

Chapter 8

Concluding observations

The foregoing discussions made it clear that the myth of Caste gradually transformed into an institution of Caste. The Brahmins, the so-called intellectual or privileged class of the ancient Indian society played a vital role in this connection. They destroyed the process of social engineering to keep up peace, tranquillity, unity, fraternity, social equanimity and justice. It created multi-dimensional problems in the Brahmanical Hindu society. Even today India failed to develop as a 'Nation State' in the global world. Caste Institution was nothing but a mechanical device of exploitation to the downtrodden section of the society. The unprivileged classes of the Hindu society were severely victimized by the divine ordinances of the Caste system made by the law-makers of ancient India. But the attitudes of Gandhiji and Ambedkar—the two shining stars of India were completely opposite to each other relating to the issue of Caste and Untouchability. Gandhiji believed everything about Caste. His explanation was completely based on orthodox traditions. He was a staunch follower of the Caste System. He treated it as the part and parcel of the Hindu religion. He explained that the divisions of Varna were based on birth. He believed in the Varnashrama Dharma and the Caste System. He had a living faith in God and the facts and events that were described in the Vedic literatures in the context of Caste. His belief in the Varna system fostered the concept of the Caste System. He was in fact a bearer of the Caste tradition. That is why he did not come forward to address the numerous inhuman problems arising out of the existence of the Caste System in the society. But on the contrary Ambedkar clearly identified and criticized the inhuman content of the Caste System. His explanation for the abolition of the Caste System was completely based on logical and scientific analysis. It was completely against human rights, social justice and women empowerment. Ambedkar solely fought against the evil-base of the Caste System. He vehemently opposed the 'Aryan Race theory' in the context of the Rig Vedic Society and founded the 'Sudra-Aryan' theory. He demanded abolition of the Caste Institution and Untouchability from the so-called Brahmanical Hindu society. Even he scientifically explained the origin of

the Sudras and pointed out that they belonged to the Kshatriya Varna and there was not a single reference of the fourth Varna in the Rig Veda. The man-made Sudras could enjoy the rights and privileges of the upanayana¹. They could worship the God and Goddess. They could become priest. Even some of the verses of the Rig Veda were composed by them. Naturally, there was no Caste distinction in the Rig Vedic society. The so-called Hindu society was categorically divided into numerous classes rather than Castes in the Rig Vedic society. But the probable interpolation of the Purusha Sukta in the Rig Veda gave birth to the concept of Caste in the Brahmanical Hindu society. Manu, an ancient law-maker, perhaps institutionalized the concept of Caste brushing aside the doctrine of Karma and virtuous deeds. Naturally, the concept of Class of the Rig Vedic period was transformed into the concept of Caste and it was spread gradually through the Vedic literatures in different ages. It was completely inhuman in nature and peculiar in character. The status and position of a person was determined by his forefather's position in the Caste System. As a result Brahmin became the privileged class and enjoyed all sorts of powers and positions in the society. But the toiling masses were forced to remain in a very distressed condition only to serve the privileged classes. Naturally, the concept of Caste created numerous problems in the Indian society.

But the very foundation of the Institution of Caste was stirred by the rise of Buddhism in India and the 6th century Religious Protestant Movement greatly influenced the reign of Chandragupta Maurya, Asoke, Harsha and Pala rulers in this context. But it was survived all positive treatments under the patronage of the Gupta, the Rajput and the Sena rulers of Bengal. Even the low-born Hindus converted themselves into Muslims during the medieval period. But they did not get opportunity to change their destiny. They were forced to remain in a very distressed condition all through the ages. But the emergence of the anti-Caste movement heralded an epoch making event in the history of the Human Rights Protection Movement in India. The name of Jyotibe Phule, Sri Narayan Guru and others may be mentioned in this connection who dedicated their life to fight against the inhuman nature and character of the Caste Institution. Ambedkar was very much inspired by their role and activities to annihilate the Caste System. But the high Caste Social Reformers of 19th century India did not come forward directly to annihilate the Caste System. As a result, the 19th century Renaissance and Reformation Movement failed to eradicate the problems of the Caste

