besides a Brahmin must never read the *Veda* in the presence of the *Shudras*: IV.99. Women also are directed not to have any business with the *Veda* :IX.18. Moreover a twice born (*Dwija*) who has ... (improperly) developed the *Veda* (that is to *Shudras* and women) commits sin. Gautam

has in his *Dharma sutra*, XII.4. has stated thus: If the *Shudra* intentionally listens for committing to memory the *Veda*, then his ears should be filled with (molten) lead and lac; if he utters the *Veda*, his tongue should be cut off; if he has mastered the *Veda* his body should be cut to pieces.

In this context Ambedkar comments thus : “The ancient world may be said to have been guilty for failing to take the responsibility for the education of the masses . But never has any society been guilty of closing to the generality of its people the study of the books of its religion. Never has society been guilty of prohibiting the mass of its people from acquiring knowledge .Never has society made any attempt to declare that any attempt made by the common man to acquire knowledge shall be punishable as a crime. Manu is the only law giver who has denied the common man the right to knowledge.”⁴⁷

Subsequently under Ambedkar’s leadership the *Manusmriti* was burnt on 25th December, 1927 after a Satyagraha conference pledged to vindicate the right of the Untouchables to the Mahad Tank. The conference was convened and more than 10,000 Untouchables assembled to consider an injunctions issued by the civil court at the instance of the high castes and restraining the Untouchables from using the Tank on the plea that the Tank was a public property. The conference took following resolutions:

(1) Taking into consideration, the remarks in the *Manusmriti* and such other books which are most vulgar and which most flagrantly violate the human rights, this meeting condemns them emphatically and as an expression of that condemnation resolves to burn them and make the following declaration of rights to form the basis of reconstruction of Hindu Society. The declaration stated that all the Hindus should be considered as one *Varna* and should be recognised and called as such and law should be enacted prohibiting the use of class words as Brahmin, *Kshatriya* etc.

(2) Another resolution urged that a competitive examination be held for the admission of person to the Hindu priesthood and that licenses be issued only to the successful candidates.⁴⁸ The ruling castes in ancient India confused society and state and introduced *varna-ashrama* or the caste system on iniquitous principles. In other words it exulted the *Brahman* and conferred

almost divine honour upon him or made him a 'Bhudev' and reduced the *Shudras* and *Chandalas* almost to the position of slaves, denying them the most elementary rights of ordinary citizenship. The *Shudras* prevented from holding property and were subjected to more heavier punishments than those meted out to the Brahmins for identical offences. The *Chandalas* were treated worse than dogs. When the state became a champion of *varnas* and *ashramas*, it became a party to all these iniquities. It enforced the *varnashramadharma* at the point of the sword to the detriment of the lower classes. It was thus based upon social injustice. It confounded 'dharma' with the existing iniquitous social order. It idealised the actual instead of trying to actualise the ideal.⁴⁹

Ambedkar's Study of the Riddles in Hinduism

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar⁵⁰ has examined the Hindu social system and called it undemocratic. It is designed to be undemocratic. The division of society into castes, sub-castes and outcastes is not only a decree but also a dogma. They are all barricades raised against democracy. It would appear that the doctrine of fraternity was unknown to the Hindu religious and philosophic thought. Such a conclusion would not be warranted by the facts of history. The Hindu religious and philosophic thought gave rise to an idea which had greater potentiality for producing social democracy than the idea of fraternity. To denote this Ambedkar has borrowed a work from Professor Hopkin's *The Epics of India*.

There are three trends in the philosophical thought of the Hindus. They may be designated as (1) *Brahmoism* (2) *Vedanta* and (3) *Brahmanism*. Although they are co-related they stand for three different and distinct ideologies. These are explained thus: (i) *Sarvam Khalvidam Brahmo* — All this is *Brahmo*. (ii) *Aham Brahmasmi* — *Atma* (self) is the same as *Brahmo*. Therefore I am *Brahmo*. (iii) *Tattvamasī* — *Atmana* (self) is the same as *Brahmo*. Therefore thou art also *Brahmo*.

They are called *Mahavakyas* which means Great Sayings and they sum up the essence of *Brahmoism*. The following are the precised teachings of *Vedanta*.

(I) *Brahmo* is the only reality. (II) The world is *maya* or unreal. (III) *Jiva* and *Brahmo*

are — (i) according to one school identical ; (ii) according to another not identical but the elements of *Jiva* are not separate from *Brahmo*; (iii) according to the third school they are distinct and separate. The dogma of *Brahmanism* may be summed up in the following dogmas, (i) Belief in the *Chaturvarna*; (ii) Sanctity and infallibility of the *Vedas*; (iii) Sacrifices to Gods the only way to salvation.

It is said that *Brahmo* is unknowable . But all the same the theory of *Brahmo* has certain social implications, having a tremendous value as a foundation for democracy. If all persons are parts of *Brahmo*, then all are equal and all must enjoy the same liberty which is what democracy means. There cannot be the slightest doubt that no other doctrine could furnish a stronger foundation for democracy than the doctrine of *Brahmo*. However, to support democracy on the basis of all beings having been the children of God is, of course, only a religious foundation of democracy.

A question arises as to why *Brahmoism* failed to produce a new society. This is a great riddle. It is not that the Brahmins did not recognise the doctrine of *Brahmoism*. They did , but did not ask themselves how they could support inequality between *Brahman* and the *Shudra*, between man and woman, between casteman and outcaste. In this context Ambedkar concludes:

“The result is that we have on the one hand the most democratic principles of *Brahmoism* and on the other hand a society infested with castes, sub-castes, out castes, primitive tribes and criminal tribes. Can there be a greater dilemma than this? What is more ridiculous is the teaching of Great Shankaracharya. For it was this Shankaracharya who thought that there is *Brahmo* and this *Brahmo* is real and that it pervades all and at the same time upheld all the iniquities of the *Brahmanic* society. Only a lunatic could be happy with being the propounder of such contradictions. Truly as the Brahmin is like a cow, he can eat anything and everything as the cow does and remain Brahmin.”

While paying a tribute to Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru moved a condolence resolution in Parliament thus : “Dr. Ambedkar was a symbol of revolt against all oppressive features of Hindu society.” But the ‘revolt’ turned into a ‘revolution’. And there is a difference between the two. On this Dr. Oneil Biswas³¹ has observed that –

“A revolt is a vigorous outbreak that arises from general turbulence or from opposition to tyranny or oppression. It passes into rebellion, that is on a larger scale and better organised.

It has for its object the securing of independence or the overthrow of government . If successful; it turns into a 'revolution' which overthrows one government or political system and establishes another. This is illustrated by the Glorious Revolution (1688), the American Revolution (1776-89), the French Revolution (1789), the Chinese Revolution (1911) and the Russian Revolution (1917). The distinction between the two is ably brought out by a dialogue between the King and his Duke on hearing of the Fall of Bastille, 1789 as follows:

‘Louis XI : Is it a revolt?

The Duke : No, Sir, it's a revolution.’

In this context one is to distinguish between reform and revolution. The true reformer is the seminal, nor the radical one. And this is the way the sower sows his seed— he does not make any open assault to uproot what is existing , but it is otherwise with the revolution. In the words of Victor Hugo , “revolution is the larva of civilization.” Revolutions begin in the best heads and run steadily down to the populace. An idea of the operations of the two is given below :

“A reformer only reforms the society, he does not destroy and remake it . He is not interested in refurbishing the society— he outwardly addresses to its super structure while retaining the base. Thus God, religion and *varnashrama dharma* and Scriptures form the foundation of Hindu society, and its superstructure comprises the family setup and cultural heritage; primary group association, religious tolerance and spiritualism. Adi Sankara and Ramanuja, in the past and M.K. Gandhi in the 20th Century were social reformers, since they tried to reform the social superstructure without dynamiting the social base.”

In the words of G.B. Shaw : “A revolutionist is one who desires to discard the existing social order and try another.” Examples are Periyar E. V. Ramasami Naicker and B.R. Ambedkar. However, there is a difference between them. As has been well said by Mazzini : “Great revolutions are the works of principles rather than of bayonets, and are achieved first in the moral , and afterwards in the material sphere.” Ambedkar started from the moral plane and descended to the material, whereas Periyar began from the material plane and ascended to the moral. These are cases of descent and ascent.⁵² In the words of Napoleon : “Revolutions are like the most noxious dung-heaps, which bring into life the noblest vegetable.” It is thus seen that revolution is both destructive and creative whereas revolt is only destructive.⁵³ In this perspective social philosophy is to be understood, since social reforms cannot be carried out without a social philosophy. Social philosophy has two parts — critical and constructive. The first one separates the basic categories and principles used in the social sciences and tests their validity. The second one

corrects the onesidedness of specialised social studies and endeavours to see social life as a whole. Social philosophy is helped by the science of sociology, that is, the study of human interaction, their condition and consequences. However, society cannot exclude from the field of study the psychology and history of ideals, since they influence human behaviour. On the other hand, social philosophy deals with the validity of the application of ethical categories to the phenomena of social life and development from the view point of their contribution to ends or purposes to which intrinsic value is ascribed.⁵⁴

Ambedkar in an All India Radio Broadcast of speech on Oct 4, 1954 outlined his personal philosophy of life. According to him : “ Every man should have a philosophy of life, for everyone must have a standard by which to measure his conduct. And philosophy is nothing but a standard by which to measure.” This has two aspects — negative and positive. Negatively he rejected the Hindu social philosophy propounded in the *Bhagavat Geeta* based as it is, on the *Tri-Guna* of Shankhya philosophy, which is a cruel perversion of the philosophy of Kapil. This has made the caste system and the system of ‘graded inequality’ as the law of Hindu social life. Positively Ambedkar’s social philosophy is enshrined in three words liberty, equality and fraternity which according to him are derivatives of Buddhist ideals. This philosophy, therefore, has roots in religion and not in political science, since he claims to have derived it from the Buddha. However, unlimited liberty destroys equality and absolute equality leaves no room for liberty. Law is a safeguard against the breaches of liberty or equality. He gives the highest place to fraternity as the only real safeguard against the denial of liberty or equality. Fraternity is another name for brotherhood or humanity which is again another name of religion.

Law is secular which anybody may break, while fraternity is religious and sacred which everybody must respect. According to Dr. Ambedkar his philosophy had a mission, for he had to do the work of conversion. In other words he had to make the followers of *Tri-Guna* theory give it up and accept Ambedkar’s. In the words of Ambedkar : “ Indians today are governed by two different ideologies. Their political ideas as set up in the preamble to the constitution affirm a life of liberty, equality and fraternity. Their social ideal as embodied in their religion denies them”.⁵⁵

The Genesis of Socio-cultural Ethos

First Mahar Parishad, 1920 :

The first Mahar Parishad or Council also known as Mangaon Parishad was convened at Mangaon near Kolhapur district in the then Maharashtra on 21st and 22nd March, 1920. The Parishad was presided over by Babasaheb Ambedkar and the , chief guest was Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj. 20-25 thousand people gathered there from Kolhapur, Chikodi, Kudchi, Belgaon and Nippani. The special feature of the Parishad was to set up 5 Mahalla committees.

Chhatrapati Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj delivered his speech on 21st March, 1920. He mentioned Ambedkar as the publisher of '*Mooknayak*'. He reviewed the status of the backward castes and congratulated Ambedkar . Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj stated that he had freed the Untouchables from the daily attendance so as to free them from the exploitation in the hands of village officers. By such a system a kind of slavery was in operation in the 20th century. This was, according to him, the heinous form of slavery. By discontinuing the inhuman practice a good beginning was made towards social reformation. Lack of leadership was one of the reasons for the backwardness of the Untouchable communities. Most of the leaders by their sweet talks cheated the masses. One who treated the Untouchable with the lowest attitude and contempt was not supposed to be a leader. As regards the co-relation between politics and untouchability Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj stated that unless the Untouchables were treated as equal human beings, there could not be any politics of the Untouchables. He emphasised that politicians must treat the Untouchables in the light of equality. In the context of a leader breaking the age old caste-system, the Rajarshi admired Dr. Ambedkar . Since the Rajarshi had started the movement for liberating the Untouchables , the Mahars and Mangs began to call him the king of the Untouchables (*Maharancha raja*). Shahu ,maharaj further wished that in future Ambedkar would shoulder this responsibility and the time would come when he would be the leader of the country.⁵⁶

Ambedkar delivered his speech as president on 21st March, 1920 . He stated that it was the responsibility of the first conference to make it a success. This was a reflection of the ideological

revolution which was taking shape in the minds of the Mahars. They had been believing that it was impossible for them to change their destiny . However, this was the work of some ugly people and therefore, should be brought to the notice of all. The Hindus usually observed two basic principles — (1) eligibility by birth ; and (2) purity and impurity by birth. According to these two principles, Hindu people are divided into three categories: 1. Those who are supreme by birth and pure, i.e., the Brahmins. 2. Those who are subordinate to Brahmins by birth and purity, i.e., the Non-Brahmin class. 3. And lastly the class that is inferior by birth and purity which is referred as the outcastes.

Ambedkar further said that the Brahmins, because of unjust classification on birth supremacy and purity had prospered. On the other hand the Non-Brahmins owing to the birth in low castes had been deprived of facilities in gradation including education and remained backward. However , for the Non-Brahmins there were ways and means to get wealth and education. But the condition of the outcastes was the worst owing to birth-ineligibility and the so called theory of ineligibility. The Untouchables had lost moral strength and self respect, which were necessary for development. The outcastes and the Untouchable had no right , they were not allowed to go to school, to draw water from a public well and to make the use of public streets, vehicles and the like. They had also suffered economically. Owing to birth in low castes they could not engage in trade and commerce . They could get a job. Because of these stern realities they had been outlawed from the military jobs. The same condition did exist in regard to agriculture too. These outcastes had either no piece of land or a very small unproductive piece of land. Thus outcastes had been exploited socially, educationally and economically. Having so analysed, Ambedkar put the question how these exploited people would prosper?⁵⁷

The Mangaon Parishad passed 15 resolutions on 22nd March, 1920 and these were published in *Mooknayak* dated 10th April, 1920. Some of the resolutions are reproduced below :

1. This conference expresses its gratitude towards all the Rajas, Maharajas and princely states who have started working for the betterment of the outcastes. 2. (The outcastes) are entitled to the following human rights, like all other Hindu people : (a) They have a right to make the use of public streets, wells, schools, *dharmashala*, lakes and government-licensed places of

entertainment, restaurants and vehicles. (b) They have a right to get an employment and engage in commerce according to their ability. 3. At the earliest there should be free and compulsory primary education to all children without any discrimination between boys and girls. 4. This conference is of the opinion that there should be one and the same school for the touchables and Untouchables. 5. Due to “*Mahar Watan*” the condition of Mahars is worst. This conference attributes this worst condition to two reasons : (a) *Mahar Watandars* are also engaged in the most condemned work of carrying away the dead animals. Hence these *Watandars* have no esteem in society. (b) *Mahar Watan* land is fragmented land because from generation to generation the same land is distributed and redistributed. As a result *Mahar Watandars* have no sufficient land. 6. This gathering resolves that, eating the flesh of dead animals by any men should be considered as a crime by law. 7. This conference demands the appointments of outcastes people in the posts of Talathis. (Who maintains a land record of a village). 8. This conference as a matter of right demands that in the future Legislative council the representatives of the outcaste people must get elected in proportion to their population from the separate Electorate.⁵⁸

The Dharmantar Parishad:

The *Dharmantar Parishad* (Mumbai Ilakha Mahar Parishad) held a conference at Naigaon, Mumbai on 30th and 31st May, 1936. The president of the *Parishad* was B.S. Vyankatrao otherwise known as Hydrabadi Ambedkar and the chief speaker was Babasaheb Ambedkar. Nearly 25 thousand people attended the conference and the *Samata Sainik Dal* was in-charge of management. The conference *Mandap* was named as Mata Ramabai Nagar. The *Mandap* was decorated with the rebellious slogans such as :

“ If you Want Humanity — Convert”

“ If you Want An Organisation — Convert”

“ If you Want to Aquire Strength - Convert”

“ For Equality — Convert”

“ For Freedom — Convert”

“ For Happy Life — Convert’

**“ Why Do you Remain In that Religion
Which Derecognises Your Humanity”**

**“ Why Do You Remain in that Religion
Which Do Not Give You Water.”**

**“Why Do You Remain In that Religion
Which Does Not Allow You To Get Education”**

**“ Why Do You Remain In That Religion
Which Deprives You From Jobs”**

**“ Why Do You Remain In that Religion
Which Condemns You At The Every Step
OF Your Life.”**

On religion the thinking of Ambedkar is on the following line :1.The Hindu religion which prohibits the human treatment is not the religion but the decoration of supremacy of a few .2.The religion which prescribes for the inhuman treatment is not a religion but a disease.3.In the religion where touch of animals is allowed but touch of certain people is not allowed that religion is not a religion but sheer madness. 4.The religion which prescribes that one class should not get education , shoul not collect money, should not bear arms such religion is not the religion but mockery of human life.5.The religion which tells the illiterates to remain illiterate , and tells the poor to remain poor that religion is not a religion but it is a punishment.⁵⁹

In the conference Dadasaheb Gaikwad moved the resolution favouring ‘The conversion Policy’: ‘Mumbai Ilakha Mahar Parishad after a deep thought makes declaraton that in order to attain the freedom and equality for the Mahar Community conversion is the only way out. This conference firmly resolves that under the leadership of Dr. Amebedkar Mahar samaj is collec-

tively and fully prepared for the conversion.” This Mahar Parishad further resolved: “This Parishad is also of the opinion that as preparations to the conversion, hereafter the people of Mahar *jati* should not worship the Hindu gods-goddesses, observe festivals and fasts, pilgrimages and they should not take part in any Hindu festivals.”

In the historic Yeola declaration Ambedkar told his followers that, “although I have been born as a Hindu, I shall not die as a Hindu.” The Mumbai Ilakha Mahar Parishad remained very active in the subsequent years and a big conference in regard to his conversion policy was held in Naigaon area to the east of Dadar Railway Station of Bombay on the 30th and 31st May, 1936. The idea of the parishad was to gauge the public opinion after the Yeola declaration of renouncing Hinduisim. In this conference different sessions were held. There was one separate session of the *Sadhus* and the one for women.

The main focus of the conference was on conversion policy and the path to be followed to attain salvation. Prior to this in the Solapur district of Maharashtra at Barshi in the Mumbai Prantik Bahishkrita Parishad held in May, 1924, Ambedkar suggested three different ways to the Untouchables— (1) *Dehantar*, (2) *Namantar* or (3) *Dharmantar*. While discussing these issues he opined that one must find out the ways of exterminating untouchability. In a speech on conversion or *Dharmantar* he said, : “Why should we not get converted into any other religion (allowing) us to lead the noble life”. Since the Untouchables were easily un-identifiable by their particular name he suggested the remedy of *Namantar*, that is the change of name. Ambedkar explained that Hindu religion was not the religion of the Untouchable’s forefathers, it was a forced slavery on them. They had no means to liberate themselves from such slavery. But the present generation had the means to do so. For man’s progress change was absolutely necessary. Conversion was a change and it was necessary.

Ambedkar criticised Mahatma Gandhi on the ground that he fought against the Britishers with non-violence, however, he was not prepared to change the minds of the Hindus towards the Untouchables and thus he could not undertake *Satyagraha* against the Hindus. In this context Gandhi’s reforms were of no utility but futile. The Hindus questioned the conversion and asked

what would happen by conversion. Their advice was to improve the economic and educational conditions of the Untouchables instead of conversion. According to Dr. Ambedkar the intention was to divert the attention of the Untouchables. According to him, the Hindus should have first effected social and economic reforms and then demand a *Swaraj* just as Hindus were in need of *Swaraj* so also the Untouchables were in need of conversion . This was so , because the ultimate object of both was to attain freedom.

Dr. Ambedkar stated clearly : “My conversion is not for material gain . There is only spiritual foundation behind my conversion . Hindu religion does not appeal to my conscience. It does not suit to my self respect . But for you conversion is a must for the both , spiritual as well as material reasons. Those who laugh at our decision of conversion, I have no hesitation in calling them fools. Finally, I must tell you that man is not for religion, religion is for man. For humanity, liberty, equality you must convert. If you decide to convert then you must assure me that it will be a collective decision. I feel that you must convert with me. If you have no desire to convert I have nothing to say. But if you decide, then your future generation will not be dependent on others, hence you have more responsibility.”

Finally, Ambedkar reminded the gathering of the last message of Buddha given to his disciple Anand : “ You will be self-enlightened , believe in yourself, do not rely on others, follow the truth, take a decision in accordance with your conscience.”⁶⁰

Reforms in Action

Ambedkar was conversant with the teachings of Phoolley. He had the ideal of a society based on the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity. Ambedkar’s education in England and the U.S.A gave him a broad social outlook to free his community from the social thralldom of the caste Hindus. To him *Brahmanism* was a poison and he took up a cudgel to fight it all along. As a result he had to wage social battle against caste Hindus.

Ambedkar made efforts to maintain a balance between thoughts and action. He recognised dynamism in life and this was derived from his teacher, Professor John Dewey. About this wrote

Ambedkar: “ Every society gets encumbered with what is trival , with dead wood from the past, and with what is positively preserved. ...As a society becomes more enlightened, it realises that it is responsible not to conserve and transmit the whole of its existing achievements, but only such as made for a better future society.”

His principles of dynamism recognised that “There is nothing fixed, nothing eternal, nothing *sanatan* : that everything is changing, that change is the law of life for individuals as well as for society.”⁶¹ Ambedkar held that social environment was as much responsible for human sorrow as man himself. He wanted to establish a society based on liberty, equality and fraternity. According to him : “ In an ideal society, there should be many interests consciously communicated and shared. There should be social endosmosis”⁶² To this end he traced a social conscience as the only safeguard of all rights fundamental and non-fundamental.⁶³ He considered social progress and social stability as depending on ‘fluidity’ and ‘equity’ among classes . According to Ambedkar , stability is wanted but not at the cost of change when change is imperative. Adjustment is wanted but not at the sacrifice of social justice.⁶⁴ Social stability meant to him negation of the caste system in Indian Society.

The social struggles launched by Ambedkar aimed at counteracting the unequal treatment meted out to the Untouchables by the caste Hindus. His motive was to establish status in religious, social, economic and political matters to all classes. This meant an offer to give them an opportunity to rise in the scale of life and to create conditions for their advancement. These fundamental ideas underlay the social struggles launched under the leadership of Ambedkar against communal tyranny.⁶⁵

Mahad Tank Satyagraha

S.K. Bole, the leader of a Non-Brahmin Party had moved a resolution in the Bombay Legislative Council and it read as follows: “ The Council recommends that the Untouchable classes be allowed to use all public water-places, wells, and *dharmashalas* which are built and maintained out of public funds or are administered by bodies appointed by government or

created by statute, as well as public schools, courts offices, and dispensaries.”

The Bombay Government issued a directive on September 11, 1923, to give effect to the said resolution. In spite of the resolution a number of local boards and municipalities did not grant the civil rights to the Depressed Classes.

Bole then moved another resolution on August 5, 1926. It directed that the municipalities and local boards would not get grants for having to implement the resolution passed three years ago. To implement the resolution the Mahad Municipal Borough threw open the Tank to all the communities. The Tank was known as *Chowdar* because of its tasty water. The caste Hindus in Mahad were opposed to this resolution.

At Mahad, a conference of Untouchables was held on March 19 and 20, 1927 and was attended by about 10,000 delegates. In his presidential address Ambedkar traced the need of eradicating caste barriers by self - elevation through self-help , self-responsibility and self - knowledge. After the conference all the 10,000 delegates marched in a procession to the *Chowdar Tank* to assert their right to drink and take water.

A rumour was spread to the effect that all the Untouchables had entered the Vireswar temple. The caste Hindus entered the pandal and attacked the delegates. Stray individuals were beaten . They had to run into Muslim houses for shelter and Dr. Ambedkar was forced to take shelter in a police station.

There after the Untouchables had to face social boycott. They were dislodged from the land and assaulted in many villages. Ambedkar urged his followers to take aggressive steps to assert their rights. To this Javalkar and Jethe, the prominent leaders of the *Satyasodhak* movement in Maharashtra promised their whole-hearted support. It was decided that all the Brahmins should be weeded out from it and the struggles should be non-violent on a mass scale.⁶⁶

At Mahad a Satyagraha Conference was called on December 25, 1927. The site for the conference was taken from a Muslim citizen. The local merchants were non-cooperative. The reception committee had to purchase corn and other materials from outside. Ambedkar left

Bombay with 200 delegates. About 3000 *Satyagrahis* were ready, but the District Magistrate requested Ambedkar to postpone the proposed struggle. In his speech he attacked the *Varna* system, since it was at the root of inequality. He stated that equality meant equal opportunity and making power dependent on inherent qualities.⁶⁷ He emphasised two things (1) equality and (2) absence of casteism. On December 25, 1927 the *Manusmriti* was burnt as noted already. The resolution on the proposed *Satyagraha* was moved by Ambedkar himself but in the then circumstances it was thought inadvisable to antagonise the government.⁶⁸

Temple Entry Movement.

In May, 1930, *Satyagraha* was started to enter into the Kalaram Mandir Temple at Nasik. Ambedkar thought that such a *Satyagraha* might facilitate the entry into other temples and create change in the Hindu-mind-set. This *Satyagraha* was directly under Ambedkar's leadership. Bhairao Gaekwad was the Secretary of the *Satyagraha* Committee. About 15000 male volunteers and 500 female volunteers were ready. A mile long procession went towards the Kalaram Mandir in batches of four. The door of the temple had been closed. Hence the processionists proceeded to the *ghats* of the Godavari river. The caste Hindus reacted by throwing stones and shoes. After a month a compromise took place between the caste Hindus and the Untouchables. It was decided that strong men from the Untouchables and the Caste Hindus should draw Ram's chariot on the *Ramnabami* ceremony. However, the Caste Hindus broke the promise and drew the chariot without the Untouchables, and Ram's temple remained closed for a whole year. But the agitation continued upto the end of October, 1935. The news of the arrest of volunteers appeared in the London times. It helped Ambedkar at the Round Table Conference.

It may be noted in this connection that Ambedkar launched the movements namely, (1) The Mahad Tank *Satyagraha*, (2) the Burning of the *Manusmriti* and (3) the Kalaram Mandir *Satyagraha*. Ambedkar made it clear that the motives behind this struggle were to rouse the consciousness of the people. He stated: "It is not that you can solve all your problems by *Satyagraha* this is only a request to the upper caste Hindu minds."⁶⁹

Ambedkar was of opinion that the problems of the Untouchables would never be solved

by worship alone. He stressed a change in the attitude of the caste Hindus.⁷⁰ Dr. Subbarayan a South Indian leader introduced a Bill in the Central Assembly. The contention of the Bill was that if a referendum favoured temple entry, temples should be thrown open to the Untouchables. But the Bill remained silent as to their right to worship the deity in the temple. Ambedkar rejected the bill since it did not condemn untouchability as a sin. Despite Gandhi's request Ambedkar refused to support this Bill and the Temple Entry Bill of Ranga Iyer. He regarded the removal of untouchability as more important than the erection of temple.⁷¹

Mahar Watan

There was a Bombay hereditary offices Act. 1874 in which the Mahars held certain posts and were required to work all day and night and in the absence of a Mahar servant his father or any other member of his family was required to work in the service of the government. For this hard work they got a piece of land as *Watan*. As *watan* some corn from the villagers and some negligible remuneration varying from two *annas* to a rupee and a half per munsum. As a result of the *watan* system the Mahars lost their self-respect and they were attached to trifling jobs. This practice kept the Mahar community down. Ambedkar said that the problem could not be solved by amending Act. But the system must be abolished. He suggested that his community should bring the waste land under cultivation and maintain themselves.

On March 19, 1928 Ambedkar introduced a Bill in the Legislative Council to amend the 1874 Act. He made clear the objects of the Bill in a series of meetings and conferences. Firstly, the purpose of the Bill was to permit commutation of the *watan* at the option of the holder. Secondly, it was to provide better security for the payment of remuneration to certain classes of *Watander*. Thirdly, it was to provide for specification, by rules, of the duties to be performed by the *Watandars*. While moving the Bill in the Bombay Legislative Council on August 3, 1928, Ambedkar reminded the House that the lands had been given to the Mahars by the ancient emperors of the country. The present government had neither increased the extent of the land nor paid any attentions to the remuneration of these payable and their income was negligible. He therefore proposed that the *watan* lands should be given to the holders of these posts at the full

rate of assesment and they should be relieved from the obligation to serve. He further added that they should be paid from the revenue derived from the assesment imposed on the lands of the Mahars and from the *Baluta* (collection of grain made by *watandar* Mahars from the villagers). If this was not done, then there would be a war between revenue department and the Mahars. In case the proposed Bill was not passed, the Mahars would organise a general strike.⁷² He concluded that the *watans* were the greatest hindrance in the advancement of the Mahar community.

The Bill was refered to a select committee of 23 members which was to report by the beginning of June 1929. The select Committee changed the Bill beyond recognition. Ambedkar proposed to convert *Baluta* into a money cess. The committee, however, opined that *watan* lands should not be given over to the *watandars* on payment of full assesment of their lands, but should be given the half the produce of the land. The vested interest opposed the very essence of the Bill and Ambedkar withdrew it on July 4, 1929.

The Mahars were excluded from land revenue because the land had been given to them as *watan* land. But owing to the stringency of money, assesment on a small scale was recovered from the Mahars since the Peshwa rule. This revenue was known as *Judi* , which was not recovered in cash but in the form of corn. The Mahar leaders wanted to change *Judi* into full assesment and derived monthly pay for services rendered to the government and to the village. The first Congress ministry (1937 - 1939) in Bombay was of opinion that such a scheme must be opposed.

The Mahar Leaders organised a Conference at Horegaon (Ahmednagar District) on December 16, 1939 and a statement was submitted to the governor of Bombay who had talks with Ambedkar . The demands of the Mahars were as follows : To transform the *watan* lands of Mahars into Ryotwari (peasant proprietorship) lands, to pay monthly wages to the Mahars as inferior servants and to make them do only the government job. Again Ambedkar introduced a Bill at the Poona Session of the Bombay Legislative Council on September 17 , 1937 so as to abolish the Mahar *watan*. During war years Dr. Ambedkar wanted a peaceful and constitutional solution of the problem . He did not want the agitation to turn into Satyagraha . Ambedkar

became a member of the Viceroy's Executive Council in 1942 and thought it better to withdraw the movement, and the government promised that no increase in *Judi* would be made. To agitate against the *watan* system Ambedkar subsequently set up the Bombay State Inferior *Village Watan* Association on June 16, 1956 and he became its Chairman. He warned the government that if it did not solve the problem amicably he might prosecute the government. But the villagers opposed such a measure by all means. However, Ambedkar stated that government had accepted the principle, "land to the Tiller", but was not ready to include government land under the jurisdiction of the Act.⁷³

Ambedkar, however, believed that the *watan* Act. and the *watan* system were contrary to the constitution of India. He held that writ petition should be filed in the High Court and if it was unsuccessful then it must be taken to the Supreme Court.⁷⁴ The Mahar *watan* was at last abolished under the *Bombay Inferior Village Watan Abolition Act.* of 1959. It took 20 years for the abolition of the *watan* system and Ambedkar could not see the Abolition Act on the Statute Book.⁷⁵

The Mahars and their Movements

The Mahars were found in almost every village of Maharashtra and were always in a minority. Their quarters, called Maharwada were set apart, usually east of the village proper. A Marathi proverb, *jethe gao Tethe maharwada* (wherever there is a village, there is a maharwada), underlines their prevalence and also their low status. The reason is that it was used ideomatically to mean the same as the English proverb, — "There is a blacksheep in every flock."⁷⁶ Irawati Karve, an anthropologist has found the Mahars, and not the dominant agricultural caste among the the Marathas, the most thoroughly wide spread castes of Maharashtra and ended an essay on "Mahars and Maharashtra" with the statement on a Mahar village official on the boarder between the Marathi and the Hindi - speaking belts. It was stated, "*jethaparayant mahar pochle tiithaparyant maharashtra*" (as far as the Mahars have gone, there is Maharashtra).⁷⁷

It has been held by some scholars and writers that the Mahars were the original inhabitants of Maharashtra. One of the old names used for them '*dharnicheput*' (sons of the soil) — as well as

some of their traditional village duties— the arbitration of boundari disputes and the care of the village goddess *Mariai* — suggests that they might at one time had owned the land . At least one early Mahar leader, Kisan Fagoji Bansode of Nagpur , spoke of pre-Arian landownership to try to build a historical spirit of the Mahars. But , B. R. Ambedkar did not exploit this belief. When asked if he were a pre-Arian, he said to the Simon Commission : “Well , I do not know.”⁷⁸

The traditional place of the Mahar in the village community was as a *balutedar* or *watandar*, or as a village servant whose duty was to the village and whose recompense came from the village in the form of — *balute* or gifts in kind, and *watan* or land. The Mahars’ hereditary duty in former times might have involved membership of the village governing body when the village servant, including the *Patil* (headman) and the *Kulkarni* (accountant, usually a Brahmin), sat as a panchayet.⁷⁹ The Mahar *balutedars’* duties included arbitration in boundary disputes, acting as the village watchman, mending the village wall, serving as guide and messenger to government servants, calling landowners to pay land revenue at the village roads *chaudi* (village hall), sweeping the village roads, escorting the government treasury, tracking thieves, carrying death notice and messages to other villages, bringing fuel to the cremation ground, and removing the carcasses of death cattle from the village.⁸⁰

Besides, the Mahar had fixed duties in religious matters, including kindling of the first *Holi* Festival Fire from which other fires were lit and guarding the shrine of goddess *Marai* which was in the *Maharwada*. Recompense given by the village for these duties included not only grain and the skins of the dead cattle, but a small amount of land known as *watan* and a host of other perquisites legendarily numbering fifty two. The Mahars not required for *Balutedar* works did agricultural labour, since their own *watan* lands were insufficient to support them. These set of duties was prevalent in the Konkan (costal) and desh(plains) areas of Maharashtra; in the Vidarbha region to the east where a looser social structure prevailed. It may be noted that some Mahars were also weavers, statesmen and Malguzars(revenue collectors).⁸¹

Ambedkar analysed the conditions that an Untouchable had to face as contrasted with the

touchable. The Touchables had prescribed certain offences only for the Untouchables which were not to be found in the Indian Penal Code. Ambedkar has cited some of these offences as follows:⁸² (i) The Untouchables must live in separate quarters away from the habitation of the Hindus. It is an offence for the Untouchables to break or evade the rule of segregation. (ii) The quarters of the Untouchables must be located towards the South, since the South is the most inauspicious of the four directions. A breach of this rule shall be deemed to be an offence. (iii) The Untouchables must observe the rule of distance pollution or shadow pollution as the case may be. It is an offence to break the rule. (iv) It is an offence for a member of the Untouchable community to acquire wealth, such as land or cattle. (v) It is an offence for a member of the Untouchable community to build a house with tiled roof. (vi) It is an offence for a member of an Untouchable community to put on a clean dress, wear shoes, put on a watch or gold ornaments. (vii) It is an offence for a member of the Untouchable community to sit on a chair in the presence of a Hindu. (viii) It is an offence for a member of the Untouchable community not to salute a Hindu. (ix) An Untouchable must conform to the status of an inferior and he must wear the marks of his inferiority for the public to know and identify him such as — (a) having a contemptible name; (b) not wearing clean cloths; (c) not having tiled roof; (d) not wearing silver and gold ornaments. A contravention of any of these rules was an offence.

Ambedkar also noted the wages paid to the Untouchables — these were paid either in cash or in corn. In part of U.P. the corn given to the Untouchables as wages is called *Gobarah* meaning privy corn or corn contained in the dung of an animal. In the month of March or April when the crop was fully grown, reaped and dried, it is spread on the threshing floor. Bullocks were made to tread over the corn in order to take the corn out of husk by the pressure of their hooves. While treading over the corn, the bullocks would swallow up the corn as well as the straw. As their intake is excessive they find it difficult to digest the corn. Next day, the same corn came out of their stomach along with their dung. The dung was strained and the corn was separated and given to the Untouchable workmen as their wages.⁸³

There is considerable evidence that Mahars freed from traditional village services saw a need to try to adopt a Hinduism more sophisticated than that offered by village gods. A poem,

probably by a Mahar , attached to the handwritten copy of the 1894 petition depicts the hardships and the bad habits of Untouchables in rough and direct language, and includes the complaint : Our religious names are *Satvi, Jaravi, Mesai, Vetai, Mhasra, Bahari, Bhadvi, Mariai*. We do not know *Brahmo, Vishnu, Mahesh, Krishnarai, Rukhamai, Sita, Lakshman*.

Many of the Mahars joined the *panths* of Kabir and Ramanand who stressed equality. A sizable section of the Mahars of the Bewani sub-sect in Vidarbha joined the *Mahamubhah panth* and thereby they came to hold high status in the Mahar community itself and gradually they took up the professions of weavers, traders and shopkeepers.⁸⁴

In this context it may be noted that the Mahars had a natural faith in the person of their own saint Chokkhamela, a 14th Century poet and spiritualist. Chokkhamela's *Abhangas* (songs) are still sung by pilgrims of the *warkari* cult on pilgrimage to Vithoba's temple at Pandharpur.⁸⁵ This seems to have been a beginning towards using the name Chokkhamela as a caste name, building temples in his honour, naming groups and institutions after him, much in the same way that the Chamar of U.P. did in the name of their saint Rabidas, in an attempt to gain status.⁸⁶ The resolution of the *Chokkhamela Reform Society* meeting at Ramtek, a pilgrimage centre near Nagpur, in 1823, illustrate the methods of this approach : (1) a temple should be built where Untouchables as orthodox Hindus can have equal rights in weddings and thread ceremonies along with *Brahmans, Kshatriyas* and *Vaishyas* ; (2) there should be religious education to bring about the unity of the Hindu people ; (3) upper class people should help educate so-called untouchables, and government should give concessions to the upper classes to encourage them; however , the importance of education and the necessity of governmental helps are necessary if any change is actually to come.

There have been sporadic efforts to create specific Mahar Institution within Hinduism , to join a reforming caste Hindu organisation or to adopt higher caste ritual practices — called Sanskritisation by the socialist M. N. Srinivas — throughout the first three decades of 20th Century . Examples are : Gopal Baba Walangkar , author of the 1894 army petition, encouraged the replacement of *Brahman* joshis who cast wedding horoscopes, one of the few duties performed

by *Brahman* priests for Mahars, with Mahar joshis. Kisan Fagoji Bansode of the Nagpur and G.A. Gawai of Amravati, both important Mahar social reformers spokesmen for increased participation in a higher form of Hinduism, joined the *Prarthana Samaj* in 1910. Vithoba Raoji Sant Pande built a separate bathing place for Mahars at Ramtek near Nagpur around 1914 and “placed the whole community under a deep obligation”. In the late 1920’s, Mahars in Bombay attempted to participate in the public worship of Ganpati at Dadar, started performing weddings in accordance with “*Vedic rites*”, and atleast on one occasion donned the symbol of the high caste Hindu, the sacred thread.⁸⁷

The claim to religious rights gradually yielded its importance to the growing consciousness for education and political power articulated by Ambedkar. Besides, the experience of the failure of the attempts for religious reforms prepared Mahars to reject Hinduism altogether. The figure of Chokkamela remained a source of caste pride rather than a stimulant to claiming a place of worth in the Hindu hierarchy. They were after new avenues for rising in status in a stratified system. In this connection a letter of Ambedkar to the leader of the *Nasik Satyagraha* in 1934 is an eye opener. He suggested: “I would advise the Depressed Classes to insist upon a complete overhauling of Hindu society and Hindu theology before they consent to become an integral part of Hindu society. I started temple entry *satyagraha* only because I felt that was the best way of energising the Depressed Classes and making them conscious of their position. As I believe I have achieved that, therefore I have no more use for temple entry. I want the Depressed Classes to concentrate their energy and resources on politics and education.”⁸⁸

In this connection the name of Kisan Fagoji Bansode (1879 - 1894) comes up. He was a labour leader, newspaper editor, social worker and a poet of Nagpur. He agreed with Ambedkar in social and political matters, however, he retained the belief that progress could be made within Hinduism. The following of his statement illustrates this:

“Why do you endure curses?

