

CHAPTER - II

AMBEDKAR: A VICTIM OF UNTOUCHABILITY

Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar was born in a *Mahar* family at Mhow in Maharashtra on 14th April, 1891. His father Ramji Maloji Sankpal was a military Subedar and was a *Kabirpanthi* supporter and his mother Bhimbai was a house wife. This family was located a remote village, Ambad, in the old Taluka Dapoli of Ratnagiri District. Due to job constraint, the father of Ambedkar was compelled to move from one military camp to another camp. Ambedkar was the fourteenth child of his parents. Although his family was respected by the neighbors, but Ambedkar very often had been the victim of the joke *Chavadave Ratna* made by his neighbors suggesting that he was born from beat of others. In the year of 1905 when Ambedkar was 14, he married nine years old Ramabai. She was from poor and illiterate *Mahar* family. However, in the year of 1935 Ramabai was died. That is why Ambedkar married a second time to Dr. Sharada Kabir (Later named Savita) in the year of 1948. She was from a *Saraswat Brahmin* family of Bombay.

Ambedkar had completed to get his early education from *Satara*. He completed Matriculate from the Elphinstone High School, Bombay in 1908 and graduated from the Elphinstone College in 1912. After that he went to the U.S.A. in 1913, on a Baroda State Scholarship and joined the Columbia University from where he took his M.A. in Economic in 1915 and Ph.D. in 1916. After completed his masters he went to England and joined the London School of Economics and Political Science and also the Gray's Inn. After that he was working for his M.Sc. in Economics and in the same time he was preparing for the *Bar*. But he had to discontinue his studies for the expiry of his Scholarship and then he returned to India in 1917. From 1918-1920 he taught at the Sydenham College of Commerce and Economics, Bombay as a Professor of Economics. Having saved some money and took the financial assistance from his friend again he went to England in 1920 and completed his studies. In the year of

1921 he obtained the M.Sc. Degree and in 1923 he had been awarded the D.Sc. Degree. He also called to the bar in the same year. That is why he started legal practice at the Bombay High Court in June 1924. From that time he had started his activities for the public career as a social worker, a politician, a writer and an educationalist. He had given a clear indication of what he was considered to be his life's mission. He had brought out a *Mooknayak*, Marathi fortnightly from December 1919 to June 1920. He had given the evidence before the *Southborough Reforms Committee* for claiming political rights for the Depressed Classes of India in January 1919. He started an organization *Bahishkrit Hitkarini Sabha* in Bombay for the moral and material progress of the untouchables in 1924. For developing the untouchable students, Ambedkar set up four boarding houses in the Bombay Presidency in 1925 to 1930. In April 1927, he had started a *Marathi* fortnightly the *Bahishkrit Bharat* for propagation of the same cause of improving the condition of the untouchables. For establishing social equality among the untouchables and the caste *Hindus* he started the *Samaj Samata Sanga* in September 1927. The important parts of the programmed of this organization were to form inter-caste marriage and inter-caste dinner. In March 1929, he started another paper the *Samata* as the organ of this body.

Ambedkar led a *Satyagraha* to establish the civic right of the untouchables to draw water from a public tank "Chavdar Talen" at Mahad, District Kolaba in December 1927. Actually the *Hindus* were claimed this tank as a private property of them. That is why untouchables had no right to use the water from it. However, in March 1937, Ambedkar won the case in the Bombay High Court on this issue. After that to get back the right of the untouchables to enter the famous temple of *Kalaram* at Nasik, Ambedkar led another *Satyagraha* in March 1930. But in March, 1934, it was withdrawn due to the hunger strike made by Gandhi. During this period his eminence as a Jurist also gains wide recognition for the Depressed Classes. The Bombay Assembly passed a resolution in 1923 that untouchables be allowed to use all public

watering places, wells, schools, dispensaries, etc. Though the caste *Hindus* did not allow taking water from the tank, but in 1924 the local *Chowdar Tank* was thrown open to the untouchables with the pursuance of this resolution. As a liberator and emancipator of the downtrodden peoples, Ambedkar impelled this to launch an agitation to exercise the right of free access to the *Chowdar Tank*. On March 19, 1927 more than ten thousand men and women assembled at *Mahad* in response to his call. Next day all the peoples began their march from the venue of the conference to the *Chowdar Tank* to assert their right of drinking water from the Municipal Tank. There were ten thousand of volunteers followed their leader. The procession reached *Chowdar Tank* wading through the streets of *Mahad* in a disciplined and peaceful manner. Ambedkar got back the right of the suffering humanity by drinking water from the forbidden Tank. Most of the volunteers who joined in the movement shared the same view along with Ambedkar. It was truly a historic event because through this movement Ambedkar got back the right of millions of downtrodden people in a glorious manner. Ambedkar alone with the so-called untouchables had demonstrated their determination to get back their right. After that the processionists returned peacefully to the venue of the conference. Ironically, a false rumor had been spreading that Ambedkar and his followers were planning to enter the *Veerashwar temple*. The caste *Hindus* had failed to check the march of the untouchables to the tank, swooped on the *pandal*. Although there was a good number of participants still present, but at that time majority of participants were left or they were either packing or taking meals before dispersal. At that time the unarmed men, women and children were mercilessly beaten up by the caste *Hindus*. After the commando attack on the *pandal* the splinter groups of the delegate were returning to their village. They all were beaten and humiliated. But Ambedkar advised his followers to be calm and not to hit back.