System and Untouchability. Even most of the Congress leaders did not like to discuss the problems of Caste in their camp. They stressed on political revolution rather than social revolution. The so-called intellectuals of the 19th century did not come forward directly to deal with the issue of Caste and Untouchability. They continued the traditions of the Congress in this context. Practically speaking, they did nothing but ideal talking. Even they differed in their respective approach to the issue of Caste and Untouchability. The name of Raja Rammohan Roy, Vidyasagar, Dayananda Saraswati, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Swami Vivekananda and others may be mentioned in order to understand the real truth. Even Gandhiji was the follower of the Congress Camp in this respect. Most of the 19th century Social Reformers of India were very much class conscious. So they did not try to launch any direct movement against the Institution of Caste.

Therefore, it can be pointed out that the Social Reformers in different periods of history tried to address the issue of Caste and Untouchability but the problems survived all positive treatments. However, the very foundation of the Caste Institution was stirred by the impact of the Industrialization in colonial India. But the colonial Government did not interfere directly to this problem. They made an arrangement to utilize this problem as a weapon against the Nationalist Movement. They primarily came forward to undertake a policy of neutrality to deal with this problem. Even they prevented from taking any particular side that might create social unrest in India. But they ultimately decided to suppress numerous social evils and prevailing superstitions of the Hindu society. So they introduced some legal acts in this connection. But the emergent Indian intellectuals played a vital role to influence the Colonial Government during the 19th Century in this regard.

However, the emergence of Gandhiji as a national leader was an important fact in the Indian political arena. The socio-religious, educational, cultural and sound economic family background of Gandhiji accelerated his career building process in the Indian society. He was practically reared up since the beginning with adequate facilities that helped him very much to fulfil his cherished dream. He was a model of moral virtues in India. Everything was examined by him on the principles of truth, non-violence etc. He believed in the Caste System that created by the so-called intellectuals of the Later Vedic period to deny the human rights and privileges of the lower strata of the Hindu

society. Gandhiji always tried to advocate the class interest of the wealthy class. He never came forward spontaneously to save the civics rights of the downtrodden section in the Hindu society except in the case of the Harijans. Naturally, Gandhiji could not come forward to start a direct movement against this inhuman caste institution. But Ambedkar emerged as a leader of the Dalit India from zero socio-politico status and position of his family atmosphere. His position was poor of the poorest. However, his strong mental confidence and tireless efforts helped him to build up his academic as well as political career at a large. Every moment of his life was full of woes and sorrows since his childhood. None but the King of Boroda² came forward to help Ambedkar to complete his studies in abroad. The versatile personality of Ambedkar brought him in the lime light of Indian politics. He was solely not a politician in the true sense of the term. But the-then socio-political factors bound him to raise voice against the socio-religious and political tyranny that doomed the daily life of the Depressed Classes and Untouchables in every sphere of their individual as well national life. He was a great emancipator of the toiling masses and women in India in the true sense of the terms. His poor family background, helpless conditions in every walk of life made his iron backbone to build up him as a great champion of social justice in India. He was tortured and harassed by the so-called upper Caste people in every moment of life. The abolition of Caste and Untouchability, promotion of social justice, welfare measures of the labourers, women emancipation etc. were the prime motto of his socio-political movement in India. He did not compromise with anything except the life-saving Pact of Poona with Gandhiji. He responded only to save the life of Gandhiji by signing this treaty at the call of great humanity. The issue of Caste in Colonial India created turmoil condition in the Indian freedom movement. It gave birth to numerous psycho-politico obstacles in establishing a unanimous mass movement in India against the Imperialist British Government. Both Gandhi and Ambedkar fought for establishing the concept of Social Justice among the people in India. But their approach was quite different from each other especially in respect of Caste and Untouchability. Gandhian Caste thesis was very much discouraging. But Ambedkar's anti-Caste thesis was completely based on humanitarian approach. Gandhiji could not overcome the obstacles of his age in the sphere of Caste System and Untouchability whereas Ambedkar straightway struggled for the abolition of these. Gandhiji stressed on the concept of Truth, Satyagraha, Non-violence and others that depends upon moral force. Ambedkar believed in the concept of social

