

# **SOCI O-PHI LOSOPHI CAL UNDERSTANDING OF UNTOUCHABILITY: PAST AND PRESENT**

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN PHILOSOPHY**

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**UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF  
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*Dedicated to*  
*my*  
*Beloved Parents*



**DECLARATION**

I declare that the thesis entitled **Socio-Philosophical understanding of Untouchability: Past and Present** has been prepared by me under the guidance of Professor Kanti Lal Das, Professor of Philosophy, University of North Bengal. No part of this thesis has formed the basis for the award of any degree or fellowship previously.

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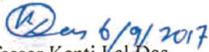
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## CERTIFICATE

I certify that **Jadab Roy** has prepared the thesis entitled **Socio-Philosophical understanding of Untouchability: Past and Present**, for the award of Ph. D. degree of the University of North Bengal, under my guidance. He has carried out the work at the Department of Philosophy, University of North Bengal.

  
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Born: - April 14, 1891, Death: - 6 December, 1956.



## ABSTRACT

The objective of my thesis is to explain and examine the concept of Socio-Philosophical implication of Untouchability after B. R. Ambedkar. Untouchability is not a legal term as nothing is constitutionally defined as untouchable. Untouchability is a social sanction embodied in the society as a custom. According to Ambedkar, Hinduism and *Hindu* civilization is the source and locus of untouchability. The fourfold division of castes gave birth to thousands of castes each associated with a particular occupation or skill and some were placed below even the lowest members of the society and treated worse than animals. They were untouchables. During the birth of Ambedkar, the *Mahar* community in which he belongs was treated as untouchables. The origin of untouchability has brought to the surface two sources of which one is the general atmosphere of scorn and contempt spread by the *Brahmins* against those who were *Buddhists* and the second is the habit of beef eating kept on by the broken man. All broken men are untouchables and all *Buddhists* are broken man for being retained their habit of beef eating. So, all *Buddhists*, according to *Brahmins*, were untouchables.

Untouchability, in any form, is a serious threat to humanity because members belonging to untouchable castes were deprived of the basic rights. Even having been achieved an unparalleled level of education and of influence as a barrister by profession; Ambedkar was the great victim in Indian religious system. He, therefore, dedicated all his powers and skills to the uplift of his people and to overthrow of the cruel system that held tens of millions of people in its thrall. He fought his struggle simultaneously on the political, social, economical fronts by writing books, founding political parties and trade unions, establishing consciousness-raising societies, news papers, schools, college, and hostels, and organizing a number of historic nonviolent demonstrations. His aim was to awaken the untouchables to their rights and to impress upon their minds the falsity of the religion they possessed in such

ignorance which treated them badly. In this thesis, I propose to address from anthropological and historical standpoint the origin of untouchability. So long we do not come to know this point; it would be difficult to evaluate the *pros* and *cons* of this concept. Apparently, it is by and large conceived by modern men that untouchables, of any form, is a social evil and prima facially it would appear to be case. Having said this, it is, at the same time, necessary to know why untouchability as a social evil had been prevailing from years after years. Therefore, it would be necessary to highlight the source and locus of untouchability. Although Ambedkar had condemned Hinduism as the source of untouchables, but there is divergence of opinions regarding this point as many would feel that it was not Hinduism, but something else which actually germinate assists to this social evil.

It is true that humans are the superior agents in the globe by virtue of possessing humanity and rationality. Humans have the ability to judge what is good or bad, what is right or wrong and what one ought to do and not ought to do. That is why, in traditional ethics humans are considered to be the only legitimate moral agents. Humans are autonomous and their autonomy is guided by their rationality. Humans are rational and self realization is the key of human beings. But when we come to know that there underlies some discrepancies or inequalities in the society, then surely human's rational position puts under scrutiny.