Immediately, it was learnt that the orthodox *Hindus* were engaged to perform a tank purification ceremony. The *Hindus* took water from the tank in 108 earthen pots for purifying the tank. These pots were filled with curd, cow-dung, cow-urine and milk and were dipped in the tank in the midst of chanting of *mantras* by the *Brahmin* priests. On 4th August 1927, the *Mahad* Municipality also revoked its resolution in accordance with which the *Chowdar Tank* was thrown open to the untouchables. So, it was a challenge to their self respect and dignity as a community. But for the second Conference, the caste *Hindus* had refused to give any space. That is why; the venue was shifted to a field on the other side of *Chowdar tank* with the consent of a *Muslim* landlord. Yet the merchants refused to give any provisions for the men participating in the Conference. Therefore, the organizers had to bring all the provisions from outside *Mahad*. In these circumstances the conference began in the evening of December 25. Here Ambedkar was addressing the entire downtrodden savior. He then assured to the downtrodden that after the *Chowdar tank* mission they proved it that they are very much human beings. With this perception Ambedkar had taken an initiative to inaugurate an era of equality in his land. He declared that all men were born equal. In this regard he referred to a parallel incident from the history of France when the French representative issued a manifesto of human rights, preaching revolt against social, religious and political privileges. In that Conference Ambedkar passed a number of resolutions aimed at the social, religious and political upliftment of the downtrodden people.

On 2nd March, 1930 the *Satyagraha* Committee was planned to secure the right of entry into the *Kalaram Temple*, at Nasik. On reaching the temple the *Satyagrahis* found that all the gates of the temple had been closed. Then they proceeded to *Godavari Ghat* and held a meeting there. Again on March 3, small groups of *Satyagrahis* went to the temple and in turn courting arrest. This type of non-violent agitation continued more than one month.

As a leader of the Depressed Classes, Ambedkar established his position in Indian politics. From 1926-1934, he was nominated for the Bombay Legislative Assembly. He introduced several bills for the welfare of the peasants, workers and untouchables during this. However, the attempt of Ambedkar was remained unsuccessful because he got a stern setback from the influential orthodox *Hindus*. Not a single bill was passed because of that. Ambedkar was nominated as a delegate to the three *Round Table Conferences* (1930-1933) in London for the recognition of his claim as a leader of the Depressed Classes. He also served on some of the Committees till 1934. At the meeting of the *Minorities Committee* of the *Second Round Table Conference* in November 1931, Gandhi opposed the demand for separate electorates for the untouchables. According to Gandhi, it would permanently divide the *Hindu* Society. But on 17th August 1932, the Communal Award announced separate electorates for the untouchables. Finally on 24th September 1932, the *Poona Pact* was made in the *Yervada* Jail which provided for reservation of seats for the untouchables in the general constituencies. Gandhi recognized the untouchables as an integral part of the *Hindu* Society. Gandhi named them *Harijans* (people of God) instead of untouchables, which came into popular use to denote this particular section of the *Hindus*. But Ambedkar did not reconcile himself to this political compromise which, for him, did not eliminate the social stigma attached to the *Harijans*. That is why Ambedkar made an announcement in a public meeting at *Yeola*, Nasik on 13th October 1935, that the untouchables would leave the *Hindu* fold altogether and accept some other religion. He realizes that within the *Hindu* fold they would never get back their recognition of Social equality and social justice the absence of which would rob humanity. During the period of 1938-40, Ambedkar first turned to Sikhism, but his effect proved fruitless. Finally he embraced *Buddhism* on 14th October 1956, and advised his followers to accept the new faith. In this regard Ambedkar gave 'Deeksha' to lakhs of followers in Nagpur.

With the foundation of the *Independent Labour Party* of India in October 1936, the great organizing ability of Ambedkar's was clearly demonstrated. As a result of that, he captured all the seats in the legislature in Bombay Presidency which were reserved for the *Scheduled Caste*. Ambedkar cast his net wider and formed the *Scheduled Castes Federation* as an *All India political party* in April 1942. He was a member of the Governor-General's Executive Council from July 1942 to March 1946. He took the advantage of this opportunity. Ambedkar promoted the interests of the *Scheduled Castes* and *Tribes* to the best of his ability. Ambedkar secured adequate funds from the Central Government for their education and reservation of posts in the Central and Provincial Government services. In July 1945, Ambedkar took initiative for the foundation of the *People's Education Society* started with a number of colleges in the Bombay Presidency for the *Scheduled Caste* students. Ambedkar in his own efforts promoted the interests of the *Scheduled Castes* peoples.