democracy, political democracy, liberty, equality, fraternity, protection of human rights and its privileges, emancipation of women, slaves, so-called Sudras made by the Aryans and others. Gandhiji did not believe in the liberty, equality and social liberty of the haves not, Indian Sudras and women of different Varnas. Most of his idealistic approaches were not based on materialistic point of view. Therefore, it could not work for the immediate benefit of the common people. His thoughts were based on moral forces that differed from man to man and it could not implement as a matter of compulsory deed for each persons. His philosophical ideas and spiritual thoughts could not bring any radical change into the mind set up of his followers. Naturally, the strategy of the national movement under the leadership of Gandhiji could not succeed at a large. But Ambedkar solely fought to establish the rights and privileges of the downtrodden masses of India. He raised the socio-religious and cultural obstacles before the British Government relating to the daily life of the toiling masses in the context of the caste and untouchability and forced the British Government as well the Indian National Congress to consider their ill-fated conditions in the light of human rights protection movement. He strongly proved that Caste System is itself a self-explanatory mechanical device to exploit the toiling masses of India in the name of divine origin and God as the creator of the universe. Therefore, it can be said that both Gandhiji and Ambedkar worked to fulfil the needs and demands of their class interests. Both of them dedicated their lifetime for the betterment of the Indian society as a whole. Gandhiji was treated as an untouchable in South Africa. But he launched a direct purification movement for the betterment of the Indian untouchables in the later part of his life. Some scholars pointed out that Gandhiji would not come forward to uplift the untouchables if there was no political compulsion. He discouraged them to launch direct Satyagraha movement against the caste Hindus in case of Chowdar Tank Satyagraha movement in Mahad and Kalaram Temple Satyagraha movement in Nasik. But the role of Gandhiji towards the upliftment of the Harijans could not be ignored. He was first caste-Hindu leader of the Indian National Congress who ultimately took initiative in the later part of his life to launch a direct anti-untouchability movement for bettering the condition of the ill-fated people in India. He made arrangements to set up tube wells, digging of ponds, establishment of schools, and construction of roads etc. for the Harijans. All sorts of beneficial measures were taken by him to uplift the socio-economic, educational and cultural conditions of the Harijans. His liberal and reformative zeal for temple entry

movement could not be denied. That is why; the role and activities of Gandhiji towards the emancipation of the untouchables was very much important. He played a vital role to establish the concept of social justice among the Harijans. In spite of numerous limitations, the greatness of Gandhiji towards the upliftment of the Harijans heralded a new dimension in the history of India. Naturally, he became the champion of the Harijan movement in India.

But the Colonial Government determined to render the concept of Social Justice among the Depressed Classes, Minorities and others by declaring the 'Communal Award' of 1932. Ramsay MacDonald, the-then Prime Minister of England played a vital role in this respect. Ambedkar was called in the First Round Table Conference to represent the Depressed Classes. Gandhiji did not attend that meeting. Realizing the hard reality of this environment Gandhiji went to London to represent the Congress in the Second Round Table Conference and claimed there that none but he solely represent the Depressed Classes in India. The 'Minorities Pact' was signed jointly by the Aga Khan (Muslim delegate), Ambedkar (Depressed Classes representative), Rao Bahadur Pannir Selvam (leader of the Indian Christians), Sir Henry Gidney (Anglo-Indian representative) and Sir Hubert Carr (European delegate). It was nothing but a settlement of the Indian communal problems. But Gandhiji was very much angry with them. He was furious against the special recognition given to the Untouchables as a separate political entity. He convinced the Untouchables that separate electorate and separate reservation was not the way to remove this bar-sinister which was the shame, not of them, but of orthodox Hinduism. Even Gandhi was ready to render immediate recognition to the demands of the Muslims and the Sikhs excluding the demands of the Untouchables. He said that if they were given separate electorate their lives would be miserable in villages which were the strongholds of Hindu orthodoxy. So he planned to isolate them from other Minorities but failed. Even he was ready to get Muslim support at any cost. Therefore, it can be pointed out that the active participation of Gandhiji in the Second Round Table Conference made his position clear relating to the issue of Caste and Untouchability. He never expressed his woes regarding the ill-fated conditions of the Untouchables at that very moment. Instead of that he vehemently opposed the concessions and special privileges given to the Untouchables by the 'Communal Award'. In this way, Gandhiji³ himself was responsible for the promotion of Casteism at different phases during the freedom