We know that untouchability was prevailing in barbaric fashion during eighteenth century onwards and it is prevailing till today in our society in many different ways. The intellectual class of the present Indian society actually plays dual roles regarding this issue. In public places they are used to state that the concept of untouchability has no rational basis and it should be eradicated in its all forms from the society. However, they play different role in their practical life. Thus, untouchability is not something manifested in outer gesture, it is something lies within. We feel that untouchability is a social evil and no one can support it. There is no scientific or rational basis of untouchability. Untouchability has no constitutional

basis. The so-called untouchability that we witness in India is a social issue and it is totally based on prejudices and false religious perceptions. The concept of untouchability is not a legal concept, nor even be a concept that can be solved legally. It is rather a social concept that cannot be solved politically. On the contrary, the concept of caste system has been politicized. Thus, instead of solving this problem the political system of India actually lingers it. It was happened in the past and it continues at present as well.

The issue of untouchability is unanimously condemned by all. It is still prevailing in the society not in the same sense as B. R. Ambedkar himself had been suffered, but in an invisible way one can easily realize if he is conscious of it. How can we overcome the concept of untouchability? Fortunately, we have already overcome the dark age of untouchability. In the past, untouchables were identified by physical appearance because at that time some physical bars were imposed on untouchables in terms of their dress, food, cloths etc. Equally, the upper caste was so vocal in favor of untouchability. However, over the course of time, there we notice a drastic change as far as untouchability is concerned. The same has happened in other parts of the world. This is the blessing of civilization. Thus, untouchability in most Indian states is not visible in barbaric fashion. An untouchable does not find any difficulty when he travels by bus or train. He may not find any problem to take food with others belonging to higher castes. These are good signs. But at the same time when we come to know that there are some societies where untouchability is a cause of concern, then we feel disgrace ourselves as the most intellectual representative of the globe.

Ambedkar has argued that though he was born as a *Hindu*, but he would certainly not die as a *Hindu*. We know that at the end of his life he accepts Buddhism, because he had no choice as everything has been undertaken by him under compulsion for doing social well being. He had shown his polemic attitude to Hinduism due to his non- acceptance of four-fold class system and undue prominence towards *Brahmins*. According to Ambedkar, this class system has

created division among men and it has injected the seed of exploitation and oppression of the lower caste people or the so called downtrodden. In this regard, he had burnt the *Manusmriti*, particularly in those portions which deal with discriminations among men. It is true that this type of class discrimination finds no entry in Buddhism. In this respect, we can readily refer to the story of *Chandalika*, which has written by Rabindranath Tagore. The *Buddhist* monk *Ananda* could address *Chandalika*, an Untouchable girl, in the eye of other *Hindu* people, namely, curd-seller, bangle-seller etc, as a human being at par with others.

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## PREFACE

The objective of my thesis is to analyze and examine after Ambedkar the issue of untouchability, its past and present. It is well-known to all of us that Ambedkar was the victim of untouchability in his earlier stage. He had been humiliated from the first day of his school. Even his class teachers in school had directly or indirectly humiliated Ambedkar on many accounts. Since Ambedkar began a life as the conscious *Hindu* untouchables, he faced several difficulties. He felt it strongly when he came to know that his hair would defile the purity of the razor of the barber. The washer man refused to wash his clothes. The teacher had abused him in his first appearance in the school. He was not allowed to drink water with the glass which was commonly used. These are a few among many instances happened in Ambedkar life.

In the Introductory Chapter, I propose to analyze and examine the trio-concepts, such as, *Varna*, Caste and Untouchability. *Hindu* religion admits *Varna* system, which according to me, is the source of the origin of Untouchability. The *Varna* system is the genesis of Hinduism which is determined on the basis of *Guna* and *Karma* of the individual. There is a considerable debate regarding this classification. Some great thinkers, for example, Mahatma Gandhi – as a firm believer of Hinduism, admits and admires the four division of *Varna* system as found in Hinduism. However, Ambedkar disagreed with Hinduism. According to Ambedkar, the fourfold division of the *Varna* system is the root cause of originating untouchability. In this **Chapter**, I propose to analyze and examine such issues, i.e. concept of *Varna*, Caste and Untouchability.