Although Ambedkar had to work with the opposition to the Indian National Congress, but during the transfer of power of the *British Government*, his eminence as a national leader was fully recognized. Ultimately he had been nominated by the Congress to the Constituent Assembly as a Law Minister. After that he was selected Chairman for the *Drafting Committee* to frame the Constitution of India and piloted the Bill successfully. He was called the *Modern Manu* for well and meticulous drafting of the *Hindu Code Bill*. He resigned from the Cabinet in September 1951 for his gradual deterioration of his health.

Ambedkar was an untouchable who had an optimistic and energetic personality. He was tall and stout. Although he put on simple Indian dress at home but he was always in immaculate western dress in public. He had been a relentless critic of the *Hindu* Society for his better experience in his early days. Whenever and wherever he faced the *Caste Hindus* he would oppose them. The intellect and fighting spirit made him a formidable enemy of the *caste Hindus*. From 1924 to 1934, he led numerous *Satyagrahas* for asserting the rights of the

untouchables. He entered the area of national politics and opposed the policy of the Indian National Congress, particularly its demand for independence. It is true that he wanted to continue the foreign rule to safeguard the interests of the lower classes of the Indian Society. In the year of 1893, when Ambedkar's father retired from the military service on a monthly pension of rupees fifty, he was hardly two years old. His father settled down at Dapoli in the Konkan region of Maharashtra. In 1896 little Bhim was sent to the primary school at Dapoli. In the same year his mother died. After that his father secured a job in the military quarters at Satara. Bhim completed his primary education from here and began his high school education at the Government High School. His original surname was 'Ambavadekar' in the school record. The common practice of Maharashtra 'Ambavadekar' derived from his ancestral village 'Ambabade'. Later this was changed to 'Ambedkar' by a king school teacher at Satara.

In his childhood Ambedkar was treated differently. He had to sit in the corner of the room on a rough mat which was far away from the desks of the other pupils of School. He was not allowed to drink water using the cups which are his fellow school children used. If he wants to drink water he had to hold his cupped hands out and the school caretaker poured him. In those days Ambedkar did not know why he should be treated differently and what was wrong with him. Here we can mention some instances which Ambedkar faced in his practical life as an untouchable:

One day Ambedkar and his elder brother had travel Goregaon, where his father Ramji worked as a cashier. After got off the train they had waited for long time at the station for his father. At this time the station master asked them who they were and where they were going. In that time they were very well dress, clean and polite. Without thinking Ambedkar told him they were *Mahars*. After that the station master was stunned his face and changing his kindly expression and he went away. Then they are decided to hire a bullock-cart. The cart-men

refused to take them, because he had heard that they were untouchables. Naturally he was afraid of being polluted by touch of the boys. But when they had to agree to pay double cost as the usual cost of journey and they had to drive the cart themselves, then the cart-men agreed. He was agreed not for the help but he thought about the extra money. By this money he could purify his cart later. At the time of journey Ambedkar thought constantly about the reason of that matter, but he could not understand the reason. He thought that, they were clean and well-dressed, if they were suppose to pollute and make unclean everything they touch, then how that could be possible. Ambedkar never forgot this incident throughout his life. On the other hand, for refusing the village barbers his sister had to cut his hair at home. The barbers were afraid of being polluted by the touch of an untouchable. These are the few instances happen which had been faced by Ambedkar in his early life.

So, we can't say that by chance Ambedkar became the first Indian Untouchable leader. Actually his personal qualities, his energy and his intelligence played a key role to make him a leader of untouchables. The familial, social and regional contexts were shaped his destiny. His socio-political awareness and militancy were directly attributable to the predicament of his caste and family. But his education was the decisive factor in shaping his revolt against the caste system. His great sense of understanding democratic values allowed him to interrogate the mechanism of caste. He refined his tools of sociological analysis was to go with better to contest a social system of which Untouchables were the prime victims.

In the modern history of India Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar alias is the great name Babasaheb Ambedkar. Generally, historians have recognized him as a great champion of the depressed, suppressed and oppressed classes (caste) in India. He wants to establish Indian society on the foundation of liberty, equality and fraternity. That is why; at the time of his death Jawaharlal Nehru described him as “a symbol of revolt against all the oppressive features of *Hindu*

society”¹⁶. For development of the life of depressed, suppressed and oppressed castes in India Ambedkar brought a great revolution in India. He was the first Indian who heartily wanted annihilate of casteism from this country. His rational thoughts stood for casteless society on the foundation of justice to all human beings. That is why, Beverley Nicholas, a famous British writer, called him one of the six best brains of India. On the other hand, the Australian Governor of Bengal described him as fountain-head of wisdom and knowledge. His encyclopedic knowledge and intellect had been accepted by all and even by his critics. His voice, pen and politics were revolted against domination, untruth and injustice.