Chokha went into the temple resolutely,

Why do you, ashamed, stay far off?

You are the descendant of Chokha,
 Why do you fear to enter the temple ?
 Brace yourself like a wrestler, come,
 Together let us conquer pollution.”⁸⁹

The Mahar awakening came in the wake of military service and other contacts with the British. The employment opportunities outside the village pattern and the beginning of education provided first by caste Hindu reformers and Christian missions inspired the Depressed Classes to begin their own efforts. Ambedkar incubated all these progress and awakening into a political force and equipped them for the use of political means towards a modern goal of socio-political equality.⁹⁰

Amongst the Scheduled Castes in India, the Mahars of Maharashtra have used political means most consistently and unitedly in their attempt to better their condition. The expression ‘political means’ covers both early efforts of scattered groups to secure governmental benefits and representation on legislative and political bodies, and later more direct efforts in the form of political parties that secured representation of their special interest, agitated for constitutional guarantees created for themselves a firm electoral base.

In this connection Ambedkar based his belief on the army experience of his ancestors and attributed the beginning of the Untouchables’ movement almost solely to their contact with the British army. In his words :

“ Until the advent of the British , the Untouchables were content to remain Untouchables. It was destiny preordained by the Hindu God and enforced by the Hindu State...Fortunately or unfortunately , the East India Company needed soldiers for their army in India and it could find none but the Untouchables... In the army of the East India Company there prevailed the system of compulsory education for Indian Soldiers and their children, both male and female. The education received by the Untouchables in the armygave them a new vision and a new value. They became conscious that the low esteem in which they had been held was not an inescapable destiny but was a stigma imposed on their personality by the cunning contrivances of the priest. They felt the shame of it as they never did before and were determined to get rid of it.”⁹¹

‘The gradual unfolding of ideology and strategy of the Untouchables’ protest movement

under Ambedkar between 1920 and 1929 may be stated in the following six propositions :

(i) The Untouchables might belong to the same religion, but they were not a part of the same society as the caste Hindus. They constituted as a separate interest group. (ii) Untouchables had historically been an exploited group; untouchability was the culmination of religious philosophy based on inequality. (iii) The philosophy of *Brahminism* was a philosophy of 'graded inequality' and Hinduism was the same as *Brahmanism*. It was inflexible and had frustrated till then all previous efforts for reform in this basic feature. (iv) The Untouchables sought equality and justice, not favours. Social graces were unimportant. (v) Justice demanded not just for proportional representation, but also against protective discrimination for the Untouchables. (vi) The Untouchables would seek to attain legitimate equalitarian goals and special protection, in political and economic spheres, within the fold of Hinduism as far as possible, but would reject Hinduism if necessary.⁹²

On the above six ideological propositions the strategy of Ambedkar's movement was based. The assertion of the separate identity of Untouchables as a group on the basis of the strategy of remaining outside the mainstream nationalist movements. This marginal position was important for the Untouchables' movement so as to bargain with the main stream on the one hand and the powerful outsiders, against whom the main stream had been battling on the other. Social reform was given primacy over the political goal of self-government. To hold out the threat of religious conversion in full awareness of the Hindu fear of losing plurality and to seek a separate electorate and reserved seats to retain political leverage were parts of the same strategy. In this context Ambedkar justified making peace with the government in Mahad when the Hindu majority denied the Untouchables their legitimate right.⁹³ Ambedkar also spelt out his position clearly while writing the note, '*Sir John Simon and the Untouchable Castes.*' "We think that when the question of granting the right of self-government to Indian people comes up before the British Parliament to the task of ensuring the progress of Untouchables would be easier if the Simon Commission takes cognisance of our memorandum in preparing its constitutional proposals."⁹⁴ Ambedkar also propounded a strategy of tit-for-tat in dealing with Caste Hindus. "One should not expect the eclipse of untouchability to be over unless we show readiness to say tit-for-tat ,

rub wrist against wrist , and adopt a strategy of obstruction and allround checkmating [of Hindu social mores].⁹⁵

The ideology of Ambedkar's movement as well as that of some other minority groups in Indian polity prior to independence had some common and recurrent themes. They were four in number as follows : (i) The assertion of separate identities and special interests of their groups; (ii) A claim that the British must provide for special protection of these interests in any programme of political liberation that they adopt for India; (iii) The maintenance of a visible but variable distance between their own movement of social and political advancement and the mainstream nationalist movement; and (iv) A similar variable distance between their movement and the foreign ruling power.

The decade from 1930 to 1940 was to bring out the various aspects of the ideology and strategy of the Ambedkarite movement of the Untouchables so as to ensure their own social and economic uplift. During this decade Ambedkar showed the awareness that the road to social betterment by Untouchables could play no part unless they asserted their separate identity.⁹⁶ From the year 1930 Ambedkar moved increasingly from his earlier pre-occupations with social reform and social protest to political action. He never lost the sight of the social aspects of inequality , but he began to focus on political issues and political means of achieving social equality and of safeguarding the interest of the Untouchables. It began with the memorandum to the Simon Commission and the commentary on the Nehru Committee Report. And this continued almost upto 1950, when he resigned from the Union Cabinet. He continued a movement thereafter for religious conversion of his followers. But a conclusive development took place only in the year 1956.

In 1930 two important events took place and these marked the transition from the "social" to the "political" and also from the 'regional' to 'national' sphere. The first was the *Nasik Temple Entry Satyagraha* in – March , 1930. The second was his participation in the First Round Table Conference in London in 1930. A full report on the long - drawn *Nasik Satyagraha* is available in Y.D. Padke's *Ambedkar Chalval* (Y.D. Phadke, 1990). The second is to be found in Dhanonjay

Keer's biography of Ambedkar (Keer , 1962) as also in Volume 2 of Ambedkar's Writings and Speeches (Moon, 1982). The *Nasik Satyagraha* for the entry of the Untouchables in to the Kalaram Temple began on March 2, 1930 and continued for six long years until April 1936 and ended inconclusively without gaining its specific objective. But its success lay in hightening the Untouchables' consciousness of their rights in mobilising them to militant action and in bringing out the leadership potential of persons like Bhaurao Gaikwad, Amritrao Ranakhambe and Savalaram Dani.⁹⁷

By the time the *Nasik Satyagraha* was to begin, Ambedkar looked upon temple entry as relatively unimportant part of the programme. He told the leaders who were to start the Satyagraha that he was more interested in securing political rights for the Untouchables than in gaining them entry into temples. In an editorial in the *Bahishkrit Bharat* on the earlier *Parvati Satyagraha*, Ambedkar had said that if orthodox Hindus were bent on preventing the entry of the Untouchables from entering Hindu temple, the Untouchables were necessarily to launch a Satyagraha against such a move.

During the period of the *Nasik Satyagraha* many important events took place. The Gandhi - Ambedkar confrontation at the Second Round Table Conference, Gandhi's Fast against the Communal attack followed by the Poona Pact, Gandhi's reluctance to give up the ideas of *ChaturVarna* — all these embittered Dr. Ambedkar and alienated him from his Hindu identity . When the *Nasik Satyagraha* petered out Ambedkar said at the Yeola Conference on October 13, 1935 : "Enter a religion where you will obtain peace and dignity . But remember to select only that religion in which you will get equal status, equal opportunity and equal treatment... It was not my fault that I was born an Untouchable. But I am determined that I will not die a Hindu."⁹⁸

It may be noted in this connection that Ambedkar was wholly rational in his approach to life's problems, but not a materialist. In this context his readiness to give up Hinduism was an important condition in his choice of work- associates. Towards the end of his life, his search for a rational morality, for a humane, non-preist - ridden equalitarian faith led him to Buddhism.

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CHAPTER-V

Ambedkar's Fights For Human Rights

In the Hindu society caste plays an important part. Being an Untouchable, Ambedkar had to face social ostracism and isolation. Early in life he realised that a large section of his countrymen had been denied of their legitimate rights by the oppressive social customs. Equipped with an almost encyclopedic knowledge of human society in general and Hindu society in particular, he started the task of reconstructing Hindu society; on the one side he criticised the society, and on the other he suggested its reorganisation. He came to the conclusion that a democratic society in India could be established only when the Untouchables and other weaker sections of society would be given the opportunity to enjoy the basic human rights. Here is a graphic picture of the plight of the Untouchables in his own words as given below :

“The Hindu society insists on segregation of the quarters of the Untouchables. The Hindu will not live in the quarters of the Untouchables and will not allow the Untouchables to live inside Hindu quarters. This is a fundamental feature of untouchability as it is practised by the Hindus. It is not a case of social separation, a mere stoppage of intercourse for a temporary period. It is a case of territorial segregation and of a cordon sanitation putting the impure inside a barbed wire, into a sort of a cage. Every Hindu village has a ghetto. The Hindus live in the village and the Untouchables in the ghetto.”¹

Ambedkar concluded that no where except in India there existed permanent segregation camp and there had never been the case of a people treating a section of their own people as permanent and hereditary slaves. Untouchability was a unique phenomenon unknown to humanity except the Hindus. He proved by illustrating the condition of the Untouchables during the period of the Peshwas.² The Untouchables had been denied the social and Civic rights because they were not considered even as citizen. Even an Untouchable saint, whose remains lay buried in the premises of the temple of Vithoba at Pandharpur, was denied the right to worship the idol inside the temple. The social and economic disabilities of the Untouchables remained

unaltered even during the British rule which provoked him to remark that the British Government was deliberately adopting a policy of indifference.³

Neglect of Depressed Classes by the British.

Ambedkar studied the problems of the Untouchables from all perspectives and concluded that the British Government had been mainly responsible for their abject poverty. The Government indirectly enunciated the intellectual renaissance of India and sowed the seeds of European Civilization based on liberty, equality and fraternity and also established a common system of law. The British Government improved roads, constructed canals on scientific principles, effected transportation by rail, contrived to carry letter by penny post and flashed messages lightening, stabilised currency, regulated weight and measures, as well as advanced the study of philosophy, geography, astronomy and medicine. According to Ambedkar, all these innovative steps were meant to regenerate the people. But they failed to redress the social wrongs.⁴

Even with an impartial view to British rule in India Ambedkar realised the need for *Swaraj* because, freedom of the country would accelerate social reforms for justice. G. K. Gokhale coined the word *Swaraj* and Ambedkar's ideas compared favourably with it. About the British Government wrote Ambedkar "it is the costliest Government in the world." (The) cost is too great for the maintenance of law and order in this country. There is one thing that must appeal to you and that is the poverty of the people. In his words —

"In the first quarter of the nineteenth century when the British rule in India had become an established fact, there were five famines with an estimated loss of 1,000,000 lives. During the second quarter of the century there were two famines with an estimated mortality of 400,000. During the third quarter there were six famines with a recorded loss of life of 5,000,000. And during the last quarter of the century what do we find? Eighteen famines with an estimated mortality which reaches the awful total of 15,000,000 to 26,000,000. And this does not include the many more millions (over 6,000,000) in a single year kept alive by Government doles. Gentlemen, what must be the cause of this? In plain terms the cause is the deliberate policy pursued by the British in the government of this country. The aim of the British Government all along has been to discourage the growth of trade and industry in this country."⁵

Ambedkar had his unequivocal demands for *Swaraj* and outright condemnation of the

British Government . But some eminent leaders like Subhas Chandra Bose criticised him thus: "Ambedkar has had leadership thrust upon him by a benign British Government, because his services were necessary to embarrass the nationalist leaders."⁶ However , the truth was otherwise ; and Ambedkar explained his standpoint as follows:

"It was due to the reason that , a patriot and a nationalist in India is one who sees with open eyes his fellowmen treated as being less than man. But his humanity does not rise in protest. He knows that men and women for no cause are denied their human rights. But it does not prick his civic sense to helpful action. He finds whole classes of people shut out from public employment. But it does not rouse his sense of justice and fair-play. Hundreds of evil practices that injure man and society are perceived by him. But they do not sicken him with disgust. The patriot's one cry is power and more power for him and for his class. I am glad , I do not belong to that class of patriots. I belong to that class which takes its stand on democracy and which seeks to destroy monopoly in every shape and form. Our aim is to realise in practice our ideal of 'one man', ' one value' in all walks of life - political, economic and social."⁷

Resistance to Indian National Congress

Ambedkar gave only conditional co-operation with the leaders of the Indian National Congress. The reason was that Gandhi was willing to give political guarantees to the Muslims and the Shikhs, but reluctant to concede them to the Depressed Classes. Ambedkar did not support the Civil Disobedience Movement started by Gandhi as this Movement was extremely inopportune and it rejected the method of peaceful negotiations provided by the Round Table Conference. The British Government had used the Depressed Classes (Untouchables) only as an excuse for its continued existence. The Hindus claimed them only to appropriate their rights. The Mohammedan refused to recognise their separate existence , since they feared that their privileges might be curtailed by their admission. In this context , the Untouchables had been depressed by the Government, suppressed by the Hindus and disregarded by the Muslims. There was a condition of slavery and so Ambedkar made it his mission to make the Untouchables conscious of their slavery. The British Government did not stop the squeezing of the masses by the landlords and exploitations of labourers by the capitalists. And the British Government did not intervene because it was afraid that it would give rise to resistance. Besides , the British Government owing to pressure of the Congress failed to come out of hesitancy in granting politi-

cal rights to the Untouchables. And Ambedkar concluded that the British Government could never settle the social problem effectively. He thundered :

“Before the British you were in the loathsome condition due to your untouchability. Has the British Government done anything to remove your untouchability? Before the British you could not draw water from the village well. Has the British Government restored to you the right to the well ? Before the British you could not enter temple. Can you enter now ? Before the British you were denied entry into the Police Force? Does the British Government admit you in the Force? Before the British you were not allowed to serve in the military. Is that career now open to you? Gentlemen, to none of these questions can you give an affirmative answer. Those who have held so much power over the country for such a long time must have done some good. But there is certainly no fundamental alteration in your position.”⁸

Ambedkar quoted the definition of ‘slave’ as given by Plato, as applicable to the Untouchables of India . According to Plato a slave is one who accepts from another the purposes which control his conduct. In this light Ambedkar pointed out that the Untouchables had been treated as slaves because— “(i) They were so socialised as never to complain of their low state; (ii) they never dreamt of trying to improve their lot, by forcing the other classes to treat them with the common respect; (iii) the idea that they had been born to their lot was so ingrained in their mind that it never occurred to them to think that their fate was anything so irrevocable ; (iv) nothing would ever persuade them that men are all made of the same clay , or that they have the right to insist on better treatment than that meted out to them.”⁹

Ambedkar described the state of slavery of the Untouchables and denial of human rights to them while giving evidence before the Reforms Committee, (Franchise), (Southborough Committee), on 27 January 1919. He said :

“The exact description of the treatment cannot be attempted. The word ‘Untouchable’ is an epitome of their ills and sufferings. Not only has untouchability arrested the growth of their personality but it comes in the way of their material well-being . It has also deprived them of certain civil rights. For instance in Konkan the Untouchables are prohibited from using the public road. If some high caste man happens to cross him he has to be out of the way and, stand at such a distance that his shadow will not fall on the high caste man. The Untouchable is not even a citizen. Citizenship is a bundle of rights such as personal liberty, personal security, right to hold private property, equality before law, liberty of conscience, freedom of opinion, speech, right of assembly, right of representation in a country’s Government and right to hold office under the State. The British Government by gradual growth may be said to have conceded these rights at least in theory to its Indian subjects.

“The right of representation and the right to hold office under the State are the two most important rights that make up citizenship. But the untouchability of the Untouchables put these rights far beyond their reach. In a few places, they do not even possess such insignificant rights as personal security. These are the interests of the Untouchables. And as can be easily seen they can be represented by the Untouchables alone. They are distinctively their own interests and none else can truly voice them. A free trade interest can be voted by a Brahmin, a Mohamedan or a Maratha equally well. But none of these can speak for the interests of the Untouchables because they are not Untouchables. untouchability constitutes a definite set of interests, which the Untouchable alone can speak for. Hence it is evident that we must find the Untouchables to represent their grievances which are their interests, and secondly, we must find them in such numbers as will constitute a force sufficient to claim redress.”¹⁰

The conditions of the Untouchables during British rule presented dismal picture of decay, degradation and demoralisation. Even the social reform movements like the *Brahma Samaj*, the *Prarthama Samaj*, the *Arya Samaj* did not egg on the amelioration of the condition of the Untouchables. The goal of these social reform movements was to solve the problems like dowry, *sati*, widow remarriage, child marriage and the like. But none of these sought to solve the vexed questions of the Untouchables. According to Ambedkar it was a class struggle between touchable majority and the Untouchable minority. The solution of the problems of untouchability lay in securing for the Untouchables liberty and equality as denied by the Touchables.

In this context the Untouchables became the bounden slaves of Hindu society. They remained as hewers of wood and drawers of water. Their condition was worse than that of the Negroes of America. The later were denied equal protection by law. Thus they did not have free access to the coaches reserved for the Whites in trains and buses. This discrimination was based on the principle of “Separate but Equal”, notwithstanding the provisions of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. The condition of the Negroes, in the opinion of Ambedkar, was certainly better than the condition of the Untouchables. He pithily pointed out the differences between the slavery of the Negroes and the untouchability of the downtrodden.¹¹

Seminal Ideas of Rights.

Ambedkar had been thinking of the rights to be conferred on the Untouchables in the Constitution to be framed for them. These are now incorporated in Part III relating to Fundamen-

tal Rights and Part IV relating to Directive Principles of State Policy. But the seminal ideas had already been given to the Minorities Committee of the Round Table Conference in November, 1930. He stipulated the terms and conditions on which the oppressed Minority would accept a majority rule in independent India. And these are noted in a Scheme of Political Safeguards for the Protection of Depressed Classes in the future of a self - Governing India.

The first condition related to “equal citizenship” having two parts - (1) Fundamental Rights and (2) to abolish the immunities and exemption enjoyed by the executive officers by virtue of sections 110 and 111 of the Government of India act 1919 and their liability for executive action was to be made co-extensive with what it had been in the case of European British subjects. Regarding Fundamental Right his observations were as follows:

“All subjects of the state in India are equal before the Law and possess equal civic rights. Any existing enactment, regulation order, customs or interpretation of law by which any penalty , disadvantage , disability, is imposed upon or any discrimination is made against any subject of the state on account of untouchability shall, as from the day on which this Constitution comes into operation, cease to have any effect in India.”¹²

The second condition related to “Free enjoyment of Equal Rights”. Mere declaration of equal rights was of no avail. It was necessary that they should have to be protected by adequate pains and penalties from interference by the orthodox society in the enjoyment of these declared rights. To this end provision should have to be made for being added to part XI of the Government of India act 1919 dealing with offences, procedure and penalties. Obstruction by orthodox individuals was not the only menace to the Depressed Classes. Commonest form of obstruction was the social boycott . And this social boycott had been invented for the suppression of the Depressed Classes . To overcome the social boycott it was necessary that social boycott should be made an offence punishable by law. To this end Ambedkar defined the offence of boycott and prescribed punishment for boycotting . He also prescribed punishment for instigating or promoting a boycott and also for threatening a boycott.

The third condition related to protection against discrimination and this should have to be incorporated in the constitutional laws of India. The fourth condition related to adequate repre-

sentation in the legislatures. Ambedkar emphasised that the Depressed Classes must be given sufficient political power to influence legislative and executive action for the purpose of securing their welfare. They should have to be given the right to adequate representation in the legislatures in the country – Provincial and Central. Besides, they should have to be given the right to elect their own men as their representatives, (a) by adult suffrage, and (b) by separate electorates for the first ten years and thereafter by joint electorates and reserved seats, it being understood that joint electorates should not be forced upon the Depressed Classes against their will unless such joint electorates were accompanied by adult suffrage.

The fifth condition related to adequate representation in the services. The Depressed Classes suffered enormously in the hands of the high caste officers who had monopolised the Public Services by abusing the Law or by misusing the discretion vested in them in administering it to the prejudice of the Depressed Classes and to the advantage of the caste Hindus without any regard to justice, equality or good conscience. The remedy lay in destroying the monopoly of the caste Hindus and providing for adequate share of the Depressed Classes in the services. To this end necessary enactment should have to be made as part of the constitutional law. The sixth condition related to redressal against prejudicial action or neglect of interest. And the provision of their protection should have to be incorporated in the Constitution of India.

The seventh condition related to “special departmental care”. The helpless and hapless condition of the Depressed Classes was entirely due to the dogged and determined opposition of the orthodox population which would not allow the Depressed Classes to have equality of status or equality of treatment. It is not enough to say that the Depressed Classes were poverty-stricken or that they were a class of landless labourers. It may be noted here that the poverty of the Depressed Classes had been largely due to the social prejudices, in consequence of which many an occupation for earning a living was closed to them. To secure remedy it was necessary that the constitutional law should have to be imposed upon the Government of India a statutory obligation to maintain at all times a department to deal with their problems by the edition of a section in the government of India Act 1919. The eighth condition related to “Depressed Classes and the Cabinet.” The Depressed Classes should have to have the power to influence governmental

action by having seats in the legislature. Also it was desirable that they should have to have the opportunity to frame the general policy of the government . This they could do only when they would find a seat in the cabinet. To this end an obligation should have to be placed in the “Instrument of instructions” on the Governor and the Governor-General to endeavour to secure the representation of the Depressed Classes in his cabinet.¹³

Efforts to raise the level of Education and Culture

Ambedkar’s slogan was “Tell the slave that he is a slave and he will revolt against his slavery.” This had a telling effect that it generated a consciousness in the minds of the Untouchables and the down-trodden about their plight so that they would exhort themselves to secure their human rights. Ambedkar started educational and social institution and journals and also launched a movement of *Satyagraha*. On March 9, 1924 he called a meeting of the social workers from among the Untouchables and others at the Damodar Hall and established the *Bahiskrit Hitkarini Sabha*. Sir Chimanlal Hiralal Setalbad L. L. D. was made president . The vice - president were Mr. Meyer Nissim, J. P., Mr. Rustomji Jeenwala, V. P. Chavan and Mr. B. G. Kher, Solicitor. The chairman of the Managing Committee was Ambedkar , the Secretary was Mr. Shivtarkar and the Treasurer was Mr. N. T. Jadhav.

The aims and objectives of the *Bahiskrit Hitkarini Sabha* were – (a) to promote the spread of education among the Depressed Classes by opening hostels and by employing such other means as may seem necessary or desirable; (b) to promote the spread of culture among the Depressed Classes by opening libraries, social centres and classes or study circles; (c) to advance and improve the economic condition of the Depressed Classes by starting the industrial and agriculture schools; and (d) to represent the grievances of Depressed Classes.¹⁴ Ambedkar carried on ceaseless struggle to make the Untouchables conscious of their self-respect and the need for self-elevation. In one of his speeches he cried out —

“My heart breaks to see the pitiable sight of your faces and to hear your sad voices. You have been groaning from time immemorial and yet you are not ashamed to hug your helplessness as an inevitability. Why did you not perish in the pre-natal stage instead? Why do you worsen and sadden the picture of sorrows, poverty, slavery and burdens of the world with

your deplorable, despicable detestable and miserable life? You had better die and relieve this world if you cannot rise to a new life and if you cannot rejuvenate yourselves. As a matter of fact it is your birth-right to get food shelter and clothing in this land in equal proportion with every individual high or low . If you believe in living a respectable life , you believe in self-help which is the best help!"¹⁵

Ambedkar tried to rouse the Untouchables from their slumber when they had been kicked by the caste Hindu people . He wanted to change this mentality. He therefore gave them the clarion call to rise up. He wanted to change the code of conduct forced on them. He said: "If you do not change, then it will be quite impossible for us to fight against the old circumstances. Don't believe in time. Don't believe in accidents and coincidence. Believe that man is the creator of history, and he can come out successful, notwithstanding the old circumstances."¹⁶

Ambedkar laboured to build up organisations like the *Bahiskrit Hitkarini Sabha*, *Bhartiya Bahiskrit Samaj Sevak Sangha*, *Samaj Samata Mandal*, *Samata Sainik Dal* and the like so as to educate down-trodden to organise and agitate for the realization of their basic rights. Through the *Bahiskrit Hitkarini Sabha*, he started High Schools and hostels for the Untouchables. He established the *Bhartiya Bahiskrit Samaj Sevak Sangh*, the moto of which was. 'read, read out and hear; understand, realise, and give realization.' Through this Association , he made Mahar community realise that they should fight for the abolition of Mahar *Watan*. According to him, Mahar *Watan* created 52 rights but in fact the 52 rights were not rights but 52 kinds of shackles of slavery. He wanted to abolish the Mahar *Watan* and therefore on 19 March 1928, when he was an M.L.C. he prepared a Private Bill and introduced it in the Bombay Legislative Council. The object of the Bill was as follows: (i) The wages should be paid according to the work done by the *Watandars* but the wages should not be decided and fixed according to the status of the *Watandar*. It must be based on the contract procedure. (ii) The *Watandars* must be allowed to exchange their *Watandari* permit. (iii) It should not be hereditary. (iv) Those who were called *Bahutas*, their wages were to be levied as taxes on the village community. (v) The *Watandar* should not be made to work as a permanent servant of the village *Sarpanch* and Patils. (v) The *Watandars* must be assigned particular duties."¹⁷

Ambedkar tried to transform the Depressed Classes into a political army and pressed their

political claims which were conceded in the Government of India Act. 1935 in the form of special representation of the Backward Classes . The 1919 Act laid down that the elected members should be less than 70% and the official members not less than 20% . In 1926 the composition of the legislature of all provinces taken together was as follows: “ 14.5 percent officials, 8.6 percent non-officials nominated to represent Aborigines, Backward Tracts, Depressed Classes, Anglo-Indians, Labour, etc., 9.9 percent elected members representing special interests and Industry, etc., and 67 percent elected members returned through territorial constituencies.”¹⁸

The name ‘Depressed Classes ‘ was not liked by Ambedkar . He stated thus on November 4, 1931 as follows : “It is degrading and contemptuous, and advantage may be taken of this occasion for drafting the new constitution to alter for official purposes the existing nomenclature. We think that they should be called “Non-Caste Hindus”, “Protestant Hindus”, or “Non-Conformist Hindus”, or some such designation , instead of “Depressed Classes”. We have no authority to press for any particular nomenclature. We can only suggest them and we believe that if properly explained the Depressed Classes will not hesitate to accept the one most suitable for them”.¹⁹

In this context the Depressed Classes as cited in the Govt. of India Act 1919 became known as the Scheduled Caste in the Government of India Act 1935 as well as in the Constitution of India 1950. The movement launched by Ambedkar to inspire the Depressed Classes to fight for their rights gradually gained momentum . This may be illustrated by the Mahar Satyagraha for drinking water and the Nasik Satyagraha for entry into the temple. Ambedkar said:

“Nobody can remove your grievances as well as you can and you cannot remove these unless you get political power into your(own) hands...We must have a government in which men in power will not be afraid to attend the social and economic code of life which the dictates of justice and expediency so urgently call for . This role the British government will never be able to play. It is only a government which is of the people, for the people and by the people , in other words, it is only the *Swaraj* Government that will make it possible.”²⁰

Major Landmarks in the Political Struggle of the Untouchables.

The Act of 1919 recognised for the first time in Indian history, the existence of the Depressed Classes. Among the fourteen non-official Members nominated by the Governor-General

to the Central Legislative Assembly, one was the representative of the Depressed Classes. In the Provincial legislatures the Depressed Classes were represented by 4 nominations in the Central Provinces, two in Bombay, two in Bihar and one each in Bengal and the United Provinces. In Madras ten members were nominated to represent nine specified Depressed Classes. In Bombay 4 members were nominated. They had to avail themselves of the experience of the legislature by rotation, since there were only 2 seats allotted to the Depressed Classes. Accordingly Shri Gholap, Shri Nikalji, Dr. Solanki and Ambedkar were nominated.

In his thesis *The Evolution of Provincial Finance in British India*, Ambedkar criticised the attitude of the British Government in repressing the National Movement of India and manifested his patriotic fervour throughout the book. Ambedkar was alive to the happenings in Maharashtra. During this period the rights of Indian citizens were totally suppressed by the British Government. Freedom of discussion and of meeting was slowly being extinguished; complaints, protests, and appeals made in regard to these rights were dubbed as seditious murmurings; and champions of these rights and freedom were denounced by the Government as sedition mongers. This gave rise to a wind of discontent and volcanic political unrest and was roaring forth with unprecedented vigour. This kind of repression must have agitated the mind of Ambedkar. Tilak's provocative deportation to Mandalay, Savarkar brothers' revengeful transportation to the Andamans, imprisonment of several other leaders and editors, and the death of some of the patriotic youths on the gallows smote the heart of Maharashtra so violently that after the deportation of Tilak and transportation of Savarkar a period of deluge reigned over Maharashtra. He being a liberal and true patriot could not remain unaffected by these tragic happenings.²¹

Eighteen Depressed Classes Associations gave evidence before the Simon Commission and placed their memorandum before it. Sixteen of them pleaded for separate electorates for the Depressed Classes. On behalf of the *Bahiskrit Hitkarini Sabha*, Ambedkar submitted a memorandum to the Commission and demanded joint electorate with the reservation of seats for the Depressed Classes.²² The *Bahiskrit Hitkarini Sabha* demanded 22 out of 146 in the Bombay Legislative Council. It was opposed to the principle of nomination and it insisted upon the

extension of the principle of election to the Depressed Classes. It is said that they needed political education and since ministership was a very important privilege they should have a place in the Cabinet.²³ Besides, the *Sabha* demanded that the education of the Depressed Classes should be the first charge on the revenue of Provinces and claimed the right of the Depressed Classes to the recruitment in the Army, Navy and police.

The first Round Table Conference in 1930 was a follow up to the recommendation of the Simon Commission to consider proposals for constitutional reforms in India. Ambedkar received an invitation to attend it in September 1930. The India National Congress had boycotted the Simon Commission and also the first Round Table Conference. In the first Plenary Session of the Round Table Conference Ambedkar made an important statement, clarifying his political stand vis-à-vis the British Government and the Hindu majority and his demands on behalf of the Depressed Classes. The British Government had not been able so far to change the social status of the Untouchables and ensure their entry into Hindu temples or into the Police force or Military. In fact the British Government had accepted the social arrangements as it found them. No one could remove the grievances of the Untouchables, he reiterated, as satisfactorily as they themselves could. They could do nothing unless the Untouchables had a share in power in self governing India. It was only in a *Swaraj* constitution that they could stand and have chance of getting the political power into their own hands, without which there could be no salvation for them. However, he could not assume that the interest of the Depressed Classes would be safe only with the coming of *Swaraj* unless the Depressed Classes had a share in political power. And this could be ensured by devising a constitution taking into account the hierarchical character of Indian society and the need for the representation of varied interest in new political structures. But there was a risk that, even in the new set up, the interest of the Depressed Classes might suffer : “ We are prepared to take the inevitable risk of the situation in the hope that we shall be installed, in adequate proportions, as the political sovereigns of the country along with our fellow countrymen. But we will consent to that on one condition that the settlement of problems is not left to time.”²⁴

The second Round Table Conference in London started its meetings on September 7, 1931. Gandhi joined the Conference and arrived in London on September 12. He put forward a demand for complete independence of India. The principal question for consideration by the Conference related to Communal problems. No unanimous decision could be arrived at on the subject. The Muslims, the Untouchables and the Depressed Classes among the Hindus, the Anglo-Indians and the Indian Christians put forward a joint proposal which was not acceptable to the Hindus and the Sikhs. Gandhi protested strongly against the recognition of the Depressed Classes as a separate community with a right of franchise as such. Ambedkar proposed a joint electorate for the Depressed Classes along with the other Hindus with the reservation of seats for them in the legislatures. Gandhi objected to this. Somebody then proposed that the matter be left to the decision of the British Government. The British Prime Minister enquired if the delegates present were prepared to accept his decision and so to send him a written request to that effect. The majority of ten delegates signed a written request to him in that regard.

The second Conference ended on December 11, 1931. Nothing much came out of this barring the formulation of certain procedural matters in connection with the implementation of the decisions of the first conference. Gandhi returned to India on December 28 and admitted that he had come back empty handed. On August 17, 1932 Ramsay Macdonald the British Prime Minister made the declaration of his decisions as follows : (i) Muslims , Sikhs and the Europeans in India will form separate electorates for the purpose of elections but the communities concerned may change the arrangement if they so desired after the lapse of ten years. (ii) The Hindus will vote for candidates contesting seats in the legislatures that will be reserved for them but some of these seats will again be reserved for the Depressed Classes who will form separate electorates for returning their candidates.²⁵

In a Supplementary Memorandum on the claims of the Depressed Classes for Special Representation B. R. Ambedkar and Rao Bahadur R. Srinivasan felt the necessity of defining the Depressed Classes (the definition had already been given earlier). However, they made it clear what special Representation meant in the following words : (i) That the Depressed Classes

shall not only lose the right to their own separate electorates, but they shall also have the right to be represented by their own men. (ii) That in each Province the Depressed Classes shall be strictly defined as meaning persons belonging to communities which are subjected to the system of untouchability of the sort of prevalence therein and which are enumerated by name in a schedule prepared for electoral purposes.²⁶

The third Round Table Conference was just a piece of window-dressing. It was intended to be a Conference of equals for the purpose of defining the principles of constitution. Its composition was changed, Jinnah was left out. The Indian states had little interest in the proceedings and the Princes abstained. The Conference sat from November 17 to December 24, 1932. After the close of the Conference, the Government published a White Paper on March 15, 1933, giving a complete outline of constitution. Meanwhile the joint Parliamentary committee of both the Houses (Lords and Commons) was appointed in April, 1933 with Lord Linlithgo as Chairman. On the basis of its Reports a bill was prepared and introduced on December 19, 1934. It was carried by large majority and the Royal assent was given on August 4, 1935, and this became the Government of India Act 1935.

It has already been noted that the Prime Minister of England announced his decision known as Communal Award on August 18, 1932. At this Gandhi wrote to the Prime Minister that he would start a Fast unto death from September 20, unless the proposal for a separate electorate for the Depressed Classes was dropped. Nothing happened and the Fast was begun on September 20. The Fast created a great stir all over the country. The excitement created by the Civil Disobedience Movement and the resultant repression and harassment of thousands of Satyagrahis at the hands of the Government were all pushed to the background under the weight of the vociferous demand that Gandhi's life be saved at any cost. And the only way to do this was to come to some sort of understanding with the Depressed Classes. The Hindu leaders met in a Conference with Ambedkar, the leader of the Depressed Classes. Subsequently a settlement was reached on September 25, 1932 and this came to be known as the Poona Pact. Gandhi broke his fast on September 26, 1932. Ambedkar stated thus :

“As to myself, it is no exaggeration to say that no man was placed in a greater and graver dilemma than I was then. It was a baffling situation. I had to make a choice between two different alternatives. There was before me the duty, which was owed as a part of common humanity, to save Gandhi from sure death. There was before me the problem of saving for the Untouchables the political right, which the Prime Minister had given them. I responded to the call of humanity and saved the life of Mr. Gandhi by agreeing to alter the Communal Award in a manner satisfactory to Mr. Gandhi. This agreement is known as the Poona Pact.”²⁷

The principal terms of settlement were as follows: “(i) A total of 148 seats in the provincial legislative assemblies shall be reserved for members of the Depressed Classes instead of 71 seats as previously decided. (ii) In the Central legislature 18% of the seats meant for representatives from the British Indian territories shall be reserved for the Depressed Classes. (iii) For every seat reserved for the Depressed Classes, four candidates shall first be selected by the Depressed Class voters only and subsequently out of these four one shall be elected on the strength of votes cast by all Hindu voters of that Constituency.”

To introduce “fast” into politics is not a political act but a kind of coercion on the political opponent. Hence Gandhi’s action cannot be defended at all. On this Jawaharlal Nehru, a firm devotee of Gandhi severely criticised and condemned Gandhi’s imprudence, and the mixing of politics and religion in tackling political questions. Nehru concluded thus: “I felt angry with him when Gandhi would rely on religion and his own intuition and repeatedly invoke the name of God for solution of a political problem. God was said to have given him the direction not only to start the fast but also when to start it. What a terrible example to set.”²⁸

Subahas Chandra Bose (Netaji) also commented on Gandhi as follows: “The Mahatma (Gandhi) has failed, because he had to play a dual role in one person — the role of the leader of an enslaved people and that of a world - teacher, who has a new doctrine to preach. It is this duality which made him at once the irreconcilable foe of the Englishman, according to Mr. Winston Churchill, and the best policeman of the Englishman according to Miss Ellen Wilkinson ...But India’s salvation will not be achieved under his (Gandhi’s) leadership”.²⁹

Gandhi undertook the ‘fast unto death’ was motivated. And Ambedkar’s comments on this are illuminating and these are noted thus : “ The story of this fact (fast unto death) has been

told by Mr. Pyarelal in a volume which bears the picturesque and flamboyant title of *The Epic Fast*. The curious may refer it. I must, however, warn him that it is written by a Boswell and has all the faults of a Boswellian ... Suffice it to say that although Mr. Gandhi declared a fast unto death, he did not want to die. He wanted very much to live.”³⁰

In his reply to Gandhi's letter dated August 18, 1932, addressed to the Prime Minister of England, Ramsay Macdonald, the latter showed in his letter dated September 8, 1932, addressed to Gandhi the motive of Gandhi to deprive the Depressed Classes of their right to choose their own candidates. In his words —

“As I understand your attitude, you propose to adopt the extreme course of starving yourself to death not in order to secure that the Depressed Classes should have joint electorate with other Hindus, because that is already provided, nor to maintain the unity of Hindus, which is also provided, but solely to prevent the Depressed Classes, who admittedly suffer from terrible disabilities today, from being able to secure a limited number of representatives of their own choosing to speak on their behalf in the legislature which will have a dominating influence over their future.”³¹

As already noted Ambedkar was not happy with the Poona Pact. He had to accept it under pressure from the caste Hindus to save the life of Gandhi. The Poona Pact was accepted by Gandhi and given effect to by Government by embodying it in the Government of India Act 1935. The Pact, however, had produced different reactions in different peoples. The Untouchables were sad. They had every reason to be. There were, however, people who did not accept this. They never felt to point out that the Poona Pact gave the Untouchables larger number of seats than what was given to them by the Prime Minister of England in his Communal Award. It is true that the Poona Pact gave the Untouchables 148 seats — Madras 30; Bombay with Sind 15; Punjab 8 ; Bihar and Orissa 18 ; Central Provinces 20; Assam 7; Bengal 30; United Provinces 20 — while the award had only given them 78. But to conclude from this that the Poona Pact gave them more than what was given by the Award is to ignore what the Award had in fact given to the Untouchables.³²

The Communal Award gave the Untouchables two benefits, as pointed out by Ambedkar. These were - (i) a fixed quota of seats to be elected by separate electorate of Untouchables and to be filled by persons belonging to the Untouchables; (ii) double vote, one to be used through

separate electorates and the other to be used in the general electorates. Now, if the Poona Pact increased the quota of seats for the Untouchables it took away the right to the double vote given them by the Communal Award. This increase in seats can never be deemed to be a compensation for the loss of the double vote. The second vote given by the Communal Award was a priceless privilege. Its value as a political weapon was beyond reckoning.