There is no question of doubt that untouchability is not something which can be legalized. Rather untouchability is a social issue primarily is confined within the society. Untouchability is *Himsa* (violence). There is no question of doubt. Its origin lies in

Hinduism, according to Ambedkar. Ambedkar severely criticizes the *Hindu* religion, particularly *Manusmriti*, because Ambedkar felt that the literature of *Manusmriti* is responsible for generating untouchability. *Manusmriti* admits four-fold division of *Varna* system subsequently misinterpreted and used as a religious verdict by the dominant *Brahmin* community and thereby promulgated untouchability in the society. Therefore, it would be pertinent or necessary to know the historical background of Untouchability and the religious background of Untouchability. In this regard, it is necessary to examine the *Hindu* religion such as: the literature of *Veda*, the literature of *Mahabharata*, the literature of *Gita* and above all the literature of *Manusmriti* to know the rationale behind untouchability. All these issues will propose to discuss in the **First Chapter** and it is entitled as: “THE ORIGIN OF UNTOUCHABILITY IN THE *HINDU* RELIGIOUS SCRIPTURES”.

It is important to note here that in some sense or other untouchability has been justified by the *Hindu* religion. It is not at all clear whether *Manusmriti* admits four-fold division of *Varna* system. The *Manusmriti* admits only the four-fold division of *Varna* system and says nothing about untouchability. The relevant question then arises: why does Ambedkar criticizes *Manusmriti*? *Manu* admits that there is a section of people which will be remaining outside the four-fold division of *Varna* system. Such people would be regarded as untouchables. In this regard, *Manusmriti* mentions *Mahar* Community as untouchables. As Ambedkar belongs to *Mahar* community, he did not belong to the four-fold division of *Varna* system. Therefore, Ambedkar would be regarded as untouchables. As an untouchable caste, Ambedkar had faced several incidents from his live hood, which was totally unethical. So, it is necessary to examine Untouchability after Ambedkar. Thus we propose to discuss it in **Second Chapter** and it is entitled as: “AMBEDKAR: A VICTIM OF UNTOUCHABILITY”.

If we look back to the history of the literature of the controversial issue of untouchability, there we find that there are some other contemporary great thinkers with whom Ambedkar

had disagreed. In this regard, the controversy between Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi is particularly relevant. I think that both Ambedkar and Gandhi have involved in serious discussion regarding the issue of untouchability. Ambedkar uses the term untouchability and Gandhi uses the term *Horizon*. According to Gandhi, *Horizons* are not equal to untouchable. Gandhi has a little bit of reservation regarding the very use of the term ‘untouchable’. In this regard, Ambedkar was disagreed with Gandhi. Moreover Gandhi was a firm believer of Hinduism and Ambedkar was a firm disbeliever of Hinduism. Each of them has contributed a lot for the betterment of the downtrodden people. Therefore, the comparison between Ambedkar and Gandhi will definitely be enhanced the gravity of my thesis. This issue is proposed to discuss in **Chapter Three** and it is entitled as: “FACE TO FACE CONFLICT BETWEEN AMBEDKAR AND GANDHI: UNTOUCHABLE VS HORIZON”.

It is well known to all of us that, Caste system is the first and foremost social curse that would vitiate the very springs of national life. Rabindranath Tagore also aware about the purposes for which it served and the value of the principles on which it was framed. According to him, when the *Aryans* came to India, they had to encounter the previous inhabitants of the country. Basically the *Aryans* were dominated by the spiritual impulse. Although they were organized a social system based on the recognition of spiritual unity as well as racial differences, but they did not adopt the lazy device of either extirpating the native peoples or reducing them to slavery. When the different peoples could live together in mutual harmony and enjoying the freedom to maintain their differences, the caste system was instituted as a social unity. There we perceived thousand of essay, poem, drama of Tagore, about the issue of Caste system and Untouchability. So, in the **Fourth Chapter** we propose to analyze this issue after Tagore, which is entitled as: “POETIC APPROACH OF THE CONCEPT OF UNTOUCHABILITY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO RABINDRANATH TAGORE.”

There we perceive thousand of opinions about the concept of Untouchability. From the *Vedic* period Casteism has practiced in our society in various ways. Every religious scripture discussed about this issue. But we think there are two different meanings, one is inner meaning and another is outer meaning. Whenever we say about casteism, we say about the outer meaning. But whenever we say about Untouchability, it is called inner meaning. So, in the **Fifth Chapter** we propose to analyze and examine the inner and outer meaning of Untouchability, which is entitled as: “UNTOUCHABILITY: INS AND OUTS”.