struggle viz. Communal Award and his active participation in the Second Round Table Conference, Poona Pact, Harijan Movement and the Temple Entry Movement. Gandhiji had vehemently opposed the concessions and special privileges given to the Depressed Classes for their uplift by the Communal Award. He even started a hunger strike till death in order to oppose the separation of the Depressed Classes from the mainstream of the Hindu society. In such a critical situation Ambedkar came forward to save the life of Gandhiji and was literally compelled to sign the Poona Pact in 1932. In fact the Harijan movement and the Temple Entry Movement was a direct outcome of the Poona Pact. After this historic event, Gandhiji came forward for the first time to address the problems of the Harijans and became renowned world-wide as a champion of the Untouchables. Ambedkar had very rightly fought for the equalization of the Depressed Classes in all spheres. He himself took leading role and arranged various protest movements to achieve his goal i.e. social justice for the Depressed Classes. He launched Chouer Tank Satyagraha movement, Nasik and Kalaram Temple Entry movement to establish the civil rights and privileges of the low born peoples. His fighting zeal inspired the common masses of India. His struggle was further strengthened by the declaration of the 'Communal Award' by Ramsay Macdonald, the then Prime Minister of England. He attended the Round Table Conferences as a sole representative of the Depresses Classes in India. His scientific and logical explanation for the benefit of the Depressed Classes created an amicable settlement among the 'Minority Communities' to implement the provisions of the 'Communal Award' in spite of the opposition of Gandhiji. As Gandhiji demanded himself as the sole representative of the Indian Untouchables.

Gandhiji said that the main ideal of any economic programme must be human happiness combined with full mental and moral growth. The wealth of a nation is its people who produce it. Therefore, if economic policy does not provide each according to his need, it is of no value. One of the economic imperatives, for Gandhi, was immediate engagement of the entire population in productive work of any kind. Gandhi advised complete de-centralisation of the productive process. This led to the evolution of constructive programme based on 'Swadeshi' and 'Khaddar'. Through the practice of Swadeshi and Khaddar, Gandhiji evolved a practical remedy for crushing poverty of the millions of village people who lived in India on the border line of starvation. His vows of Swadeshi and Khaddar went deep into his conception

of human progress. Swadeshi would mean self-dependence and Khaddar, work for the millions of idle manpower of the country. In advocating the production and use of Khadi, Gandhi had a humanitarian motive⁴. In fact, manufacture and use of Khadi meant more and more self-dependence and use of leisure time for productive purposes. He basically dedicated to the cause of 'daridranarayan' the poor man, who represents God. But he identified machinery as anti-social for it was meant to replace human labour and thus increased unemployment. His supreme consideration was man. Gandhiji pointed out in 'Young India' that 'I would favour the use of most elaborate machinery if thereby India's pauperism and resulting idleness be avoided'⁵. His utmost aim was to establish a classless society by changing the hearts of the people. Some scholars pointed out that humanism was the basic principle of his economic theory. But it was very difficult to do in the real sense of the term.