It may be noted here that the voting strength of the Untouchables in each constituency was one to ten. With this voting strength free to be used in the election of caste Hindus, the Untouchables would have been in a position to determine, if not to dictate, the issue of the General Election. No caste Hindu candidate could have dared to neglect the Untouchables in his constituency or be hostile to their interest, if he was made dependent upon the votes of the Untouchables. With the Poona Pact the Untouchables were given a few more seats than were given to them by Communal Award. And this was all that they gained. If the Communal Award with its system of double voting had remained, the Untouchables would have had a few seats less, but every other member would have been a member for the Untouchables. The increase in the number of seats for the Untouchables was no increase at all and was no recompense for the loss of separate electorate and the double vote.³³

The announcement of August 8, 1940 was a response of the British Government to the demands of the Muslim League. It was originated by the idea of Pakistan. It may be noted in this connection that the Muslim leader Syed Ahmed strengthened Islamic separatist idea in the second half of the 19th Century. In the session of the Muslim League held in Allahabad in December 1930, the President Iqbal Ahmed demanded a separate Muslim State in India. According to him a separate State either independent or as a part of the British Dominions should be carved out of Muslim majority Provinces— Punjab, Sind, Beluchistan and North West Frontier Province (N.W.F.P.)³⁴

During the session of the Round Table Conference in London, Rahamat Ali, a student of the Cambridge University proposed to the Muslim leaders assembled the formation of a separate Muslim State comprising (1) Punjab, (2) Afghan i.e., N.W.F.P., (3) Kashmir, (4) Sind, and (5)

Beluchistan in all which the Muslims were in a majority. Further he proposed that the first letters in the names of the first four Provinces (P.A.K.S.) and the last portion (STAN) of the name of the fifth Province be taken together to give the name Pakistan to the new State. In support of his proposal he contended that the Hindus and the Muslims form two separate Nations with fundamental differences in their religion, culture, history, tradition, literature, economic system, law of inheritance and system of marriage. Besides, Hindus and Muslims do not inter-dine ; there was no inter-marriage between them ; and Muslims have their own calendar, have a diet and dress different from those of the Hindus. In 1933 some students of Cambridge joined together to start what was called the "Pakistan National Movement" with Rahamat as its President. On January 8, 1933 an eight-page pamphlet in English was published with the caption, "Now or Never", which propagated the idea of Pakistan. The word "Pakistan" came to be used for the first time in that pamphlet. "Pak" means pure and "Pakistan" the land of the pure. At the time the Muslim leaders in London did not attach much importance to Rahamat's proposal.³⁵

In the Lahore Session of the Muslim League a resolution in support of the demand for Pakistan was passed on March 24, 1940. The argument in support of the resolution advanced by Jinnah in his Presidential address did not differ much from the two Nation theory of Rahamat Ali. Incidentally, it may be mentioned here that Ambedkar wrote at that time a book named *Thoughts On Pakistan* (1940), subsequently re-named as *Pakistan or Partition*. In this connection mention may be made of Jawaharlal Nehru visiting M. A. Jinnah over the controversy relating to Pakistan. On Nehru's query, Jinnah referred him to Ambedkar's book. Dhananjay Keer has eulogised Ambedkar's book in the following words: "Thoughts on Pakistan is a masterpiece in which learning and thinking are blended and displayed at their highest order. It is entrancing in its magic, intriguing in its construction, terse in its style, and provocative in its manner. It is a model in scientific propagation!"³⁶

The main resolution on the formation of Pakistan was moved in the Lahore Session of the Muslim League by the chief Minister of Bengal, Fazlul Hoq. The resolution ran thus: "The contiguous geographical units should be partitioned in such a way that the North Western and Eastern parts of India where the Muslims are in a majority should form more than one indepen-

dent State and the units comprised in these States should be independent and sovereign.”³⁷

The Lahore resolution was subsequently endorsed by the Government of India . On August 8, 1940, the Governor General issued a Proclamation which inter-alia, ran thus: “ It is needless to say that the British Government would not entrust the administration of India to a party in the face of objection by a large and powerful element in the national life of India which is not prepared to accept its authority. The Government of India is not prepared to force such an unwilling element to accept the authority of that party.”³⁸

The implications of the Governor-General’s declaration dated August 18, 1940 was pregnant with significance for the future of the country. The declaration implied that if the Muslims did not agree to live under the domination of the Hindus, the British Government would not be prepared to leave the country by relinquishing the administration to the Hindus. The situation that emerged was that without the concurrence of the Muslims no arrangement for transfer of power could be made. In other words, Jinnah became the arbiter of the shape of the administrative set up that was to come. Thus was led the foundation of Pakistan. The only change in the labour resolution subsequently underwent was that in the Muslim majority areas of India, instead of a number of sovereign states, one sovereign state of Pakistan comprising the same was substituted. In other words in place of India being split up into a number of small states, it was decided to partition it into two States— Hindusthan and Pakistan. In fact the scheme of Pakistan followed the logic of Ambedkar in his book *Pakistan or Partition*.³⁹ The implication of the Muslim League’s demand for Pakistan had a certain affect on the position and aspiration of the Depressed Classes. The logic was that if because of exclusiveness between the two communities the Muslims could not stay in one country with the Hindus , then on the same ground at least without administrative assurance and constitutional safe-guard for reservation the Depressed Classes had reasons not to able to trust the congress leadership which mainly belonged to the high-caste Hindus and who actually exploited the Depressed Classes all through the ages had gone by. The demand for Pakistan, therefore, gave an warning to the Depressed Classes for their assertion of socio-religious and political rights.

The impact of the Second World War (1939 - 1945) led the British Government to change its policy towards India. Japan had declared war against England on December 6, 1941 and started bombing Rangoon on January 28, 1942. The Japanese captured Singapore on February 15 and on March 7 the British army began to retreat from Rangoon. Burma (Myanmar) fell to Japanese army on May 15 and the Japanese army started its march towards India. The first Japanese bombs fell on Calcutta on December 20, 1942. From the beginning of the year 1942, thousands of Indians in Burma had taken the hills and forests on foot in their attempt to reach Bengal. At this juncture, under pressure from President Roosevelt of America the British Prime Minister Churchill sent to India Mr. Stafford Cripps, a minister of his cabinet with mission to arrive at an understanding with the political leaders of India. Cripps arrived at Delhi on March 23, 1942. Earlier a special India Committee of the cabinet was set up by Churchill under the chairmanship of Attlee, with the Secretary of State Vicount Simon, Sir John Anderson, Sir Stafford Cripps and Sir Jammes Crigg as members. Churchill's announcement of the decision to send Sir Stafford Cripps out to India was made in the House of Commons on 11 March 1942. And Cripps came to Delhi armed with the British Governments' draft declaration, on the basis of which he was to conduct negotiations with the leaders of Indian political parties and communities. The first two or three days were spent in preliminary talks with the Viceroy, members of his Executive Council and other official advisers. Thereafter Sir Stafford Cripps proceeded to interview the leaders of various political groups and communities. Gandhi attended in his personal capacity. The political leaders included Azad and Nehru, Jinna as representative of the Muslim League, Sir Sikandar Hyat Khan, Fazlul Hoq, Savarkar and other members of Hindu Mahasabha, Ambedkar and M. C. Raja of the Depressed Classes, representative of the Sikhs, the India Christians, Anglo-Indians and Europeans as well as representatives of the Indian states.⁴⁰

Sir Stafford made it clear that his "scheme goes through as a whole or is rejected as a whole." The terms of the declaration were as follows:

(a) Immediately upon cessation of hostilities steps shall be taken to set up in India, in the manner described hereafter, an elected body charged with the task of framing a new Constitution for India.

(b) Provision shall be made, as set up bellow, for the participation of Indian States in the Constitution - making body

(c) His Majesty's Government undertakes to accept and implement forthwith the constitution so framed subject only to: (i) The right of any province of British India that is not prepared to accept the new constitution to retain its present constitutional position, provision being made for its subsequent accession, if it so decides. With such non-acceding provinces, should they so desire, His Majesty's Government will be prepared to agree upon a new constitution giving them the same full status as the Indian Union and arrive at by a procedure analogous to that here laid down. (ii) The signing of a treaty, which shall be negotiated between His Majesty's Government and the constitution-making body. This treaty will cover all necessary matters arising out of the complete transfer of responsibility from British to Indian hands; it will make provision, in accordance with the undertakings given by His Majesty's Government, for the protection of racial and religious minorities, but will not impose any restriction on the power of Indian union to decide in future its relationship to other member states of the British Commonwealth. Whether or not an Indian state elects to adhere to the constitution, it will be necessary to negotiate revision of its treaty arrangements so far this may be required in the new constitution.

(d) The constitution-making body shall be composed as follows, unless the leaders of Indian opinion in the principal communities agree upon some other form before the end of hostilities: Immediately upon the result being known of the provincial elections which will be necessary at the end of hostilities, the entire membership of the Lower Houses of provincial legislatures shall ; as a single electoral College, proceed to the election of the constitution-making body by the system of proportional representation. This new body shall have about one-tenth of the number of the Electoral College. Indian states shall be invited to appoint representatives in the same proportion to their total population as in the case of representatives of British India as a whole and with the same powers as British-Indian members.

(e) During the critical period which now faces India and until the new constitution can be framed His Majesty's Government must inevitably bear the responsibility for, and retain the

control and direction of, the defence of India as part of their world war effort ; but the task of organising to the full the military, moral and material resources of India must be the responsibility of the Government of India with the co-operation of the peoples of India. His Majesty's Government desires, and invites, the immediate and effective participation of the leaders of the principal sections of the Indian people in the counsels of their country, of the Commonwealth and of the United Nations. Thus they will be enabled to give their active and constructive help to the discharge of a task which is vital and essential for the future freedom of India.”⁴¹

Gandhi's policy was one of 'total pacifism' and he described Cripps' declaration as a 'Post - dated Cheque'. The Hindu Mahasabha rejected the long-term plan on the ground that the option given to the provinces to stay out of the Union would destroy the unity of the country. The Sikhs also protested. They said: "we shall resist by all possible means separation of the Punjab from the All India Union. The Depressed Classes denounced the scheme for its failure to provide the necessary safeguards for them. In their words: " we are all of us absolutely convinced that the proposals are calculated to do the greatest harm to the Depressed Classes and are sure to place them under an unmitigated system of Hindu rule." Other political parties including the Muslim League were also not prepared to accept the proposals as they stood.

There was exchange of views on the Defence Department. Sir Stafford Cripps had written to Azad on April 1, 1942 suggesting that he would ask the Commander-in-Chief to meet him and Nehru in order to explain to them the technical difficulties of the situation connected with the defence proposals. The Indian leaders saw the Commander-in-Chief on 4th April. It was clear that there would be an Indian defence member, in addition to the Commander-in-Chief who would continue to be the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces in India. The leaders were anxious to secure and assure that an Indian defence member would have reasonable status and to be able to function effectively. On this point Sir Stafford Cripps after consulting His Majesty's Government wrote on 7th April to both Azad and Jinna as follows :

"I am therefore authorised to propose to you as a way out of the present difficulties that
(a) the Commander-in-Chief should retain a seat on the Viceroy's Executive Council as War Member and should retain his full control over all the war activities of the armed

forces in India subject to the control of His Majesty's Government and the War cabinet, upon which body a representative Indian should sit with equal powers in all matters relating to the defence of India. Membership of the Pacific Council would likewise be offered to Representative Indian. (b) An Indian representative member would be added to the Viceroy's Executive, who would take over those sections of the Department of Defence which can organisationally be separated immediately from the Commander-in-Chief's War Department and which are specified under head (I) of the annexure. In addition, this member would take over the Defence Co-ordination Department which is at present directly under the Viceroy and certain other important functions of the Government of India which are directly related to defence and which do not fall under any of the other existing departments, and which are specified under head (II) of the annexure.

Annexure

(I) Matters now dealt with in the Defence Department which would be transferred to a Defence Co-ordination Department: (a) Public relations; (b) Demobilisation and post-war reconstruction; (c) Petroleum officer, whose functions are to calculate the requirements of, and make provision for, all petroleum products required for the Army, Navy, and Air Force, and for the civil departments, including storage and distribution; (d) Indian representation on the Eastern Group Supply Council; (e) Amenities for, and welfare of, troops and their dependants including Indian soldiers' boards; (f) all canteen organisations; (g) certain non-technical educational institutions, e.g. Lawrence schools, K.G.R.I.M. schools, and the Prince of Wales' Royal Indian Military College; (h) Stationary, printing and forms for the Army; (i) Reception, accommodation, and social arrangements for all foreign mission, representatives and offices.

(II) In addition the Defence Co-ordination Department would take over many major questions bearing directly on defence but difficult to locate in any particular existing departments, examples are denial policy, evacuation from threatened areas, signals co-ordination, economic warfare."⁴²

The Congress rejected the proposal. At this stage a new factor entered in Cripps' negotiation. Col. Louis Johnson, the special representative of the President of America arrived in India with a watching brief. Cripps took advantage of his presence in Delhi and asked him to help him in disentangling the naughty defence problem.

Johnson produced a new formula, which Cripps approved with some minor modifications. According to this formula an Indian would be appointed in charge of Defence, but he would delegate powers to the Commander-in-Chief as the war Member of the Executive Council who would control the war operations and the armed forces and would be responsible to the General Head Quarters, the Naval Head Quarters, and the Air Head Quarters. The Defence would be in charge of all other matters in the Defence Department as well as the Defence co-

ordination Department ; and in the event of any new function falling to be discharged or any dispute arising as to the allocation of functions it would be decided by His Majesty's Government.⁴³

The new formula was shown to Nehru who had suggested some minor changes. However, the Viceroy was not shown this and he protested. He refused to accept any responsibility for it. Churchill, the Prime Minister of England then warned Cripps not to commit the Government in any way. The War Cabinet communicated their views on the formula to Cripps on April 9: "It is essential to bring the whole matter back to Cabinets' plan which you (Cripps) went out to urge, with only such modifications as are agreed to be put forward."⁴⁴ It further questioned him (Cripps) regarding the significance of the phrase National Government.⁴⁵

In this context the hopes Cripps raised of establishing immediately a National Government could not be fulfilled. Nor did the Congress already reject the new formula about defence Cripps-Johnson formula — different from the original formula and Cripps had to retrace his steps. However, he urged upon the Congress leaders to accept this scheme. But that was not to be. As a result the conflict of opinion between the Congress and the British Government led inevitably to the failure of the Mission which was wounded as Cripps left India on April 12, 1942. Hodson having first hand information about the Mission and its working gives the cause of failure thus:

"The fault clearly lay with Sir Stafford in negotiating on such an issue to a point of vital commitment without the clearest understanding with the Viceroy. (The busy body Col. Johnson obviously made matters worse). But the blame did not rest with him alone; for the War cabinet, especially the India Committee, made a fundamental mistake, strange in a body so experienced, when they sent an emissary to promote a policy in India which had not been fully agreed with the Viceroy, though he would to carry out."⁴⁶

Cabinet mission plan, 1946

Soon after the World War II the general election in Britain changed its Government. The election resulted in a resounding victory for the labour party, the first time that the party had been able to secure a clear majority in the House of Commons. Churchill's caretaker Govern-

ment gave place to a Labour Government , with Clement Attlee as Prime Minister and Lord Pethick Lawrence as Secretary of State for India. Nationalist opinion in India acclaimed the Labour Party's success with jubilation. In a cable to Attlee, the Congress President said: "Hearty congratulations to the people of Great Britain on the results of the election which demonstrate the abandonment of the old ideas and acceptance of a new world." There was less enthusiasm among members of the Muslim League ; but on the whole, the new British Government was welcomed by India with friendliness and goodwill. The expected surrender of Japan was accelerated by the first atom bomb dropped on Hiroshima on 6 August, 1945, and on the 15th of that month Victory over Japan was celebrated all over India.⁴⁷

His Majesty's Government thought that the situation demanded a different approach. It proposed sending a Mission of Cabinet Ministers— , of whom the secretary of State was one — to conduct, in association of the Viceroy, negotiations with Indian leaders. They welcomed the proposal, but he pointed out that the Mission would have to stay in India till a satisfactory decision had been reached. On 19th February, 1946 Lord Pethick Lawrence in the House of Lords and Prime Minister Attlee in the House of Commons made a simultaneous announcement that in view of the paramount importance, not only to India and the British Commonwealth , but to the peace of the world and, of a succesful outcome of discussions with leaders of Indian opinion, His Majesty's Government had decided to send out to India a special Mission consisting of three Cabinet Ministers to seek, in association with the Viceroy, an agreement with the Indian leaders on the principles and procedure relating to the constitutional issue. The members of the Mission would be Lord Pethick Lawrence, Secretary of State for India, Sir Stafford Cripps, President of the Board of Trade, and A. V. Alexander, first Lord of the Admiralty.⁴⁸

There was a debate in the House of Commons on 15 March on the Cabinet Mission's visit to India. Intervening in the debate, Attlee said that the tide of nationalism was running very fast in India and that it was time for clear and definite actions. The Cabinet Mission was going to India in a possible mood. The temperature of 1946 was not the temperature of 1920, 1930 or even 1942. His colleagues were going to India with the intention of using their utmost endeavours

to help her to attain freedom as speedily and as fully as possible. What form of Government was to replace the present regime was for India to decide, though he hoped that India would elect to remain within the British Commonwealth. In conclusion he said, "we are mindful of the rights of the minorities and the minorities should be able to live free from fear. On the other hand, we cannot allow a minority to place their veto on the advance of the majority."⁴⁹

The above statement of the Prime Minister of England evoked criticism from Jinna. He protested that the Muslims were not a "minority" but a "nation" and that it was futile to expect cooperation from the Muslim League. Nehru, on the other hand, however noticed a change in the tone and approach of Attlee's speech. Other political parties also welcomed the visit of the Cabinet Mission and offered their co-operations. The Mission arrived Delhi on 24th March, 1946. Unlike the procedure adopted at the time of the visit of Cripps in 1942, the Viceroy was to be not merely a consultant, but an effective partner in the efforts of the Cabinet Mission to find a solution of the Indian problem. The Mission went on interviewing the political leaders like Azad, Jinna and others. The case of the Sikh community was presented by Master Tara Singh, Giani Kartar Singh and Harnam Singh as well as by Valdev Singh. Ambedkar was interviewed on behalf of the Scheduled Caste Federation. As regards the Scheduled Castes in the Constituent Assembly, he said that he did not want a Constituent Assembly at all. The reason was that it would be dominated by the Caste Hindus and the Scheduled Castes would be no more than a small minority which would always be out voted.

His own proposal was that the tasks envisaged for the Constituent Assembly should be divided into two classes, namely (a) constitutional questions properly so called, for example, the relations between the legislature and the Executive and their respective composition and function; and (b) communal questions. Matters under (a) should be referred to a commission presided over by an eminent constitutional lawyer from Great Britain or the U. S. A. The other members should be two Indian experts and one representative each of the Hindu and Muslim communities. The terms of reference should be the Government of India Act, 1935 and the commission should be required to recommend the changes to be made in the Act. Matter under (b) should be referred to a conference of the leaders of the different communities. In case the

conference failed to arrive at an agreed solution. His Majesty's Government should make an award.⁵⁰

Ambedkar claimed that before they left, the British must ensure that new constitution guaranteed to the Scheduled Castes the elementary human rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, and that it restored their separate electorates and gave them the other safeguards which they demanded. The Secretary of State suggested that Indian politics had been dominated by two issues, the question of winning independence from British rule and the Hindu - Muslim problem. Once these were out of the way, party divisions would probably be on economic issues. Surely the Schedules Castes would have a better chance of securing their rights by allying themselves with the left wing than by relying on the British, who were about to hand over power. Ambedkar reiterated that so long as there were joint electorates, Scheduled Caste voters would be so few that Hindu candidates could safely ignore their wishes. Caste Hindus would never support Scheduled Caste candidates. Separate electorates were fundamental ;without them the scheduled castes would never have their own representatives.⁵¹

The Constituent Assembly

A notable feature of the Indian Constituent Assembly was the number of transformations it was subjected to in the course of its career between July-August 1946, when it was first elected and to November 1949, which marked the end of its complicated tasks. In the first stage the election of representatives was from the territories then known as British India, and the Indian States. In the setting up of the Constituent Assembly, the suggestions of the Cabinet Mission, as outlined in its statement of May 16, 1946 were faithfully adopted. Having rejected the method of election by adult franchise — though seemed most satisfactory for the framing of the constituent Assembly but for unacceptable delay in executing such a process, the Cabinet Mission concluded that the only practicable course was to utilise the recently elected Provincial Legislative Assemblies as the electing bodies. The fairest and most practical plan according to the Cabined Mission would be : (a) to allot to each Province a total number of seats proportional to its population, roughly in the ratio of one to a million, as the nearest substitute for

representation by adult suffrage; (b) to divide this provincial allocation of seats between the main communities in each province in proportion to their population; (c) to provide that the representatives allotted to each community in a Province would be elected by the members of that community in its Legislative Assembly.⁵²

By the end of July the elections to the Constituent Assembly were over. The Cabinet Mission recognised only three major communities in India : General , Muslims and Sikhs. The 292 seats were divided into these sections, A, B and C. In section A (group of provinces of Madras, Bombay, Orissa, U. P., C. P. and Bihar) the Congress won 162 general seats and 2 Muslim seats, the Muslim League 19 seats, and the Independent 1. In section B (Punjab, NWP Provinces , Sind and Baluchistan) the Muslim League secured 19 seats, the Congress annexed 7 general and 2 Muslim seats, Unionist Party 3, the Independent 1. In section C (Bengal and Assam) the Congress Obtained 32, the Muslim League 35, the Communists 1, the Scheduled Castes Federation 1, and the Krishak Praja Party 1. The total number of the Congress members was 201 and of the Muslim League 73, of the Independants 8 and of the other parties 6. The Congress won all the general seats except 9, the League all the Muslim seats except.⁵³

While the elections were proceeding the Viceroy formed a new care-taker Government which was sworn on July 4. Since the situation had worsened, he realised the importance of installing a popular Government consisting of leaders of the political parties. He wrote letters to Nehru and Jinna. He proposed to form a Government consisting 14 members — 6 members (including 1 scheduled caste representative) to be nominated by the Congress ; 5 members to be nominated by the Muslim League; and 3 representatives of the minorities nominated by the Viceroy. The portfolios would be equitably distributed after finalisation of nominations. Nehru accepted the Viceroy's invitation of the 6th August and on August 13 wrote to Jinna inviting his co-operation in the task of forming an interim government. The two leaders met in Bombay on August 15. But Jinna declined to co-operate with the Congress. On 14 August Jinna issued a statement explaining the purpose of Direct Action Day Celebration on the 16 August as announced by the Muslim League. Rioting took place in Calcutta and the mad fury continued for 4 days starting from August 16. The city began to return to normal life by August 20. The casu-

alties could not be estimated accurately. Hodson gives the figure of 5000 killed and 15,000 seriously injured in Calcutta. On 24th the new government was announced with 12 members. On September 2 the new government took over. On October 13 Jinnah informed the Viceroy that the Muslim League would join the Government with 5 members including 1 member named Jogendranath Mandal from the Scheduled Caste. The Congress had already included Jagjiban Ram from the Scheduled Castes.⁵⁴

So far as the Indian states were concerned their representatives numbered 93. The total membership was of 389 members. Meanwhile Constitution-making was in operation. There were 7 members of the Drafting Committee. Meanwhile on the advice of Gandhi Jawaharlal Nehru invited Dr. B.R. Ambedkar as one of the members of his Cabinet after the partition of India into India and Pakistan. Ambedkar remained in the Indian Cabinet. Ambedkar thought that he would be best able to serve the interest of the Scheduled Castes by joining the Drafting Committee of the constitution as well as Government. The 7 members of the Drafting committee were as follows — K. M. Munshi and T. T. Krishnamachary (Congress members); Muhammed Saadulla (Muslim League); B. R. Ambedkar; Alladi Krishnaswamy Aiyar; N. Madhava Rao; and D. P. Khaitan (Independent). Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was elected chairman of the Committee and he piloted the Constitution with remarkable skill and ability. He remarked on his election “I had not the remotest idea that I would be called upon to undertake more responsible functions. I was therefore greatly surprised when the Assembly elected me to the Drafting Committee. I was more than surprised when the Drafting Committee elected me to be its Chairman.”⁵⁵

A Draft Constitution was prepared. Thereafter it was revised by the Drafting Committee. The Constituent Assembly began the clause by clause consideration of the Draft Constitution from November 15, 1948 and it was concluded on October 17, 1949. The Draft Constitution, with the amendments adopted by the Assembly, was then referred again to the Drafting Committee with instructions to carry out such renumbering of the Articles, such revisions of punctuations and such revisions and completion of the marginal notes as might be necessary, and to recommend such formal or consequential or necessary amendments to the Constitution as might be required. The Draft Constitution as revised by the Drafting Committee contained 395 Articles

and 8 Schedules. It was then submitted to the President of the Constituent Assembly on November 3, 1949. In this Draft, where words were substituted or new words inserted, they were indicated in italics and where words were omitted such omission was indicated by asterisks.

Apart from the editions, deletions and amendments incorporated in this revised Draft, the Drafting Committee gave notice of some further amendments. Other members of the Assembly also gave notice of the amendments. All these amendments were considered by the Assembly on November 14, 15 and 16, and they were put to vote on November 16. The Constituent Assembly took up the third reading of the Constitution on November 17, 1949, on a motion by Ambedkar "that the Constitution as settled by the Assembly be passed." The discussion on the motion concluded on November 26 and the motion was put to vote and adopted amidst prolonged cheers.⁵⁶

Ambedkar made the concluding speech on November 25, 1949.⁵⁷ He in his speech looked back on the work of the Constituent Assembly remarked that it continued for 2 years 11 months and 17 days since the Assembly met on 9th December, 1946. The Assembly held 11 sessions, of which the first 6 were spent in passing the Objective Resolutions and on the considerations of the Reports of Committees on Fundamental Rights, on Union Constitution, on Union Powers, on Provincial Constitution, on Minorities and on the Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes. The 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th and the 11th sessions were devoted to the consideration of the Draft Constitution. These 11 sessions of the Constituent Assembly consumed 165 days. Out of these the Assembly spent 114 days for the consideration of the Draft Constitution.

The Drafting Committee was elected by the Constituent Assembly on 29th August 1947. It held its first sitting on 30th August. Since then it sat for 141 days during which it was engaged in the preparation of the Draft Constitution. The Draft Constitution as prepared by the constitutional Advisers as a text for the Drafting Committee to work upon, consisted of 243 Articles and 13 Schedules. The first Draft Constitution as presented by the Drafting Committee to Constituent Assembly contained 315 Articles and 8 Schedules. At the end of the consideration stage, the number of Articles in the Draft Constitution increased to 386. In its final forms,

the Draft Constitution contained 395 Articles and 8 Schedules. The total number of amendments to the Draft Constitution tabled was approximately 7635. Of them, the total number of amendments actually moved in the House were 2, 473.

The Constitution outlined above was to come into force on 26th January 1950. Ambedkar expressed his unhappiness in these words :

“On the 26th January 1950, we are going to enter into a life of contradiction. In politics we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality. In politics we will be recognising the principle of ‘one man one vote’ and ‘one vote one value’. In our social and economic life, we shall, by reason of our social and economic structure, continue to deny the principle of ‘one man one value’. How long shall we continue to live this life of contradiction? How long shall we continue to deny equality in our social and economic life? If we continue to deny it for long, we will do so only by putting our political democracy in peril. We must remove this contradiction at the earliest possible moment or else those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy which this Assembly has so laboriously built up.”

The Constitution of India, 1950

At the time of Constitution framing there were three revolutions— Political, Social and Economic. It was not possible at the time to give effect to the three revolutions simultaneously. As a result the Constitution paid attention to the Political aspect and the constitution was framed on the basis, namely ‘one man, one vote’ and ‘one value’. And this purpose was served immediately with the framing of the Constitution which came into effect on 26th of January, 1950. The socio-economic aspects have been embodied in part IV of the Constitution relating to the Directive principles of State Policy, while part III related to the Fundamental Rights of the citizens. Granville Austin⁵⁸ has described Parts III and IV relating to the Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles of State Policy as “the conscience of the Constitution.”

In this context a question arises as to the kind of Constitution that India has. Here the “ontological” classification of constitutions as devised by Karl Lowenstein⁵⁹ is helpful. According to him Constitution may be divided into three categories - Normative ; Nominal ; and Semantic. The first focuses on “the concordance of the reality of the power process with the norms of the Constitution”. A normative Constitution is valid in the legal sense and it must be faithfully

observed by all, so as to make it integrated into the State and Society. The two main norms are the social and economic developments or transformations. And these norms are to govern the political process — the power process is to adjust itself to the norms. The Constitution is like a suit that fits and is actually worn. Normativity, however, cannot always be taken for granted. There are cases where Constitutions are not for granted. There are cases where constitutions are not lived up to in practice. They lack “existential reality” and are called nominal. A nominal Constitution implies that the existing socio-economic conditions in India militate, for the time being, against the complete concordance of the constitutional norms with the exigencies of the power-process. Its primary goal is educational with the object of becoming fully normative. The suit for the time being hangs in the closet to be worn when the national body politic has grown into it. Finally, there is the situation where the constitution is applied and activated, but its “ontological reality” is nothing but the finalization of the existing location of political power for the exclusive benefit in the interests of the powers that be. This pattern is called the semantic constitution— it is not an honest suit at all but merely a cloak or a fancy dress.⁶⁰ It is unfortunate that part IV of the constitution relating to the socio-economic transformation still remains to be implemented. As a result, the Indian Constitution remains ‘nominal’ but has not become ‘normative’.

The Fundamental Rights of the Constitution are, in general, those rights of citizens or those negative obligations of the State not to encroach on individual liberty, that have become well-known since the late eighteenth century and since the drafting of the Bill of Rights of the American Constitution - for the Indians, no less than other peoples, become heir to this liberal tradition. These rights in the Indian Constitution are divided into seven parts : the Right of Equality, the Right of Freedom, the Right against Exploitation, the Right to Freedom of Religion, Cultural and Educational Rights, and the Right to Constitutional Remedies. The Right to Property has been made Article 300A by means of Forty fourth Amendment of the Constitution in 1978. The Right lay down that the State is to deny no one equality before the law. All citizens are to have the right to freedom of religion, assembly, association, and movement. No person is to be deprived of his life, liberty, or property, except in accordance with the law. Minorities are

allowed to protect and conserve their languages, script, and culture. And various means are provided whereby the citizen can move the supreme court and other courts for the enforcement of the Fundamental Rights.⁶¹ It may be pointed out in this connection that the Backward Classes including the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes have been conferred the special privilege of Reservations in respect of education and employment by Article 15 (4) and 16(4). These are Fundamental Rights.

In the Directive Principles, however, one finds an even clearer statement of the social revolution. They aim at making the Indian masses free in the positive sense, free from the passivity engendered by centuries of coercion by the society and by nature, free from the abject physical conditions that had prevented them from fulfilling their best selves. To do this, the state is to apply the precepts contained in the Directive Principles when making laws. These principles are not justiciable, a court cannot enforce them, but they are to be, nevertheless, 'Fundamental in the governance of the Country'. The essence of Directive Principles lies in Article 38, which runs as follows: ". . . The State shall strive to promote the welfare of the people by securing and protecting as effectively as it may a social order in which justice, social economic, and political, shall inform all the institutions of the national life."⁶²

Moreover Article 46 of the Directive Principles of State Policy provides for the promotion of educational and economic interest of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and other Weaker Sections of society, and their protection from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.

The Indian Constitution provides for a Federation of 28 States and 7 Union Territories. India is an indissoluble Union of dissoluble States and Territories as contrasted with the U.S. Federation, which is an indissoluble union of indissoluble states. The Indian federation contains a Federal Structure with bias towards the Centre. And the Indian Constitution contains in epitome the natures of polity and the rights conferred on the citizens. The polity is "A sovereign Democratic Republic." Subsequently two adjectives "Socialist" and "Secular" were inserted in the Preamble by the 42nd Amendment of the Constitution in 1976. An idea of these may be had from the Constitution (45th Amendment) Bill, 1978. Clause 44 of the Bill sought to insert in Article 366 a definition of the two terms as follows: "(i) the expression 'Republic', as

qualified by the expression 'Secular', means a republic in which there is equal respect for all religion; and (ii) the expression 'Republic', as qualified by the 'Socialist', means a republic in which there is freedom from all forms of exploitation, social, political and economic."

The adjective 'Democratic' means that the political process proceeds on the principle of 'one man, one vote'. And this has been declared a 'basic feature' of the Constitution by the Supreme Court in the case of *Kesavananda Bharati Vs the State of Kerala*.⁶³ And the 'basic feature' of the Constitution means that it cannot be amended in exercise of the power under Article 368 of the Constitution.

The Rights conferred are 'justice, liberty, equality and fraternity'. The Preamble to the Indian Constitution so much impressed Ernest Barker that he has quoted the Indian Preamble in the preface to his book *Principles of Social and Political Theory* (Reprint, 1965) and observed thus :

"It seemed to me, when I read it, to state in a brief and pithy form the argument of much of the book; and it may accordingly serve as a key note. I am the more moved to quote it because I am proud that the people of India should begin their independent life by subscribing to the principles of a political tradition which we in the West call Western, but which is now something more than Western."

Referring to his own personal decision in the matter, Ambedkar said that unfortunately for him he was born a Hindu Untouchable. It was beyond his power to prevent that, but he declared that it was within his power to refuse to live under ignoble and humiliating conditions, 'I solemnly assure you that I will not die a Hindu', he thundered.⁶⁴ In fact the stigma of untouchability affected Ambedkar so much that he spoke of Tilak's struggle for Independence in a new light as follows :

"If Tilak had been born amongst the Untouchables, Ambedkar proceeded, he would not have raised the slogan 'Swaraj is my birth right, but he would have raised the slogan 'Anihilation of untouchability is my birth right.'"⁶⁵

As a result the Indian Constitution inserted in Article 17 "Abolition of Untouchability" thus "Untouchability is abolished and its practice in any form is forbidden. The enforcement of any disability arising out of Untouchability shall be an offence punishable in accordance with law."

To implement the above Constitutional Mandate the Protection of Civil Rights Acts 1955 was passed. Under Section 7(1)(c) of the Act , thread - bearing has been made a punishable offence. Thus Ambedkar's life-long efforts in abolishing untouchability saw the light of the dawn, though in history he has not been given the credit due to him.⁶⁶

The Constitution of India is supposed to have been drafted by 7 members of the Drafting committee of which Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was the Chairman . But the entire burden of the drafting fell on Ambedkar — because of reasons given by one of his colleagues T. T. Krishnamachari as noted below :

“ The House is perhaps aware that of the seven members nominated by you, one had resigned from house and was replaced . One had died and was not replaced . One was away in America and his place was not filled up, and another person was engaged in State affairs, and there was a void to that extent . One or two people were far away from Delhi and perhaps the reasons of health did not permit them to attend. So it happened ultimately that the burden of drafting this Constitution fell upon Ambedkar and I have no doubt that we are grateful to him for having achieved this task in a manner which is undoubtedly commendable.”⁶⁷

The Hindu Code⁶⁸ and the Uplift of Women.

In 1941, a committee under the chairmanship of B.N.Rao was set up and thereafter, Hindu Code Bill was drafted. But Ambedkar transformed it. It shocked the reactionary elements. Tradition and modernity were at loggerheads; learning was pitted against revolutionary intellect. On the one side was Manu and on the other side was Ambedkar. On 11 January, 1950 he addressed the second session of Siddharth College Parliament in Bombay and declared that it would be wrong to describe the Hindu Code Bill as either radical or revolutionary. He stated that the new Republican Constitution of India had directed the preparation of the Civil Code for the benefit of the country. Article 44 provided a uniform civil code for the citizens: “The state shall endeavour to secure for the citizens a uniform civil code throughout the territory of India.” He explained that the modifications proposed had been based on the Hindu *Shastras* and *Smritis*. Thus property was governed by the *Dayabhag* system; the child belonged to father's caste under *Pitrisavarnya*; divorce was supported by Kautilya and *Parashara Smriti* ; and Women's rights to property were supported by *Brihaspati Smriti*. Ambedkar introduced the Hindu Code Bill on

5th February 1951. ⁶⁹ Replying to the objections raised, Ambedkar said that the Hindu Code should be uniform throughout India. With regard the Sikh's objection he observed :

“ The application of the Hindu Code to the Sikhs, Buddhists and Jains was a historical development , and it would be too late, sociologically to object to it. When the Buddha differed from the *Vedic* Brahmins he did so only in matters of creed, left the Hindu legal frame work intact. He did not propound a separate law for his followers. The same was the case with Mahavir and ten Sikh Gurus. The Privy Council had as early as in 1830 laid down that the Sikhs were governed by the Hindu laws.” ⁷⁰

The Hindu Code consisted of four Acts— (i) The Hindu Marriage Act, enacted in May 1955; (ii) The Hindu Succession Act in June 1956; (iii) The Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act in August 1956 and (iv) The Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act in December, 1956.

Main Provisions

The Marriage Act, 1955 :

The following fundamental changes are made : (i) Monogamy is enforced as a rule of law [sec 5(I)] and bigamy punishable u/s 17 of the Act. (ii) A Hindu Marriage is extended to Buddhists, Jains and Sikhs as well. (iii) The conditions and requirements of a ceremonial marriage are simplified . And Sec 8 provides for registration as well. (iv) Relief by way of judicial separation (sec.10) declaration of nullifying of marriage (Sec 12/12), divorce (Sec 13) and divorce by mutual consent (Sec. 13B) are permitted under the Act.

These changes are revolutionary. Marriage is not entirely a 'sacrament' as was formerly, but union of one man with one woman to the exclusion of all others by way of solemnisation of the customary rites and ceremonies of either party essential for a marriage. And such a marriage exists directly, creates a relation and a status imposed by law and not by contract.

The Hindu Succession Act, 1956

The following reforms are made: (i) It lay down a uniform system of inheritance for the whole country and enacts simple rule relating to succession to property. (ii) Male and female are treated as equals in matter of inheritance (Sec. 8, Schedule) (iii) Any property possessed by a female Hindu is held by her as her absolute property (Sec. 14) (iv) A murderer is disqualified from inheriting the property of the person murdered (sec 25).

The Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act, 1956

This Act shall be in addition to, and not in derogation of, the Guardianship and wards Act, 1890. It aims at amending and codifying certain parts of the law relating to minority and guardianship among Hindus. The main changes are noted below : (i) The natural guardian has not in the matter of disposal of the minor's immovable property, any power larger than those conferred on a guardian appointed or declared by the 1890 Act. The limitations are in *pari materia* with those of sec. 29 of that Act. (Sec 8 of the present Act). (ii) A Hindu father is empowered to appoint a testamentary guardian of his minor children in respect of that person and property (Sec 9). The mother can do so in case the father had predeceased the mother. (iii) The power of the defacto guardian is abrogated (Sec. 11). (iv) The Minor's welfare is of paramount consideration (Sec 13) and a 'minor' is defined u/s 4 (a) of the Act as a person who has not completed the age of 18 years.

The Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956

This enactment has provided a uniform law on the subject throughout India. The main features of the Act are as follows : (i) Women are treated as in equalijura. Boys and girls may be adopted and a widow can now adopt a son or daughter to herself in her own right (sec 8/10) (ii) Where both the parents are dead or disabled , the testamentary guardian or a guardian appointed or declared by the Court can now give the word in adoption with the priorsanction of the Court, which can be given only for the minor's welfare (sec 9). (iii) A Hindu - male or female is now to maintain his or her legitimate or illegitimate children and aged or infirm parents (sec 20). (iv) A Hindu has to maintain his 'dependants' as listed in sec.21 Undr sec 22, a dependant of a male or female deceased Hindu, who has not obtained any share in the estate of the deceased , is entitled to claim maintenace from those who take the estate.⁷¹

Commentary

The significance of the Hindu code was stated by Ambedkar (in the 14th volume of His writings and speeches) thus : "No law passed by the Indian Legislature in the past or likely to be passed in the future can be compared to it (Hindu Code) in point of its significance . To leave inequality between class and class , between sex and sex which is the soul of Hindu society,

untouched and to go on passing legislation relating to economic problems is to make a force of our Constitution and to build a palace on a dung heap. This is the significance I attached to the Hindu Code.”

The Hindu Code Bill was introduced by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar in the Constituent Assembly on 11, April 1947. The Bill was moved for referring to the Select Committee on 9th April 1948. This was followed by debate which continued by more than four years and still remained inconclusive. In the words of Ambedkar, it was killed and it died unwaved and unsung. This was probably the largest discussion on any single Bill in the free India's Parliament. Ambedkar felt that the Government and the Party in power i.e., Congress were not eager to clear the Hindu Code. He, therefore, tendered his resignation on 27th September 1951 to the prime minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru but continued to participate in the Parliamentary debates till 10th October, 1951 at the request of the Prime Minister. In his letter he expressed that he attached greatest importance to the Hindu Code Bill and would be prepared to undergo any strain on his health to get the Bill through. He wanted the Bill to be taken-up on top priority basis on 16th August and be finished by the 1st September, 1951. However, the opponents of the Hindu Code continued obstructive tactics and delayed the passing of the Bill. Ambedkar ultimately submitted his statement of resignation on 10th October and left the House in anguish.⁷²

It is unfortunate that Ambedkar, author of the Hindu Code Bill failed to pass it because of the conservative reactionaries including Sardar Patel. Subsequently it was passed in the absence of the author of the Bill. The Bill was a part of social engineering via law. It was a revolutionary measure. Some hold the view that Pandit Nehru was more western than Ambedkar. But the failure of the Hindu Code Bill as sponsored by Ambedkar gives a lie direct to the above statement. It shows clearly that Ambedkar was more western than Pandit Nehru.

The Uplift of Women

B.R. Ambedkar tried to uplift the women folk of the country. To this end he addressed in 1942 at Nagpur the Depressed Classes Women's Conference held under the presidentship of Mrs. Sulochanabai Dongre of Amraoti. He believed in Women's organisation. He knew what

they would do to improve society if they were convinced. According to Ambedkar the progress of a community is to be judged by the degree of progress achieved by women. And he was convinced that women had made progress. In his address to the Conference he stated as follows:

“Learn to be clean. Keep from vices. Give education to your children . Instil ambition into them . Inculcate in their minds that they are destined to be great. Remove from them all inferiority complex. Do not be in a hurry to marry. Marriage is a liability. You should not impose it upon your children unless they are financially able to meet the liabilities arising from marriage. Those who will marry will have to keep in mind that to have too many children is a crime. The paternal duty lies in giving each child a better start than its parents had. Above all, let every girl who marries stand by her husband, claim to be husband’s friend and equal, and refuse to be his slave. I am sure if you follow this advice, you will bring honour and glory to yourselves.”⁷³

The conference indicated the extent of awakening among the women of the down-trodden classes. It was a tribute to such leaders as Mrs. Indirabai Patil and Mrs. Kirtibai Patil. The Women’s Conference demanded abolition of polygamy and urged the installation of pensions as well leave with pay for women workers. Addressing the *Samata Sainik Dal Conference* held under the Presidentship of Sardar Gopalsing O. B. Ambedkar observed that he had love for the principle of non-violence. But he distinguished between non-violence and abject surrender. The volunteers had been warned that a man should not live a life of surrender, servitude and helplessness. Ambedkar believed with the Saint Tukaram that destruction of the wicked was also a form of non-violence. It is true that love and kindness towards all creatures formed a part of the principle of non-violence . And to destroy all evil-doers also formed the principal element in the doctrine of *ahimsa*. It is to be remembered that without the above element, *ahimsa* was an empty shell, a beatitude. *Shakti* (strength) and *shila* (character) should be the ideal. All these applied to men and women alike.

On his return from Nagpur, Dr. Ambedkar attended the last series of receptions held by the Depressed Class women of the then Bombay under the Presidentship of Mrs. Donde. He advised educated girls not to go in for marriage with the young men of higher classes. In the end, he expressed satisfaction that women of the Depressed Classes, specially the Mahar ladies, were more advanced from the view point of politics than the Maratha, Bhandari or Agari women.⁷⁴ It may be noted in this connection that the Hindu Code has done much for the women as discussed already.

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CHAPTER - VI

Ambedkar and Labour Welfare

B. R. Ambedkar held the port-folio of Labour member in the Viceroy's Executive Council from July 20, 1942 to the end of June, 1946. He has been the architect of India's Labour Policy (1942-1946) and the present labour policy has been based on the seminal ideas emanating from Ambedkar's labour policy. The employer-employee relationship in industry is an exclusive matter between the two parties the-employers and the employees. Here, constructive and harmonious relations can develop only if the parties concerned are able to appreciate and respect the legitimate concerns, needs, interest and appreciations of each other. If they can evolve appropriate strategies and approaches with the necessary organizational objective and if they can settle their own differences on the basis of mutual gain in the spirit of give and take, a third party intervention may be unnecessary.

However, the concern of the state for industrial peace and harmony remains. Although industrial relations are basically a matter between employers and their employees, the state becomes involved because of two factors: (1) employer - employee frictions in industry can have far-reaching and extensive consequences on the state of economy, on community well-being and social stability, and (2), industrial strikes can cause immense loss to the parties concerned, in terms of production and wages.

In a developing country like India, seeking economic development with social justice, the state has to remain vigilant. And the basic question is: what is, and what should be the role of labour in the economic development of the nation? It may be noted that the national development of a country depends basically upon more production of goods and services. From the national viewpoint, increased productions generate a healthy cycle of more income, more investment, more employment, and growing national wealth. The plans framed for the country

have fully realized the importance of labour in economic development. As stated in the First Five year Plan:

“ The worker is the principal instrument in the fulfilment of the targets of the plan and in the achievement of economic progress, generally. His co-operations will be an essential factor in creating an economic organisation in the country which will best subserve the need of social justice.”

In this light the plans are to assure to workers certain rights, such as minimum wages social security, training facilities, housing etc. On the other hand the workers are expected to fulfil certain responsibilities such as maintenance of industrial peace, labour management co-operation and higher production. And Ambedkar gave assurance to the working classes in India on his assumptions of the labour portfolio in the Viceroy's Executive Council as follows: “I assure you that I shall not surrender in the battle I will have to wage for protecting and advancing the interests of working class in India in the Executive Council.”¹

Ambedkar adopted a three-fold approach towards dealing with Indian labour problems— (i) Providing safeguards and social security measures to workers. (ii) Giving equal opportunity to workers and employers to participate in formulating labour policy and strengthening the labour movement by introducing compulsory recognition of trade unions in order to enable labour to play an effective role in the economy of the country. (iii) Establishing a machinery for enforcing labour laws and settling disputes. Some major functions performed by the Ministry of Labour headed by Ambedkar from July 1942 to June 1946 may classified as thus: Convening of the Indian Labour Conference and standing Labour Committee ; Enactment of labour laws ; Establishment of the Chief Labour Commissioner's Organisation ; Appointment of the Labour Investigative Committee ; Machinery for fixing minimum wages ; Standing orders in industrial employment ; and Recognition of trade unions. These are now discussed below:²

I. The Indian Labour Conference and the Standing Labour Committee

The Indian Labour Conference is a tripartite body consisting of (1) Representatives of employers, (2) Representative of employees, and (3) Representatives of Government. The Indian Labour Conference was constituted to provide a forum for employers, employees and the

government to come together and to evolve policies for the promotion of economic development. The first conference was held on the 7th August 1942. In his keynote address Ambedkar said that —

“It is for the first time in the history of these Labour Conferences that the representatives of the employers and employees have been brought face to face within the ambit of a joint conference.”³

The conference had three main aims and objects- (i) the promotion of uniformity in labour legislation ; (ii) the laying down of a procedure for the settlement of industrial disputes ; and (iii) the discussion of all matters of all - India importance between employers and employees.

In this light two bodies were constituted - (a) A Plenary Conference, and (b) A Standing Advisory Committee. According to Ambedkar, three principles underlined the constitution of these bodies. First, equality of representation between Government and non-Government representatives; the Second principle of equality of representation as between employers and employees; the Third principle was an assurance of representation. This would ensure some representation of interests other than those represented by the main employers and employees ' Organisation.⁴ Ambedkar stressed the importance of the Indian Labour Conference on the 6-7 , September 1943 and during the Conference he stated :

“The motive for calling such conference is two-fold . For a long time the conviction had gained ground that the industrial problems and problems of labour welfare could not be solved unless the three parties — Government, employers and employees — developed a sense of responsibility towards one another and agreed to work in a spirit of give and take; and that there was not much change in such a sense of mutual respect and responsibility growing up so long as one was not engaged in talking to the other. A plan to bring them together and to let them talk to each other across the table , was felt to be necessary for the realisation of this purpose. The Tripartite Labour Conference....is going to be an institution which will have a permanent place in the economic structure of the country.”⁵

Indian Labour Conference

Ambedkar explained in the Indian Labour Conference held on 27th and 28th November 1945 the utility of such a conference and of it naming so. According to him, it was the name that counted. The role-played by Ambedkar in the pre-Independence days formed the background of the labour welfare on which the labour policy of India was built . Ambedkar's contribution

during the period from 1942 - 1946 was extraordinary. There had been four Tripartite Conferences held under the auspices of the Indian Labour Conference. All the conferences were held under the chairmanship of B. R. Ambedkar. The topics and the discussions following them are summarised below so as to show the basic nature of the problems and actions taken on them.

First Tripartite Conference held at New Delhi on the 7th August 1942

Discussion took place on the following topics :

- (i) Provision of adequate A.R.P. measures including the provision of slit trenches or other shelters and of adequate air-aid services.
- (ii) Propaganda including the provision of wireless sets for the dissemination of concrete news.
- (iii) Maintenance of cost - price grain shops to ensure steady supply of food grains at reasonable prices to workers.
- (iv) Provision of stocks of grain for emergencies and adequate arrangements for cooking.
- (v) Provision of canteens particularly in places where worker's families live. (vi) Facilities for remitting allowance to families of workers.
- (vii) Short breaks during work to enable production to be sustained at a high level.
- (viii) Payment of wages in the event of suspension of work due to air -aid conditions.⁶

Second Tripartite Conference held at New Delhi on 6th and 7th September 1943

Discussion took place on the following topics:

- (i) Involuntary unemployment due to shortage of coal, raw material, etc.
- (ii) Procedure for the conference - adoption of the report.
- (iii) Labour representation in Legislatures, Local bodies and statutory committees.
- (iv) Social security, minimum wages.
- (v) Principles for fixing dearness allowance.
- (vi) Provision for standing orders on the lines of provisions in Chapter V of Bombay Industrial Disputes Act in large industrial concerns.

- (vii) Statement by provincial governments regarding setting up of Tripartite Organisation in the provinces.
- (viii) Model provident fund rules.⁷

Third Tripartite Conference held at New Delhi on 27th and 28th October 1944

Discussion took place on the following topics:

- (i) Compulsory Insurance of liabilities under the Workmen's Compensation Act, 1923.
- (ii) Revision of the Trade Disputes Act, 1929.
- (iii) Organisation of Employment in the transition from war to peace.
- (iv) Participation of States in the Sickness Insurance Scheme for Industrial Labour in India.
- (v) Statutory Machinery for fixation of Minimum Wages.
- (vi) Resolution proposed by the All - India Trade Union Congress and the procedure for amendment of Defence of India Rules affecting labour.
- (vii) Special relations for workers doing heavy work.⁸

Fourth Tripartite Conference held at New Delhi on 27th and 28th November 1945

Discussion took place on the following:

- (i) Unemployment - (a) involuntary unemployment resulting from controls and (b) in the transition period.
- (ii) Reduction of working hours in Factories Act.
- (iii) Minimum wages legislation.
- (iv) Attitude of Employment Exchange during strikes and lockouts.
- (v) Industrial Canteens.
- (vi) Proposed amendment of the Workmen's Compensation Act, 1923.
- (vii) Proposed legislation for compelling employers to frame rules for regulating service rights of employees in industrial concerns.
- (viii) Proposed amendment of the Trade Unions Act, 1926.⁹

Standing Labour Committee

The standing Labour Committee was created to serve as a watch dog of the workers' interest. It was to monitor the implementation of the decisions of the Tripartite Indian Labour Conference, as opined by Ambedkar. There have been eight meetings of the Standing Labour Committee under his Chairmanship. A summary of the matters discussed in these meetings is given below:

First Meeting held on the 30th November and 1st December, 1942

Matters discussed are noted below:

- (i) Wartime Legislation affecting labour.
- (ii) (a) Production - Prevention of Stoppages of work, (b) Hours of work, and (c) Industrial Health Research Board.
- (iii) Earnings of labour -(a) Dearness Allowances, (b) Profit Bonuses.
- (iv) Labour Welfare.
- (v) Industrial Statistics Act-Collection of information regarding wages , hours or work etc.
- (vi) Shortage of small coins and payment of wages.¹⁰

The Second Meeting of Standing Labour Committee held on 25th January

Matters discussed are noted below:

- (i) Food supplies to Industrial Labour.
- (ii) Joint adjudication under Defence of India Rule 81-A
- (iii) Deferred Bonuses.¹¹

The Third Meeting of Standing Labour Committee held on 7th and 8th May 1943

Matters discussed are noted below:

- (i) Report of procedures, Sub-Committee.
- (ii) Fair wage clause in Government contracts.

- (iii) A plan for labour legislation and labour welfare during wartime (a) Social Security (b) Wages and (c) Welfare.
- (iv) (a) Joint Production Committees in undertakings engaged in war work (b) Labour officers in industrial undertakings.
- (v) Working of the Defence of India Rule 81-A.
- (vi) Employment Exchange.
- (vii) Industrial Statistics Act XIX of 1942.¹²

The Fourth Meeting of Standing Labour Committee held on 25th and 26th January, 1944

Matters discussed are noted bellow;

- (i) Statutory wages control.
- (ii) Scheme for the establishment of employment exchanges.
- (iii) Model Provident Fund Rules.
- (iv) Canteen for workers.
- (v) Consideration of the report of the Committee on dearness allowances/
- (vi) Absenteeism.
- (vii) Maintenance of records of service of industrial workers.
- (viii) Amendment of Factories Act, Consequent upon the change in the Indian Standard Time.¹³

Fifth Meeting held on 27th June 1944

Matters discussed are noted bellow:

- (i) The Indian Trade Union (Amendment) Bill, 1943.
- (ii) Draft Rules under the Industrial Statistics Act, 1942 for collection of statistics of trade dispute.
- (iii) Monetary compensation to workers who have been refused leave.¹⁴

The Sixth Meeting of the Standing Labour Committee held on 17th March 1945

Matters discussed are noted below:

- (i) Report on health insurance for industrial workers.

- (ii) Changes in the constitution and functions of the tripartite Organisation.¹⁵

The Seventh Meeting of the Standing Labour Committee held on 24th August 1945

Matters discussed are noted below:

- (i) Report of sub-committee on the constitution of the tripartite organisation.
- (ii) Industrial housing and the responsibility of the employer in connection therewith.
- (iii) Draft rules under the Factories (Amendment) Act, 1945 relating to holidays with pay.
- (iv) Amendment of the workmen Compensation Act. (VIII of 1923). Definition of “workmen” (Wage level).¹⁶

The Eighth Meeting of the Standing Labor Committee held on 15th & 16th March 1946

Matters discussed are noted below:

- (i) Amendment of the Trade Disputes Act (Improvement) on Government machinery for conciliation and adjudication.
- (ii) Review of employment in industry and extent to which unemployment is likely to occur.
- (iii) Possibilities of Welfare Trust Funds for industrial employment.¹⁷

II. Labour Laws (1942-1946)

B. R. Ambedkar played a crucial role in passing laws so as to provide social security in the promotion of the welfare of the workers. He strengthened the process of worker’s participation by moulding the Industrial relations Policy and by implementing the decision of the Indian Labour Conferences. To this end he matched various labour laws during the period from 1942 to 1946. Such laws are listed below:

1942

1. The Workmen’s Compensation (Amendment) Act, 1942 (I of 1942).
2. The Indian Boilers (Amendment) Act, 1942(V of 1942).

3. **The Cotton Ginning and Pressing Factories (Amendment) Act, 1942 (IX of 1942).**
4. **The weekly Holidays Act, 1942 (XVIII of 1942)**
5. **The Industrial Statistics Act, 1942 (XIX of 1942)**
6. **The Repealing and Amending Act, 1942 (XIX of 1942) amending the Indian Trade Unions Act, 1926.**
7. **The Coal Mines Safety (Showing) Amendment Ordinance, 1942 (XXV of 1942).**
8. **The Railways (Hours of Employment) Ordinance, 1942 (XIV of 1942).¹⁸**

1943

- 1. The Indian Boilers (Amendment) Act, 1943 (XVII of 1943).**
2. **The Mines Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 1943 (XIVII of 1943).**
3. **The Injuries Compensation Insurance Act, 1943 (XXIII of 1943).**
4. **The Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act, 1943.**
5. **The Factories (Control of Dismantling) Ordinance, 1943 (XXXI of 1943).¹⁹**

1944

1. **Coal Mines Safety (Stowing) Amendment Act, 1944 (III of 1944).**
2. **Factories (Amendment) Act, 1944 (XIV of 1944).**
3. **Coal Mines Labour Welfare Fund Organisation, 1944 (VII of 1944).**
4. **Coal Mines Labour Welfare Fund (Amendment), 1944 (XXVII of 1944).²⁰**

1945

- 1. Factories (Amendment) Act, 1945 (III of 1945).**

2. Mines Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 1945(X of 1945).
3. Mines (Amendment) Ordinance, 1945 (XVII of 1945).²¹

1946

1. Workmen's Compensation (Amendment) Act, 1946 (I of 1946).
2. Indian Mines (Amendment) Act, 1946 (II of 1946).
3. Factories (Amendment) Act, 1946(X of 1946).
4. Industrial Employment (Standing orders) Act, 1946 (XX of 1946).
5. Mica Mines Labour Welfare Fund Act, 1946 (XXII of 1946).²²

III. The Chief Labour Commissioner's Organisation Setup

To improve the welfare of the workers Central Machinery for industrial relations was found necessary. In 1911 the Royal Commission on Labour suggested such machinery. To this end three factors were important, namely (i) Mobilizing Public opinion ; (ii) Enactment of legislation; and (iii) Provision for implementing machinery. It may be noted that Royal Commission on Labour in India had advocated the appointment of a Labour Commission under each of the then Provincial and Central Government. The idea was that a great majority of questions relating to labour administration could be dealt with by each government through a single office. Besides, the commission had recommended that the Central Labour Commissioner should have status like that of the then Education Commissioner to the Government of India. In pursuance of the recommendation , the Government of India appointed on the 9th April, 1945 a Chief Labour Commissioner with the field staff, charged with the duty of Prevention and settlement of industrial disputes, enforcement of labour laws and promotion of labour welfare in the industries and undertakings controlled by the Central Government, the then Federal Railways, and in Mines, Oil Fields and major Ports. The organisation consisted of the following:

1. A Chief Labour Commissioner (Central) with headquarters at New Delhi.

2. Three Regional Labour Commissioner (Central) with headquarters at Bombay, Calcutta and Lahore.
3. A Deputy Labour Commissioner , at New Delhi.
4. Nine Conciliation Officers and 23 Labour Inspectors (Central) located at various centres throughout India.
5. One Central Inspector of Industrial Concerns.

The functions and powers of the new organisation were as follows:

Industrial Relations and Conciliations

These include assistance in the formation and maintenance of voluntary machinery in industrial establishments for the prevention and settlement of trade disputes and maintenance of a continuous contact with the employers and workers.

Labour Welfare

This excluded the Coal mines for which there existed a separate organisation under the Coal Mines Welfare Commissioner. However, this included the examination of welfare measures and advice to employer and governments. The Central Inspector of Industrial Canteens had to inspect and advise on the setting up of Canteens in undertakings of the Central Government.

Implementation of Labour Laws

Maintenance of information regarding wage rates and conditions of work

The Chief Labour Commissioner (Central), the Regional Labour Commissioner (Central) and the Conciliation Officers (Central) had been vested with statutory powers of conciliation under section 81-A of the Trade Dispute Act, 1929. The Chief and the Regional Labour Commissioners (Central) were also appointed supervisors of railway labours under the Indian Railways Act, 1890, and Inspectors under the payment of Wages Act, 1936. They were also authorised to act under the Employment of Children Act 1938 for Federal Railways and major Ports. The Labour Welfare Adviser and the Assistant Labour Welfare Adviser were designated Concilia-

tion Officers (Central) to work under the Regional Labour Commissioner (Central).

It may be noted that the relationship of the Industrial Relations Machinery had been tagged to the administrative machinery of departments and establishments. Thus labour officers or Labour Welfare Officers, Civilian Labour Officers and the like continued to function under the respective establishments or administration. The Chief Labour Commissioner (Central) and his officers had to maintain close liaison with the administrative machinery of various departments and establishments. The Chief Labour Commissioner (Central) Organisation became instrumental in implementing labour policies. At times the functioning of the Organisation helped the promotion of congenial atmosphere for the growth of Trade Unions. The organisation also helped the employers and the unions in creating awareness in providing statutory welfare measures for the workers and maintaining peace in industry. Moreover, it succeeded in extending the fruits of labour legislation to unorganised sector, where workers had exploited on a large scale.²³

IV The Labour Investigating Committee

Three important committees had been constituted before and after Independence to enquire into the conditions of workers in India and to give suggestions to Government so as to enable it to formulate labour policies. These committees were known as (1) the Royal Labour Commission, (2) the Labour Investigative Committee and (3) the National Commission on Labour. The first two committees had been formed in the pre-partition days. The Royal Commission on Labour was based upon restricted samples. It was thus felt necessary to conduct a detail study covering all industries for providing social security measures to the workers. The government resolutions constituted the Labour Investigative Committee No. L. 4012 dated 12th February 1944. As a result the Governor-general in Council appointed a Committee of Inquiry to be known as Labour Investigating Committee.²⁴ The Committee consisted of (1) M. D.V. Rege, I.C.S., Chairman, (2) Mr. S. R. Deshpande, M. B. E., (3) Dr. Ahmed Mukhtar and (4) Mr. B. P. Adarkar. The terms of reference were as follows:

- (a) To collect data relating inter-alia to wages and earnings, employment housing and social

conditions of labour and in particular of industrial labour in India; and (b) To investigate and report inter-alia on the following matters: (i) the risks which bring about insecurity; (ii) the need of labour, by various classes to meet such risks; (iii) the methods most suitable for meeting such risks and (iv) Housing and factory conditions.

The Labour Investigation Committee selected the following industries for its comprehensive study:

A. Mining : 1. Coal, 2. Manganese, 3. Gold, 4. Mica, 5. Iron ore, 6. Slate.

B. Plantation: 7. Tea, 8. Coffee, 9. Rubber.

C. Factory Industries: 10. Cotton, 11. Jute, 12. Silk, 13. Woolen, 14. Mineral Oil, 15. Dockyard, 16. Engineering & Mineral and Metals, 17. Cement 18. Matches, 19. Paper, 20. Carpet Weaving, 21. Coil Matting, 22. Tanneries and Leather Goods Manufacture 23. Potter, 24. Printing Presses, 25. Glass, 26. Chemical and Pharmaceutical, 27. Shellac, 28. Bidi making, Liquor & Cigarettes, 29. Mica splitting, 30. Sugar, 31. Cotton ginning & boiling, 32. Rice Mills.

D. Transport: 33. Transport Services (Tramway & Buses), 34. Non-Gazette Rly. Staff.

E. Other type of Labour : 35. Port Labour, 36. Municipal Labour, 37. Central P. W. D., 38. Rickshaw pullers.²⁵

The committee published its report on the 5th March 1945. The recommendation of Labour Investigative committee subsequently became the basis for the enactment of social security legislation for workers in India.

V. Machinery for Fixing Minimum Wages

The wages had been classified into three categories: (a) Living Wages (b) Fair Wages and (c) Minimum Wages.

The living wage had been defined as the wage, which provided for maintaining maximum

efficiency of the workers and enabled him to live with the members of the family a dignified life as a citizen of the country. It is interesting to note that Dr. B.R. Ambedkar as the chief architect of the Indian Constitution incorporated in Article 43 this 'Living wage' for workers as one of the Directive Principles of State Policy. Article 43 runs thus:

“The State shall endeavor to secure, by suitable legislation or economic organisation or in any other way, to all workers, agricultural, industrial or otherwise, work, a living wages conditions of work ensuring a decent standard of life and full enjoyment of leisure, social and cultural opportunities and, in particular, the state shall endeavour to promote cottage industries on an individual or co-operative basis in rural areas.”

The term 'Fair Wage' had been defined as a wage which was determined on the basis of productivity, efficiency of workers and capacity of the industry to pay. The term 'Minimum Wage' had been defined as the wage, which was sufficient for providing the bare necessities of man. Incidentally the Minimum wages Act was passed in 1948 - it fulfilled the requirements of 'legislation' as stated in Article 43 of the Constitution. A distinction may be drawn between the three expressions as defined above. A 'Fair Wage' is the demand and the destination. Its upper limit is the 'living wage' while the lower limit, the 'minimum wage'. The only relevant consideration for fixing the minimum wages is the minimum requirements of the worker concerned.²⁶

VI. Standing Orders in Industrial Establishment

The nature of the relationship between the employer and worker is a type of contract for employment. It is governed by two factors. First, the fairness of the contracts depends upon its clear provision binding the parties to the contract. Second it is depended on the extent of equality of states between the parties. Of the two parties one is stronger than other. In fact the employer is powerful and he can exploit the weaker worker. In this context the government as a third party has to intervene. To bring about fair play between the parties, the concept of standing order comes in, in order to determine the terms and conditions for services between parties.

In this context the Labour Investigating Committees' main Report of 1946 made in pursuance of observations in Chapter V-1: Standing orders Rules and Agreements, (Page 113 & 115) deserves mention:

“ An industrial worker has the right to know the terms and conditions under which he is employed and rules of discipline which he is expected to follow. Broadly speaking in Indian industry, the rules of service are not definitely set out and like all unwritten laws, where they exist, they have been very elastic, to suit the convenience of employers...Neither worker's organisations nor the Government are generally consulted before these orders are drawn up and more often than not, they have given the employers the upper hand in respect of all disputable points.”

The first Legislative enactment in India which incidentally sought to regulate the making of Standing Orders was the Bombay Industrial Disputes Act, 1938...Workers organisations suggested that legislative provision should be made for the preparation and approval of standing orders by government authority in consultation with workers' organisations; and that provision should also be made for appeals to some higher authority in the event of a dispute. A proposal for provision being made, requiring every factory employing 250 or more workers to have a set of standing orders, somewhat on the same lines (Chapter - V of the Bombay Industrial Dispute Act), was discussed at the Fifth Labour conference (September 1943). The memorandum for discussion set out that the essential thing was to define the working conditions on a clearly recognised contractual basis and to have that basis approved the Commissioner of Labour or some such authority. A contract in the form of standing orders was also considered necessary before the penalty provided for under section I of the Payment of Wages Act, could be enforced for striking without notice. The members were generally in favour of Standing orders being given statutory rather than contractual force, contravention being punishable equally with other offences under the Factories Act. It was decided to have a statutory authority to deal with the disagreement of employers with the labour Commissioner on dispute arising out of standing order.

Standing Order No.22 for Cotton Mills in Bombay, as settled by industrial courts, laid down a detail procedure in connection with the suspension and dismissal of workers found guilty of misconduct. It might have been worthwhile to adopt a similar provision in the Standing orders for other industries. The Central Trade Dispute Act. 1929, unlike the Bombay Industrial Dispute Act 1938, made no mention of standing orders while these formed an integral part of the Bombay Act. The Sixth Labour Conference in October 1944 discussed the question whether

provision should be made under the Trade Dispute Act through separate legislation for statutory authority in respect of Standing order. As a result the Government of India proposed to introduce a separate Bill entitled the Industrial Employment (Standing orders) Act, 1946. The proposed Bill would remove a long-standing lacuna in labour legislation in India.²⁷

On the 8th April 1946 the Government of India introduced in the Legislative Assembly a Bill providing for the framing of 'Standing Orders' defining conditions of employment in all industrial establishments employing one hundred and more workers. And the Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Act 1946 (XX of 1946) came into force on the 23rd April 1946. It applied to a wide range of industrial enterprises, including factories, railways, mills, quarries, oil fields, plantations, workshops, inland steamer vessels, docks, harbours and of jetties, and tramways or motor omnibus services and it related to industries having one hundred and more workers on any day of the 12th months preceding 23 April 1946.²⁸

Under the 1946 Act every employer was required to submit to the Certifying Officer (Labour Commissioner) within six months of the application of the Act, five copies of the draft standing orders which he proposed to adopt for his establishment, along with the prescribed particulars regarding the workmen employed, and the name of the trade Union to which they belong. These draft orders were required to provide for certain matters laid down in the schedule appended to the Act. The Certifying Officers certified these orders after taking into consideration objections, if any, from the employers. Persons aggrieved by the decisions of the Certifying Officer can prefer an appeal for failure to submit contravention thereof; an employer was punishable with fine.²⁹

VII. Recognition of Trade Unions

The first case of collective representation of the claims of workers was recorded in 1884 by the Labour leader, Mr. Lokhanday. He organised a conference of Factory workers to draw up a memorandum to the Factory Commission. The earliest trade Union in the country was the Bombay Millhands' Association formed in 1890. Trade Unions had been growing both in number and volumes since 1918. However, they did not enjoy the legal status and the workers' right

to organise and strike. The decisions of the Madras High Court in 1920 in the famous case of the Buckingham Mill granting an injunction restraining the Madras Union officials from influencing labourers to break their contract with the employers by striking in order to obtain increased wages focussed public attention on the necessity of giving legal recognition in the Workers' rights to organise and strike in defence of the legitimate rights.³⁰

In 1921 the government of India accepted a Resolution of the Legislative Assembly to take steps to introduce such legislation as might be necessary for the registration and protection of Trade Union. The government of India consulted the Provincial governments and drew up a Bill for the registration of Trade Union and introduced it in the Legislative Assembly on 31st August 1925. The Indian Trade Union Act was passed in 1926(XVI of 1926) and it came into force on the 1st of June 1927. The Act defines the legal provision of trade unions and provides for registration.³¹

Registered Trade Unions in India

The legal status of trade unions in India has not been greatly advanced since the passing of the Act in 1926. There were 29 registered trade unions in 1927-28 with a total membership of 1,00,619. The Royal commission on Labour deprecated obligatory recognition, but the position regarding voluntary recognition did not improve as expected.³²

Freedom of Association

The Labour Investigation Committee in 1945 in its (page 372) conclusion on Freedom of Association observed:

“This brings us to what we consider to be one of the fundamental principles, namely freedom of association. According to the law of the land, there is perfect freedom of association and as a matter of fact, the I.L.O. convention on the subject was ratified by the Government of India in the year 1923. Actually, however, from such evidence as we were able to obtain during the course of our enquirer, we found that, barring a few honourable exceptions such as municipal and port trust administrations and a few individual employers, freedom of association exists only in name. And even where they are, the relation between the two is far from cordial. Moreover, excepting a few enlightened employers, most others in country are inclined to look upon trade unions as no better than necessary evils. This is one of the reasons why during the recent years, whenever agreement had to

be brought about between employers and employees, these were seldom the result of collective bargaining but almost invariably of adjudications of awards.³³

In this circumstances the Labour member Ambedkar's advice to labour leaders on 11th May, 1943 at Bombay, and 17th September 1943 at New Delhi, at a function arranged by the Indian Federation of Labour, is relevant in terms of promoting the interest of workers:

“ The utter hollowness and the superficiality of the present labour movement in India was deplored by him . He advised the labour leaders present to sink their differences and present a united front against capitalism. He referred to the growth of the labour movement in Britain and traced how it had captured the reigns of Government twice, wresting power from the hands of the ever dominant Tories. It was an example for the Indian labour movement to emulate. He urged the need for formation of a United Labour Party in this country, on the model of the British Labour Party. In conclusion Ambedkar said that if democracy in England had failed it was because it was in the hands of the Tories. It was, therefore, important in whose hands Swaraj would be. He exhorted the labour leaders of India to see that when Swaraj came it would be in the hands of Indian Labour.”³⁴

In September 1943, Ambedkar urged in a speech before the study circle of the Indian Federation of Labour at Delhi the organisation of a Labour Party in India with the declared objective of taking charge of the government. He pointed out two things. The first thing was to discard mere establishment of trade unions as the final aim and object of the labour in India. It must be declared that its aim was to put the labour in charge of the government. To this end a Labour Party was to be organised. The second thing for labour in India was to realise that without knowledge there could be no power.³⁵

Ambedkar endeavoured to amend the Indian Trade Union Act to provide for compulsory recognition of a trade union by an employer. The 9th November 1943 issue of the Free Press Journal New Delhi reported :

“It is felt that the time has now come when the compulsory recognition of trade unions must be provided for by legislation of trade unions . With all its limitations, recognition by statute will at least clarify the position and give organised and well conducted trade unions the status they deserve. It may achieve much more . The Bill introduced by Dr. Ambedkar in the Central Assembly provides for the compulsory recognition of trade unions under certain conditions and defines what recognition would imply . Union formed on a communal or sectarian basis would not be eligible for recognition.”³⁶

The Government of India introduced the Indian Trade Unions (Amendment Bill) in the

Central Legislative on 14th February 1946. The Indian Trade Union Act 1946 provides for obligatory recognition of a representative trade union. It is for the Labour court to decide if a trade union is represented or not. The Bill was referred to a Select Committee, which submitted its report on the 28th February 1947. The Bill was passed on the 19th November 1947 (XL.V of 1947).³⁷

VIII. Untouchability as a Social Theory for Labour Exploitation

B. R. Ambedkar has formulated a social theory of exploitation. This may be found in the following works of his : (a) *Castes in India : Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development ; Indian Antiquity* , vol. II. VI. 1977, pp. 81-95; (b) *Annihilation of Castes in India* ; (c) *Who were the Shudras and Untouchables* (d) *What Gandhi and Congress Have Done to the Untouchables?* (e) *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches*, Vol.1 to 7, (various unpublished papers and manuscripts), Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, Bombay, 1989-90.

To comprehend fully and appreciate the relevants of Ambedkar's economic development strategies prescribed for Scheduled castes and Scheduled Tribes, it is necessary to have a knowledge of his conception of the social theory of labour exploitation. Here the focus is not on Ambedkar's analysis of the origin and growth of the Untouchables and *Shudras*, instead the emphasis is mainly on his analysis of Brahminisation (or Sanskritisation) leading to : (1) imposition of social, religious and cultural disabilities on 'Dalits' and '*Shudra*'; and (2) their impact on the economic deprivation and economic exploitation of the labour belonging to the Dalit and *Shudras* groups. In fact , B. R. Ambedkar was one among the important forerunners, who have analysed the impact of social and religious discriminations and segregation on economic well-being of the people.³⁸

Ambedkar has clearly brought out that : (a) the Hindu social order being hierarchical had formulated several socio-economic and legal rules which have created a disproportionate preaching system. Accordingly, the labour belonging to Dalit and *Shudra* groups have tended to receive share whereas the shares of people belonging to higher Hindu *varnas* had proportionately increased in relation to their social placement; and (b) the legal punishments and penal fees imposed on *Shudras* and Dalits were most inhuman and cruel as well as exorbitantly high; this

legal system has devised methods like confiscation of property; penal fee and physical punishments for various types of social, cultural, criminal and property- related crimes and robberies committed by the *Shudras* and Dalits. Ambedkar rightly considered these factors as highly discriminatory, and reactionary in nature, which would create nothing more than destitutes and impoverished rural population. Ambedkar was one among a few Indian leaders who paid a serious attention to the analysis of the problems of widespread poverty and underemployment as well as unemployment.

Moreover, there was a difference in the treatment of the *Shudras* and Dalits. Thus the *Shudras* did not suffer from the total and complete socio- economic exploitation, to which the Untouchables were subjected to by the people of the higher castes . This may be illustrated as follows . The *Shudras* were tenants, agricultural labourers, skilled and semi-skilled craftsmen, while the Dalits were totally manual labourers attached to specific family of the caste Hindus. In other words , the Dalits were subjected to the bonded labour system. The *Manusmiriti* excluded both the *Shudras* and the Dalits from owning land and right to take up arms in exigencies . In this context both the *Shudras* and Dalits had been reduced to the status of ‘wage labour’ and ‘bonded labour’ respectively. To carry the point home B. R. Ambedkar provided a comparative analysis of Western slaves as in ancient Rome and the Indian Untouchables . Ambedkar brought out the differences between Roman slaves and Indian Untouchables. He argued that the western ancient slavery possessed some degree of freedom , liberty and had the opportunity to become free citizens. Unfortunately the Untouchables or the Dalits did not have the right of the Roman slaves.

Ambedkar elaborated the economic deprivation of Dalit labour in agriculture. According to him, a living by agriculture was not generally open to the Untouchables. There were various reasons for this. First, purchase of land was beyond their means. Second, even if an Untouchable had the money to purchase the land , he had no opportunity to do so. Such an act of daring on the part of an Untouchable (Dalit) was not only frowned upon but might easily invite punishment. In some parts of the country they were disabled by law like the land Alienation Act in Punjab. The wages paid to the Untouchables were paid either in cash or in corn. In U.P. the corn given to the

Untouchables as their wages was called *Gobarah* meaning privy corn or corn contained in the dung of an animal. Because of the seasonality of agricultural operations, the Scheduled caste labours would be subject to seasonal unemployment. This might be true of other sections of rural labours. But the incidence of seasonal employment of Dalit labour was very high, since they did not possess any other alternative means of earning a living.

The process of Sanskritization kept out the scheduled castes population from all avenues to high pay and high status based job. Moreover, it imposed various social restrictions upon the consumption pattern of the Scheduled Castes, resulting in the low materialistic culture of these people. This was illustrated by Ambedkar from the experience of a Scheduled Caste community named Balais. For example they were not allowed to wear gold-lace bordered puggarees, they had to play music before the processions and during the marriages of caste Hindus, the Balais women were not allowed to wear fancy gown or Jackets and the like. Such restrictions also applied to many other sections of Dalit labours.

In the context of agricultural labour, Ambedkar's idea of socialism was an attack on poverty. He emphasised two concepts—(1) 'Concept of State Socialism' and (2) 'Concept of Constitutional Law and Parliamentary Democracy'. He advocated state ownership of agricultural land with a democratic 'collectivised method of cultivation'. 'Consolidation of holding' and 'Tenancy legislation' would not benefit landless labourers, including the servile classes, the *Shudras* and Untouchables. It was only the Collective Farm that could help them, provided that agriculture became a "State - Industry".³⁹

According to Ambedkar, caste - consciousness hampered all economic growth. It created conditions which were harmful for collective efforts in agriculture and other activities. Rural development, in the presence of caste relations, turned to be against the principles of socialism. Therefore, the great feudal estates based on casteism had to be broken up and the land be distributed among the people who tilled it and who could collectively produce things for the rapid progress of both cities and villages.⁴⁰

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CHAPTER - VII

Ambedkar and the Education of the Untouchables.