As the thesis is entitled as: “SOCIO-PHILOSOPHICAL UNDERSTANDING OF UNTOUCHABILITY: PAST AND PRESENT”, therefore in the **Concluding Chapter**, which is entitled as: “CONCLUDING REMARKS”, I propose to analyze and examine with critical outlook and also my own rationale about the Sociological and Philosophical implication of the concept of Untouchability developed in the Past as well as in the Present. The thesis would be ended with a selective BIBLIOGRAPHY followed by a brief INDEX.

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## INTRODUCTION

It is well known to all of us that before 1950s, the untouchables were divided into three categories – Untouchables, Unapproachables, and Unseables. Out of three hundred million *Hindus*, they were only sixty million peoples who were regarded as Untouchables. That means almost twenty percent of *Hindus* were treated as Untouchable in India. They had been identified in different names in different parts of the country. They were called Outcastes, Untouchables, Pariahs, Panchamas, Atishudras, Avarnas, Antyajas and Namashudras etc. Actually their social disabilities were specific, severe and numerous. Their touch, shadow and even voice were polluted the caste *Hindus*. They have no right to keep certain domestic animal, to use certain ornaments etc. They were bound to wear a particular dress, to eat particular type of food. They were forced to live in dirty, dingy and unhygienic outskirts of villages or town. They have no right to use the public wells. Along with the caste *Hindu* children, they were not admitted in the school.

Now the question is: who or which is responsible for this? What is the origin of this unhealthy system? Generally the answer occurs that Hinduism is responsible for it and the division of *Varna* and caste system of Hinduism is the origin of this unhealthy system in our society. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar in his book *Annihilation of Caste* insists that the *Varna* division is the root cause of Untouchability and caste system is the final cause of spreading these unhealthy practices. So, it is important to discuss about the trio-concepts of Hinduism: *Varna*, Caste and Untouchability.

The triangular form of Hinduism, such as, *Varna*, Caste and Untouchability, is only one of the maladies afflicting India, the ancient *Bharat*. It is an illness, a serious disease like cancer, spreading slowly but steadily in the whole body of India. These days, all the three forms of sickness have been working and affecting the minds of the people of all shades, yet to many of the Indians. So, this triangular appears to be non-existent entities. Is it true? No, not at all,

the afflicted persons, like scheduled caste and the weaker sections, know the intricacies as to how these maladies function minutely and maliciously to despise and degrade them. To say these ills have disappeared and are non-functional is to ignore the facts and afflictions. That is why; they create for the downtrodden, the weak and the lowly of our society. It is an illusion, because, if anyone thinks that *Varna*, caste and untouchability have become non-functional these days, then it is important to examine the modus operandi of each one separately.

### VARNA

The *Purusha Sukta* contains the theory of *Chaturvarna*, which was created by *Prajapati*, God – the Creator, not only of the universe, but also the creator of *Chaturvarna*. The constitution of society has divided into four classes (Varnas), i.e., the *Brahmins*, the *Kshatriyas*, the *Vaishyas* and the *Shudras*. They were created from the *Prajapati*'s mouth, his arms, his thighs, and the feet, respectively. In other words, the *Brahmins* were the priests, the *Kshatriyas* were the soldiers, the *Vaishyas* were the traders, and the *Shudras* were the menials or the servants of the people of three upper *varnas*. Thus, the constitution of society prescribed by the *Purusha Sukta* was known as *Chaturvarnya*. All the *Veda-Shastras*, including *Manusmriti*, confirmed such an ideal to be divine and infallible, because it was God-given for ideal social governance.

According to *Manu*, the four *Varnas* *Brahmins*, *Kshatriyas*, *Vaishyas* and *Shudras* were created for the prosperity of the world. The first three of them were called twice-born (*Dvijas*), i.e. the first was the natural birth. The second birth happened only after *Upanayana* ceremony of offering the sacred girdle or thread (*Janeyu*) to the boy. That is why; they were called twice-born. But this was denied to the *Shudras* and thus, they had only one birth. The role of *Manusmriti* was two-fold – (i) giving to the *Purusha Sukta* a divine injunction, and (ii) declaring the Veda as the only and ultimate sanction for *Varnashrama Dharma*. Thus, the

social ideal of *Chaturvarnya* was adorned with a degree of divinity and infallibility, which means that no one could challenge its original and functioning. What was, then the basis of *Chaturvarnya*'s organization and functioning? The theory of *guna* and *karma* was applied to each individual according to Varna. Every individual would be placed in a *Varna* according to his worth and merits. This was confirmed by *Vedas, Brahmanas, Dharmashastras, Smritis, Mahabharat* and the *Bhagavada Gita*.

