

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) we 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	Ghasya	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

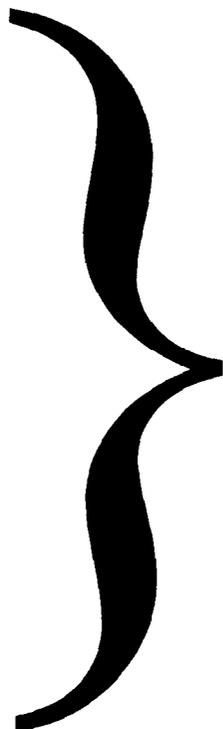
Ganda

Mang.

Mehtor or Bhangi

Mochi

Satnami



Throughout the Province

AudheliaIn the Bilaspur district.

BahnaIn the Amraoti district.

Balahi, or BalaiIn 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.

ChadarIn the Bhandara and Saugor districts.

ChauhanIn the Drug District.

DahayatIn the Damoh sub-division of the saugor district.

DewarIn 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

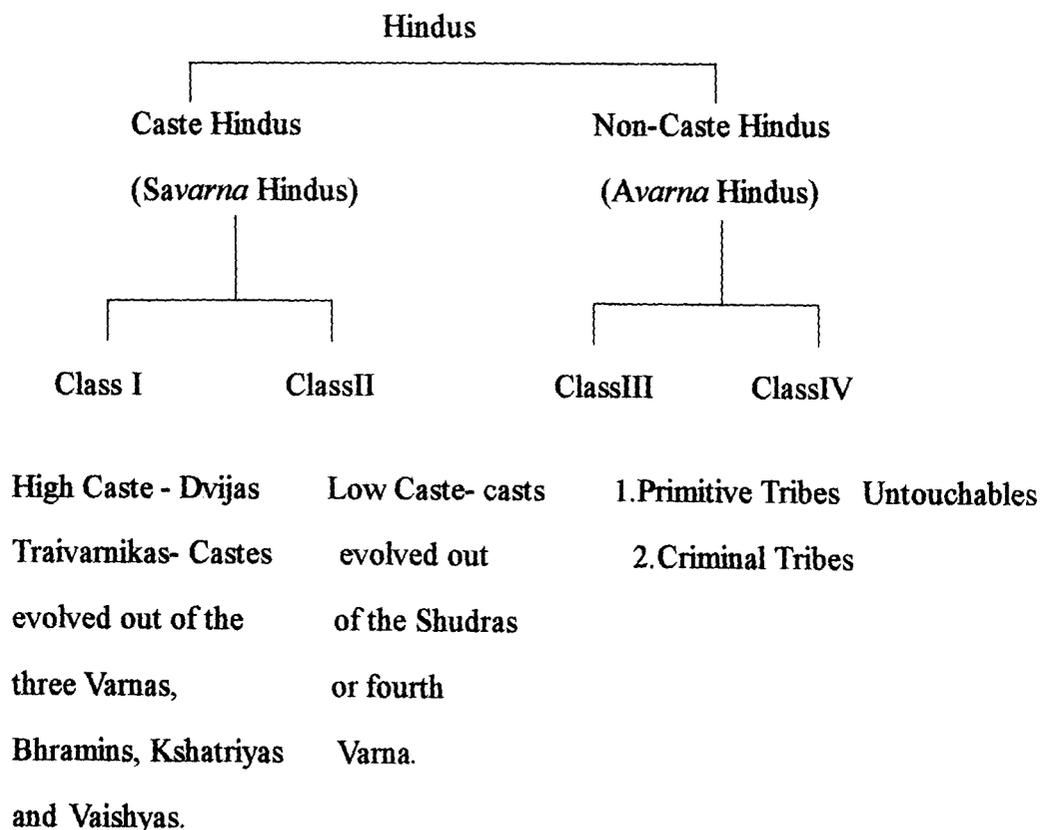
Much has been made of India's freedom struggle against the British . Before the adoption of resolution for complete independence in 1929 the so called struggle was nothing but to have only administrative powers and not the elimination of colonialism. This is evident from Tilak's observation of the Home 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 Maharashtra 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. Ellwood³⁹ 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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