Ambedkar was born in an Untouchable Mahar family of Maharashtra. At that time the Untouchables were segregated discriminated against on the basis of caste in every aspect of Indian society i.e. socio-economic and political. The advent of the British in India opened a new era in the history of the Dalits. During the British regime, various educational institutions (Government and aided) began to admit Untouchable students in schools and colleges. Moreover, some Indian reformers like Mahatma Jyotiba Phuley, Vithal Ramji Shinde, and princes like Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj, Sayajirao Gaikwad and others, had also worked in this direction.¹

Ambedkar, after completing his education, started to work for his people. First, in 1919, he gave evidence before the Southborough Committee to constitute separate electorates for the Untouchable.² He started a weekly paper *Mooknayak* (Leader of the dumb) on 31st January 1920, to mobilise the Untouchables for the struggle.³ In 1924, he established the *Bahishkrit Hitkarini Sabha*. The aim of this *Sabha* was to prepare the Untouchables for the future struggle. Through this *Sabha* Ambedkar gave a clarion call to his people to 'educate, agitate and organise.'⁴

Apart from his other measures, Ambedkar began to take positive steps in the field of education in order to spread education among the Untouchables. At first, he started two hostels for Backward Class students at Solapur and Belgaum, in 1925. He established the Depressed Classes Education Society with a view to educate his people. He also appealed to the Bombay Government to help this Society to establish hostels, in which poor students could be accommodated. In response, the Governor of Bombay declared that he would sanction a scheme for five hostels for the benefit of secondary school students of the Depressed Classes.⁵

It was difficult for the Depressed Classes Education Society to function, due to lack of funds and the negative attitude of upper caste people. In order to solve these problems B. R. Ambedkar met several persons and contacted several charitable institutions with a view to gather help from them.⁶ In 1936, Babasaheb Ambedkar established the Independent Labour Party. The

party contested the Provincial elections of 1937, and explained its educational policy in its election manifesto. It was in favour of free and compulsory education. It would strive to remove illiteracy and stress the need of technical education, it also agreed to give scholarship to deserving candidates of the Backward Community for higher studies abroad. It declared its intention to establish regional Universities.⁷ Moreover, he was able to reserve certain seats for technical education of the Depressed Class students in London.⁸

The Peoples' Education Society

To propagate higher education among the Dalits, Ambedkar established the Peoples' Education Society on 8th July 1945. Its objective was explained thus : "The people's Education Society's objective is not merely to give education in such a manner as to promote intellectual, moral and social democracy. This is what modern India needs and this is what all 'well-wishers' of India must promote."⁹

According to Ambedkar education was only effective means to uplift the down-trodden. He believed that it was only through education that the down-trodden would be awakened for their struggle to get their rights. He held, "My final word of advice is 'Educate, Agitate and Organise, have faith in yourselves. With justice on our side, I do not see how we can loss our battle. It is a battle for freedom. It is a battle for the reclamation of the human personality."¹⁰ The motto of the Peoples' Education Society is 'knowledge and compassion' which is reminiscent of Buddhist principles of *prajna* and *karuna*. The Society had made good progress in this direction. At present the Society runs a number of colleges affiliated to various universities and institutions, high schools and hostels. They are as follows:¹¹

(i) The Name of the Colleges

1. Siddharth College of Arts, Science and Commerce, Bombay, Bombay	2. Siddharth College of Commerce and Economics
3. Siddharth College of Law , Bombay Bombay.	4. Dr. Ambedkar College of Commerce, Wadala,
5. Dr. Ambedkar College of Law, Wadala, . Bombay	6. Siddharth College Commerc of Wadala, Bombay.
7. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar College of Arts, Science, Commerce, Mahad Dist. Rigad.	8. P.E. Society Jr. College of Education, New Bombay
9. Milind College of Arts, Aurangabad.	10. Milind College of Science, Aurangabad
11. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar College of Arts & Commerce, Aurangabad.	12. Dr. Ambedkar College of Law, Aurangabad.

ii) Other Colleges

1 Siddharth Institute of Industry and Administration, Bombay	2. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Memorial Research Centre, Rajgriha, Bombay.
3. P.E. Society's Marathi Medium High School, New Bombay.	4. P.E. Society's English Medium Central School, New Bombay.
5. Marathi Medium Primary School, New Bombay	6. Milind Multipurpose High School, Aurangabad.
7. P.E. Society's English Medium School, Aurangabad.	8. Matoshri Ramabai Ambedkar High Aurangabad.
9. Goutam Vidyalaya, Pandharpur.	10. Ngsen Vidyalaya, Nanded.

(iii) Hostels and Ashrams

1. Siddharth Vihar Hostel, Wadala, Bombay	2. Subhedar Sawadkar, Vidyarthi Ashrama, Mahad Dist. Raigad.
3. Matoshri Ramabai Ambedkar Vidyarthi Ashrama, Dapoli, Dist. Raigad.	4. Milind College of Arts and Science Girls' Hostel, Aurangabad.
5. Milind College of Arts Boy's Hostel, Aurangabad	6. Milind College of Science Boy's Hostel, Aurangabad.
7. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar College of Commerce & Arts Boy's Hostel, Aurangabad.	8. Sant Gadge Maharaj Chokhamela Vastigraha, Pandharpur.

Commemorative Projects

The Peoples' Education Society started the following projects.¹²

(i) Projects at Bombay :

- | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. A Multipurpose Auditorium | 2. A Central Research Library. |
| 3. A Stadium and a Pavilion. | 4. A Buddhist Cultural Centre. |

(ii) Projects at Aurangabad :

- | | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| 1. Buddha Mahavihar with Research library. | 2. Stadium and Swimming Pool. |
| 3. Working Women's Hostel | 4. Non- Resident School for Girls. |

(iii) Projects at Bangalore :

1. Buddhist Institute for study of Buddhism and comparative study of all religions.
2. A spacious Multipurpose Hall
3. A Residential School.

(iv) Projects at Mahad :

1. Buddhist Cultural Centre.
2. A polytechnic Institute.

(v) Projects at Dapoli :

1. Jr.College of Education
2. Girls' High School and a Hostel.
3. Development of Present Boys' Hostel.

(vi) Projects at New Bombay :

1. A Multipurpose School.

The Society also planned to start I.A.S., I.P.S., I.F.S., coaching centres, vocational courses in different disciplines. In fact, the Society played an important part for spreading higher education among the Dalits. The Colleges run by the Society provided various facilities to the students, namely monthly scholarships, cheap accomodation and attention to their problems. Students also after completion of their education engaged themselves in villages and cities in various capacities. And the credit goes leargely to the graduates of the Society for spreading Ambedkarism among the Dalits keeping the movement alive. In short the survey of the educational conditions of the Dalits from 1920 to this day shows that there were a few matriculates and few are graduates among the Dalits in 1920 when Ambedkar started his public career. Today the position is different. The Dalits have made significant progress in this direction.

Ambedkar's Concern for Dalit Education.¹³

Ambedkar felt unhappy at the treatment of the Depressed Classes by the Higher Castes of the society, who monopolised and wielded all the power and positions. The situation made him

a life-long rebel to defend their human rights. The backwardness of the Indian people , particularly of the lower strata of the society had been due to two factors — (1) material negligence and (2) indifference to knowledge. Ambedkar analysed the progress of different classes of society and found that the Backward Classes were second in order of population , but fourth in the order of education , whether primary, secondary or College education. As a result, his efforts were directed towards the removal of the social disabilities. And this meant the opening up of avenues of educational advancement and provisions of better opportunities for economic progress. Earlier he felt that the lot of the downtrodden could not be bettered without a share in political power. To him education was not merely a means of livelihood , but as powerful weapon to liberate the Dalits from ignorance and to strengthen their fight against injustice and humiliation . That is why he raised the slogan ‘Educate, Agitate and Organise.’ He organised several educational institutions as noted above “ to raise the level of consciousness of the serf-like people “ and also started journals for Dalits so as to wage a better battle for their human rights.

Ambedkar was unhappy to see the slow progress of education of the Dalits in India during the British rule, and the position did not improve keeping pace with the increase of population. The level of literacy on which the quality of life depended much posed an alarming situation across the country and across the various social classes. For the poor Dalits it became a dream. The overall planned investment in educational and health sector had been far from the adequate. It may be noted in this connection that Ambedkar as the chief architect of the Constitution provided in article 45 of the constitution of India for free and compulsory education within a period of ten years from the commencement of the Constitution for all children up to the age of 14 years. But the parties in the power did not and could not implement this Directive Principle of state policy during the twentieth century. It is a paradox that the primary education meant for the poorer and weaker sections of the society has been neglected because of the lack of funds, while higher education including technology has been highly subsidised. Dr. Amartya Sen the Nobel Laureate economist has brought to light the neglected aspect of primary education in India . He has pointed out that China has given more attention than India to education at primary stage compared with that at the higher stage. And this is unfortunate, for the poor have been deprived

of education whereas the rich have been pampered . Because of this policy of the ruling class, India has 54% of the illiterates of the world .

Ambedkar realised that 'education of the masses is a matter of great cost.' Hence, he wanted to ensure that the Depressed Classes did not find themselves in a helpless condition and the authorities charged with the responsibility of such an important subject like education should be up and doing in the matter. Further he stressed that education ought to be within the reach of every one. It ought to be cheapened in all possible ways and to the greatest extent possible. In this context Justice V.R.Krishna Iyer's words are worthquoting :

"Excellence in education is a non-negotiable value, true. Who can deny that, given opportunity, many a flower now wasting its sweetness in the desert air, will not blossom and brighten the garden ? And they are the ignored Harijan/Girijan talent. On the other hand, demonstrably sub-standard candidates from among moneyed classes are pampered by allowing them to join private colleges, medical, engineering and others by payment of capitation fee although in the competitive market they have no chance, judging by the marks. Our meritorious lobby has not yet shouted against this monetary infection of educational health." ¹⁴

In regard to higher education Ambedkar was of opinion that "it is the duty of a modern university to provide facility for the highest education to Backward Communities." It follows from this as a necessary corollary that "the Backward Communities should have some control in the university affairs." He looked upon the university "primarily as a machinery, whereby educational facilities are provided to all those who are intellectually capable of using those facilities to the best advantage, but who cannot avail themselves of those facilities for want of funds or for other handicaps in life." He strongly recommended the nomination of members of Backward Communities on the university senates which functioned like Legislative Bodies and were supposed to put forth the needs of the Backward Communities and to suggest the facilities that were necessary for meeting them.

Ambedkar considered the acquisition of knowledge to be *sine qua non* for the success of democratic experience . He said that when three - fourths of the population was drenched in ignorance and did not know its rights and responsibilities there could be no hope for self - government and added: " If we do not get self-government notwithstanding the fact that three - fourths of the population is drenched in ignorance, our representative system will be a slam, and

there would be a rule of wealth against poverty, of power against weakness.” Purporting to give a solution to the problem, he said , “If we desire to have provincial autonomy we must ensure two things. One thing is that every access must be given to every grade of modern education to the communities which are educationally backward, in order that they may realise their rights and liabilities of citizenship, and secondly, in order that every access may be given to the communities, it is absolutely necessary, under the present circumstances, that special representation should be provided for them.” No need to overemphasise that his words have great relevance even in the present day.

Therefore, if we are sincere to provide commensurate education to the weaker sections and thereby bringing them at par with the others, our society , particularly the academic world needs to look at the problem in a more humanistic way. A new approach seems necessary; keeping them out of the higher education on mere alibis like ‘quality’ or ‘merit’ would not do so.

Ambedkar’s Basic Educational Philosophy : Various Facets

Ambedkar considered as one of the “wretched of the earth”¹⁵ and “the lowliest and the lost”¹⁶ of the Indian soil shot into the political horizon by dint of his genius and prodigious diligence.¹⁷ He was not only a political emancipator, economic historian and constitutionalist, but a great savant and educationalist too. Secondly , the spectrum of his ideas and action has not only influenced the process of emancipation of Scheduled Castes but many others also . We are to make an endeavour to delineate his ideas in respect of education so as to come to his basic philosophy of education. Such an evaluation is to be effected in relation to the biographical and social context of his life.

Ambedkar was born in 1891 in a Mahar family of Central India and his social rank was very low. His father, a subedar Major, was burdened with fourteen children and ambedkar happened to be the last one. His father had not enough financial means to support his studies . Ambedkar reached his high school studies in Parel, Bomaby. He used to take his afternoon meals in the school and had no home support to buy books of interest and choice . He had to help

himself with the reading in public among the Dalits. This led, in later years, to the formation of Peoples' Education Society in Bombay. The impact of his mentor Jotiba Phooley is manifest in the inauguration of Siddarth College on 20th June 1946. And the naming of the College has an interesting history of its own. A lone Mahar boy like Ambedkar passed his Matriculation Examination in 1907 and the event became a matter of pride and celebration for the family and friends. On this occasion one of his teachers K. A. Keluskar presented him with a copy of Buddha's life.¹⁸ His appreciation of the leadership of Buddha had a great impact on his religious and secular thinking and pushed him into charismatic fold of Buddhism. The naming of the college is thus a personal tribute of Ambedkar to Buddha, whose inspiration directed his thinking and activities.

2. Ambedkar happens to be one of the few Mahar people who could go abroad for higher studies. With the help of a scholarship from Maharaja Sayajirao Gaikwad of Baroda, he went to the University of Columbia in America, where from he got his Master's as well as Ph.D. degrees. Among the professors who influenced him a notably was of John Dewey¹⁹. John Dewey was a philosopher of rationalism and instrumentalism. He had a great belief in the usage of education and its potentialities to alter the values of individuals and prepared for change. Greatly moved by his ideas Ambedkar developed the doctrinal belief in the efficacious and transformatory character of education. Ambedkar himself acknowledged his debt to his teacher John Dewey. He quoted from his teacher these words:

“Every society gets encumbered with what is trivial, with dead wood from the past, and with what is positively perverse. . . . As a society becomes more enlightened it realises that it is responsible not to conserve and transmit the whole of its existing achievements, but only such as make for a better future society .

“An individual can live only in the present. The present is not just something which comes after the past; much less something produced by it. It is what life is in leaving the past behind it. The study of past products will not help us to understand the present. Acknowledge of the past and its heritage is of great significance when it enters into the present, but not otherwise. And the mistake of making the records and remains of the past the main material of education is that it tends to make the past a rival of the present and the present a more or less futile imitation of the past.”²⁰

3. Another major source of impact on his thinking was M.G.Ranade²¹ who was a great

advocate of rationalism, evolutionism and modernism, particularly, in politics. Ranade believed that education was the best and surest warranty of social change, for change, primarily had to germinate in the minds of men before they could come to its fruition of inexorable end. Ambedkar carried in him these ideas and spurned the idea of force as against education as a instrument of social change.

4. Another aspect of his life profile which glued him to education was his Mahar background. As a student he was not permitted to learn Sanskrit which he was fond of. In the school at Satara where he had his early education he experienced discrimination at the hands of fellow pupils. When his teacher asked him to solve a problem in mathematics which often pupils had failed to solve he attempted to go to the blackboard to solve the problem . But the fellow students shouted against Ambedkar for behind the blackboard lay their tiffin boxes and his writing on the blackboard would lend a defiling touch to the boxes. Instead of discouraging him this strengthened and fostered the iron will of Ambedkar for learning and education . In addition to that Ambedkar found a great compensation and rejuvenation for his murky life experience in the garden of books and public libraries which were strewn with lofty ideas and fruitful lives. Besides, his exciting studies in various libraries in Columbia and New York, his studies in the London Museum and India office Libraries, etc., paved the way for the emergence of Ambedkar as a formidable scholar and commendable educationalist.

5. Dr. Ambedka's involvement in education led to his career development and professional experiences. His post-matric employment in the Gaekwad's state and later employment after his return from foreign studies in 1917 as a military secretary to the Maharaja led him to realise that nobody treated him as a human being. He was treated by the staff and peons as despicable object. Similarly was the experience in respect of his accommodation and food at the hands of other citizens. None of his degrees could alter his status, since he carried the social stigma of a Mahar with him. In November 1918, he accepted the job of a professor of Political Economy in the Sydenham College, Bombay until he left for London . After four years Ambedkar became a full-fledged professor in Government Law College, Bombay. His interaction with the

students and teachers influenced his ideas on education . Thereafter, his assumption of the Principalship of the Government College of Bombay in June 1935 enabled him to get insight into academic and administrative problems . His three years experience as the Principal and also member of legislative Council in the Province of Bombay provided him the rich experience of the need and complexity to the problems of education . It was as a member of the Legislative Council that he gave the formula for the upliftment of the Backward Classes in education. He stated, "All these communities (backward) are unequal in their status and progress. If they are to be brought to the level of equality then the only remedy is to adopt the principle of inequality and to give favoured treatment to those who are below the level." ²²

The above statement may be explained by means of mathematics as follows . If the privileged class = P, non-privileged class=N, the 'favoured treatment'=reservation=R, then Mathematically,

$$P = N + R .$$

In this context, reservation is a must to remove the existing inequalities.²³ And this has been incorporated in Article 15 (4) of the Constitution of India . The critiques of reservations have no occasion to decry this reservation . It is their ignorance of the basic problems of the society and their selfishness in this regard have led them to cry reservation down.

6. Dr. Ambedkar was committed to educational values as a means as well as an end in terms of Weltanschauung (world view). He shared this with many leaders from Dadabhai Naoroji to Tilak, Phooley, Ranade and Gokhale etc. Since the time of Rammohan Roy, the innovative leaders of India had been championing the cause of English education for it was a source of new knowledge, national thinking and humanistic way of life . Ambedkar shared the concern for education in general and the education of the Mahars in particular. The Mahars of the time had been steeped in illiteracy and superstitions and had been living the life of dehumanised and brutalised beings. Ambedkar believed that education could bring not only a new consciousness among the Mahars, but also impel them toward the praxis of self - liberation . To this end he took lessons from Jyotiba Phooley and Justice Ranade. He started journals, wrote petitions and drafted

manifestos for the welfare of Dalits. And he started many schools and educational institutions as noted already.

In this context, Ambedkar's basic educational philosophy is seen to have been based on two objectives—(a) the search for truth, and (b) the practice of humanitarian principles in one's own life. Here the Buddhist principles of *prajna* (understanding) and *karuna* (compassion) acted as the beacon light. He had been inspired by the rational approach of the Buddha in the East and John Dewey in the West. So as to inculcate rational thinking and scientific temper among the masses in general and the students in particular. In his address in the Elphinstone College, Bombay in December 1952 he exhorted the teachers and the taught to meet the challenges of the modern world by way of the application of knowledge. He warned that universities would continue to be sacred abodes of learning and not workshop centres training only an army of clerks.

7. Ambedkar had developed a programme of education for the uplift of the Depressed Classes as a part of the general manifesto of Indian Labour Party before the 1937 elections. To stamp out illiteracy, he stressed the necessity of full and compulsory education. He did not encourage liberal education, because it was neither useful for the upper classes nor for the Depressed Classes. Instead he advocated the adoption of diversified technical education. His programme of education included the divorce between teaching and non-teaching universities.

8. He championed universal primary education, but he was opposed to the introduction of *charka* in the primary school. The *charka* scheme drew its inspiration from Gandhi on the principle of "earning while learning." Ambedkar contended that the Gandhian scheme would deprive the scheduled caste people of the curiosity and adventure of learning. The reason was that they being the poorest could be tempted to earn a little more than learn. As a remedy education should be made compulsory. Though Ambedkar was in favour of voluntary efforts to start educational institutions, he advocated the modernisation of the masses through education under the auspices of the states. In his concept of state socialism he allocated a major role for the state in discharging its duties in respect of educating the unlettered millions of citizen in the country.

9. Ambedkar was unhappy with the colonial system of education in British and post independent India. He was inspired by the freedom of choice of learning in American Universities and advocated a re-organisation of subjects and courses so as to provide a wider exposure of knowledge to the peoples. Moreover, he called for removal of inequalities in pay scale and status among academics involved in teaching and research. Moreover, he abhorred the idea of differentiated status of undergraduates and post-graduate College under the university system .

10. Ambedkar was a great lover of students. As a principal of the Government Law College in Bombay he took keen interest in enriching and expanding its library and the academic facilities and environment for the students. He himself was conscious and worked hard to deliver his lectures full of insight and information . According to him, a professor “should not only be learned : he must speak in a clear tone. He must be well -versed.” He also held that professors should constantly seek knowledge and try for truth and practise it .

11. Ambedkar’s opinion on education of girls is interesting. He thought liberal education for girls was of no consequence. “What is the use of Burke and Shakespeare to girls,” he said . Ambedkar wanted women to be particularly trained in home science education and peripherally in other subjects. Men of course, are free to pursue a variety of courses and studies.

12. Ambedkar’s life was of study and struggle. His academic interest in crucial political and economic problems continued until the end. However, he stated that students in schools and colleges should not be involved in active politics. On the contrary they should be engaged in the development of self-culture and self-help. Ambedkar exhorted the students to put a premium on industry and creativity. They should persevere to attain goals and ideals dearer to them , devoid of which life becomes less thrilling and meaningful.

13. Ambedkar’s belief about commitment to education was so deep and wide that it had affected the entire gamut of his outlook and activity. In his struggle against the Congress, the Muslim League and the British for the freedom and emancipation of the Scheduled Castes, he used parliamentary methods to struggle. He believed in petitions, representation and debates as a means of information as well as redressal of social problems. He appeared before many com-

missions like the Royal Commission on Indian currency, the Simon Commission, the Round Table Conference and the like in which he pleaded for the uplift of the Depressed Classes.

14. Ambedkar's method of struggle differed from Gandhi's *Satyagraha* and non-co-operation method. Ambedkar used *Satyagraha* only thrice in his life when major issues like temple entry in Nasik and land distribution in Vidarbha were at stake. He neither believed in *Satyagraha* nor in the "change over theory." Here Ambedkar's bias seemed to be in favour of constitutional, Parliamentary and legalistic methods. After all, education is a critical process of societies. Ambedkar did neither embrace the philosophical anarchies in Gandhi nor the proletarian revolutionary in Marx . As a result he emerged as a champion of educative struggle for the creation of consciousness and liberation of the Dalit masses . All his life he had been in search of truth which would liberate the Dalits from the oppression of Hinduism . It started in 1938 at Nasik and went through a long ordeal of judgement and evaluation before he finally converted the lacs of Mahars into Buddhism . In October 1956 at Nagpur his process of learning and unlearning changed into an ideology of rationality, brotherhood and equality of Buddhism . Opinions may differ on this but there is no doubt about his quest for the truth as he understood it . The summum bonum of his life had been "to strive, to seek, to find and not to yield ." And it was a source of education for those who participated in that adventure.

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CHAPTER VIII

The Neo-Buddhist Movement

Background

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's journey to Buddhism spreads over a span of about 40 years . At the age of 16 Keluskar gave him a copy of biography of Gautam Buddha when he successfully completed high school in 1908. The book made a deep impression on Ambedkar. However , it lay dormant for many years. However it was revived on the eve of the Yeola Conference convened by the leaders of the Depressed Classes in 1935. The conference met at Yeola on October 13 and was attended by about 10,000 Untouchables of all shades of opinion. In a convincing speech lasting over an hour and a half, Ambedkar recounted the plight of the Depressed Classes in all spheres, economic, social, educational and political and pointed out the immense sacrifices made by them to secure the barest human rights. He said that it gave him a very painful realisation that the time and money spent on efforts made to achieve those objectives had proved utterly fruitless. He, therefore , expressed his opinion that the time for making a final decision to settle the matter had arrived. He, then, with a rise in his voice exhorted them to sever their connection with Hinduism and seek solace and self - respect in another religion. However, he warned them to be very careful in choosing the new faith and to see that equality of treatment , status and opportunity was guaranteed to them unreservedly. As to his own personal decision in the matter, Ambedkar said that unfortunately for him he was born a Hindu Untouchable. It was beyond his power to prevent this , but he declared that it was within his power to refuse to live under ignoble and humiliating condition. "I solemnly assure you that I will not die a Hindu," he thundered.¹

Even after his announcement of his resolve to abandon Hinduism, Ambedkar did not opt right away in favour of Buddhism. Even in the Presidential address that he had prepared for the

Lahore Conference convened by the *Jat-Pat Todak Mandal*, he only repeated his resolve to leave Hinduism but gave no indication of the faith which he wished to embrace. Following the announcement, representatives of different faith publicly or privately invited Ambedkar to embrace their faith. The obvious choices before Ambedkar were Sikhism, Christianity and Islam. Of these, it would appear that Islam was not considered seriously at any stage. One important reason for this could have been that by choosing Islam in the charged atmosphere of Hindu-Muslim communal tension, Ambedkar would have invited even greater hostility from the Hindus towards himself and his followers. This is only conjecture and there is no specific comment by Ambedkar to suggest this. When in 1935, there were Muslim as well as Sikh observers present at the meeting. As regards Islam and Christianity, Ambedkar seems to have had the feeling that both these religions practised caste system of their own. With regard to Christianity he also had the complaint that the church had not been able to further the interest of its Dressed Class converts in substantial manner.²

Of the three — Sikhism, Christianity and Islam — only Sikhism was seriously considered for adoption. Ambedkar sent his son and nephew to the Golden Temple in Amritsar. He also sent another group of thirteen young men to study Sikhism. He had discussion with Dr. Moonje of the Hindu Mahasabha on the choice of Sikhism.³ But he seems to have given up the idea of opting for Sikhism, sometime after his return from London. Keer mentions this in his biography of Ambedkar (Keer, 1962) but gives not date or year.⁴ It would appear though this must have been after one year of his visits to London in the mid-1930s.⁵

The formal declaration of the decision to embrace Buddhism came in May 1950 and in the same year he gave a talk at the Young Buddhists Conference in Colombo on the rise and fall of Buddhism. Obviously the decision could not have been sudden, and one would assume that he had been reading on Buddhism for at least a few years. The factor that would have weighted against the choice of Buddhism must have been primarily that Buddhism had very little following left in India, though it was the land of its birth. Conversion to Buddhism would mean that it would get identified as the religion of the erstwhile Untouchables and, to that extent, would

reinforce their social isolation, for there is no doubt that Ambedkar was not thinking of conversion only for himself. He was conceiving of it as an act in which a substantial number of his followers would join him. The choice of Buddhism would mean some marginal gain that might have resulted from increasing the relative size of one of the existing minorities. At the same time, Ambedkar was equally certain that the adoption of Buddhism as their religion was likely to meet with the least opposition from the Hindu minority.⁶

On 29 September 1950 in a speech at Buddhist temple in Worli, Ambedkar made his first open plea to his people to embrace Buddhism as a way out of their sufferings and declared that he would devote the rest of his life to the revival and spread of Buddhism.⁷ Ambedkar made this pledge in 1935 in a non-descriptive sugar town called Yeola. Yet he would give no sign that Buddhism was to be his refuge until the early fifties. His formal conversion came at the end of 1956. Why did he wait so long?

In the 30 years upto 1945 he had bitter experience of caste Hindus, and he tried his utmost to have separate electorates— an attempt to isolate Scheduled Castes completely from the Hindus. In 1945 he attended a Buddhist Conference. On 20th June 1946, on behalf of Peoples' Education Society, he started one College and named it Siddharth College. In 1948, he wrote a forward to — P. L. Narasu's book, *The Essence of Buddhism*. In 1950, he took part in the first Modern Buddhist procession in Delhi. In December 1954, he took part in the Third World Federation of Buddhists. It is said that there he made up his mind to embrace Buddhism. Ambedkar was inclined towards Buddhism openly from May, 1950. On May 24, 1956 he declared on the day of Buddha Jayanti Celebration at Nare Park in Bombay that he would embrace Buddhism in October, 1956. On September, 23, 1956, he issued a press note announcing that his conversion to Buddhism would take place at Nagpur on the *Dassara day*, October 14, 1956 between 9 and 11 a.m. He himself preferred Nagpur which was a historic town where the Buddhist Nagas flourished in ancient times.⁸

Ambedka's detractors have always maintained that the Yeola declaration was nothing more than a shock tactic characteristic of his approach at the time, his conversion no more than

a stunt, the last frantic gesture of a failed politician still looking for the lime-light. His own followers naturally see things differently. Some explained that his political, social and educational work left him no time to devote to the question of conversion. Others pointed out to his posthumously published work, *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, suggesting that he was reluctant to launch a mass conversion movement among poor, uneducated folk until he had produced at least one simple book with which to guide them. Yet others declared that the question of conversion was so important to him that he spent those fifteen to twenty years making a conscientious study of the options before him. This, to be fair, was the reason he gave himself.⁹ Besides, the Untouchables specially the Mahars had to be educated in the conversion process. Failing this, Ambedkar had been a solitary figure divorced from his own people namely the Untouchables. And this involved sometime. In order to have a change of mind for the Untouchables some time was badly needed. Ambedkar gave this time to the Untouchable masses. It has already been noted earlier that the conversion process was collective as well as individualistic. So far as he was concerned, there was no trouble since he had been already educated in the conversion process. But the Untouchable masses needed time to accept the change of faith from Hinduism to Buddhism. And this also influenced his decision to put off the conversion to some future date.

Ambedkar announced his decision in 1935 to leave Hinduism, but at that time Buddhism was not seen as a viable alternative for the Mahars. Ambedkar was aware of the increased intellectual interest in Buddhism. He himself had received as an examination prize in 1907 a biography of the Buddha in Marathi from its author, a Bombay school teacher. He had been in correspondence with V.R. Shinde, a social reformer who was interested in Buddhism, and who had founded a wide network of schools and hostels for the Untouchables in the 1920. Moreover, Ambedkar named his new home in Bombay, built in 1934, Raj Griha, after the Bihar city of the ancient Buddhist Kings. But in spite of all this, when he announced that he would not die a Hindu in 1935, he was not yet ready to commit himself and his followers to Buddhism.

Ambedkar's personal conversion announcement in 1935 was followed in 1936 by a Mahar conference in Bombay and the Conference, after an address by him, declared its intention for

Converting to another religion. Portions of Ambedkar's impassioned plea for conversion form a sort of litany, which in the printed version is lifted out and placed in a poetry format as follows:-

‘Religion is for man ; man is not for religion (and continues:)

If you want to gain self-respect, change your religion.

If you want to create a co-operating society , change your religion .

If you want power, change your religion.

If you want equality , change your religion.

If you want independence, change your religion.

If you want to make the world in which you live, change your religion.’¹⁰

It may be noted in this connection that there had been a gap of 20 years before Ambedkar's final conversion to Buddhism took place after the great conversion announcement of 1935-36. For the first few years he flirted with Islam, Sikhism and Christianity in an attempt to combine a personal need for self-respect with an astute political move to allow the Untouchable more political power. Ambedkar personally felt Islam and Christianity to be ‘foreign religions’. And his threatened conversion particularly to Islam seems to have been more in the nature of a weapon to force recognition of the Untouchable's needs from the Hindus than a genuine interest. Sikhism was an Indian Religion and Ambedkar seriously considered this , but as a political expedient it was impractical . The appointment of Ambedkar in 1942 as a Labour member of Viceroy's Executive Council, the highest position in the government to which any Untouchable had ever risen , and his subsequent place in the Constituent Assembly and in Nehru's first cabinet in independent India, gave such active rein to his political ability that the religious question, except for his own personal interest , was left in abeyance.¹¹

During the time of Ambedkar's activities on the national scene, his personal interest in Buddhism increased. His College established in 1946 was named Siddharth, the personal name of the Buddha and a second college founded in 1951 was given the name of Milind after the Greek king converted to Buddhism . In 1948 Ambedkar published P.Lakshmi Narasu's *Essence of Buddhism* adding his own introduction . In the same year he also published his own studies,

The Untouchable, which theorises that Untouchables had been Buddhist pushed aside from society when they fiercely clung to their religion, while there was a resurgence of *Brahmanical* Hinduism. In 1950 he visited Ceylon (Srilanka) and in the same year began his own compilation of Buddhist scriptures, *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, published in 1957. This contains his interpretation of Buddhism — rational, moral, ethical and egalitarian, with little attention to contemplation and complete eradication of any mystical or magical elements.¹²

However, the actual conversion ceremony in relation to Buddhism was held in 1956. By this time Ambedkar was an old man in Indian terms, and so ill that he died only two months later. He took *Diksha* from the oldest Buddhist monk in India before a large audience in Nagpur and set in motion the conversion process that brought over three million Indians into the Buddhist fold in the next few years. Most of the converts are former Mahars of Maharashtra, but small groups of new Buddhists exist in other states.¹³

The Conversion Ceremony

On September 23, 1956, Dr. Ambedkar issued a press note announcing that his conversion to Buddhism would take place at Nagpur on the *Dassara* day, October 14, 1956, between 9 and 11 a.m. He invited the Rev. Bhikshu Chandramani of Kushinara, Gorakhpur District, to Nagpur, to initiate him into Buddhism on October 14. He added: "It is our great wish, he added, that you should officiate at the ceremony. You being the oldest monk in India we think it would be appropriate to have the ceremony performed by you." He further added that he would send someone to bring him from Kushinara to Nagpur. Ambedkar wrote to D. Valisinha expressing his desire that the 'Mahabodhy Society of India' should participate in the function. He informed him that he had no idea of exactly what ritual there was. However, he had himself framed an important formula of a series of vows to be administered at the time of *Dharma Diksha Ceremony* either by a *Bhikshu* or some Buddhist lay man. He pressed him to attend the ceremony. Again he wrote to Valisinha on October 5 saying that in case of some difference between Valisinha and himself over the initiation ceremony, he would resolve them if he came a little earlier to Nagpur. At the time the '*Mahabodhy*', the famous Buddhist Journal was very much excited with joy and

observed thus: “When on the coming *Vijaya Dashmi* day the lion-hearted leader and his followers made that momentous steps forward, a three fold shout of ‘Sadhu !!!’ will surely rise from every part of the Buddhist world.”

Ambedkar with his wife and Rattu his private secretary left Delhi by air on the morning of October 11 and reached Nagpur at noon. Arrangements were made for their stay in Nagpur at Sham Hotel. Vast throngs of people wanted to touch the feet of their saviour. Meanwhile thousand of men, women and children of the Depressed Classes specially the Mahars had been hourly pouring into Nagpur from the Marathi - speaking areas of Central Provinces and Berar and Bombay by trains and in buses : poor people selling their trinkles for the transport and for white sarees and white shirts, the dress prescribed by the leader. Thousands who could not find easy transport trekked hundred of miles shouting slogans ‘*Bhagwan Buddha ki jay, Babasaheb ki jay*’ : They were accomodated in school houses. The whole atmosphere was surcharged with Buddhist piousness. Nagpur sanctified in the olden times by the residence of Nagarjun, the great scholar leader of Buddhism, became transformed then into a holy place of great significance — historically , cultural and religious.

An expansive open ground of 14 acres near Vaccine Institute at Shradhanand Peth was turned into an enclosure. All approaches and streets leading to the place were decorated with bunting on the evening of October 13. He told newsman that his Buddhism would cling to tenets of the faith as preached by Lord Buddha himself, without involving his people in differences arising on account of *Hinajana* and *Mahajana*. His Buddhism would be a sort of Neo-Buddhism or *Navayan*. When asked why he was embracing Buddhism, he said angrily “Why cannot you ask this question to yourself and to your forefathers as to why I am getting out of the Hindu fold and embracing Buddhism?” He asked newsman why they wanted his men to remain Harijan to enjoy only such ‘benefit’ as those of reservations. He asked them whether the Brahmins were prepared to be Untouchables to enjoy these privileges. He said that they were making efforts to reach manhood. He declared that once he had to tell Gandhi that though he differed from him on the issue of untouchability he would choose the least harmful way for the country. In his own

words : “I will choose only the least harmful way for the country. And that is the greatest benefit I am conferring on the country by embracing Buddhism ; for Buddhism is a part and parcel of Bharatiya culture. I have taken care that my conversion will not harm the tradition of the culture and history of this land.”

On the morning of October 14, 1956 Ambedkar woke up early . He asked Rattu to arrange for a hot bath and then to make sure that arrangements at pandal had been made perfect. Since early morning a sea of humanity had been flowing towards the *Diksha bhoomi*. The sweepers had swept the street leading to it at day - break as they deemed it their fortune to sweep a street along which their saviour was to pass. The skies were filled with the resounding ‘Joys’ to the Buddha and Bahasaheb. Dressed in silk white *dhoti* and white coat, Ambedkar left the hotel at 8.30 in the morning in a car with Rattu and his wife Mrs. Sabita Ambedkar, who had also put on a white *saree*. The huge crowds enthusiastically cheered their saviour as he reached the Pandal and was taken up on the dais. He stood on the dais with a staff in one hand and the other hand on Rattu’s shoulder. There was thunderous applause. It was a quarter passed nine in the morning. Cameramen were busy taking photographs; newsmen writing reports. On the dais there stood on a table a bronze statuette of the Buddha flanked by two statues tigers and incense burning before it. Sitting on the dais were D.Valisinha, Ven. M. Sanghratna Thera, Ven. H. Sadda Tissa Thera and Ven. Pannanand Thera.

The initiation of ceremony started with a Marathi song sung by a lady in praise of Ambedkar. The vast gathering stood up and observed silence for a minute in memory of the death anniversary of Ambedkar’s father. Thus the actual ceremony began. Scores of photographers rushed towards the dais. The vast humanity of over three lakhs of men and women from all parts of the state watched the ceremony eagerly as the eighty - three year - old Mahasthaveer Chandramani of Kushinara and his four saffron - robed *Bhikshus* administered in Pali to Ambedkar and his wife, who were both bowing before the image of Buddha, the three *Saranas* under Buddha, *Dhamma* and *Sangh* and *Panchsheel* of five precepts of abstention from killing, stealing, telling lies, wrongful sex life, and drink. They repeated the Pali *mantras* in Marathi. And then they

bowed down thrice with clasped hands before the Buddha statuette and made offerings of white lotuses before it. With this, Ambedkar's entry into the Buddhistic fold was announced, and the vast concourse gave full - throated cries of '*Babasaheb Ambedkar ki jay.*' The whole ceremony was filmed. It was now a quarter to ten in the morning.

Ambedkar was garlanded by his followers after his conversion. D. Valisinha presented Ambedkar and Mrs. Sabita Ambedkar with an image of lord Buddha. Thereafter, Ambedkar declared : "By discarding my ancient religion which stood for inequality and oppression today I am reborn. I have no faith in the philosophy of incarnation ; and it is wrong and mischievous to say that Buddha was an incarnation of Vishnu . I am no more a devotee of any Hindu god or goddess. I will not perform *Shraddha*. I will strictly follow the eight fold path of Buddha. Buddhism is a true religion and I will lead a life guided by the three principles of knowledge, right path and compassion." ¹⁴

Ambedkar took the following Buddhist oaths :¹⁵

1. I will not regard *Brahma* , *Vishnu* and *Mahes* as Gods nor will I worship them.
2. I will not regard Rama and Krishna as Gods nor will I worship them.
3. I will not accept Hindu deities like Gauri, Ganapati etc. nor will I worship them.
4. I do not believe that God had taken birth or incarnation in any form.
5. I do not believe that Lord Buddha was the incarnation of *Vishnu*. I believe this propaganda as mischievous and false.
6. I will never perform any *Shraddha* nor will I offer any *Pinda*.
7. I will never act against the tenets of Buddhism.
8. I will never get any *Sanskar* performed by Brahmins.
9. I believe in the principle that all are equal.
10. I will try to establish equality.
11. I will follow the Eight Fold Path of Lord Buddha.
12. I will follow all the ten *Paramitas* of the *Dharma*.
13. I will have compassion on all living beings and will try to look after them .