It is true that in the public life of India and throughout the world Ambedkar had been recognized as the most controversial person. He led millions of the depressed to a life of self-respect, dignity and responsibility. He himself said in his book *Annihilation of Castes*, “they (*Hindus*) hate me. To them I am a snake in their garden”. It is true that Ambedkar was the only *Hindu*, who criticized and questioned to the *Hindu* religion for its unethical custom and law. He criticized *Hinduism* for its injustice, tyranny and insincerity. Ambedkar claims that the press in India misreported, misrepresented and criticized him for everything whatever he did. In this respect, he in the same book said, “However strong and however filthy be the abuses which the Congress press choose to shower on me, I must do my duty.” Ambedkar was a patriot in the true sense. For the service of humanity he devoted his noble life sincerely and honestly.

There is no question of doubt that untouchability is a curse in India. The *Hindu* religion had been unfortunately following this custom very rigidly throughout its recorded history. From many years the doors of education were closed for the untouchables. In the different parts of the country the untouchables had different names. They were called outcastes, untouchables,

¹⁶ *New York Times*, 6 December 1956.

avarnas, pariahs, panchamas, atishudras, antajas and namashudras etc. Their social disabilities were specific and severe and numerous. Their touch, shadow and voice were deemed by the caste *Hindus* to be polluting. They were forbidden to keep only domestic animals like pigs, dogs and donkeys etc., to eat a particular type of food, to use certain metals for ornaments, wear a particular type of dress, a particular type of footwear. They were forced to occupy the dirty, dingy and unhygienic outskirts of villages and town. They were lived in dark, insanitary and miserable smoky shanties or cottages. The male untouchables were wore a turban, a staff in the hand, a rough blanket on the shoulder and a piece of loin cloth for a symbol of untouchables. On the other hand, the female were wore bodices and rough sarees barely reaching the knees. They were not permitted to bear arms and own wealth to run their life with protection. They were compelled to use crude language in order to help their identification. They were not allowed to use decent language. They were compelled to live only in the huts where the earth was their mother and sky is their father. During daytime they could enter the village and return to their huts before sunset, when the shadow grows in the longest.

Actually Ambedkar wanted to annihilate this system which perpetuated distinction between man and man, between high and low, between upper and lower, between noble and ignoble. But caste system has perpetuated these distinctions. Throughout his life Ambedkar struggled hard to do away with caste system and its evils. But he failed to do this because the foothold of caste system actually lies in divinity, spirituality which cannot be modified. That is why, he started to investigate the origin of caste system. In this regard he questioned its divine origin, its hereditary status, its codification of laws governing class-relationship in the society etc. Its unfair distribution of punishment was taking into consideration not on the seriousness of crime but on the caste-status of the criminal. According to Ambedkar, the result of caste system was beneficial to some and not beneficial to other. With the help of scriptural texts

burst, Ambedkar argued that the bubble of the myth *Arya Samajists* and others propounded that four *Varna*'s of the *Indo-Aryan* society existed from the very beginnings in *Hinduism*. Generally the *Vedas* were eternal and sacrosanct. *Vedas* were the repository of all infallible knowledge and truth. *Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya* and *Shudra* – the ordination of four classes were announced in the *Purushsukta* of *Rig-Veda*, were challenged by him. Ambedkar believed that the *Purushasukta* was a later interpolation in the *Vedic* text. It was fabricated by *Brahmins* intending to serve their own class interests or class hierarchy in which they stood. According to this classification the social status of *Brahmins* were at the top, because they were produced from the mouth, next status were placed *Kshatriyas* who were produced from the arms, next were placed *Vaishyas* as they were produced from the thighs and last were placed the *Shudras* as they were produced from the feet of the divine *purush*.

Ambedkar directed his anger towards *Manu Smriti*. Ambedkar believed that *Manu Smriti* emphasized that the *Veda* is the only and ultimate source of knowledge as well as sanction of *Dharma*. Although Buddha and Mahabir challenged this in their own way which was unsuccessful, but Ambedkar's main argument in this connection was the following:

- (1) That the *smrutikars*, elevated real to the dignity of an ideal.
- (2) No society has given the defector state of class composition a legal effect by accepting it as a *de jure* connotation of an ideal society.
- (3) No society has accepted the class composition as an ideal.
- (4) They have accepted it as being natural. *Purush Sukta* not only regards class composition as natural and ideal but also as secret and divine.
- (5) The scheme of *Purush Sukta* fixes number of classes as a matter of dogma.
- (6) The scheme of *Purush Sukta* fixed a permanent warrant of procedure among the different classes which neither the time nor circumstances alter.