*Varna* has its own *guna* (worth) and *Karma* (duty). The *Brahmins guna* was purity to know the *Veda-Shastras* and to teach others as a duty. The *Kshatriyas guna* was valour and his duty was to defend the society and the country from disorder and invasion. The *Vaishyas guna* was to learn trade and his duty was to manage economic affairs. Lastly, the *Shudras guna* was nothing but to serve the three varnas people with all devotion and without asking wages except some food, eatables and tattered clothes. Now the problem is: who belongs to the *Varna* and how he carries on their respective functions or duties. Who was responsible to maintain and place the individuals into each *Varna* according to their worth and merits? Why did the ideal of *Chaturvarnya* fail in *Hindu* life? It is a riddle to know, exactly.

An answer may be given in the words of Dr. Ambedkar who observed thus: "*Chaturvarnya* presupposes that you can classify people into four definite classes. Is this possible? In this respect, the ideal of *Chaturvarnya* has close affinity to the platonic ideal. To Plato, men fell by nature into three classes. In some individuals, he believed mere appetites dominated. He assigned them to the labouring and trading classes. Others revealed to him that over and above appetites, they have a courageous disposition. He classed them as defenders in war and guardians of internal peace. Others showed a capacity to grasp the universal reason underlying things. He made them the law-givers of the people. The chief criticism against Plato is that his idea of lumping of individuals into a sharply marked-off class is a very superficial view of man and his powers. Plato had no perception of the uniqueness of every

individual, of his incommensurability with others, of each individual forming a class of his own. He had no recognition of the infinite diversity of active tendencies and combination of tendencies of which an individual is capable. To him, there were other types of faculties or powers in the individual constitution. All this is obviously wrong. Modern science has shown that lumping together of individuals into a few sharply marked-off classes is a superficial view of man not worthy of serious consideration. Consequently, the utilization of the qualities of individuals is incompatible with their stratification by classes, since the qualities of individuals are so variable. *Chaturvarnya* must fail for the very reason for which Plato's Republic must fail, namely that it is not possible to pigeon men into holes, according as he belongs to one class or the other. That is impossible to accurately classify people into four definite classes is proved by the fact that the original four classes have now become four thousand castes.”<sup>1</sup>

Another reason for the failure of *Chaturvarnya* is the meaning of *Varna*. The term 'Varna' also stands for one's 'colour', i.e., the colour of the upper three *Varna*'s, who must be fair (*gora*) and not black (black). It was so presumed when the *Varna* system was initially propounded. But it could not be possible as it was not in the hands of the profunder of *Varna* theory. In the long run, it was also found that the progeny of the *Brahmins*, *Kshatriyas* and the *Vaishyas* failed to acquire the *guna* (worth or the merits) and also could not carry on the prescribed duties of teaching *Veda-shastras*, defending the country and the trade marketing. Their progeny has come out to be non-possession of worth and fair colour; but found to be duffers and black. The *Brahmins* are realized that the classification of men into four definite classes was not based on heredity. The basis of *Chaturvarnya*'s *guna-karma* was replaced by birth, i.e., the progeny of each person would be *Brahmin*, *Kshatriya*, *Vaishya*

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<sup>1</sup> Ambedkar, B.R., *Annihilation of Caste*, 1994, PP.43-44.

and *Shudra*, on the basis of birth, not worth, if born in the same *Varna*. Thus, the ideal of *Chaturvarnya* was shifted from worth to the birth of an individual. It was a tragedy in the history of the *Varna Vyavastha*.