14. I will not lie.
15. I will not commit theft.
16. I will not indulge in lust or sexual transgression .
17. I will not take any liquor or drink that causes intoxication.
18. I will try to mould my life in accordance with the Buddhist preachings, based on 'Enlightenment', 'Precept' and 'Compassion' .
19. I embrace today the *Bauddha Dhamma* discarding the Hindu Religion which is detrimental to the emancipation of human beings and which believes in inequality and regards human beings other than the Brahmins as low born.
20. This is my firm belief that the *Bauddha Dhamma* is the best religion.
21. I believe that today I am taking new birth.
22. I solemnly take oath that from today onwards I will act according to the *Bauddha Dhamma*.

Sabbe Satta Suknee Hontu.

It has been noted above that nearly three lakhs of his followers embraced Buddhism, and to use Ambedkar's own ideology of shepherd, he flocked them into Buddhism. Among those who embraced Buddhism with Ambedkar, were M. B. Niyogi, former Chief Justice of the Nagpur High Court, and Ambedkar's leading Maharastrian Lieutenants. According to Niyogi, the denunciation of Hinduism as was done by Ambedkar while embracing Buddhism had no place in the original Buddhist rituals. The ceremony was over by ten to eleven in the morning. Messages welcoming the great leader and his followers to Buddhism were sent by U Ba Sway, Prime Minister of Burma, U Nu, former Burmese Premier, Dr. Arivind Barua of Calcutta and H.W. Amarsurya from Colombo. It is very important to note that no message from any great Indian leader such as Nehru, Dr.S.Radhakrishnan, C.Rajagopalachari or Dr. Rajendra Prasad was received on the occasion, not to speak of Veer Savarkar. If Nehru believed that there was nothing inconsistent between Indian philosophy, religion and democracy. Hindu religion, he pointed out, had within itself an impressive universalisation. It could adjust itself to change; it was large enough to encompass different and even conflicting beliefs. According to Nehru, it might take a

little time, but religion in India would undergo whatever reorientation was necessary to have it reflected the general welfare of the people. Many times before Hinduism had digested great changes. After Buddhism came to India, Hinduism did not set itself up in competition with Buddhism; it absorbed it.¹⁶ Radhakrishnan believed that the Buddha had attempted to achieve a power of Hinduism.¹⁷

According to the Buddhist view, the great conversion constituted a new chapter. It had been contended that 'conversion' was not a happy term to discuss the changes, since force and temptation are associated with conversion. It was self-conversion and not conversion that had come to mean giving up one's own faith and embracing something foreign. Some Buddhists said that the *Dharma Chakra* was set evolving by the intrepid leader; and it was the greatest religious revolution which India had witnessed in modern times. Ambedkar thus fulfilled the prediction of Sir William Hunter who said in 1881 that the revival of Buddhism was, one of the possibilities in India.¹⁸

Ambedkar's 'Navayana'(New Vehicle) of Buddhism

Buddhism is divided, on religious matters into two wellknown schools — *Hinayan*, flourishing in Srilanka, Myanmar(Burma) and Thailand; and *Mahayan* in Tibet, China and Japan. The *Mahayan* comprises (1) the *Madhyamika* or *Sunyavada*; (2) the *Yogacara* or *Vijnanavada* school, while the *Hinayan* comprises (1) the *Sautrantika* school, and (2) the *Vaibhasika* school.¹⁹ In this context Ambedkar's conversion to Buddhism led to a new school of Buddhism which may be styled '*Navayana*' or Neo-Buddhism for most of his adult life. A resume of these activities is noted below:

Hinduism is often described as the mother of whom Jainism and Buddhism are two rebel daughters. Buddha was primarily an ethical teacher and reformer, not a metaphysician. The message of his enlightenment as his name indicates — it points to man the way of life that leads beyond suffering. The answers to the four questions raised by Gautam Buddha are known as the Four Noble Truths. They are (1) life in the world is full of suffering. (2) Desire is the cause of

this suffering. (3) It is possible to stop suffering by removing desire. (4) There is a path which leads to the cessation of desire and suffering.²⁰

Gautam is gone, but the Buddha remains. The enlightenment, which dawned upon Gautam and transformed him into the immortal Buddha, serves us even today. The *Dharma Chakra*, the wheel of the law, first turned by the Buddha at the Deer Park in Sarnath still revolves as the National Emblem of India. The *Parinirvana* or the Great Decease of the Buddha at Kushinara proved that every one of us might follow the path of 'Buddhahood in this world.' But what is it like? The self and the material world are in a flux (*Saintana*). The 'self-producing and self-consuming' flame and the stream of water are the two symbols generally used to illustrate "flux". It thus seems that each one of the so-called things or happenings is only a series (*vithi*) and the notion of fixity is fictitious. Hence there is a ceaseless movement of all things with no underlying constancy. It is a compromise between two views — belief in Being and non-Being. And this world proceeds on a duality, of the "it is" and "it is not."²¹ Neither being nor non-Being is the truth, asserts Buddha, but only Becoming. This does not mean that he denies reality. In fact, he admits it, and gives an explanation of its dynamism. There is incessant change, but at the same time there is nothing that changes: "There is action, but no agent." Hiriyanna is eloquent over this and cites the case of Heraclitus of Greece and that of Bergson of France both after Buddha, as following in the footsteps of Buddha. He says: 'Great indeed should have been the genius that enunciated such a doctrine for the first time.'²²

Matter exists only in changes and not in a single self-contained entity. Thus the chariot is a mere symbol of the parts of pole, wheels etc. assembled in a particular way. Similarly the self is a level aggregative of certain psychic and physical factors. As a stable entity Buddhism does not deny the self, but it recognises instead a 'fluid self', which, because of its fluidity, is not a series of distinct or dissimilar states. In the very act of analysing the self and dismissing it is not a series of momentary states, posits an enduring self. Hence, "the self is not only a collective, but also a recollective entity."²³ With regard to the apprehension of external objects, a question as to their recognition arises, since everything is in a flux. And the Buddhist answer is that the things

in the two moments of our cognition are only similar and that we mistake them to be the same. In other words, all recognition is erroneous, since similarity is mistaken in it for identity.²⁴

The laws of contingent causation is called *dharma* or *dhamma*, *pratityasamutpada* in Sanskrit and *paticcasamupada* in Pali. Etymologically, *pratitya* means 'getting' (something else) and *samutpada* 'origination' (of something else). As observed by Buddha: "He who sees the *paticcasamutpada*, sees the *Dharma*, and he who sees the *Dharma*, sees the *paticcasamutpada*. The doctrine of *Pratityasamutpada* is the foundation of all teachings of Buddha. It is contained in the Second Noble Truth showing us the cessation of suffering. Now, suffering is *Samsara*; cessation of suffering is *Nirvana*. Both are only the few aspects of the same Reality. *Pratityasamutpada* viewed from the view point of reality is *Samsara*; when viewed from the standpoint of reality, it is *Nirvana*.²⁵ A controversy has raged over *Nirvana*. Oldenberg and Rhys Davids identify it with negative extinction. But this is not true as demonstrated by Dr. Biswas.²⁶ The Buddhists seek to annihilate the desire-energy by raising it to zero level. Mathematically this becomes: $D=1/0$. Hence, *Nirvana* leads to bliss. And this accords with the Madhyamika interpretation of '*Shunya*', which is indescribable (*avachya*), and not 'nothing', empty void or negative abyss.²⁷

It is evident from his activities that even before his conversion Ambedkar was a Buddhist at heart; and in the light of his religious propensity, his concept of religion may better be discussed. He had a profound rational outlook of religion; devoid of metaphysics it was mainly for man on earth. Ambedkar gives four characteristics of religion. First, religion in the sense of morality must remain as the governing principle in every society. Second, religion if it is to function must be in accord with reason which is another name for science. Third, its moral code must recognise the fundamental tenets of liberty, equality and fraternity. Fourth, "religion must not sanctify or ennoble poverty".²⁸ He has traced four stages in the evolution of religion: (i) personal salvation of man's soul; (ii) human brotherhood based on moral principles, underlying conduct; (iii) hero-worship of personalities satisfying wants of human beings; and (iv)

deification of miracle-performer.²⁹ Ambedkar was opposed to supernaturalism, because he was a rationalist. He agreed to Buddha's repudiation of supernaturalism with three objectives (i) to lead men to the path of rationalism; (ii) to free man so as to enable him to go in search of truth; and (iii) to remove the most potent source of superstition.

Ambedkar's observations on religion are as follows: (1) "I consider the foundations of religion to be essential to life and practices of society." (2) "Religion is not an opium as it is held by some. I want religion, but I do not want hypocrisy in the name of religion." (3) "Religion is a part of one's inheritance." (4) "Man cannot live by bread alone. He has a mind which needs food for thought. Religion installs hope in man and drives him to activity." (5) "The religion which discriminates between followers is partial and the religion which treats crores of its adherents worse than dogs and criminals and inflicts upon them insufferable disabilities is no religion at all. Religion is not the appellation for such an unjust order." (6) "Religion and slavery are incompatible."³⁰

Definition

According to Ambedkar "religion must be judged by social standards, based on social ethics." Thus, he connected religion with the social well-being of the people. And religion need have 'spiritual principles' that are 'universal' and applicable to all countries and to all races. Judged by this yardstick, Hinduism appears as "a much of sacrificial, social, political and sanitary rules and regulations, all mixed up." It is a 'law' or 'legalised class ethics'.³¹

Ambedkar enumerated the evils of *Hindutva*: First, in Hinduism, according to Ambedkar, the belief in god gives rise to the belief in the efficacy of worship and prayer and the efficacy of worship and prayer gives rise to the office of priest and the priest is the evil, genius who creates all superstition and destroys the growth of the right view. Second, the law of past action completely betrays the spirit of revolt. Third, Hinduism is a riddle of the contradictions between dignified thought and base behaviour (Mooknayak, 31 January, 1920). Fourth, it tends to deprive moral life of freedom and spontaneity and reduces it merely to servile conformity to externally imposed rules. Fifth, there is no loyalty to ideas, but only conformity to commands.

Sixth, laws are inequitable and not the same for all. Seventhly, the Hindu Code has the character of fixity and finality. Eighth, "Hinduism and social union are incompatible. Hinduism creates an eagerness to separate." Ninth, *Vedantic* idealism is a Brahminical counterpoise to the liberalising role of the Buddhist movement. Tenth, Hinduism is characterised by inequality and casteism.³²

Ambedkar wrote a book named *The Buddha and His Dhamma*.³³ The book was published within a year of his death. The Chairman of the People's Education Society, Justice R.R. Bhole has stated in his 'preface' that "this new and consistent commentary of the *Dhamma* by Ambedkar became almost the Bible of the Indian Buddhist." It was later published in Hindi as well as Marathi version. These publications served a very useful purpose to Indian Buddhists who treated this book as 'the New Testament' for studying the *Dhamma* singly or in groups in their localities and for devoting some of their everyday to reflect on it. It is the way of the Buddha without comparison that they find in this devotional Buddhist *Nikaya* and in it they find a substantial source of religious inspirations." It is because of this that Ambedkar has been styled as the founder of the Buddhist *Navayana*. Besides, Ambedkar also wrote a small book called *Buddha and the Future of His Religion*.³⁴

The word, 'religious', is derived from 'religion'. According to Cicero, it is derived from a root 'leg', meaning 'take up, gather, count or observe', i.e. 'to observe the signs of a Divine communication.' Servius thinks that it comes from the root 'leg'—, meaning 'to bind' and 'religion' means 'a relationship', i.e. 'a communication between the human and the Super-human.' Both uses are found in St. Augustine the Great. The first is the counterpart of the Greek word, *paraterisis*, meaning 'the scrupulous observation of omens and the performance of ritual'. Jesus used the word in this sense when he said: "The Kingdom of God cometh not with *paraterisis*." Now most Europeans understand by the word a fixed relationship between the human self and some non-human entity. And from Suez eastward this relationship is the *hodos* or way of the Pharisees. Similarly early Christianity is described as "that way"; Buddhism as the Noble Eight Fold Path; Shintoism as "the way of the Gods", Confucianism as "the way." Even communist

Russia rejecting these has surrendered to the Dialectical Process , which is also a “way”.³⁵

Religion has its counterpart in the Sanskrit word *Dharma*. The *Mahabharata* uses the word in two senses. The first derives the word thus - *Dhana*-√*ri* + *mak* : it means that whence wealth is got. And *Dharma* denotes wealth, worldly and other worldly. The second sense derives the word from the root *dhri* with the addition of the suffix *man*. It means that which sustains all. From this a deeper meaning is derived by Tagore. He gives a third sense to *dharma* to the following words : “*Dharma* is the innermost nature, the essence , the implicit truth, in all things. *Dharma* is the ultimate purpose that is working in our self. When any wrong is done we say that *dharma* is violated, meaning that the lie has been given to our true nature.”³⁶

According to Ambedkar religion is a word with no fixed meaning. It has varied from time to time. There are three stages in the evolutions of its meaning. The first is of magic. Any weird performance done to control the phenomenon of lightning, rain and floods was called magic. The second stage related to rituals, beliefs, ceremonies, prayers and sacrifices, which developed to propitiate a benevolent power and also to conciliate an energy power. Later this power came to be identified with God or the creator. A third stage came : it was taken for granted that God created this world and man. This was followed by a belief that man has a soul that is eternal and answerable to God for his actions in the world.

However, there are points of distinction between religion and *Dharma*. First, religion is personal, whereas *Dharma* is social. Second, the former can exist if there exists only one individual. But *Dharma* needs atleast two for its existence. Third , a society cannot do without *Dharma*. And it has to choose one of the three alternatives. Society may choose not to have any *Dharma* as an instrument of government. In that it results in anarchy. Society may choose police or dictatorship as an instrument of government. Lastly, it may choose *Dharma* plus the Magistrate where people fail to observe the *Dharma*. In the first two cases liberty is lost; and only in the third liberty survives. Hence, people desirous of liberty must have *Dharma*. Fourth, *Dharma* according to the Buddha, consists of *prajna* i.e. understanding and *karuna*, i.e. love. But religion is different from this definition of *Dharma*. Finally, both differ as to their pupose; religion

is to explain the origin of the world, while *Dharma* is to construct the world.

Truly speaking morality is not religion-oriented. Religion consists of god, soul, prayers, worship, rituals, ceremonies and sacrifices. But morality comes in only where man comes in relation to man. Besides, it enters religion as a side wind to maintain peace and order. Secondly, every religion preaches morality, but morality is not the root of religion. Thirdly, religion is a triangular peace, namely god and two neighbours who are children of god. But morality is a wagon attached to religion : it is attachable and detachable as the occasion requires. Finally, the action of morality in the functioning of religion is casual and occasional : it is not effective.

According to Ambedkar morality is *Dharma* and *Dharma* is morality. In other words, in *Dharma* morality takes the place of god, although there is no god in *Dharma*. Second, morality arises in *Dharma* from the direct necessity for man to love man. It is for his own good that man has to love man. Third, morality must be sacred and universal. Three factors are responsible to make morality sacred. The first factor is the social need to protect the best in the face of the struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest. The second factor is to put a stop to conflict of group interests by man of the common rules of mortality. And the third factor is to safeguard the growth of the individual, since his interests may not be safe under the group rule.³⁷

Critics of conversion

Ambedkar had to face criticism from the Hindus for his conversion to Buddhism . Thus Gandhi criticised his declaration to renounce Hinduism (Harijan, 21 March, 1936): "Religion is not a matter of barter. (It) is a more integral part of one's own self than one's body. Change of faith will not serve the causes." Here Gandhi repudiates what he preached earlier (young India, June , 1, 1921 at pages 172-73). "Religion is as much an ideal as the acceptance of a thing. It is as necessary to reject untruth as it is to accept truth. All religions teach that two appropriate forces act upon us and that the human behaviour consists in a series of eternal rejections and acceptance." Secondly, he separates religion from body and associates it with self. He does not consider if religion and self can exist without body. All are constituents of single entity, and if one, specially the body suffers, the entire thing suffers. In fact this is what he said in respect of

non-co-operation movement: "I found it impossible to soothe suffering patients with a song from Kabir. The hungry millions ask for one poem-invigorating food" (Young India, October 13, 1921 at pp.324-26). Now he goes back on his own word. Thirdly, here Gandhi is wrong in stating that change of faith will not serve the causes. It may not achieve all its objectives. But it will certainly have some objectives fulfilled, e.g., the sense of self-respect, supremacy. What Tagore said of Gandhi applies equally to Ambedkar: "Perhaps he will fail to wean man from their inequities, but he will always be remembered as one who made his life a lesson for all ages to come."³⁸

There were other critics as well. V. D. Savarkar spoke in terms of a fighting soldier of Hinduism. He warned the Depressed Classes and asked Ambedkar to fight valiantly for equality. Savarkar belonged to the privileged class and could not realise the sufferings of the Untouchables. What was the result of the fight by Ambedkar? He failed. In fact, it was not possible to score victory against heavy odds. Casteism is so much entrenched in the *Brahmanic* mind with religious sanctity that it was next to impossible to eradicate it. 43 years after Ambedkar's death, the picture of oppression of the Untouchables and the Backward Classes is now as lucid if not more as it was before. Thus the Statesman, 5 July, 1990 at page 1 reports under caption "Upper Castes have their way in Gujrat" that the B. J. P.—run Municipal Corporation ordered the bulldozing of 65 huts, mostly of Harijans at Brahmaninagar in Ahmedabad city (and) at Navalpur village in Sabarkantha 50 Patel farmers publicly whipped, lynched and hanged a Backward Caste youth from a tree on June 23". Hence, Ambedkar's decision was correct. Let Savarkar answer a simple question: "If he feels as much for the Depressed Classes, how is it that he did never lift a finger to protect them from the inequities practised by the caste Hindus on them?" In this the verdict of history will be that Savarkar might be a leader and fighter for the Hindu cause of inequality against the Depressed Classes, but a "lost leader" of whom Browning spoke thus:

Blot out his name, then, record one lost soul more.

One task more declined, one more footpath untrod.

Rajaji described Ambedkar's move as diabolical. Here the boot was on the other leg. And

this Rajaji failed to see. As a result he castigated the victim without punishing the aggressor. This was due to two factors as noted by Ambedkar in his preface to *'Who were the Shudras'* thus: "The Brahmin has a two - fold interest in the maintenance of the sanctity of (the Shastra). In the first place being the production of his forefathers his filial duty leads him to defend it even at the cost of truth. In the second place , as it supports the privileges of the Brahmins, he is careful not to do anything which would undermine its authority." Malaviya and Gandhi also failed to carry out the promises made at the time of the Poona pact for the uplift of the Depressed Classes. And this was a betrayal by the Caste Hindus.

This caste Hindu prejudice has been put in a new garb under the label of communism by W. N. Kuber in his *Dr. Ambedkar - A Critical Study* (1973) and *B. R. Ambedkar* (1978). In the latter (p.880) Kuber has made four points. First , Ambedkar invented the theory that the Untouchables were once Buddhists in order to facilitate his conversion to Buddhism . Second , this conversion went to counter class war. Third, this was a reactionary step, since Ambedkar's approach to Marxism was wrong. Fourth, he first wrote the answer and thereafter outlined his theory. In a nutshell, it may be stated that it is a historical fact that the Untouchables were once Buddhists. Secondly, the critic has confused wrongly religion with politics . Thirdly, there was no misconception about Marxism. A veteran communist M.N.Roy who helped Russia build up communism there had to admit subsequently that 'Marxism is not the horoscope of the world.' Hence, he favoured "radical humanism." It was the change of heart .

Ambedkar had been interested in Buddhism for most of his adult life. He had been drawn to Buddhist teachings since his student days. Further reflection and reading convinced him that the path to social equality and psychological liberation for the 'Untouchables' lay in the teachings of the Buddha. He studied Buddhism deeply and extensively and met a number of people who had become interested in this religion. The writings of the Tamil Buddhists, specially of P. L. Narasu and of Mahatma Jyotiba Phooley, a nineteenth century radical social reformer of Maharashtra, made a strong impact upon him. He himself claimed that he had three *gurus* — the Buddha, Kabir and Jyotiba Phooley. He travelled to Ceylon and Burma to see living Buddhism

in these countries. He had prepared his followers psychologically for a conversion from Hinduism 1935 onwards. But his conversion took place quite late on October 14, 1956. In less than two months after his '*diksha*' Ambedkar died (December 7, 1956). Thus he died a Buddhist and before his death set in motion a movement that soon involved over three million people. Another huge ceremony was held in Bombay ten days after his death in which Ananda Kausalyayana, a pali scholar and Hindi speaking Punjabi monk, initiated thousands to Buddhism. But these massive conversions mainly affected only low castes, particularly the Mahars of Maharashtra, the community of Ambedkar, who had been involved for decades in a battle for political, social and religious rights. Their conversion, however, made the authority of Babasaheb Ambedkar unquestioned for them. A few even refer to him as a "second Buddha" and describe the Nagpur *Diksha* as a new "*Dharmachakra-Pravartna*."³⁹

The chief vehicle for transmitting and interpreting the new faith of Ambedkar is his book, *The Buddha and His Dhamma*.⁴⁰ It was written in English at the end of his life, published posthumously and subsequently translated into Hindi and Marathi. It is a rationalised biography of the Buddha and contains a selection from Buddhist pali works. Ambedkar's aim was to produce a Bible for his followers. It was not intended to be a scholarly work. In it the events of Buddha's life are narrated in free style and much liberty was followed in the selection, application and interpretation of the Pali passages. No attempt was made to maintain a distinction between the translation of the original passage and Ambedkar's commentary on it.⁴¹ The liberty taken with the Pali passages naturally earned the criticism of a number traditional Buddhists. However, in the Hindi translation of the volume, Bhadanta Ananda Kausalyayana, who identified the original texts from which Ambedkar drew, observed, though somewhat inaccurately, that it represented a "new orientation, but not a distortion" and that all central doctrines of Buddhism were present in it.

Ambedkar himself offered the criteria, by which he determined the authenticity of Buddha's teachings, thus :

“ There is one test”, he says , which is available, if there is anything which could be said with confidence, it is : He(the Buddha) was nothing if not rational, if not logical .Anything, therefore which is rational and logical, other things being equal may be taken to be word of the Buddha. The second thing is that the Buddha never cared to enter into a discussion which was not profitable for man’s welfare. Therefore, anything attributed to the Buddha which did not relate to man’s welfare can not be accepted to be the word of the Buddha.”⁴²

It is evident from Ambedkar’s statement that two characteristics of the Buddha’s teachings were accepted as tests to judge. Whether any particular writing conforms to the test as laid down by him, namely (1) its rationality on one and (2) its social message on the other.

Ambedkar described the Buddha as “ a ‘reformer, full of the most earnest moral purpose and trained in all the intellectual culture of his time, who had the originality and the courage to putforth deliberately and with a knowledge of opposing views, the doctrine of a salvation to found here , in this life, in inward change of heart to be brought about by the practice of self-culture and self-control.”⁴³ As pointed out by P. L. Lakshmi Narsu ⁴⁴ “The dictum accepted in all schools of Buddhism is that nothing can be accepted as the teaching of the Master, which is not in strict accord with reason.” Thus, in fighting the Hindu ideas of God, soul and *avatara* upon which , they believe, the caste system rests, Ambedkar and his followers appeal in the last analysis no other authority than the human reason itself. The religious implications of taking reason and logic as ultimate authorities do not appear to concern them.⁴⁵

Ambedkar’s Navayana and Traditional Buddhism : Their Differences

Ambedkar had to introduce a number of innovations in traditional Buddhism. These innovations are not isolated phenomena. New views on the Buddhist social ethics have been expressed in other countries of South and South East Asia. But the peculiarity of Ambedkar’s *Navayana* is that the degree of divergence from the traditional doctrine is very much greater than those of other countries. Hence, the *Navayana* may be regarded as a phenomenon of modernisation of Buddhism in Asian. In this context the differences between the traditional Buddhism and *Navayana* are noted below :⁴⁶

1. The 'rationalism' of the Buddha serves chiefly, in Ambedkar's Buddhism, to deny the existence of God and '*atman*'. Whereas the Buddha on these questions apparently maintained silence, Ambedkar's Buddha is certain and explicit. "He began by saying that his *Dharma* had nothing to do with God and soul. His *Dharma* has nothing to do with life after death", wrote Ambedkar of the Buddha's first sermon, for in his eyes the greatest danger of the belief in God and soul is the basis it provides for belief in caste. So Ambedkar is of the opinion that 'atheism' is the key element of Buddhism, as much as hallmark as its rationality and egalitarianism.
2. Ambedkar's rejection of the existence of '*atman*' led him to the rejection of the 'belief in *samsara*, i.e., transmigration of the soul', 'belief in *moksha* or salvation of the soul', and 'belief in karma' (as) the determination of man's position in present life. The Buddha denied the fatalistic view of *karma*. According to this 'scientific' view, rebirth as a concept applies only to the natural components of a being. When the body dies, the four elements disperse and live on. While any psychological or spiritual dimension to the concept of rebirth is denied, *karma* as moral law is acknowledged. It is operative only within one's present life and the general moral order.
3. If the Buddha's gospel is essentially social, so is '*dukkha*', the central Buddhist notion of suffering or sorrow. "The recognition of suffering (is) the real basis of religion" writes Ambedkar in his version of the Buddha's first sermon. But this suffering is the condition of misery and poverty, wrought by social and economic injustice, "Man's misery is the result of man's inequality to man." In this view the central insight of the traditional Buddhist vision of '*dukkha*' is omitted and suffering is interpreted as a social phenomenon.
4. Ambedkar's vision of suffering as primarily a social phenomenon entails a reinterpretation of the Four Noble Truths. For, if one's suffering results from social injustice from without, then its cause and alleviation do not relate directly to one's desire or craving. In Ambedkar's version of the Buddha's first sermon, therefore, "the recognition of human suffering" can be viewed as equivalents to the first and fourth Noble Truths. But to the

second and third Noble truths, this sermon presents analogous teachings, for no attention is given to the cause of this suffering nor any mention is made of craving or desire (*tanha of the Chattari Ariya Satyani*).

5. Ambedkar gives a new account of the '*Mahabhinishkramana*' (great renunciation) of Gautama Siddhartha. The causes for Gautam's renunciation of his princely life were not the traditional Four Sights. Ambedkar found it irrational to suppose that a man of 29 would not have been exposed earlier to the presence of sickness and death : "These are common events occurring by the hundreds and the Buddha could not have failed to come across them earlier."
6. The Salvation to which Buddha points is seen as a 'kingdom of righteousness on earth', and even enlightenment itself is presented in a purely pragmatic way: " On the night of the last day of the fourth week," Ambedkar writes "light dawned upon him(on the Buddha). He realised that there were two problems. The first problem was that there was suffering in the world and the second problem was how to remove this suffering and make mankind happy."
7. Ambedkar played down the role of the *Sangha* in the history of Buddhism. To this end he stressed that, the Buddha clearly had the laity in mind when he preached. According to him the Five precepts and the Eight Fold path included in the original Buddhism had been addressed to house-holders. The *Sangha* was instituted by the Buddha to serve as a model and to show that the ideals he preached were practical.
8. Ambedkar thought that India's aboriginal stock had common ethnic roots which he identified as Naga. Being subjected to tortures by the ruling class the Nagas became Buddhist in large numbers. They were progressively excluded from the main stream of the society and eventually driven out as the ancestors of the Untouchables. In his conversion speech he pointed to the Nagas as chief propagators who "spread the teachings of *Bhagwan* Buddha all over India." The *Koliyas* , to whom Gautam was related on his mother's side belonged

to this ethnic stock. Hence, the Nagas were connected to the *Dhamma*'s origin through blood and were instrumental in its spread. It may be noted here that the name Nagpur is derived from the Nagas.

9. Ambedkar is neither worshiped nor prayed to, nor of course is the Buddha. However, on every occasion both are garlanded ; the Buddha first, and *Parampujya Babasaheb* Ambedkar next are addressed before the delivery of any speech. Some of his followers regard Ambedkar as *Bodhisattva* in recognition of his role as the savior of modern Indian converts to Buddhism. As a mode of honouring him to his name is added to the list of refuges that is *Bhimang Swaranang Gachchami*. As a result the "three Jewels" become four: (1) I go for refuge to Buddha ; (2) I go for refuge to the *Dhamma* (doctrine) ; (3) I go for refuge to the *Sangha* (order of monks); (4) I go for refuge to Bhima.⁴⁷
10. The new buildings dedicated to the Buddhist religion of Ambedkar's movement in Maharashtra as well as the old buildings converted to Buddhists' use are called 'viharas'. The words for temple in Marathi—*Deul* and *Mandir*— are not used. These 'vihars', however, are not the living quarters for the monks but a meeting place for the laity. Such a multipurpose *Vihara* is a plain rectangular structure.
11. In its early days the Ambedkar movement was led by his Republican Party members because of paucity of the trained *Bhikshus* for *diksha*. Religious conversion at the hands of political leaders might seemed strange to the outsiders, but it was unavoidable.
12. Ambedkar's followers celebrate four great observances (1) *Dharma 'Diksha'* day; (2) *Buddha Jayanti* ; (3) Ambedkar's death memorial day and (4) *Ambedkar Jayanti*.

Ambedkar said : " Once it is realised that Buddhism is a social gospel , its revival would be an ever lasting event." He had the divine satisfaction of having accomplished a great deed, and set in motion the wheel of *Dharma* once again thereby establishing the revival of Buddhism in India. He had fulfilled the prediction of Sir William Hunter who had said as early as 1881 that "the revival of Buddhism is, I repeat one of the possibilities in India".⁴⁸ Tagore, too had sent

forth a call, eagerly awaiting the arrival of the Buddha, singing:⁴⁹

‘Bring to this country once again
 the blessed name
 Which made the land of the birth sacred
 to all distant lands!
 Let the great awakening under the Bodhi Tree
 be fulfilled
 Let open the doors that are barred,
 and the resounding conch shell
 Proclaim thy arrival at Bharat’s gate.
 Let, through innumerable voices,
 the gospel of an unmeasurable love
 announce thy call.

Ambedkar accords in his *Navayana* great weight to the egalitarian aspect of Buddha’s life and message. The scriptural stories of the Buddha’s acceptance of and regard for the low and outcaste followers, such as the sweeper Sumita, the barbar Upali, the Untouchables Sopaka and Suppiya and others, are featured in the *Navayana*. Some outward symbols of traditional Buddhism are stressed — the image of the Buddha, the study of Pali, the use of Pali ritual phrases in group ‘*Vandana*’, honour shown to the caves of Ajanta, Ellora, Aurangabad, Nasik and Junnar and pilgrimages to Sanchi, Sarnath and Buddha Gaya.⁵⁰

Ambedkar’s *Navayana* represents three elements —(1) the elements in the past of the Buddhists; (2) the work of Ambedkar himself, its social unity in the face of continued prejudice and its rejection of Hinduism as a religion of inequality; and (3) the retention of some Hindu or Indian elements— the *tehguru idea*, the public procession, memorising the days honouring the birth or death of greatmen. This amalgam of traditional Buddhism, the Mahar past and the socio-religious practices of Hindu society in general has led the followers of Ambedkar to create some new and interesting development on their own. This is seen in the multipurpose *Vihars* as well as the initiative and responsibility of the lay leaders. Ambedkar’s view of the *Sangha*, it is asserted.

“Whether accurate or not, has some relevance for a period when Indian Buddhists have little or no contact with monks, *Bhikshus*, especially native-speaking ones, are still rare, and Ambedkar’s emphasis on the dignity and role of the laity helps foster an attitude of religious self-reliance. Although the need to train more monks is expressed there also is talk of the need to develop an *upasaka* or lay Sangha and of its appropriateness now in a time and community that lack the economic base for a full-time order.”⁵¹

Conversion as Psychological Transformation

The psychological impact of Buddhism on Ambedkar cannot be easily judged by visible science. One way of judging it is the test laid down in the Buddhist literature, writings and songs. A song of Waman Kardak reads thus:

“Here there is no caste, no useless black-white splits,
 My Gautam Buddha loves each one.
 The door is open for all-*Shudra*, *Chandala*, Weaver,
 Gardener, *Brahman*, Fisherman, all merge
 in the triad of Buddha, Sangha, Dharma.
 There are no separate paths, all are brothers.
 There is no pollution, no harassment,
 in Buddha’s religion.
 There is no shelter for hypocrisy
 in the place of my Buddha.
 There are no gods; there is no fate,
 no deed binding one to a fatal direction.”⁵²

In his article on this singer, Gangadhar Pantavane writes, “Bhimrao (Ambedkar) has placed us in the lap of a life-giving religion and so has awakened psychological independence ... This is the religion of Gautam, who with love won the world, and the spine of this religion is humanity.” The profoundly satisfying psychological meaning of the conversion is clear. The same sense of

pride in Buddhism, and in the same degree the love and respect for Babasaheb Ambedkar is found in the numerous folk songs current in the Neo-Buddhist community. A new development called 'Dalit' literature, is more concerned with the injustices still inflicted upon the lower castes than with religion, even here, two of major leaders of this literary movement and its concurrent social arm, the Dalit Panthers, support the idea that conversion brought psychological freedom. Namdev Dhasal, a forceful poet and once the major figure in the communist faction of the Dalit Panthers, is reported as having said in an interview, thus:

“Conversion to Buddhism... freed the Scheduled castes from mental and psychological enslavement... Religion (has) an attraction for the common man and it was not easy to change his attitude toward it ... (The Buddhists have) liberated themselves from old ideas of *Karma* and destiny and from worship of Hindu gods. To the extent this facilitated their adopting rational attitudes to their condition in society, the chances of their actively striving to change their conditions were better.”⁵³

According to Raja Dhale, the leader of the non-communist, 'Ambedkar' faction of the Dalit Panthers, Buddhist conversion is simply the turning again of the wheel of '*Dhamma*', the return to the Untouchables' former identity. Buddhism is for all ; it is relevant, consistent, complete. But if a Buddhist does not himself turn the wheel of '*Dhamma*' by his own thought , he becomes an Untouchable again.⁵⁴ Raja Dhale's political or literary writing contains little of Buddhism, but it seems that conversion is a necessary part of his own identity. In terms of Eleonor zelliot⁵⁵ the psychological freedom from the sense of being a polluting person is a major achievement. It is because of this that she names her book, "*From Untouchable to Dalit*" a title itself illustrates her observations. *The Times of India*⁵⁶ also confirms this – “They (Buddhists) seem to have got rid of their age-old inferiority complex. They have a fresh sense of identity and a newly acquired confidence. What is more, the youth among them have completely shed the superstitions that had cramped their existence and have adopted a more rational view of life.”

It is a fact that the new class of rational Buddhist youth would not accept too much of rituals . In other words the sort of imitation of Hindu processions, *yatras*, festivals for involving the Buddhist masses is discouraged by educated Buddhists. Of course, it must be said that the mass of Buddhists in the slums of cities, or the landless in rural areas , live in the same fashion

as the desperately poor in any culture. It is difficult here for the Neo-Buddhist to produce a new Buddhist morality or a new Buddhist life-style. The young people have become educated and the Buddhists no longer participate in the Hindu public practices so long denied them, not now out of prohibition but out of a sense of exclusiveness.

It may be noted here that the rationale for conversion was psychological and the benefits have been psychological. But this is not enough. The Conversion has one fact of a multilevel effort. Economic improvement for the masses, freedom from village harrassment and urban prejudice, room at the top for the ambitious and the able — all this must come through some other paths. The conversion seems to have helped create the will to probe every possible means, and it has created the means to preserve group unity. This separatism has been described as self-defeating to Buddhists, however, separatism has marked all movements of an inferior group for equality and this is something new . It seems to be an essential psychological weapon in the maintenace of the group unity necessary for organised efforts. In the words of Eleanor Zelliot: "In choosing Buddhism as the vehicle for separatism, Ambedkar committed his people to wholly Indian, basically, non-violent , rational, potentially, creative way."⁵⁷

Notes and References

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CHAPTER - IX

Protest As An Ideology : An Urge For Social Change

The revival of Buddhism has been the most significant contribution of Ambedkar. It is his legacy to India. He was emphatic about the need of Indians to develop character and integrity, since without this achievement in economic and social fields would make no qualitative change in their lives. Without undergoing such a total change, he believed, the Indians would be unable to defend the country's freedom and integrity. *Dhamma* (morality), according to him, is the foundation of a civilised social life. Unless the government accepts it as its corner stone, the society may either disintegrate or succumb to dictatorship of one kind or the other. In both the cases liberty of the individual would be the first casualty. Equality between man and man would be impossible under a dictatorship based on the negation of the principle of equality. In this context Owen M. Lynch writes :

“Buddhism has arisen at the point where traditional Hindu institutions and caste inequality are tangent to modern secular institutions and democratic equality. At present, the Indian socio-political system is a mixed system containing elements of tradition and modernity, caste and class. Buddhism functions to bridge the gap between these two systems and to soften the transition from one to other. It is religious and it is Indian ... It is also secular and egalitarian.”¹

It is necessary to remember here what the advocates of Marxism try to make out about Ambedkar's non-acceptance of communism (This is dealt with in the next sub-section). The ingredient of Marxian communism are not only German metaphysics, French Politics, and British industrial expansion but also Greek myths and Old Testament archetypal concepts. The Pagan myths and concepts added an irresistible moral flavour to the writings of Karl Marx. Ambedkar, an astute student of human nature and society, too had the insight to visualise the role of religion and myths in human history. “Because Ambedkar embedded his revolutionary message in religion and in religious myth, its appeal to his followers is far greater than that of his

purely political teaching.² In a country where the religious attitude plays a predominant role it was but prudent to introduce revolutionary ideas in a language understood by the people. Buddhism is the language of 'saintly' politics; the language so persuasively spoken by Gandhi and others when appealing to Indian mind."³ And this religion, in addition to being secular and rational, has its roots in the Indian soil. In spite of its having suffered defeat at the hands of revengeful Hindu revivalist, the ideas it had set in motion and the ideas it had postulated had left their indelible mark on the Indian mind. M. Gobindan illustrates as thus.

"The deliberate attempt to wipe out Buddhists did not meet with complete success because ideas and images have their own logic. Whenever Indians thought of freedom they reminisced the great epoch and ideas that moulded it. Re-conversion or designed extermination of Buddhists did not lead to the total extinguishment of the light of Asia from the minds of Indian people. It took different forms and penetrated into their psyche influencing the later events and the periodical emergence of saintly social reformers especially of both the *Vaishnavite* and *Saivite* varieties to preach the doctrine of social equality. A large number of Hindu social reformers were *Pracchanna Buddhas*."⁴

Dhamma and the Marxist Class Struggle

Advocates of Marxist class struggle accuse Ambedkar of not resorting to Marxist class struggle to achieve the welfare of the Untouchable. It is said, as already noted earlier that Ambedkar should have adopted the Marxist technique of class struggle to achieve his objectives. As observed by W. N. Kuber:

"Though Ambedkar had received Western education, still he was not westernised in the sense Nehru was. He pointed out that the Scheduled castes had two enemies: Brahminism and Capitalism; but what was his way to fight them? Not by adopting only parliamentary methods, but by waging class battles in corporation with other like-minded parties. That was the greatest drawback in his political thinking ... His (Ambedkar's) rejection of Marxism and embracing Buddhism were reactionary steps ... It is inconceivable how he could achieve socialism by repudiating Marxism and making Buddhism an alternative to Marxism."⁵

It is evident from Kuber's statement as quoted above that Ambedkar has made three mistakes. In the first place he contended that Nehru had been more westernised than Ambedkar. Secondly, he mistook the better method leading to the "greatest drawback in his political thinking." Thirdly, his ignorance as to the efficacy of Buddhism in preference to Marxism in

bringing about socialism. But all these three objections have no legs to stand upon. As regards the comparison of Nehru with Ambedkar, Kuber betrays colossal ignorance. He does not know that Nehru was a casteist. And this is pointed out by Pattavi Sitaramaya in his introduction to the 'life of Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru' by Y.G.Krishnamurty. Sitaramaya observes that "Pandit Nehru is very conscious of the fact that he is a Brahmin"(p.208, vol.9).⁶ His casteism was also manifested in the passing of the Hindu Code Bill as sponsored by Ambedkar. It was Ambedkar who wanted to reform the Hindu law and thereby remove the social inequalities between man and woman but Pandit Nehru opposed. As a result the Hindu Code Bill could not be passed and Ambedkar resigned from the cabinet. Kuber should have been aware of this.