(7) The warrant of procedure is based upon the principal of “graded inequality”.¹⁷

Ambedkar compared between *Brahminic Law* with *Roman Law* in respect to the structure of social system. He said that according to the *Roman law* the basis for rights and disabilities was set for all and did not differ from community to community. However, in *Brahminic law* the basic rights and disabilities were not based on general uniform consideration. Here all the rights were reserved for the first three *Varna*'s and all the disabilities were for the *Shudras*. He also disagreed with the contention that the Aryan race come from outside India and invaded India. He disputed that the *Dashyus* were conquered by invading *Aryans* and that *Dashyus* were a separate race. The *Dashyus* and *Aryans* differed on religious matters. They had some times conflicts but they stood united as single people against the enemies from outside. *Dashyus* were as civilized or perhaps more cultured than the *Aryans*. They were a robust community, who were more powerful than *Aryans*. But the *Shudras* were far different from the *Dasas* or *Dashyus*. *Shudras* had a right to study the *Vedas* and participate in religious ceremonies like *Yajna*. That is why Ambedkar contended that originally there existed two *Aryan* communities and two *Vedas* i.e. *Rig-Veda* and *Atharva Veda*. The former was considered as sacred and the later offensive. After that *Atharva Veda* came to be regarded equal with the *Rig-Veda*. Ambedkar cited many classics like *Taittiriya Samhita*, *Shatapatha Brahmana*, *Mahabharat* and *Ramayana* etc. in support of his contention. He cited many myths about the *Shudras* prevalent from centuries. He opposed to the view of *Manu* that contended that the *Shudras* was a non-*Aryan* community. Ambedkar quoted from *Arthashastra* of Kautila, where called the *Shudra* as an *Aryan* in the most emphatic and express terms. On the other hand, Patanjali in his *Mahabhashya* mentioned *Shudras* and their associates with *Abhiras*. The Vishnu as well as *Markandeya Puranas* referred to the *Shudras*

¹⁷ B.R. Ambedkar: *The Untouchables, who were they? And why they became Untouchables?* Amrit Book Co, New Delhi, 1948,P.27

as a separate tribe among many other tribes and fixed their location in the Western part of the country above the *Vindyas*. The *Mahabharata* spoke of the republic of *Shudras*. Even *Manu* said that where the king was a *Shudra*, a *Brahmin* should not live. That means there was a time when our country was dominated by the *Shudra King*.

With the help of all evidences, Ambedkar conclusively established that (1) The *Shudras* were *Aryans*. (2) That they belonged to the *Kshatriya* class, (3) that some of the most eminent and powerful kings of Ancient *Aryan* communities were *Shudras*. Again he raised a question: If the *Shudras* belonged to the *Kshatriya Varna*, then why were they degraded? According to him, there was a violent conflict between the *Shudras* and the *Brahmins*. We also saw this had been reflected on the story of the conflict between the *Shudra* king *Sudas* and *Vasishtha* the *Brahmin* seer. Ambedkar cited another example of the enmity between *Vasishtha* and *Vishvamitra*. It was an antagonism between a *Brahmin* priest and *Kshatriya* priest. The dispute between the *Brahmins* and *Kshatriyas* centered round three things: the right to receive gifts, the right to teach *Vedas* and the right to officiate at the sacrifice. The *Brahmins* with a view to degrade *Shudras* employed the technique of refusing to perform *Upanayana* (thread ceremony) which was a license to the study of the *Vedas* as well as right to property.

The whole things were described in support to the story of the conflict between *Vasishtha* and *Vishvamitra*. It looks like a story of making believe so long as the right to *Upanayana* and consequent other rights i.e. the right to the study of the *Vedas*, the right to perform sacrifices, right to property and the right to determine the status of *Shudras* as a class is concerned. Later on, it was found in the *Kshatriyas* and *Vaishyas* which were the most parts of *Aryan* world, gradually stopped to undergo *Upanayana*. They possessed all the rights due to the reason that the *Brahmanic* practices were found inconsistent with their professions. For example, a *Kshatriya* would better prefer to undergo military training rather than the study of *Vedas* or teaching or presiding over a sacrificial ceremony. Similarly a *Vaishya* would better prefer to

carry on his mercantile activity or animal husbandry or farming and other related activities. This was also the same in the case of *Shudras*.

Ambedkar attacked on *Vedic* religion and *Brahminism*. Similarly, he aroused hopes in the minds of the *satyashodhakas* (Seekers of truth). They tried to take Ambedkar with them by their degenerate philosophy of anti-*Brahminism*. But Ambedkar was very much well known about their behavior towards untouchables. They were bent upon destroying the cultural hegemony of *Brahmins*. He also knew that they had forgotten the tenets of Phoolley and led the movement into communal channels. Actually Ambedkar's chief concern in life was to meet the challenge of wrongly idealized social relations which threatened the whole of human existence. His purpose was practical rather than speculative. His philosophy of life was essentially a development and evolution under the condition of Indian society. His aim was not communal and limited to personal benefit. But it was essentially social and human which was related to all, who suffered from slavery, injustice, tyranny and exploitation etc. Ambedkar wants to break the shackles of traditionalism, religious orthodoxy and blind superstition of Hinduism.

As an untouchable leader Ambedkar also discussed about matter of the origin of untouchability. In this regard he has discussed about the *Broken Man* theory. According to him, due to tribal conflict the problem of defeated tribes arose. The peoples were broken into bits and continued to remain floating population moving from place to place. They are always living outside the village or city. The broken men used to do the work of watch and ward for the settled tribes. That is why the settled tribes agreed to provide them food and shelter. But the *Broken Man* was outsider and they lived outside the village. In this regard there we find a relation with the broken man and the untouchables. According to Ambedkar, the untouchables were outside the *Varna* fold. They were outside the fourfold division of *Varna* system. They were denoted as *antyaja* or *antevasin* i.e. end of the village and not the end of

the creation. So, it will be said that there is no difference between *broken man* and the untouchables. They were the same people of ancient India, who were humiliated by the upper three castes. The *Mahars* of Maharashtra lived outside the village at the very beginning because they were *Broken Men*. They were different from the settled tribe.