But the fighting zeal of Ambedkar for human rights gave him international recognition as a liberator of humanity from social and economic injustice. But the economic thoughts of Ambedkar were based on the concept of mixed economy, socialism, industrialization, state ownership of industries, worker's right to strike⁶ etc. He fought against the caste based economic life to establish the idea of liberty and equality in the society. The main motto behind it was to create a liberal atmosphere in the field of economic life and activities with a vision to open up the flood gate of different occupations to all irrespective of their caste, class, creed, sex and religion. As an economic thinker, Ambedkar belonged to the group of liberal thinkers. By and large his orientation was that of a socialist but he did not agree with Karl Marx whose ideas and methods were of violent nature to him. He was very much anxious about the exploitative social and economic conditions of the toiling masses in India. He knew well that these people most of whom were Dalits were being severely exploited by land lords and capitalists. That is why; Ambedkar struggled for mixed economy or State Socialism to prevent this endless social and economic exploitation. He had understood that the economic equality was very much essential along with political equality to empower the toiling masses in India. The problem of the toiling masses, landless labours relied exclusively on the agricultural problems and more than this on the Indian economy as a whole. These problems should be tackled in the wider spectrum of national economic development. That is why; Ambedkar stressed on the nationalization of economy. He said that the production might reach the optimum

level and the capitalist might not grab the entire benefits and the hard earned money should be distributed equally. According to him, the capitalist economy can not in any way remove the economic crisis of the suffering people. In the capitalist economy there are more chances of unemployment, inhuman treatment of labour, long hours of working, vicious working conditions and numerous repressive measures. In fact, he was a great champion of socialism. According to him, 'State Socialism is essential for India's industrialization, private economy cannot do so and it makes an attempt it would give way to economic disparities as it can be visualized in the case of Europe. It is a warning bell for India'. He pointed out that industrial harmony can be established through labour welfare and congenial industrial relations by eradicating exploitation. He fought for economic and social freedom and equality. He clearly noted the fact that political freedom and equality without economic and social equality is quite insufficient. He advocated state socialism in the field of industry and also ownership in agriculture with a collectivized method of cultivation⁷. He opined that the plight of millions of untouchables who were of landless labourers can not be ameliorated through consolidation of lands or by tenancy legislation, only collective farms can solve the problems of the landless labours; therefore, Ambedkar suggested the plan that has two special features. The first proposes state socialism in important fields of economic life and the second does not leave the establishment of state socialism to the will of the legislature; it establishes state socialism by the law of the constitution and thus, makes it by any act of the legislature and executive. That is why Ambedkar demanded to include the provision of state ownership of agriculture in the fundamental rights as this provision was unalterable by any act of legislature and the executive. The purpose was to protect the liberty of the individual. Naturally, the connection between liberty and the shape and form of economic structure of society becomes real only when state socialism has been established through political democracy. He expressed his views to establish state socialism not through dictatorship but through political democracy. He realized that the solution to the problem of the untouchable landless labourers depended upon the solution to Indian agricultural problems or, even more broadly, economic problems. Ambedkar said that socialism does not only embrace economic equality but also social and political equality. But Ambedkar was in favour of modernization, industrialization and urbanization which, he found, were indispensable for the overall growth of the nation. Besides, as the first law minister in independent India he always tried to alleviate the

lot of those sociologically and economically exploited. He proposed for the implementation and enactment of the Hindu Code Bill the importance of which was only felt at a pretty later stage.

The foregoing discussions made it clear that the Institution of Caste created numerous problems, such as inter-caste exclusiveness, hatred, discrimination, disunity and others, in the Hindu society and it snatched away the civil rights and privileges of the toiling masses in India. In spite of that the inhuman features of the Caste System and Untouchability were traditionally maintained in different ages. Even the colonial Government was very much alert to take any action owing to the fear of social unrest. But Gandhiji ultimately changed his attitudes towards these problematic issues and launched Harijan Movement to uplift the Harijans. However, Gandhiji and Ambedkar came forward to address the issues of Caste and Untouchability in terms of reforms, liberalism, humanism and progress to bring about a lease of life in the Indian society. But the Government of Independent India and different political parties of our country did not come forward even today to eradicate the Institution of Caste from the Hindu society. Instead of that, they traditionally maintained it probably to capture low caste vote banks for obtaining power. As a result caste politics increased day by day. Naturally, India could not develop as a 'Nation State' in the global world till date in the true sense of the term.

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