Kuber's second mistake is that he wanted Ambedkar to adopt the method of "class battles in co-operation with other like-minded parties," in addition to "parliamentary methods." Kuber should have known that other parties were mostly for Manuvite brotherhood. As such they were always opposed to social equality. In this context one could not expect that they would cooperate with Ambedkar to achieve social equality. Here Kuber advocates an impossible thing and he should remember the caveat of Bismarck: "Politics is a game of the possible." So Kuber's advice is unrealistic and untenable in the Indian context. The third mistake relates to kuber's preference of Marxism to Buddhism. It does not stand to reason. How does he call Buddhism a reactionary step?

Ambedkar has analysed both the Marxist and Buddhist methods. According to him Buddhism has twenty five factors in its favour. With regard to the Marxist interpretations of history and the movement of history he points out that there is a great similarity between the Buddhist analysis and the Marxist analysis in identifying the private ownership of property as one of the factors accounting for class conflict and the consequence of sorrow and suffering in the social live. Then he evaluates the Buddhist and Marxist means of undoing this conflict and misery and ushering in an era of conflict - free social living based on equality. He concludes by saying that the means adopted by Buddha were to convert a man by changing his moral disposition to follow the path voluntarily. On the Buddhist side he lists, as means: the *Panhashila* and the *Noble*

Eight Fold Paths. In regard to the Marxist method he points out that they are (i) violent revolution; (ii) the dictatorship of the proletariat. Thereafter he addresses himself to the question, “whose means are most efficacious” ? And he gives the answer: “one has to choose between a government by force and a government by moral disposition.”⁷

It is clear that Ambedkar had a great appreciation for communist society; he expressed his antipathy toward dictatorship and the communist resorting to violence. He believed that Buddhism creates the society aimed at by the communist that is a society based on equality, but without dictatorship or force. However, it may be noted that the class-based state is an instrument for the exploitation of the oppressed class is inherently violent. It maintains itself through violence and any challenge to its existence would be met with violent suppression. In Marx’s words: “Force is the mid-wife of every old society which is pregnant with the new.” In this context it is inevitable for the ruling class to suppress the struggle to maintain itself as in the oppressor, making the social processes violent. What is inevitable is that violence goes on forever. The second objection raised by Ambedkar is that the communist revolution results in dictatorship and that too a permanent dictatorship. To avoid this, Ambedkar suggests that the communist might use “Buddhism as an ultimate aid to sustain communism when force is withdrawn.”⁸ One may therefore conclude that given its rational structure, the Buddhist ‘*Dhamma*’ may play an important role as a moral and spiritual basis for some of the ideological developments required for sociologists living in the post revolutionary phases. It is unfortunate that Kuber has failed to understand this.

Ambedkar’s way of thinking was characterised by Dr. Jatav as social humanism which is supposed to have contained the following principles —(1) Equality among human beings; (2) every human being as an end in himself; (3) right of every human being to social, economic, political and religious freedom; (4) to make every human being free from want and fear; (5) to maintain liberty, equality, fraternity, and strive to secure redemption from oppression and exploitation of man by man, of class by class, and of nation by nation; (6) to stand for a democratic society under a parliamentary system of government; (7) to believe in non-violence as an instru-

ment of social change and adopt peaceful and persuasive methods to avoid class conflicts and the possibility of civil war; (8) to avoid any 'ism' or any theory or dogma in its extreme aspect; (9) need for spiritual discipline ; and (10) firm foundations of universal love, equality and human brotherhood that the Buddha taught.⁹

The Neo-Buddhist Movement As a Protest

The progress of the Buddhist conversion movement is difficult to trace. It has now been almost forty years since Babasaheb Ambedkar took '*diksha*' at Nagpur, and it is fair to say that many serious Buddhists are concerned that there still is not a *Bhikshu* in every locality or that some who converted still follow Hindu practices or that Buddhism has not developed the kind of festivals that make Hinduism such a participatory religion. But the outside observer does see change: there are more and more '*Viharas*, complete with images of the Buddha and Babasaheb Ambedkar, many of them in slum areas. Now, there are perhaps a dozen Buddhist nuns as well as several dozen Marathi speaking *Bhikshus*. Hundreds of Maharastrian Buddhists go to the *Vipassana* meditation retreats offered by the growing movement of Goenka, who now has a permanent centre at Igatpuri. *The Trailokya Baudha Mahasangha Sahayaka Gana* begun by the venerable Sangarakshita as the Indian branch of the Friends of the western Buddhist order is steadily adding new centres and new *dharmacharis* - *dharmachari rather than bhikkhu* since the order stresses by leadership rather than *sangha* of monks. At latest count, the TBSMG maintain a hostels and *Dhamma* work at ten towns in Maharashtra as well as in Goa, Ahmedabad, Agra and Hastinapur. There is a beautiful centre of extensive work at Dapoli near Pune and a retreat center in Nagpur, and the ancient Buddhist cave at Karle is a retreat centre for today's Buddhists.¹⁰

The conversion spot at the *diksha bhumi* (conversion spot) in Nagpur is marked by an enormous *stupa* and it is still being built. There is a training centre of the late venerable Ananda Kausalyayan at that place still continues. Moreover, a branch at Kampti has been established. There have been recent mass conversion at Patna in Bihar under the care of Meiku Ram (Inspector General of Police) in December, 1994 and at Bhopal by the '*Bauddha Mahasangha*' based in Bombay in May, 1994. A Japanese Bhikkhu , Surai Sasi, who lived four years in Nagpur, led a

continuous protests of the Hindu domination of Bodh Gaya, the place of the Buddha's enlightenment. A number of Maharashtra Buddhists joined him.

It may be noted here that the outsider sees more change and progress than the Buddhist inside the Movement. But it is still true that change comes through individual action. There have been overarching organisations and their noble efforts are praiseworthy. Such one has been the *All India Bauddha Dhamma Parishad* which met in Nanded in January 1994 with ten thousand people and eighty *Bhikshus* in attendance. The organiser of this 6th Conference was Dr.S.P.Gaikwad, a long time worker for Buddhism in Maharashtra, who invited the venerable Shasan Rashmi, general Secretary of the *All India Bhikshu Sangh*, to inaugurate the conference.¹¹

Ambedkar's Rationalization of Religious Concepts

Ambedkar considered the pros and cons of four religions before he resolved to embrace Buddhism.¹² He compared mutually Buddha, Jesus, Mohammed and Krishna. The first point of making Buddha separate from the rest was his self-abnegation. Jesus insisted that he was the son of God and that those who wished to enter the Kingdom of God would fail if they did not recognise him as the son of God. Like Jesus Mohammed also claimed that he was the messenger of God on earth and further he insisted that he was the last messenger. Krishna had gone beyond Jesus and Mahommed. He claimed that he was the full incarnation of God on Earth and his followers described him as the Supreme Being. But the Buddha was born a son of man and was content to remain a common man and preached his gospel as a common man. He never claimed any super natural origin or supernatural power, nor did he perform miracles to prove his supernatural power. The Buddha made a distinction between a *margodata* and a *mokshadata*. Jesus, Mahommed and Krishna claimed for themselves the role of *mokshadata*. The Buddha was satisfied with playing the role of a *margodata* or path-finder.

There is a third distinction between the four religious teachers. Both Jesus and Mohammed claimed that whatever they taught was infallible and beyond question. Krishna assumed himself

as a God of Gods and therefore what he taught was a word of God, uttered by God, and they were original and final and the question of infallibility did arise. The Buddha claimed no such infallibility for what he taught. In the *Mahaparinibban Sutta* he told Ananda that his religion and experience was based on reason and experience and that his followers should not accept his teachings as binding merely because they emanated from him. He wished his religion not to be encumbered with dead wood of the past. It is because of this that he gave liberty to his followers to chip and chop as the necessities of the case required. No other religious teacher has shown such courage. They had been afraid of permitting repair.

However, Buddhism holds a unique position in this respect. Ambedkar compared Buddhism with Hinduism thus. Hinduism is a religion, which is not founded on morality. Whatever morality Hinduism has, it is not an integral part of it. In other words morality is not embedded in religion. It is a separate force sustained by social necessities and not by injunction of Hindu religion. As contrasted with Hinduism, Buddhism is morality—it is embedded in religion. Buddhist religion is nothing if not morality. It is true that in Buddhism there is no God. In place of God there is morality. What God is to other religion, morality is to Buddhism. Secondly, here Buddha propounded a most revolutionary meaning of *Dhamma*. The *Vedic* meaning of *Dhamma* did not connote morality. The *Dharma* as enunciated by the Brahmins and as propounded by *Purvaminansa* of Jaimini nothing more than the performances of certain *karmas*. *Dharma* to the Brahmins means the keeping up of observances that is *yajnas*, *yagas* and sacrifices to God. It had nothing to do with morality.

It may be noted here that the Buddha repudiated the *yajnas* as being the essence of religion. He substituted ritualism by morality as the essence of *Dhamma*. Although *Damma* had been used by the Brahmin teachers and by the Buddha, the contents of both are radically different. Indeed, it may be stated that the Buddha was the first teacher in the world, who made morality the essence and foundation of religion.

Thirdly, there is a point of contrast between Hinduism and Buddhism. It lies in the fact that the official gospel of Hinduism is inequality as embodied in the *Chaturvarna*. Against this the

Buddha stood for equality. He stood for equality and was the greatest opponent of *Chaturvarna*. According to Hinduism neither a *Shudra* nor a woman could become a teacher of religion nor could they take *Sannyasa* to realise the God head. On the other hand Buddha admitted the *Shudras* to the *Sangha*. He also admitted women to become *Bhikshunis*. This he did to destroy the practice of inequality.

In this context Ambedkar gave his views which are as follows : - (1) That society must have either the sanction of law or the sanction of morality to hold it together. Without either society is sure to go to pieces. In all societies law plays a very small part. It is intended to keep the minority within the range of social discipline. The majority is left and has to be left to sustain its social life by the postulates and sanction of morality. Religion in the sense of morality ,must therefore, remain as the governing principle in every society. (2) That religion as defined in the first proposition must be in accord with science. Religion is bound to lose its respect and therefore becomes the subject of ridicule and thereby not merely lose its force as a governing principle of life but might in course of time disintegrate and lapse if it is not in accord with science. In other words, religion if it is to function, must be in accord with reason which is merely another name for science. (3) That religion as a code of social morality, must recognise the fundamental tenets of liberty, equality and fraternity. Unless a religion recognise these three fundamental principles of social life religion will be doomed. (4) That religion must not sanctify or ennoble poverty. Renunciation of riches by those who have it may be a blessed state. But poverty can never be. To declare poverty to be a blessed state is to pervert religion and to perpetuate vice and crime, to make the earth a living hell.

Guiding Principles of Ambedkar

In his battle to gain rights for his people, to lift the Untouchables to a status equal to the higher Castes of India, Ambedkar used many techniques, many tactics. In the religious field, he at first encouraged attempts to join in religious festivals, to enter temples, to perform marriages with *Vedic* rites. Later he called his people to a conference on conversion and asked them to leave the fold of Hinduism. For twenty years, following that decision in 1936, Ambedkar played

with the possibilities of entering Islam. Christianity or any one of India's numerous sects within Hinduism. The final decision was to convert to Buddhism, which meant liberty to revive a religion long dead in India.

Ambedkar at first supported special representation for the Depressed Classes in the political field, then joint electorates with Hindus, then separate electorates, and towards the end of his life the workability of the reserved seats for the Scheduled castes for which he had spent so much time and energy. Ambedkar's varying approaches in the religious and political fields, however, reflect the shifting opportunities and the changing political demands around him. There is a remarkable consistency in his total view. From his work the following guiding principles may be derived —

- (i) The Untouchables should revolt because they are slave, and slavery is inherently inhuman. There is no racial difference that marks them off from caste Hindus. If Hindu religious scripture ordains the practice of untouchability, those scriptures should be rejected.
- (ii) Only by acknowledging their slavery, by admitting their inferior position, could Untouchables unify and press for change. Only by Governmental acknowledgement of their deprivation as a class and the correction of that injustice by special treatment on a caste basis could equality eventually be reached.
- (iii) Only Untouchables could understand their own condition and needs, hence only Untouchables themselves should lead Untouchable movements.
- (iv) Education and politics are the chief means to equality; education so that the Untouchable will be able to participate in society on an equal plane; political agitation and participation, so that Untouchables can secure their rights and redress their economic and social grievances by law and political policy.
- (v) Untouchables are totally Indians. No foreign ideology, no foreign religion could help them achieve equality as Indians. India must be free before they are totally free, but their battle

for freedom must never be subservient to other demands.

- (vi) Only as some Untouchables become elite can the whole group be raised . Only if ability and ambition enable some Untouchables to be at the top of the pinnacle can the mass below realise its own potential.¹³

The conversion announcement was made without reference to any religion. Ambedkar seemed to be inclined towards Sikhism explaining later that “conversion to Islam or Christianity would de-nationalise the Depressed Classes.”¹⁴ But after several interactions with the Sikhs as expression of goodwill towards the Scheduled Castes, Ambedkar led the issue of conversion lapse, probably because he felt that the reserved seats won for the Depressed Classes. There is another reason for this. The ideal religion according to him should be free from any taint of caste and untouchability. It would place man, rather than an authoritarian God, at its centre, and would work for man rather than requiring him to live in unquestioning obedience to God. He had no respect for religions, which shrouded themselves in superstitious mystery and insisted that there was no reason why religious teaching should not accord with the principles of reason. Finally, no true religion could sanction or ennoble poverty; instead it should promote the principle of liberty, Equality and Fraternity.¹⁵

One by one the world’s religions failed the test. Islam and Christianity were not only God-based and essentially authoritarian, but they were also foreign. Still a patriot at heart, Ambedkar feared that mass conversion to an “alien” faith could have a de-establishing effect on the Country’s cultural integrity. Sikhism appealed for a while, many of his lieutenants favoured it, if only because it allowed, even encouraged its adherents to bear arms. But he finally rejected that on the grounds it was too closely allied to Hinduism, and even infected with canker of castes.¹⁶ In 1946 when Ambedkar was asked by a Christian minister why his first choice had been Islam rather than Christianity, he said it was not easy to uproot humanity. The Untouchables were willing to stay where they were provided they had political safeguard, and there was no agreement among them as to where to go.¹⁷

Gandhi and Ambedkar in Leadership And the Questions of the Untouchable ¹⁸

On November 29, 1948, nine months after Gandhi's death, the Constituents Assembly of independent India passed a provision in the Constitution of India (article 17) abolishing untouchability. The House resounded with cries of *Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai* (victory for Mahatma Gandhi) — a tribute to Gandhi's 30 year effort to remove untouchability from Indian Society . At the session was present the Chairman of the Drafting Committee for the Constitution, Dr.B.R.Ambedkar, an Untouchable.Three years earlier he had ended his book, *What Congress and Gandhi Have Done to the Untouchables?* with bitter words, “the Untouchables have ground to say: ‘Good God! Is this man Gandhi our Saviour?’”

The irony of the movement was lost on those present — a legalistic measure was taken in the name of Gandhi who had no use for legal means, coupled with this was the lack of recognition for Ambedkar, the Untouchable who had drafted the measure and fought Gandhi to secure legalistic solutions to the problem of untouchability. The amalgamation of the two approaches, however, does symbolise India's continuing attempts to synthesise the ways of Gandhi and Ambedkar in efforts to remove the stigma of untouchability from democratic national life. Both Mohandas K. Gandhi(1869-1948) and Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar(1891-1956) are known to their followers respectively as the “Father of the Nation”, and “the Saviour of Untouchables”.Gandhi publicly put the abolition of untouchability, along with Hindu-Muslim unity, as the essential prerequisite for India's true independence. He also popularised the term “Harijan” (children God) for the Untouchables. Ambedkar objected to the use of the term. This new naming ‘ Harijan ‘ was in fact a newer way of perpetuating the separation of the Untouchables from the rest of the Hindus. For the sake of equality, Ambedkar protested against any kind of exclusiveness. On the day after Ambedkar's death, Nehru described him as a ‘symbol of the revolt against all the oppressive features of Hindu society.’¹⁹

A comparison between Gandhi's action and Ambedkar's reaction has to be done against the background and ideology of each of them . Gandhi's “vindication of castes,” as against its rejection by Ambedkar was interesting.²⁰ Gandhi showed adherence to casteism and advanced

arguments in support of it. He described Ambedkar as “challenge to Hinduism.” Ambedkar replied demolishing Gandhi’s theory altogether. It may be noted that Ambedkar gave a logical defence of the annihilation of caste by his arguments. And he stated that Hindu society seemed to stand in need of a moral re-generation. Finally, he observed: “The intellectual classes to whom the masses look for guidance are too dishonest or too indifferent to educate them in the right direction.”

Gandhi’s statement on untouchability have been collected in several small volumes : *Caste Must Go* ; *All Are Equal In the Eyes of God* ; *None High : None Low* ; *The Bleeding Wound* ; *My Soul’s Agony* ; *My Varnasharma Dharma* ; *The Removal of Untouchability* ; and others, which draw chiefly from his two newspapers, *Young India* and *Harijan*. Descriptions of his work, which sometimes included private essays as well as public pronouncements, have been written by his close associates about the Vaikam Satyagraha,²¹ his experience at the Round Table Conference in London,²² his Communal Award fast²³ and the 1930s anti-untouchability campaigns.²⁴ Material on Gandhi has been taken from these works and the two other sympathetic but frank accounts of Tendulkar,²⁵ and Desai.²⁶ Ambedkar’s underlying beliefs and aims have been derived from his Writings on Caste,²⁷ his testimony to various British Commissions, biographies in English²⁸ and Marathi.²⁹

Gandhi identified his caste as Bania (Merchant) in his autobiography and stated that for three generations his forefathers had not practised the caste occupation but had served as prime ministers in some princely states of Kathiawad peninsula (Gujrat). This was an essentially conservative region in its adherence to traditional patterns of social relations. Hindu and Jaina marchant groups constituted an influential segment of the population. In Gujrat *Banias* were without peer in wealth, influence and piety. They were orthodox.

Gandhi’s autobiography contains only a few references to Untouchables or untouchability. The most striking reference is the story of his insistence on the admission of an Untouchable family to the *ashramas* he had established near Ahmedabad in 1915. On assuming the leadership of the Indian National Congress in 1920 Gandhi made his first public statement on untouch-

ability. They reflect his dual role as *Mahatma* and politician in Indian life. As politician he said: “*Swaraj* is as unattainable without the removal of the sin of untouchability as it is without Hindu - Muslim unity.”³⁰ Here, in regard to the second point namely ‘Hindu-Muslim unity’ history has proved him wrong as may be seen in the emergence of two states — India and Pakistan. Ambedkar was right since he outlined this in his *Pakistan or the Partition of India* in 1940 (vol.8 of Dr. Ambedkar Writings and Speeches) in respect of the first point, namely the fate of untouchability of the Untouchables he stood against them in not allowing them special representation. On the other hand Ambedkar demanded this. Gandhi reiterated: “I do not mind Untouchables, if they so desire, being converted to Islam or Christianity.”³¹ On the other hand he was in favour of special representation for the Sikhs and Muslims.

In this context Gandhi said: “I do not want to be reborn. But if I have to be born, I should be born an Untouchable.”³² One may note here the contradiction between the two roles of Gandhi. This shows that Gandhi was more a politician than a *Mahatma* as seen by Ambedkar. Hence, much can not be made of Gandhi’s protestation as a *Mahatma*. He was primarily an orthodox in his views on caste and he could not extricate himself from Manuvite classes. In other words he believed in *Varnasharama Dharma* as opposed to Ambedkar’s *Annihilation of Caste*. According to Gandhi the status of a caste should remain as before and could not be changed. He stated: ‘One born a scavenger must earn his livelihood by being a scavenger, and then do whatever else he likes. For a scavenger is as worthy of his hire as a lawyer or your President. That, according to me, is Hinduism.’³³

It is evident from the above discussion that Gandhi posed as a saviour of the Untouchables but that he was, perhaps, inconsistent was exposed by Ambedkar in his memorable work, *What Congress and Gandhi Have Done to the Untouchables?* (1945). Ambedkar concluded (in Chapters X and XI Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches, vol.9) —

“Gandhism is a paradox. It stands for freedom from foreign domination, which means the destruction of the existing political structure of the country. At the same time it seeks to maintain intact a social structure which permits the domination of one class by another on a hereditary basis which means a perpetual domination of one class by another.

“The first special feature of Gandhism is that its philosophy helps those who have, to keep what they have and to prevent those who have not from getting what they have a right to get.

“The second special feature of Gandhism is to delude people into accepting their misfortunes by presenting them as best of good fortunes. Following Shakespear one can well say : Plausibility ! Ingenuity ! Thy name is Gandhism.”³⁴

It would thus appear that Gandhi and Ambedkar were opposed to each other so far as the removal of inequality was concerned. Ambedkar won his battle and got representation at the Round Table Conferences in preference to Gandhi and no wonder, Ambedkar became the leader of the Scheduled Castes. The difference between Gandhi and Ambedkar is noted by Nurullah and Naik:³⁵

“Gandhi’s main work lay among the caste Hindus. But however painful, it is a fact of history that he did not have a very large following among the *Harijans* themselves. On the other hand , Dr. Ambedkar was *Harijan* by birth and therefore was destined to be the leader of this people by virtue of his birth, complete identification with their cause and unequal capacity.... The great service of Dr. Ambedkar to the cause is awakening that he created among the *Harijans*. He gave them a leadership, which they sadly lacked and which was very badly needed. He puts the problem of the *Harijans* before the country in its true perspective political, social and economic.”

Savarkar and Ambedkar

Vinayak Damodar Savarkar (1883 - 1966), popularly known as veer Savarkar, was born in 1883 in a middle class Chitpavan Brahmin family in a village named Bhagur near Nasik. Seven generations before him, his ancestors had come to this village from Guhanagar in Ratnagiri district, ‘Savar - wadi’ was a place near Guhanagar, from which came the surname. Vinayak was married (1901) to Mai, the daughter of Chiplankar, a minister in the small Jawahar State near Nasik. Vinayak passed the Marathi fourth standard at the age of ten. For two years he could not be sent to Nasik for higher studies, but during this period he completed at home the course of the first two English standards. He joined the Shivaji High School at Nasik in 1895 and passed matriculation examination in 1901. From an early age Vinayak was a voracious reader of books and newspapers. He learnt by heart passages of Marathi prose and poetry. He even began to compose poems at the age of ten. At Nasik one Barve encouraged him to write essays, one of which was published serially in the weekly, ‘*Nasik Vaibhav.*’ At fourteen he got the first prize in

an elocution competition on *Who was the best of the Peshawar* ? At nineteen he got the first prize for his poem on *'Woes of Child - Widows.'*

In 1899 Vinayak formed his first secret society with a nucleus of three. Next year it expanded into *'Mitra Mela.'* In 1902 Vinayak joined the Fergusson college, Poona, and lived in its residency. He gathered round him a band of young patriots. During vacations he would visit places in Maharashtra and deliver patriotic speeches. In 1905 the partition of Bengal roused a country wide political agitation. Savarkar's group organised a big bonfire of foreign cloth at Poona. Tilak, Paranjpe and Savarkar addressed the gathering. Vinayak was fined Rs.10/- and expelled from the college residency. After graduating in 1905 Vinayak toured extensively to strengthen the *'Mitra Mela'* branches. Savarkar addressed a conference of their delegates, numbering two hundred. He gave the new name *'Abinav Bharat'* to the society. It may be noted in this connection that in front of the family Goddess at Bhagur he took an oath to fight like the Chaphekar brothers who murdered the oppressive plague officer Rand and went to the gallows singing verses from the Geeta , for India's freedom. This oath was later introduced in the secret societies formed by him.

In 1906, on Tilak's recommendation, Vinayak secured Shyamji Krishnavarma's scholarship, and sailed for England . In London Savarkar gathered round him a number of Indian patriotic students. They procured a book on bomb - making and sent cyclostyled copies to India. Savarkar also wrote a Marathi translation of Mazzini's Writings, with a long introduction. It was published in India and became popular.

In May 1907 came the 50th anniversary of Mutiny which Savarkar called the *'War of Independence.'* He and his associates celebrated it in the India House of Shyamji. Savarkar wrote his famous English treatise on this war. The Government proscribed it in its manuscript form, but copies were printed in Holland and widely distributed. Vinayak's leaflet , *'Oh! Martyrs'*, on the heroes of 1857 was also printed and distributed. His articles in the *Indian Sociologist*, the *'Talwar'* and other papers were also translated and reproduced in the *'Yugantar'* of Calcutta and the *'Vihari'* of Bombay.

The revolutionary movement soon spread to other countries. It was in London that Savarkar first met Hardayal before the latter went to America and founded his '*Gadar*' (Revolt) party. Shyamji also left for Paris to carry on revolutionary activities, leaving the charge of the India House in London to Savarkar. In India also, the '*Abhinav Bharat*' was continuing its activities. In 1909 Vinayak's brother, Ganesh, was sentenced to transportation for terrorist activities. This was followed by Madanlal Dhingra, of Savarkar's group, killing Curzon Wylie with a bomb in London.

At a meeting of Indians held in London after this incident, Veer Savarkar alone stood up and opposed the condemnation of Dhingra. He was assaulted on the platform and his eye-glasses broken; blood trickled down from one of his eyes. Next morning '*The London Times*' published Savarkar's letter that nobody should be condemned unless found guilty. Dhingra was tried and sentenced to death. The written statement with him was taken away by the police. But Savarkar had a copy, and he printed and distributed it to the surprise of the authorities.

At the time revolutionaries were very active in India. In 1910 Kanhere shot the collector of Nasik to avenge the transportation of Ganesh. Vinayak was in France, but came back to England after the Nasik murder conspiracy trial was over. He was arrested and put in Brixton jail, where he wrote his '*Will*' and was extradited to India. From the steamer in which he was being taken, he escaped through a porthole and landed in French soil near Marseilles, but guards from the ship captured him. Brought back to India, he was tried by special tribunal on charges of treason and helping the Nasik murder. He refused to recognise the court's authority on the ground that he had been illegally captured from French soil. He was sentenced to two consecutive life - transportation, which meant fifty years. His property was confiscated. The University cancelled his B.A. degree. The Hague International Court was invoked but it refused to interfere.

During his ten years in Andaman jail from 1911 to 1921, Vinayak composed poems, and wrote other discourses and dispelled the superstitions of many of the Hindu convicts. In the Andamans he composed his poem '*Kamala*' in a special blank verse which he named '*Vinayak Vrittva*.' The poem was learnt by heart by prisoners. It was printed under the pseudonym

‘*Vijanavasin*’. Besides he composed other poems such as ‘*Saptarshi*’ and ‘*Virahocchvasa*’, dealing respectively with first night in jail and a yearning for the motherhood. After being released he published the story of his life in the Andamans in ‘*Mazi Janmathep*’ (My transprtation).

He was brought back to India in 1921 and for three years kept in Yervada, Nasik and Ratnagiri jails. He was released in 1924 on condition that he should go out of Ratnagiri and take part in politics. In Ratnagiri jail he wrote his thesis of *Hindutva*, maintaining that everyone whose fatherland and holy land was India is a Hindu. It was smuggled out of jail and published under the pseudonym ‘*Maratha*’. During his stay at Ratnagiri from 1924 to 1937 he carried on a movement of social reform against Casteism and untouchibility. He published essays against the old Hindu taboos regarding food, inter-caste marriages, sea crossing and reconversion. He also started a *Hindu Mahasabha* branch at Ratnagiri.

In 1937 restrictions on Savarkar were removed and he was elected president of the *Hindu Mahasabha Sessions* - 1938(Nagpur), 1939 (Calcutta), 1940 (Madura) , 1941 (Bhagalpur) and 1942 (Kanpur). Although elected in 1943 also to preside over the Amritsar Session, he could not go owing to illness, and Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherji presided. *The Hindu Mahasabha* founded in 1915, was mainly a social organisation. After 1943 Savarkar led a retired life in his home ‘*Savarkar Sadan*’ in Dadar, Bombay. In 1948 he was accused of complicity in the Gandhi murder case but was acquitted by the court. He died 1966 leaving behind his son Vishwas and daughter Prabha.³⁶

Savarkar is to be viewed in the context of various parties coming up according to the circumstances emerging at particular periods of the 19th and 20th centuries. The Indian National Congress was formed in 1885 to rope in the recalcitrant youths of India. But its first President W. C. Bonerjee, did not like to tag social reforms to political independence. This idea of separation of one from the other was against a normal course of events. B. R. Ambedkar criticised this. W. C. Bonerjee in his presidential address at the 8th Session of the Congress in 1892 at Allahabad stated thus :

“ I for one have no patience with those who say we shall not be fit for political reform until we reform our social system. I fail to see any connection between the two. Are we not fit(for political reform) because our widows remain unmarried and our girls are given in marriage earlier than in other countries, because our wives and daughters do not drive about with us visiting our friends, because we do not send our daughters to Oxford and Cambridge ?” (cheers)³⁷

On the above statement of the Congress president Ambedkar wrote the following comments:

“History bears out the proposition that political revolutions have always been preceded by social and religious revolutions. The religious Reformation started by Luther was the precursor of the political emancipation of the European people. In England Puritanism led to the establishment of political liberty... The political revolution was led by social revolution of Buddha. The political revolution led by Shivaji was preceded by religious and social reform brought about by the saints of Maharashtra. The political revolution of the Sikhs was preceded by the religious and social revolution led by Guru Nanak. It is unnecessary to add more illustrations. These will suffice to show that the mind and the soul is a necessary preliminary for the political expansion of the people.”³⁸

That Ambedkar stated the whole truth and Bonerjee only partial truth is born out by the fact two organisations came into being subsequently. Thus the All India Muslim League was established in December 1906 with a view to:

“To support whenever possible, all measures emanating from the Government, and to protect the cause and advance the interest of our co-religionists throughout the country to controvert the growing influence of the so-called Indian National Congress , which has a tendency to misinterpret and subvert British rule in India, or which might lead to that deplorable situation, and to enable our young men of education, who for want of such an association have joined the Congress, to find scope, according to their fitness and ability, for public life.”³⁹

As a counter to the League the *Hindu Mahasabha* came into existence in 1914 . Just as the League was meant to cater to the needs of the Muslims so also did *Hindu Mahasabha* to those of the Hindus. Thereafter, the *Mahasabha* was converted into *Jan Sangh* in 1951. When the president of the *Jan Sangh* met Savarkar, the latter warned not to merge the one with the other. He further developed the concept of Hindudom of the Hindus. There should be an organisation manned by Hindus only to represent *Hindudom* as a whole and to protect the interest, political, social cultural and economic, of the Hindus.⁴⁰

Savarkar himself coined the word *Hindutva*. He distinguished between Hinduism and *Hindutva* thus: "Every person is a Hindu who regards and owns this *Bharat Bhoomi* - this land from the Indus to the seas, as his fatherland and Holyland - the land of origin of his religion and the cradle of his faith." Therefore it follows that the followers of Vedism, Jainism, Buddhism, Sikhism and all Hill - tribe all were Hindus. Around this life-centre moved *Hindutva* which Savarkar defined as not only the spiritual or religious history of the Indian people, the history in full pervasion. Hinduism was only a derivative, a fraction, a part of *Hindutva*. He observed particularly that *Hindutva* was not theocratic, a religious dogma or a creed. It embraced all the departments of thought and activity of the whole being of the Hindu race. Forty centuries, if not more, he stated, had been at work to mould it as its prophets and poets, lawyers and lawgivers, heroes and historians have thought, lived, fought and died just to have it spelled thus.⁴¹ This movement was called *Hindu Sanghatan* or organisation for the solidarity and strength of the Hindu Nation.

A nation is a group of mankind which is bound together by some or all of these common ties such as common religion and culture, common history and traditions, common language and literature, and consciousness of common rights and wrongs, occupying a territory of geographical unity, and aspiring to form a political unit. When a nation realises this ambition, it becomes a state. A state is a governmental unit and may have more nationalities than one under its rule. By 'nationality' C.B. Fawcett, the author of *Frontiers - A study in Political Geography*, understands the group of qualities which characterise the people of any one nation. French nationality, he says, is that group of qualities which distinguish the French from other European people.⁴²

Subsequently, modern *Hindutva* as derived from Savarkar's definition of the Hindu came into being with the help of a fellow Maharastrian K. B. Hedgewar. He provided the essential organisational backup by founding the R. S. S. (Rastriya Sayang Sevak Sangha). The R. S. S. ramified into B. J. P. (Bharatiya Janata Party), V. H. P. (Viswa Hindu Parisad) and V. D. (Vajrang Dal). The common ground on which both Savarkar and Amedkar met was the untouchability. It

appears that Savarkar tried to understand Ambedkar in a sympathetic way. Savarkar started the untouchability - removal movement and invited Ambedkar more than once to attend the meeting organised for the purpose. However Ambedkar refused to be drawn into it, because he wanted to steer clear of big parties such as *Hindu Mahasabha*, Muslim league, and the Congress.

Savarkar carried on intense propaganda in favour of mixed schools through press and platforms and appealed to the District and Provincial authorities for help against the forces of orthodoxy which denied the just, civic, human and legitimate rights to the children of the Untouchables to sit in a public school for all irrespective of castes. Savarkar entreated the orthodox Hindus not to treat their co-religionists worse than dogs and cats. In his words:

“ You insult the Untouchables, because they are ignorant and helpless; but you yield to the unjust demands of the Muslims because they are aggressive. When a Mahar becomes a Muslim or a Christian convert, you treat him as your equal. But as a Mahar he will not receive the treatment . What a shame my countrymen ! he thundered.”⁴³

Savarkar appealed to the District Magistrate to bring the rowdy elements to book. It had its telling effects. The District Magistrate saw things for himself and wrote the following remark during one of his visits to school : “It is the good result of Mr.Savarkar’s lectures that the Untouchable boys have been allowed to sit mixed and get their education without any division being made in their case.”⁴⁴

The *Hindu Mahasabha* got two reconverted girls married to two Hindu gentlemen under the direction of Savarkar who performed the marriage rites himself. This shook orthodoxy to its roots. The question of temple entry for the Untouchables cropped up in 1925. The orthodox Hindus shouted that their religion, god and tradition were in danger. But their religion, tradition and customs welcomed an Untouchable when he became a Mahommed or Minto. The orthodox endures animals like bullocks and buffaloes, endures the presence of a dog or cat in their houses, but not the presence of their co-religionists Hindu Mahars or Bhangis though they were human beings. They fear that their sacred god would be polluted by the mere sight of a Hindu Bhangi. To this Savarkar thundered : “He is not god who can be degraded.” He added that those who regarded such inhuman faith and abhorred the touch of a human being and yet gladly touched

dogs and cats were really fallen and not the Untouchable. Removal of untouchability, he added, thus implied purification and salvation of such misguided orthodox touchable also.⁴⁵

Orthodoxy began to collapse under such ruthless arguments as given above. To pull down the steel walls of orthodoxy, Savarkar started *Pan Hindu Ganesh festivals* in 1925. He transformed the Ganesh festival started by Tilak into a Pan Hindu Festival. An Untouchable was not allowed for ages within the precincts of the Hindu sanctuaries. Gradually the question of temple entry was discussed with wisdom and vehemence during the days of Ganesh festivals. The Untouchables were brought into the hall of the Vithoba Temple in Ratnagiri, the most important temple in Ratnagiri District. At that time the independent movement started by Ambedkar in 1924 for the liberation of the Untouchable came to a head. It hated the sense of dependency and abhorred the feeling of patronage of Caste Hindu reformers. "Tell the slave that he is a slave and he will revolt" was its slogan. Self-elevation and self-help was the symbol on its standard. Ambedkar unfurled the banner of revolt at Mahad in December 1927. The one leader who fearlessly and whole-heartedly supported Ambedkar's struggle was Savarkar.⁴⁶

It is a matter of pride that a Brahmin like Savarkar upheld the struggle for human rights by the Untouchables. He stated that Untouchability must be condemned and abolished not only as the need of the hour but also as the command of the true religion. It was not only a policy or an expediency but as a matter of justice - not only as a matter of obligation, but also as a service to humanity. In this light Savarkar declared that the pious and bounded duty of the Hindu world at large was to restore full human rights to their co-religionists. The Untouchables responded well to the bold stand taken by Savarkar for the deliverance. He was invited by them to preside over the Conference held at Malvan, a leading town in the southern part of Ratnagiri district. The Conference sang *Vedic* hymns in a body. Savarkar distributed sacred thread among the so-called Untouchable Hindus and declared amid great applause:

"A battle royal has been raging for the last seven generations over the right of studying the *Vedas*. Here are the *Vedas*. Here is the sacred thread. Take these two. Is that all? Even non-Hindus read the *Vedas*. Why should not the Hindu Mahars read them? The fend over this problem was a useless task. Let us expiate the sins we committed. We are responsible for our political subjugation. That is the past. Now let us declare an oath that we shall

rectify our past blunders and wean back our weal, wealth and glory. The people who regard untouchability which has been a disgrace to humanity as a part of their religion are really the fallen people.”⁴⁷

Savarkar told the Conference that he would have been very happy, had it been possible for Ambedkar to preside over the conference and distribute the sacred thread, since it has been his practice to do so on such occasion. As a result the sacred threads were distributed next day. P.N.Rajbhoj, a Depressed Class leader from Poona took the leading part in the Conference and observed: “I was really sceptical of the Savarkarian movement at the beginning. My contact and discussion with Barrister Savarkar and my personal observation have thoroughly convinced me of its far-reaching effect. I extremely rejoice to declare that this famous leader of the political revolutionaries is also an out and out social revolutionist.”⁴⁸

Dr. Ambedkar had been to Ratnagiri in the month of September, 1929 in connection with the murder trial at the District Session Court. Savarkar seized this opportunity and extended to Ambedkar an invitation signed by hundreds of citizens to address a meeting at the Vithoba temple, a very important centre where battles for social reforms had been going on for the past three years. The orthodox ran for an injunction. Just then Babasaheb Ambedkar received a telegram from Bombay demanding his presence, and Ratnagiri lost an opportunity to hear speeches of two great revolutionaries from the same platform. In November 1929, an event of far-reaching consequences took place. Following a special order the City Magistrate was present to see that the proceeding of the public meeting, held in the Vithoba temple of Ratnagiri to decide the question of the entry of the Untouchables into the Vithoba temple came off peacefully. The momentous meeting began, where Savarkar’s convincing speech swept away doubts, hesitation and misgivings which were lurking in the minds of the opponents.⁴⁹

The Magistrate appointed to maintain law and order was carried off his faith by the force and faith of Savarkar’s speech so much so that he exclaimed: “Now who and what remain to be convinced?” None came forward. It was a unique triumph for Savarkar. The Untouchables entered the Vithoba temple step by step, singing gracefully and gratefully the glory of “one god, one goal, one language one country and one nation.” Savarkar composed a song in Marathi for the occasion. It read:

“ The Impurity of ages is gone
 Scripture born stamp is torn
 The age-long struggle is ended
 The net enemies shredded
 The slave of ages hoary !
 Now is a brother of glory!”⁵⁰ (Translated)

Prohibition of one caste from dining with another was the keystone upon which the arch of the caste system mainly rested. Savarkar contemplated inter-caste Pan Hindu dinners. As usual orthodox Hindus opposed the idea vehemently. Savarkar silenced the opposition by throwing at their face extracts from their scriptures and holy works that sang that Lord Krishna dined with Vidur, a son born of a maid servant and their great *Brahman Rishi*, Durvasa, dined among with numerous disciples at Pandava’s who were *Kshatriyas*. The movement developed gradually from private quarters to public places. Thereafter, came the first Public Pan-Hindu dinner popularly known as *Sahabhojan* in a theatre in 1930.⁵¹

Ambedkar’s ‘*Janata*’ dated 11 May, 1931 appreciated Savarkar’s advice to the Mahars and other Untouchables. Savarkar admonished them : “Your weakness is worse than the wickedness of the Caste Hindus. Always treat with equality and kindness all the sub-castes amongst your own Depressed Classes. That is also your duty. Forget it not !” A few days earlier Savarkar supported the Nasik Satyagraha conducted by Ambedkar’s followers and appealed to the Nasik Caste Hindus to open the Kalaram temple to the Depressed Class Hindus. As regards inter-caste marriages , Savarkar did not approve of compulsory and forced marriages. He said: If a Hindu girl, selects as her husband any Hindu youth who does not belong to her caste or vice versa and if the couple is otherwise fit for the marriage should not be condemned, nor the couple be regarded as outcaste on that alone!”⁵²

It may be noted here that Ambedkar appreciated the work which Savarkar had been doing in the field of social reform. However, he added : If the Untouchables are to be part and parcel of the Hindu society, then it is not enough to remove untouchability; for that matter you must de-

stroy *Chaturvarna*. I am glad that you are one of the very few who have realised this.⁵³

Protest Ideology and Emancipation from Exploitation

Ours is an 'idea-struck age', and liberal democracy is the typical product of it. Democracy, it may be noted, is the fruit of an ideocracy, which means that man has depended on ideas for his development. Here a distinction is to be drawn between 'ideology' and 'ideocracy'. In other words 'ideology' is abstract whereas 'ideocracy' tends to be concrete. The one is the process and other is the product. 'Ideology' was coined by Destutt de Tracy in 1796⁵⁴ to indicate the science of the study of ideas. In this context Ambedkar's ideology is to be explored as shown below.