On the other hand, Ambedkar also discussed about the matter of *Beef-eating*. *Broken Men* in addition to being Buddhists retained their habit of beef-eating and this provided further ground for offence to the *Brahmins*. According to him, *Manu Smriti* did not prohibit cow slaughter nor did Asoka's rules. Ambedkar maintained "the reason I like to suggest is that it was due to their desire to imitate the *Brahmins* that the non-*Brahmins* gave up beef-eating".¹⁸ He accused the *Brahmins* as being the greatest beef-eaters. Ambedkar said that, "*Yajna* of *Brahmins* was nothing but the killing of innocent animals. Carried on in the name of religion with pomp and ceremony the clue to the reason of cow worship was to be found in the struggle between *Buddhism* and *Brahmanism*. That means which *Brahmanism* adopted to establish its supremacy over *Buddhism* by accepting their ways and means and practicing them in its extreme form. *Brahmanism*, therefore, gave up the *Yajna* as a form of worship and also the sacrifice of the cow."¹⁹ According to Ambedkar, beef-eating was the root of untouchability which divided the impure and the untouchables. Untouchability was not the same as impurity. In *Vedic* period there was no untouchability. But in the period of *Dharmasutras*, there was impurity but no untouchability. In the *Law of Manu*, there were four *Varnas*, there was no untouchability and there was only impurity.

Ambedkar suggests that inter-caste dinners are not sufficient to kill the spirit of caste. Only the replacement of caste system is to bring about integration in society, to inculcate fraternity

4. B.R. Ambedkar: *The Untouchables, who were they? And why they became Untouchables?* Amrit Book Co, New Delhi, 1948, P.99

¹⁹ Ibid: P.121

and solidarity and to build up a strong India for tomorrow. The real remedy is inter-marriage that will vanish the spirit of caste. According to Ambedkar, the history of *Hindus* was the history of the surrender of Indian before foreign invaders. Under the caste system it is impossible to defense the general mobilization of the people. According to him, notional and psychological change was an urgent necessity for annihilate the caste system from India. But the real remedy was, according to Ambedkar, “to destroy the belief in the sanctity of the *Shashtras*”, because “the acts of the people are merely the result of their beliefs, inculcated upon their minds by the *Shashtras*”.²⁰

Although Ambedkar supported the non-*Brahmin* movement but he was not blind about the virtues of *Brahmins*. In this regard he said: “you people always abuse *Brahmins*, but you never imitate their virtues. *Brahmins* change their ideas according to the exigencies of the time. They pursue knowledge and money ... Remember! *Brahmins* have brains with in brains. If you went to fight the *Brahmins*, you must be more intelligent than them. You do not unite; instead you fight amongst yourselves and chew the poisonous pill given by the *Brahmins*”.²¹ At the time of *Mahad Satyagraha*, non-*Brahmins* leaders urged him to exclude *Brahmins* from the *Satyagraha*. But he overruled the suggestion and remarked that, it was erroneous to treat all *Brahmins* are enemies of untouchables. What he hated was that the man who was possessed with the spirit of *Brahmanism* – the idea of high caste and low caste which implanted the idea of pollution from human beings and imparted social privileges and inequality.

Ambedkar was a believer of rational humanism. According to Ambedkar, humanism implies the goodness, happiness, and welfare of all human beings on this planet. Humanism represents the specific of the universe, nature of man and problems relating to human being.

²⁰ Ambedkar, B.R. : *Annihilation of caste* P. 57

²¹ *Khairmoday* vol II P.193

Humanism is beliefs in naturalistic metaphysics. It considered man as the evolutionary product of nature. It implies the power of human being to solve their problems through reason. It believes that human beings possess creative choice. Moreover, it considers ethics or morality as the basis of human values. Humanism believes in good life of the individual contributing to the welfare of the community. Humanism believes in the development of earth, in social life on the basis of rigorous reasoning. According to Ambedkar, humanism claims that man is the only reality and there is nothing real. Humanism tries to emancipate man from the orthodoxy and dogmatism. Humanism stands for the value like happiness, love, kindness, compassion, tolerance, pleasure, freedom and removal of fanaticism, rigorism in tolerance, feudalism, despotism, egoism and self-aggrandizement. Thus, it seems clear to us that Ambedkar's concept of humanism stands for liberty, equality, and fraternity of all human beings. Untouchability, being a social curse, regrets humanism. It destroys individual liberty, annihilates equality and fraternity. There is no place of untouchability of human love, care and compassion. There is no place of untouchability in human rationality. Untouchability cannot be justified by reason, nor can it be justified by science. Untouchability is a social disease, a social curse, a social cancer, which dissects every individual by means of hate or *himsa*.