### CASTE

*Varna* then arose and assumed a new name, i.e., 'caste' that means, if a boy or a girl born to a *Brahmin* family, *Kshatriya* or a *Vaishya's* family, he or she would be the same caste whatever his or her worth or merits. He or she may be a stupid or a duffer, illiterate, deformed, blind or lunatic, but he would be regarded as the same caste. The difference between *Varna* and caste may be summed up thus:

“The principle underlying caste is fundamentally different from the principle underlying *Varna*. Not only are they fundamentally different but they are also fundamentally opposed. The former is based on worth. How are you going to compel people who have acquired a higher status based on birth without reference to their worth to vacate that status. How are you going to compel people to recognize the status due to a man in accordance with his worth, who is occupying a lower status based on his birth?”<sup>2</sup>

Now the question is: why the worth was replaced by birth? It was, undoubtedly, a conspiracy on the part of *Brahmanism* which stood for social inequality and degradation of the *Shudras*. The *Shudras* were denied the right to education, arms and trade in order to keep them under subjugation for serving the so called higher castes' people. The *Varna* still works in matters of superiority of *Brahmins*, *Kshatriyas* and *Vaishyas*, irrespective of the fact that they are divided into several castes one over the other. The *Varna* superiority exists mentally, but the caste's behavior or bias exists everywhere and works openly in terms of discrimination,

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p.42.

groupies, alienation, atrocities on the weaker section of our society. “I am a *Brahmin*, *Kshatriya* or a *Vaishya*”, indicates the mental state of these people. But the caste feelings alienate them from one another. It is the caste-ridden society that ails India today, much more than the ideal of *Chaturvarnya* which is now practically extinct, but mentally prevails in matters of inter-caste marriages and party-politics in India.

The effects of caste system may be seen not only in society but also in Indian politics and management, in elections and administrative matters. The role of caste is some time hidden and sometimes open, afflicting the minds of rationalists and humanist of our country. The life of *Hindus* has been a life of continuous defeatism and what appears to them to be life everlasting is not ever-lastingly. But is really a life which is afflicting them for centuries long. The caste system of *Hindus* has been a continuous headache to entrap them into narrow-walls. The right-minded *Hindus* have distaste for it. But the majority of *Hindus* believes in its authority. Probably most of them believed that the caste system is profitable because of its close link with priesthood and certain benefits or privileges by way of manifold ceremonies among *Hindus*.

These days caste has entrapped everyone, whether belonging to the higher caste or to lower one. In view of the fact that the people, being the members of a particular caste, they are busy in seeking their origin from a *Sage* or a *Rishi* as a progeny of him. By this way all the castes people feel to be proud of being the progeny of a great *Sage* or *Rishi*. This keeps them confined to a particular caste. They called it ‘*Samaj*’ (society or community). The word ‘caste’ is something mentally bad, but the term ‘*Samaj*’ gives them an emotional satisfaction. Ambedkar contends that the transmission from *Varna* to caste and from caste to *Samaj* may not be the end. According to him, they declare their *Samaj* a ‘nation’, like during the freedom movement, the *Muslims* claimed themselves to be a ‘nation’, the *Sikhs* did the same and the *Jains* too endeavored to be a ‘nation’. The *Scheduled Caste* also demanded that they be

recognized as a separate among the *Hindus*. What would be the result or repercussion, no one thought of it.

Instead of the annihilation of caste system, it has now emerged as a powerful weapon for fighting in favors of reservation to their caste-people. This way caste has been openly vitiating the environment of this country and in the minds of the higher castes people. The caste-based distribution of partly tickets, while holding elections, and the selection of candidates on the basis of caste population is an unfortunate process that has gripped the mentality of our leader. This affects the democratic system of governance as well as the unity of the nation. What ought to be done, has become a riddle to many of us. The caste role does not stop here. It also influenced *Sikhs, Jainas, Muslims, Christians* and other religious groups to demand reservations to their respective communities. Thus, *Varna* and Caste have become the enemies of Indian political right from ancient to these days. The *Varna* mentality and caste- ridden social system have been ailing India; this can not be denied by any nationalist. How the Indian society could become a 'caste-less society'? Could it be abolished in future? It seems to me a dream for ever, because the *Varna* or the caste is a part and parcel of Hinduism, being the sacred and infallible aspect of it.