It has already been discussed that Ambedkar's was an ideology of protest. This ideology had a paradigm - who protests against Whom for What Reasons with What means and to What purpose? The main propositions of the Ambedkar ideology at the time of his death in 1956 are noted below:⁵⁵

1. We the Untouchables of India, protest.
2. As Untouchables we may belong to the same religion as the caste Hindus, but we do not belong to the same society.
3. Untouchability emanates from and reaffirms a philosophy of inequality. Brahminism is the culprit responsible for this situation and Hinduism is but Brahminism. It is inflexible and it frustrates all attempts of reforms.
4. As Untouchables, we have historically been a clearly identifiable, exploited group, we are a minority in need of special protective measures — reserved seats, reservations in government jobs and in admission to educational institutions.
5. We demand equity and justice, not pity and favour.
6. Pious resolutions and half-hearted ameliorative measures will not be enough or acceptable to us. Political independence has not solved any of our problems or met our needs. We will now have to explore new linkages and new strategies to attain our social, economic and political goals.
7. We have now got adult franchise reserved seats in the legislatures, reservation in jobs and educational institutions. But the discrimination against us continues.
8. Our problems are not those of any other group, which is poor. They are problems of en-

forced social backwardness, continued discrimination and economic exploitation.

9. We continue to assert our separate identity and demand a more effective share in political power. For this we need to continue to educate, organise and agitate.
10. We have now reached the conclusion that a life of dignity is not being attained within Hinduism. We will seek it in a new religion-Buddhism.

The manifest goal of the Ambedkar ideology was to sensitise the Untouchables to their own deprivation, to make them socially and politically articulate, to organise them socially and to agitate on their behalf to ensure immediate modifications in social and civic arrangements to benefit the deprived. If fulfilled, these objectives would serve in direct social functions. Indirectly, as and to the extent the objectives specified were attained, the total social order would undergo change and, in the long run, would be consolidated on the basis of the new value of equality and opportunity for all in place of the earlier value of inequality of status even at the point of birth. As Ambedkar stressed, the prevalence of social equality was in part a function of social morality taught by a particular religion. But it was equally a function of the general widening of the economic opportunity. In this context a historical sense of the sphere of freedom and of equality may widen areas of life depending on material as well as moral factors. An ideology stressing the right of particular groups to social equality has a certain universal and perennial function in society.⁵⁶

In this connection the strength and weakness of the movement may be noted thus. Constitutional and legal provisions have certainly given the Untouchable a voice and a share in the political power structure. The economic and social subjugation of the Untouchables, particularly in the rural areas, is far from over and while political power provides an opportunity, it does not guarantee that the elected leaders of the Untouchables can or will exert themselves to change the ground realities. There is the problem of political co-operation, of the alienation of the urban, educated elite among the Untouchables from the crude, brute force used by the upper caste landed gentry in the semi-feudal rural economy for example *Ranaveer Sena* in Bihar. The burning down of Untouchables bustees, the killing and maiming of 'recalcitrant' untouchables, the atrocities against Untouchable women have not ceased. The annual toll of lives lost is in

terms of thousands and the inadequacy of formal legal provisions in the absence of a change in the existential reality of economic dependence and a change in social attitudes is all too evident.

Political means have to be utilised, but a change in the social and economic content is equally necessary. It is unfortunate that there has been no Untouchable leader of Ambedkar's stature, dedication or integrity to take his place and while the condition of some of the Untouchable groups, particularly in the urban industrial areas has improved, the condition of the others has probably worsened as a result of fear and the effort of the upper castes to screw the lid tight against the possibility of new workers on land. This situation is not to be interpreted as a failure of the Ambedkar ideology, although the partial success seems to be continuing in most movements for basic social change.⁵⁷

The Ambedkar ideology is otherwise called 'Ambedkarism' that is the theory of Dalit Liberation. 'Ambedkarism' is today a living force in India such as Marxism is : it defines the ideology of the Dalit movement and, to a large extent, and even broader anti-caste movement. Yet just as 'Marxism' as a trend in the working movement has to be distinguished from the actual theorising of Karl Marx, so the urge to abolish the social and economic exploitation involved in caste and capitalism (which is the main significance of 'Ambedkarism' as a general movement ideology) must be distinguished from the complex grappling of an individual theoretician with the interpretation of Indian reality. Some of Ambedkar's themes stand out : First, an uncompromising dedication to the needs of his people, the Dalits (as he said once in response to a legislative council claim that he should think as 'part of a whole' - 'I am not a part of a whole ; I am a part apart') which required the total annihilation of the caste system and the *Brahmanic* superiority it embodied; Second, an almost equally strong dedication to the reality of India — but an Indian whose historical - cultural interpretation he sought to wrest from the imposition of a 'Hindu' identity to understand it in its massive, popular reality; Third, a conviction that the eradication of caste required a repudiation of 'Hinduism' as a religion, and adoption of an alternative religion, which he found in Buddhism, a choice he saw as not only necessary for the masses of Dalit who followed him but for the masses in India generally; Fourth, a

broad economic radicalism interpreted as 'socialism' (state socialism in some versions; democratic socialism' in others) mixed with and growing out of his democratic liberalism and liberal dedication to individual rights; Fifth , a fierce rationalism which burned through his attacks on Hindu superstitions to interpret even Buddhism he came to in rationalistic, 'liberation theology' forms; And finally, a political orientation which linked a firmly autonomous Dalit movement with a constantly attempted alliance of the socially and economically exploited (Dalits and *Shudras*, 'worker' and 'peasants' in class terms) projected as an alternative political front to the Congress party which, he saw as the unique platform of 'Brahminism' and 'Capitalism'.⁵⁸

The Flowering of Dalit Culture and Literature

Dr.Ambedkar as the Father of Dalit literature.

Some researchers have tried to trace the origin of the Dalit literary movement to the Buddhist period. Some hold that the originator was the saint poet Chokhamela(14th Century A.D.) Some mention the name of Mahatma Phooley (1828-90) and some give the credit to Prof. S.M. Mate(1886-1957). The researchers maintain that though the expression 'Dalit literature' did not exist in the ancient and medieval period , concern for Dalits and about the injustice meted out to them was first reflected in the writings of these authors and as such they can be called pioneers of the Dalit literary movement.

While both Goutam Buddha and Mahatma Phooley revolted against the unjust class structure and their teachings and ideas are inspiring even today, but historical and objective examination of the situation reveals that it was Ambedkar who infused his ideas and outlook towards a new life enabling the beginning of Dalit literature. His articles in some of his own Marathi periodicals, '*Mooknayk*,' '*Bahishkrit Bharat*,' '*Janata*,' '*Samata*' and '*Prabuddha Bharat*' and though his major writings in English led to the beginning. It is significant that Dalit literature owes its origin to a revolutionary struggle for social and economic change. This explains the various aspects of serious thought in Dalit literature. And this literature is closely associated with the hopes for freedom of a group of people, who as Untouchables are victims of social, economic and cultural inequality.

Dalit literature is thus characterised by a feeling of rebellion against the establishment of negativism . To study Dalit literature from only a literary or academic point of view fails to present a complete perspective in its assessment. This over all perspective is lacking in the review of Dalit literature so far.⁵⁹

It is to be admitted that Ambedkar through his struggle against untouchability and socio-economic inequality liberated the Dalits from mental slavery and abject wretchedness and thereby giving them new self-respect. The Dalit literary movement has now reached the various parts of India and the literature is now growing in almost all Indian languages. It is no coincidence that its beginning took place in Marathi language in Maharashtra. Ambedkar was from Maharashtra and the Dalit multitude there supported him fearlessly. It may be said that Ambedkar shaped the tradition of revolutionary thinking of almost a generation of Dalits who now have occupied high places. The literary manifestation of this social awareness is Dalit literature.⁶⁰

The title of Zelliott's ⁶¹ book *From Untouchable to Dalit* explains the transformation effected by Ambedkar so as to bring in Dalit literature. The term "downtrodden" is a fairly accurate translation of dalit, but "downtrodden Panthers" and "downtrodden Literature" seem ridiculous because it carry's none of the dignity and pride of the Marathi word. Dalit literature acquaints people with the caste system and untouchability in India , its appalling nature and its system of exploitation as explained by Arjun Dangle⁶² that—Dalit is not a caste but a realisation and is related to the experiences, joy, sorrows, and struggles of those in the lowest stratum of society.

As a result of this realisation, experiences are not simply stated but their meanings are also explained. It is out of this realisation that the Dalits consider works such as the poetry of Narayan Surve, '*Ek Gav Ek Panvatha*' by Baba Adhav or '*Jevha Manu's Jaga Hoto*' by Godavari Parulekar as their own. They also feel affinity to the *Samantar* literary movement in Hindi. On the other hand the works of some Dalit writers are seen as being suffocated by White-collar or traditional values.

Though caste is at the root of most Dalit literature, as its literary manifestation is based on its experiences, the horizons of Dalit literature are expanding. The non-Dalit writers do not like to call themselves Dalits. As a result the process of expansion of art is retarded. To use Marxist jargon, many authors avoid joining the 'D' class. This is not only true of non-Dalits but also of the educated and the secured among the Dalits themselves. The word 'Dalit' traditionally connotes wretchedness, poverty and humiliation. Hence the term has become derogatory. The non-Dalits therefore pose the question : why should we call ourselves Dalits? But with reference to Dalit literary movement the term 'Dalit' means masses exploited and oppressed economically, socially, culturally, in the name of religion and castes. Dalit writers hope that this exploited group of people will bring about a revolution in this country.⁶³

The Dalit movement entered a new phase on December 25, 1927. On this day Ambedkar began an agitation by the Dalits to draw water from the *Chavadar* Lake at Mahad. The water of this lake had been reserved for caste Hindus. The *Manusmriti* was burnt here as a mark of Dalit protest against untouchability. The historic speech delivered by Ambedkar contained his vision of the Dalit movement including Dalit literature. As explained by him, the speech was as follows: ⁶⁴

“We are not going to *Chavadar Lake* to drink its water. We are going to the Lake to assert that we too are human beings like others. This meeting has been called to set up the norm of equality. No parallel to it can be found in the history of India. We shall have to go to the history of France on the continent of Europe. On 24 January 1789 King Louis XVI had convened, by royal command, an Assembly of Deputies to represent the people of the kingdom. The Assembly sent the King and the Queen of France to the guillotine; prosecuted and massacred the aristocrats; drove their survivors into exile. It confiscated the estates of the rich and plunged Europe into war for fifteen years. Such as accusations levelled against the Assembly by the Historian. In my view, the criticism is misplaced; further, the historians of this school have not understood the gist of the achievement of the French National Assembly. That achievement served the welfare not only of France but also of the entire European continent. If European nations enjoy peace and prosperity today, it is for one reason : the revolutionary French National Assembly convened in 1789 set new principles for the organisation of society before the disorganised and decadent French Nation of its time.

“Our Hindu society is based on the system of castes. A similar system of classes existed in the France of 1789: the difference was that it was a society of three castes. The important thing is that the caste or class system is similar. The inequality of our caste system was also

to be found in the French social system: it was economic in nature. The thing to bear in mind is that there is a great similarity between the French National Assembly that met on 5 May, 1789 at Versailles and our meeting today. The similarity is not only in the circumstances in which the two meetings took place but also in their ideas. The third proclamation is the most important of the three; it might be called the king of (all) these proclamations. This proclamation has 17 clauses, of which the following are important: -

- (1) All human beings are equal by birth; and they shall remain equal till death. They may be distinguished in status only in the public interest. Otherwise, their equal status must be maintained.
- (2) The ultimate object of politics is to maintain these human birthrights.
- (3) The entire nation is the mother-source of sovereignty. The rights of any individual, group or special class unless they are given by the nation cannot be acknowledged as valid on any other ground, be it political or religious.
- (4) Any person is free to act according to his birthright. Any limit placed upon this freedom must be only to the extent necessary to permit other persons to enjoy their birthrights. Such limits must be laid down by law: they cannot be set on the grounds of religion or on any other basis than the law of the land.
- (5) The law will forbid only such actions as are injurious to society. All must be free to do what law has not been forbidden by law. Nor can anyone be compelled to do what the law has not laid down as a duty.
- (6) The law is not in the nature of bounds set by any particular class. The right to decide what the law shall be rests with the people or their representatives. Whether such a law is protective or punitive, it must be the same for all. Since justice requires that all social arrangements be based on the equality of all, all individuals are equally eligible for any kind of honour, power and profession. Any distinction in such matters must be owing to differences of individual merit, it must not be based on birth.

“ I feel our meeting today should keep the image of the French National Assembly before the mind. We need to pull away the nails which hold the frame work of caste bound Hindu Society together, such as those of the prohibition of inter-marriage down to the prohibition of social inter course so that Hindu society becomes all of one caste. Otherwise untouchability cannot be removed nor can equality be established. None can doubt that the responsibility of letting the revolution take place peacefully rests more heavily on our opponents than on us. Whether this social revolution will work peacefully or violently will depend wholly on the conduct of the caste Hindus.”

Ambedkar said, “The Hindus wanted the *Vedas* and they sent for Vyasa who was not a caste Hindu. The Hindus wanted an Epic and they sent for Valmiki who was an Untouchable. The Hindus wanted a constitution, and they sent for me —(Marathi, 1978, p.225).”

The above quotation hints at the culture of the Dalits, since ex-Untouchables and other

low-castes involved in a contemporary cultural movement identified themselves as Dalit or Downtrodden or Oppressed and not as Untouchables, Scheduled castes, or Harijans. Hence the term 'Dalit' connotes emancipation from untouchability. The Dalits feel that they do have and have had a culture of their own, no way inferior to any one else's tradition. They have built up new folk beliefs around three ideas : (i) the idea that they are and were creators of culture from the very ancient times; (ii) the idea that they were "Lords of Earth", the original inhabitants of their areas shunted aside by the Aryan invaders; corollary with this is a disbelief in hereditary pollution and purity, disbelief in *Karmic* rebirth ; and (iii) the idea that they were and are a militant people, with heroes who used their strength in self-sacrificial way for their people.⁶⁵

Buddhism has a tremendous impact on the beliefs of the Dalits. Belief among the Mahars after their embracing Buddhism in 1956 changed because of the growing rational thinking among them. Earlier they used to rely on magic or oath in the name of deity or dead soul. After 1956 their earlier beliefs began to disappear. As a result they began to consult doctors and undergo operation wherever required. Practically the younger generations look from a rational angle. In this context the earlier rituals also began to discontinue, when they were not unconformity with Buddhism. In many places they constructed *Vihars* (Buddhist temple) and installed Buddha's statue in them and threw their gods and goddesses from the temple. After embracing Buddhism they observed mainly the following five principles - (a) *Buddha Jayanti* or *Vaishak Purnima*, (b) *Vijaya Dasami*, the day of their embracing Buddhism, (c) 14th April, the birth day of Ambedkar and (d) 6th December, the day on which Ambedkar died.⁶⁶

Other Untouchable groups also have claims their cultural achievement. Many of the Bhangi caste of the North call themselves '*Valmiki*', tracing their lineage to the author of the *Ramayana*, supposedly an outcaste and a criminal before his conversion by the inadvertent repetition of the name of Rama. There seems to have been no building of literary tradition based on this claim, but an effort of the much scorned Bhangi sweepers to elicit pride for self-improvement (Kolenda, 1960). (The recognition of Vyasa, son of a Brahmin sage and a fisherman girl, supposed author of the *Vedas* and of the *Mahabharata*, as a fellow Dalit is found, however, only

among contemporary Dalit intellectuals and does not seem to be traditional). A poem by Daya Pawar illustrates the way in which a modern poet thinks of Valmiki as a betrayer of his low-caste identity (Pawar, 1976, pp. 34-5). His reference to Shambuk relates to the story of Rama's punishing the *Shudra* Shambuk for hearing the *Vedas* :

Oh Great Poet

Oh Valmiki

Should you sing the praises of Ramarajya

Because you're the great poet of poets?

Seeing the heron's wounded wing

Your compassionate heart broke out in lament.

You were born outside the village

In a shunned neighbourhood...

where misery itself was born...

Never festooned with fruit or flower.....

The dejected faces furrowed with care

Is it true you never heard

Their lament as they cried for liberation?

One Shambuk of your own blood

Caught fire, rose in anger .

Oh great poet ,

Singing the praises of Ramrajya ,

Even there the icy cliff of humanity towered up!

Oh great poet,

How then should we call you a great poet?⁶⁷

“Dalit culture” has now become something of a fashionable article of faith. ‘*The Dalit Voice*’, an english weekly from Bangalore, claims from time to time that *Devadasi* culture, which includes the classical dance from *Bharata Natyam*, is a Dalit forum of creativity. The June 1986 issue of ‘*Religion and Society*’, a scholarly journal published from Bangalore by Christian Insti-

tute for the study of society and religion , is entirely devoted to Dalit culture , Hindu as well as Christian. Even more striking , however, are the ways in which today's Dalits encourage cultural creativity. The poem by Daya Pawar on Valmiki indicates belief in the Dalit creative past and is itself an act of creation. Since the early 1970s short stories, novels, poetry and most recently autobiography have followed from Dalit pens in great quantity. Dalit theatre have followed close on heels of Dalit poetry and short stories. '*Dalit Rangabhumi*' is the first Dalit theatre based in Pune. It has been followed by dozens of others in Maharashtra and outside. The Delhi-based Ahwan theatre, a Cinema and mass media group has "definite plans to provide extensive exposure to rich cultural heritage and traditional Dalit and folk arts of the country. In this context there have been several drama conferences. It is said that there are now more forty Dalit theatre groups. There has been cultural activity amongst Dalit women in Bombay, who organised the *Dalit Stri Samwadini* (Dalit Women's Dialogue) in 1986. A Dalit art exhibition was held in Nagpur in 1979. It is believed that the sculptors of the classic period of Indian art were an Untouchable caste.⁶⁸

Dalit culture is related to Dalit literature, because both are products of imagination. Dalit literature is marked by revolt and negativism, since it is closely associated with the hopes for freedom of a group of people who, as Untouchables are victims of social, economic and cultural inequality. It is no coincidence that the Dalit literary movement began in Maharashtra, the birth-place of Ambedkar's movement. His revolutionary ideas stirred into action all the Dalits in Maharashtra and gave them new self-respect. Dalit literature is the literary expression of this awareness.⁶⁹

The term 'Dalit literature' can be traced to the first Dalit literary conference in 1958, which passed a resolution defining the term. However, this conference went almost unnoticed, thus proving beyond doubt that the Dalit class was indeed neglected. The sixties saw many new things happening in Marathi literature. A poet-Narayan Surve - wrote about the problems of workers. The little magazine movement also took root and flourished in this decade. Marathi literature made its acquaintance with the angry young man. In Dalit literature, Anna Bhau Sathe

and Sankarrao Kharat were already established but the movement gained great momentum from the short stories of Bagurao Bagul. His collection of stories, *Jevha Mee Jaat Chorli Hoti* (when I had concealed my caste) made such waves in the Marathi literary world that some critics hailed it as the epic of the Dalits which others compared it to the jazz music of the Blacks. Bagul's stories taught Dalit writers to give creative shape to their experiences and feelings.

In the seventies, thinking Dalit critics began to theorise on Dalit literature and its role. A number of young writers, full of a new awareness, had started writing for periodicals like 'Asmitadarsha'. The poets Daya Pawar, Waman Nimbalkar, Tryambak Sapkate, Arjun Dangle, Namdeo Dhasal, Umakant Randhir and J.V.Pawar and short story writers Tarachandra Khandekar, Yogiraj Waghmare, Avinash Dolas, Yogendra Meshram and Bhimrao Shirvale to name a few out of many who developed the foundation of Dalit literature.

But Dalit writers began to realise more and more that there was no point in merely writing provocative poetry against injustice. The Dalit writers had also become familiar with the Black movement and its literature in the U. S. A. The result was that the youths like Namdeo Dhasal, Arjun Dangle and J. V. Pawar took the initiative and established a political movement called the 'Dalit Panthers' in Bombay in 1972. The leaders of the Dalit Panthers were all writers. Thus a wave of writings describing experience in provocative language swept Marathi literature. This was probably the first time in India that creative writers became politically active, and formed an organisation. Dalit literature is associated with a movement to bring about change.⁷⁰

Since the conversion to Buddhism in 1956 the Mahars of Maharashtra have entered upon an extraordinary literary movement that has made major contribution to Marathi literature. 'Dalit Sahitya' (the literature of the oppressed) includes short stories, novel and drama, but has been most effective in poetry and autobiography.⁷¹ The poems reflect something of 'new past, new future,' in that they refer either to the proud Buddhist of India, reinterpreting it for today's need or to the conflict between the past tradition and the contemporary movement. In this context Daya Pawar sees *Angulimal* as the symbol of the fierce society around him. Thus Daya Pawar writes a poem named

“*Siddharthanagar*”

O Siddharth!

The town of your name
in the twentieth century
has been struck by the tyrannical plough of power.
Each hut
is uprooted like a worthless stone.

Over the sign board with your name on it
a police van was driven.

Clothing , mats in each hut—
the huge earnings of umpteen generations –
scattered by police clubs.

A bunch of naked little children,
screaming and moaning, came onto the road.

O Siddartha,

You made a tyrant like Angulimal
tremble .

We are your humble followers.

How should we confront
this ferocious Angulimal?

O Siddharth,

If we fight tooth and claw,

Try to understand us.

Tryambak Sapkate takes a diametrically opposite view of the figure of *Angulimal*, sees himself becoming the violent man who wore his victim's finger in a garland around his neck .

This is shown below —

When I came into this world

I was crying .

The world was laughing.

Two hands caressed me

On the back , on the stomach.

.....

I tried to catch hold of this turning world.

My hands were brushed off.

I fell.

The world laughed.

pointing its fingers at me.

Tears dried

Feet froze

Gathering all strength

I laughed at this world

Ha.....ha.....ha.....ha...

The world trembled

at my laugh.

.....

Angulimal .

I am Angulimal...

I am Angulimal...

While much of the Dalit literature is bitter, a strain of humour and optimism through the work of almost every poet. Narayan Surve is not a Mahar, but a casteless orphan from the streets of Bombay. His poem, '*For I am Brahma*' expresses beautifully one of the themes of Dalit literature— the betrayal of high Hindu concepts by the facts of India's social reality. This is

illustrated by the following lines :

I will protect all that belongs to Brahma,

all that is Brahma.

I'll undo the knot of time.

.....
The mole's mountain , the mountain's mole —
they 're both inside of me.

For I am Brahma. I hold the world together —
I , the helpless one,
without even a room to call my own.

Namdeo Dhasal in his poem '*Poverty as My Own Independent Piece of Land*' explained the position of the Dalits as follows —

Destiny willing, the form may change or may not.

Even then poverty itself is my own independent piece of land

And as I cultivate it my days arise

And my days fall.....

Earlier men could have wretched slaves....

I refused to make compromise with the later feudal lords

My limbs of a forest were fostered by geometric contagion

Drenched me in gentle innocence

I am the headless body of a rat with a pyramid rising above me

Meat and fish

Rice and eggs

Bootleg liquor and the flowers of white champak

Kisses, embraces, coattail postures, jewels,

And beds, and a house with a leaking roof,

And the rhythm of lullaby.

I am squeezed : in my yearning

Feminine beauty flowers

The Mona Lisa painted by Leonardo da Vinci

In the service of A-B

Rain driving down in sheets, a dying cigarette,

a dehydrated dancing girl,

Contrasting colour harmony

I too have poverty as my own independent piece of land...

A human being is not inherently Dalit, neglected or Untouchable. It is the system that degrades him in this fashion. When the system is changed, the human being regains his human essence. Therefore literature that portrays the human being is, in fact, not Dalit literature at all. Even after realising this, a major literary stream calls itself, in all seriousness, Dalit literature. The caste-ridden society and its literature have viewed the Dalit as someone who is mean, despicable, contemptible and sinful due to his deeds in his past life; he is seen as sorrowful in this life, poor humiliated and without history, one whose ancestors could never hope to acquire respectability in either temples or scriptures. This, in fact, is suffering, misery, servitude, humiliation, neglected and contempt of the Indian society as a whole, and Dalit literature carries the burden upon its head.

Dalit literature have accepted 'Dalit hood' (i.e., the status of the oppressed or the down-trodden), the way the Buddha accepted sufferings, or the way so many revolutionaries accepted the status of the oppressed. Day dreaming, and the establishment and portrayal of everything that belongs to it, may appear to be beautiful (due to the power attached to it, of course); but it cannot be forgotten that this establishment enslaved women and *Shudras* and condemned them to the status of Untouchables. Ambedkar was the essence of social revolution itself and embodied the mythical value-structure and ideal of the Dalits. It is not that he became the leader of the Dalits because he believed them to be Mahars, i.e. lowcaste. He became their leader in order to eradicate suffering, untouchability and caste distinctions. It was not that he became a 'Dalit' because

he did not respect the ideology based on the concepts of deeds or sins of past life which strengthened distinctions based on birth, caste, *varna* and class. He was a great revolutionary and a great scholar, and yet he called himself an Untouchable Dalit. It is for the same reason that writers — of today as well as tomorrow — whose works have the potential to be placed in the tradition of great literature of the world, call themselves Dalit writers. The established literature of India is Hindu literature. But it is Dalit literature which has the revolutionary power to accept new science and technology and bring about a total transformation. ‘Dalit’ is the name for total revolution; it is revolution incarnate.⁷²

Was the Neo-Buddhist movement inevitable ?

It may be noted that “nothing in history is inevitable, except in formal sense that, for it has happened otherwise, the antecedent causes would have had to be different,” as observed by E. H. Carr.⁷³ Carr further adds : “As a historian, I am perfectly prepared to do without ‘inevitable’, ‘unavoidable’, ‘inescapable’, and even ‘ineluctable’. But let us leave them to poets and metaphysicians.” The reason is, as pointed out by Sri Aravinda is “Life is not a rigid exercise in logic.” This may be illustrated by courts’ order restoring conjugal rights to the estranged husband and wife. Either partner may not agree to the judicial order, since its implementation on his or her free will. Determinism is to be reconciled with free will. To have this, law makes detour and show causes the recalcitrant partner why he or she should not be held up for contempt of court, bypassing the main issue relating to restoration of conjugal life.

In this context Carr deals with two “savory red herrings which have been drawn across our path – one labelled ‘Determinism in History’, the other ‘Chance in History.’”⁷⁴ And he adds: “History is a process of selection in terms of historical significance ... Interpretation in history is always bound up with value judgement, casualty is bound up with interpretation.”⁷⁵ Carr’s interpretation leads to the interpretation of past, present and future. And our “present has no more than a notional existence as an imaginary dividing line between the past and the future.” This is so “since past and the future are the parts of the same time span, interest in the past and interest in future are inter-connected.”⁷⁶ In this light history begins with the handing of tradition, and

tradition means the carrying of the habits and lessons of the past into the future. In the words of the Dutch historian Huizinga:⁷⁷ “Historical thinking is always teleological.” In other words the historian, in addition to the question ‘why?’ also the question ‘whither?’ ”

In this connection one may apply Newton’s third law of motion to history : “An action is always opposed by an equal reaction, or, the mutual actions of two bodies are always equal and act in opposite directions.”⁷⁸ This may be illustrated by the following examples. When a body fall towards the earth the latter moves to meet the body, and a shell fired from a gun projects the gun backwards. The sun attracts the earth, consequently is itself attracted by the earth with a precisely equal force.

The application of Newton’s may be done in the way in which Hegel stated his dictum in the introduction to the *Philosophy of Rights* : “What is rational is real, and what is real in rational.”⁷⁹ In this context Ambedkar’s Neo-Buddhist movement has been ‘inevitable’ as discussed already.

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The Resume

The preceding study is an exploration into the nature of Hindu Caste hierarchy and graded-inequality in the Hindu social order which constituted the bedrock of all reality, possibility and prospects of the socio-economic, cultural and political life of the Hindus all through the ages; as well as, the ideals and objectives of the socio-cultural and political reforms and movements as enunciated by B. R. Ambedkar to the effect of eradicating the evils in the prevailing order, and why the ultimately, with his followers, embraced Buddhism.

That the Brahmins made the laws of the state, sanctified the position of the king by coronation, exercised all authority on matters religious, educational and legal and had also dominating role in ministerial affairs; that of themselves the *kshatriyas* formed the ruling class- the kings, the generals, the soldiers, and the bureaucrats; that the lower two castes- the *vaishyas* and the *shudras*-demographically even being the majority could never enroll themselves in professions reserved for the two high castes; and that in terms of human rights, equality, and liberty, the *sudras* and the untouchables were never treated with minimum social justice laid the pedestal of socio-religious ethics, economic and professional order of the Hindu society and state-system; and this order of things remained unchanged for centuries till the dawn of modernism in the recent past. Change is the law of history, but in India the wheel of change moved too slowly to be noticeable.

The fact that the British Government for the first time established the rule of law and, of course, secular law can not be denied. The threshold of opportunities put forward to the low-caste communities and Untouchables by the British was best utilized by B.R. Ambedkar in organising and educating the lowest of the low and thereupon he began the agitation for the assertion of their rights. The agitation was reformative in nature and was aimed at transforming the Hindu society by annihilating caste and untouchability and establishing basic human rights.

His mission to bring about a change of the Hindu social order failed owing to the unrelenting attitude of the high caste Hindus.

Perturbed and frustrated, Ambedkar ultimately turned to Buddhism, the ideals and philosophy of which he had been meditating upon for a period of twenty years since 1936. Buddhist philosophy, religion, ethics and social order, to him, proved to be the fountain of greater humanism, social justice, equality, liberty, brotherhood and non-violence. Ambedkar understood that in a caste-ridden society devoid of a socio-cultural revolution or at least rudimentary reforms and annihilation of caste, there could be no emergence of true nationalism. Whereas people were caste-conscious but not class-conscious, there could be no class-unity or class-based organisation without which no path could be made towards a socialistic society and state either through revolution or democracy.

Headed by Ambedkar, the conversion of thousands of 'dalits' to Buddhism signalled the alternative strength of Indian culture which could mitigate the scourges inflicted upon them by *Brahmanical* system. This conversion though did not alter much the demographic ratio of the Hindus and the Buddhists, never the less, it brought back a confidence in the minds of the untouchables and the down-trodden that they could take resort to the ideals of the Buddha, and they need not have to seek refuge to any other religion of foreign origin ; and it set a trend in the subsequent time that more number of 'dalits' followed the path of Ambedkar as to the question of a new religious identity on their rejection of Hinduism. But since the neo-Buddhists deified Ambedkar and added his name with the three jewels of Buddhism and thus it became:-

- (i) *Buddhang Smaranang Gachchhami,*
- (ii) *Dharmang Smaranang Gachchhami,*
- (iii) *Sanghang Smaranang Gachchhami,*
- (iv) *Bhimang Smaranang Gachchhami,*

Many Buddhists in different countries mainly the 'Hinayanists' criticised this step. The conversion process, however, gave the 'dalits' a new identity outside the periphery of the Hindu *varna-jati* system.

This new identity inspired the 'dalits' to initiate another round of adventure into the realm of education, literature and culture. As a consequence of their new identity the efflorescence of 'Dalit' literature and culture reflecting and articulating demands in terms of human rights in a democracy seemed very much natural. But 'Dalit' literary and cultural movement did not remain confined to the neo-Buddhists only; it also involved within itself the non-Buddhists 'dalits'. Thus the movement set up a bridge of communication between all types of 'dalits' strengthening the path of every possibility of more number of 'dalits' becoming Buddhists in subsequence.

Sometimes it is said that movements are in the nature of "process" in society. The question is how the process can become a "structure" in society that is a product of the continuing process. Usually a name is given to the continuing transaction or interactions going on between individuals occupying certain role position in society. These roles are basic elements of social structure, whereas the interactions between them are the processes of day to day social life. However there is a difference between a social movement conceived as a process and familial socialisation as process. The process called social movement seems to have no such continuity as is found in the family. However the social movement gets this continuity as soon as it is institutionalised like religion, education or family. Movements are collective attempts to bring about a social change or to create an entirely new social order or to prevent such changing of specific social institution. B. R. Ambedkar's Neo-Buddhist Movement based on a socio-religious philosophy was a collective and conscious attempt to change the condition of the untouchables in India.

Movements are the ways, or 'processes', through which the new patterns of behaviours, new patterns of relationship, new value systems express themselves within the social systems. Society is no more a tangible entity than a pattern of relationship. Social movements are not ideosyncratic. Ordinarily a movement is not an institution like the basic institutions of family, education or religion, since there is no continuing function at the level of substantive analysis. But in Ambedkar's Neo-Buddhist Movement this limitation has been superseded. In other words the value system of equality and fraternity have found their place in it. Herein lies Dr. Ambedkar's credit. Ambedkar's protest movement was born out of a humanistic philosophy and social ide-

ology.

An ideology seeks to state what is worth achieving , for whom and on what 'normal', 'ethical' or 'social' principles. It has been shown in the previous chapters that any change involves an arrangement of existing beliefs in a society — movements of change tend to be in favour of those who are currently 'deprived' and 'against' those who are currently 'privileged'. Thus movements of protest are characterised by the following features :

1. The existence of currently deprived potential beneficiaries, all or some of whom must be willing to make sacrifices, to 'fight' — all deprived persons or segments are not necessarily ready or willing to be mobilized; mobilisation would depend upon subjective consciousness of injustice and hurt as also objective circumstances of the viability of protest.
2. The existence of currently privileged potential losers, again, all or some of whom will resist change - the- phrase 'all or some' is used because neither the deprived nor the privileged are homogeneous, solitary groups.
3. The existence of an ideology which attacks and seeks to demolish the values /practices of existing inequality, enunciates values in terms of which changed relationships are sought to be established and states the means of bringing about these changes.
4. 'Leaders' who have seen the need for change, articulate it and who now initiate the process of mobilisation.
5. Active 'followers' who have been mobilised and will now assist in the organisational efforts.
6. The rank and file who will remain vitally involved but will participate in the movement in so far as it is consistent with their day - to- day preoccupations.

Correspondingly the ideology of a protest movement would be seen to encompass answer to the question : who is protesting against whom, for what reasons, with what objectives and by

what means? In the case of Ambedkar the protest was against 'Brahmanism' which was defined by him : Ambedkar protested against the inequality laid down in the *Manusmriti*. In other words the protest was laid against the four rank system of caste as in the *Manusmriti*, which was burnt by him and his associates assembled on 25, December, 1927.

It may be pointed out that Ambedkar convened a meeting in March, 1924 of persons sympathetic to the cause of the Untouchables, to discuss the need to establish a society which could place the social and political problems of the Untouchables before the government. As a result the Bahishkrit Hitkarini Sabha was established on 20 July 1924. The motto of the organisation was "Educate, Agitate and Organise." He wanted to awaken the Untouchables to a state of consciousness of their deplorable condition and thereby begin a movement for progress brushing all inertia and obstructions. He pointed out that though the Untouchables were Hindus yet did not constitute a part of the Hindu society mainly owing to inhuman discrimination and inequality — practised by the high caste Hindus.

The gradual unfolding of the ideology and strategy of the Untouchables' protest movement under Ambedkar between 1920 and 1929 consisted of the following ideas and objectives:

1. Untouchables might belong to the same religions but they were not a part of the same society as the caste Hindus. They constituted as separate interest group.
2. Untouchables had historically been an exploited group, untouchability was the culmination of a religious philosophy based on inequality.
3. The Philosophy of Brahminism was a philosophy of *graded inequality* and Hinduism was the same as Brahminism. It was inflexible and it frustrated all previous efforts for reforming its basic features.
4. The Untouchables sought equality and justice, not favours. Social graces were unimportant.
5. Justice demanded not just proportional representation ; but protective discrimination for the Untouchables.

6. The Untouchables would seek to attain legitimate equalitarian goals and special protection, in political and economic spheres, within the fold of Hinduism as far as possible , but would reject Hinduism if necessary.

Ambedkarite social reforms, held primacy over the political goal of self-government . To hold out the threat of religious conversion in full awareness of the Hindu fear of losing plurality and to seek a separate electorate and reserved seats to retain political leverage, were parts of the same strategy. The decade from 1930 to 1940 was to bring out more clearly the various aspects of the ideology and strategy of the Ambedkar -led movement of Untouchables so as to ensure their own social and economic uplift.

Increasingly, during the next decade , Ambedkar showed the awareness that, in the particular historical context in which he was functioning, the road to social betterment lay through the political channel and in politics the Untouchables could play no part unless they asserted their separate identity. And this came with his conversion to Buddhism along with his associates in 1956.

The identity as noted above is the key to transform an ideology into an institution. Ambedkar put forth the hypothesis that the Untouchables were historically 'Brokenmen' that is primitive tribes that were defeated and broken into segment. The settled tribes often allowed such Brokenmen to settle on the outskirts of their habitations because they needed men who could watch and ward against invaders. Ambedkar said that the Untouchables were originally only Brokenmen. It is because they were Brokenmen that they lived outside the village.

Usually the protest movement remains a temporary process and cannot become an institution like family. But in case of Ambedkar the Neo-Buddhist Movement launched by him on the basis of socio - religious equality became an institution. Protest thus converted itself into a family. Here in lies the greatness of Ambedkar. His Neo-Buddhist Movement grew into a Neo-Buddhist family.



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