The rational basis of untouchability actually hinges on the selection of *Hinduism* on one hand and the scientific outlook and rational investigation on the other hand. Ambedkar supports the scientific interpretation of the concept of untouchability. For Ambedkar a person should be measured not in terms of the caste and religion in which he belongs to, but in terms of the quality and education he possesses. So it is wrong to run with the conviction that untouchability is an accredited religious sanction which must be abided by the every religious person having faith on *Hinduism*.

Ambedkar wants to establish an ideal society or a casteless society based upon the principle of justice. In his own words, the ideal would be a society which is based on liberty, equality and fraternity. According to Ambedkar, justice is simply another name for liberty, equality and fraternity. Therefore to understand Ambedkar's vision of a *just society* we have to understand the meaning of these three expressions, i.e. *liberty*, *equality* and *fraternity*. According to Ambedkar, the existing social order based upon the *Hindu* classical religion is vitiated by evils and hence he asked for a complete change.

Instead of caste based society, Ambedkar wanted an ideal society based on two principles. The first is that here the individual is an end in himself and that the aim and objective of society is the growth of the individual and the development of his personality. Here society is not above the individual and if the individual has to subordinate to society, it is because such subordination is for his betterment and only to the extent necessity. The second essential is that the terms of associated life between members of society must be regarded by consideration founded on liberty, equality and fraternity. According to Ambedkar, in the caste based *Hindu* society an individual has no place, whereas in the just society, individual is the final end. Moreover, in the caste based society a person's relationship with the member of his or her class or with the members of other classes were already fixed. But in just society, these relationships have to be based on liberty, equality and fraternity. Here the demand on the society is to protect the individual human rights. Ambedkar inclined to say that any good social order or society has to go through the two tests namely, *the test of justice* and *the test of utility*. Besides these two essential principles, one of the most important components was *justice or the principle of justice*. The norm or the criterion of judging is the right and wrong in the modern society. Therefore, to understand the real nature of the just society, it is important to know the meaning of *liberty*, *equality* and *fraternity*.

On the basis of the above observation, it becomes clear that Ambedkar was not just a critic or a person having some new ideas. His analysis of the existing social order is based on caste. He was very clear about *justice* as the basis of his alternative society. According to Ambedkar, the *Varna* system was the basis of the existing Indian social order and it is responsible for all the evils of the existing order. Generally, he talked about the annihilation of caste. But he was very clear that it is not possible to break caste without annihilating the religious notions on what the caste system is founded. This was only possible through revolution, but not through a simple reformation.

Being a highly educated person and living in the smaller town and villages Ambedkar simply imagined about the dilemma of the poor and helpless untouchables. He rebelled against this injustice and attacked the *Hindu* social order. He declared in the strongest language against his opposition to caste-system and other social evils prevalent there. He also challenged the absurd notion that the position of each individual in this life has been determined by his merit or demerit in his previous births. So his place in the social organism was irrevocably fixed and can't be changed. He fought bravely against the protagonists of inequality and exploitation. He made heroic efforts to inspire the downtrodden classes to raise the banner of revolt against the *Hindu* social order.

Generally, there was a myth reflecting the idea that an innocent, misunderstood or mistaken action caused their untouchability. They were not concerned of occupation, but the eating of forbidden food is a myth in their mind. There were many stories which we perceived in respect of untouchability. Here we mentioned few stories among them. A common myth was a story of four cow-born brothers who were asked by their mother. Mother asked them, how they would treat her after she died. First three brothers said they would worship her. But the fourth said he would bear her inside him just as she had borne him. After that this fourth son was born as a *Mahar*. There were other myths in this sin: *Mahars* were demoted to

untouchability in the seventeenth century by the *Peshwa*, because they ate anything they could find during the *Mahadurga* food crisis.

Whatever may be, we saw till now that the untouchables were living the life of exhaustion and inaction. In fact, they were not living, but they just existed under the notion that their pitiable condition was the result of their past *Karmas*. There was no escape from it and no hope of changing it. Ambedkar instilled a new life in them. He exhorted them to revolt against their slavery and serfdom. Through his numerous speeches, talks and articles, he made these classes conscious of their degraded position. This created a new awakening among them and they responded to his call for an action in a big way.

According to Ambedkar, liberty, equality and fraternity are the foundation of social justice. Ambedkar understands fraternity in terms of democracy. For him democracy is not merely a form of government. But it is primarily a mode of associated living of conjoin communicated experience. In an ideal society there should be many interests consciously communicated and shared. Fraternity is the name for the disposition of an individual to treat man as the object of reverence and love and the desire to be in unity with his fellow beings. Fraternity strengthens sociability and gives to each individual a stronger personal interest in practically consulting the welfare of others. It leads him to identify his feelings more and more with their good. With a disposition of fraternity, he comes closer to one who, of course, pays a regard to others. The term 'equality' means exactly the same or equivalent in value or quality. Equality may be a fiction but nonetheless one must accept it as the governing principle. Liberty is essential for social justice. Liberty falls under two classes, such as, civil liberty and political liberty. Civil liberty refers to liberty of freedom, liberty to speech and liberty of action. Political liberty consists in the right of the individuals to share in the framing of laws. Political liberty is really a deduction from the principle of human personality and equality. According to Ambedkar, the principle of liberty, equality and fraternity when taken together,

form an ethical standard by means of which we can measure what an individual does, what a society thinks, and what a nation aspires for. *Hinduism* fails to ensure it. Only *Buddhism* ensures it. Therefore, justice for the downtrodden is retained only in *Buddhism*. That is why Ambedkar ultimately shifted from *Hinduism* to *Buddhism*.

Ambedkar used many techniques and tactics for lift the untouchables to a status equal to the higher caste of India. He at first encouraged for attempts to join in religious festivals, to enter temples, to perform marriages with *Vedic* rites. Then he called the caste to a conference on conversion and asked them to leave the fold of *Hinduism*. In this regard Ambedkar played with the possibilities of entering *Islam*, *Sikhism*, *Christianity* or any one of India's numerous sects within *Hinduism*. The final decision was to convert to *Buddhism*, which meant literally to revive a religion long dead in India.

Ambedkar found the *Hindu* religion incapable of giving either spiritual solace or social equality to the depressed and oppressed. That is why he decided in 1935, to renounce *Hinduism*. Hence as a search for new religion, he ultimately found solace in the teachings of the *Buddha*. There was proper perspective of his pilgrimage to *Buddhism*. According to Ambedkar, the *Dalits* were not only lowest of lowly and devoid of even elementary human rights. These unfortunate people were also hopeless as useable and unapproachable. Because there was prevailing a perception that mere touch and even shadow of an untouchable would pollute the caste-*Hindus*. That means they were made to suffer immeasurable deprivations and humiliations.

So, the question arises: Is there any religion which satisfies all these tests? Ambedkar believes that *Buddhism* is the only religion which satisfies all these tests. In other words, *Buddhism* is the only religion which the world can have. In another place Ambedkar says: "*Buddhism* is like an ocean. There is no distinction of high and low in it. The Buddha by His Compassion and Love won the hearts of the down-trodden classes of his days and showed

them the right path. Today's *Hinduism* is rotten to the root. So we must adopt a better religion. In my opinion, *Buddhism* is the most appropriate religion."²² It is true that, the acceptance of *Buddhism* has brought about revolt in attitude of the followers of Ambedkar. They have liberated themselves from the strangle-hold of the dominant caste *Hindus*. They excited by the new feeling of pride, identity and cultural milieu. They no longer accept any indignity over their rights. Though reasonably still weak, they are marching ahead with courage and confidence.

Buddha says "Hunger is the greatest disease"²³. It realises that the untouchables not only suffered from 'hunger' but also suffered from many social disabilities. Ambedkar deliberately decided to go with his plans for talk to another religion. In its place, he goes to all his energies towards the social, economic and political freedom of his followers. He preferred *Buddhism* because he found that the religion of the *Buddhism* is rational, scientific and an epitome of liberty, equality and fraternity. According to him, *Buddhism* is the only religion that does not believe in *God*. Ambedkar argued that the concept of liberty does not explain with the acceptance of *God*. So, *Buddhism* is the only religion who possessed liberty, equality and fraternity.

On the basis of the above discussion, it can easily be claimed that Ambedkar during his lifetime played three roles: of a caste leader, of an untouchable spokesman and of national statesman. Generally he was a guide, guru and decision maker of his own caste in his first leadership role. From the early 1930s in the eyes of the Government of India, he was the chief spokesman of the untouchables. He was such an untouchable leader who had to be dealt with from the view point of the National Congress. He was responsible for India's policies of compensatory discrimination toward the Schedules Caste. In his third role, he spoke on all

²² Ibid, p 07.

²³ Singh S & P.S, *Ambedkar on Buddhist conversion and its Impact*, Eastern Book Linkers, 1990, p.06.

phase on India's development. He worked about the problems of labour and law as a member of the Government. He also put some of his theories which were to help create a viable society, generally accepted for Constitution. He never saw himself as merely a caste leader. His first and chief support was from his own caste. This massive support is what enabled him to work effectively in larger circle.

Actually Ambedkar appeared at a time of incipient changes among the *Mahars*. He building on a movement which had just began. In this regard he designed an ideology and a program which counteracted negative self-images, made use of *Mahar* virtues. He urged the *Mahar* towards every channel open to participation in a modernizing democratizing India. At the end of his movement, he left the caste with new images and legends and with a new history as past and present *Buddhists*. It is true that Ambedkar did not present the *Mahars* with a new identity, that of former *Buddhists* broken in the battle with *Brahmans*. Until 1956 he did not leave the *Mahars* with a new religion correlated with that past identity. But he does the *Mahars* with a new identity with his own person, a hero who won rights for them. But he did not have to castrate himself to show his absolute loyalty to his sovereign. That is why Ambedkar was seen as a savior, as a giver of rights, as one who sacrificed for his people.

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