#### UNTOUCHABILITY

An untouchable is a name that has generally been applied to a person who belongs to the lowest class of *Hindu* society. It first appeared in the year of 1909. The word is a literal translation of the *Hindu* word *Achhut*, it also means *depressed classes* which has not begun to appear and *lower castes*. The Webster's dictionary vividly describes untouchable as a member of a large hereditary group in India having traditional *Hindu* belief and quality of defiling by contact the person, food or drink of a member of a higher caste and formerly being strictly degraded and restricted to menial work.

How the disease of untouchability emerged as a byproduct of *Varna* and caste has been studied well seriously and historically by the well-educated scholars. It may be noted here that untouchability is more harmful and ruinous than *Varna* and caste in terms of its sharp and inhuman treatment of the untouchables who were the part and parcel of India. That is why the *Indian Constitution*, without any hitch and hesitation, first of all came forward to abolish it. The Constitution, in its Article 17, declares: “Untouchability is abolished and its practice in any form is forbidden. The enforcement of any disability arising out of ‘untouchability’ shall be an offence punishable in accordance with law.”<sup>3</sup>

However, the Indian Constitution anyhow does not abolish ‘Varna’ or ‘Caste’. Despite of the abolition of untouchability, its practice continues unabatedly less incites but more in rural areas, especially in remote villages. The fact, however, is that untouchability exists in subtle varied forms in both urban and rural areas. Here it is necessary to ask: who were the Untouchables? By whom untouchability afflicted, severely and sharply? The answer may be found in these lines:

“*Savarna* is generally contrasted with *Avarana*. *Savarna* means one who belongs to one of the four *Varnas*. *Avarana* is one who does not belong to any one of the four *Varnas*. The *Brahmins*, *Kshatriyas*, *Vaishyas* and *Shudras* are *Savaranas*. The Untouchables or *Ati-Shudras* are called *Avaranas*, those who have no *Varna* logically, the Untouchables or the *Ati-Shudras* are outside the *Chaturvarnya*. *Dvija* is generally contrasted with non-*Dvija*. *Dvija* literally means twice born and non-*Dvija* means one who is born only once.”<sup>4</sup>

This distinction was made on account of the ceremony of *Upanayana* which means the offering of the ‘Sacred Thread’ (*Janeyu*) and the boy of anyone belonging to the upper three *Varnas* after this ceremony was called *Dvija*. The right to *Upanayana* was limited to the

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<sup>3</sup> The Constitution, Article 17.

<sup>4</sup> Ambedkar, B.R. *Who were the Shudras?*, Thacker & Co., Bombay, 1947, PP.1-6

*Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas*, but not to the *Shudras*. This way the *Shudras* were denied the privileges to have education, arms and wealth etc. A section of the *Shudras* suffered so much that they became '*Ati-Shudras*', also called as *Antyajyas*, or the most degraded class of *Hindus*. It was the *Ati-Shudras* who became 'Untouchables', the *Avaranas* or the *Antyajyas*. In due course of time, the Untouchables were hated and were subjected to severe indignities such as their mere touching seeing and shadow, could pollute the *Swavarnas* accept the *Shudras*. The *Traivanikas*, thus, conspired to degrade the lot of *Ati-Shudras* or *Antyajyas* to the maximum extent and denied to them the rights to education, arms and wealth. The notion of untouchability came into existence, declaring the *Ati-Shudras* or the Untouchables as 'impure' or 'unholy'.

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## CHAPTER – I

### THE ORIGIN OF UNTOUCHABILITY IN THE HINDU RELIGIOUS SCRIPTURES

Before delving into the origin of untouchability, it is necessary to discuss about *Hinduism*, because the untouchables were the part of the *Hindu* social system. What then is *Hinduism*? Is *Hinduism* in its original form a religion? In fact, it is revealed that originally *Hinduism* was not a religion. It has no founder like *Christianity* and *Islam*. In the entire range of the ancient Indian literature the word *Hindu* does not appear. Even the word ‘Hindu’ does not appear in our vast ancient Indian literature. This name was given by the *Persians* and the later Western invaders to the people who were living on the side of the river *Sindhu* (Indus). They used to call them *Hindus*. In this regard Radhakrishnan said: “The *Hindu* civilization is so called, since its original founders or earliest followers occupied the territory drained by the *Sindhu* (the *Indus*) river system corresponding to the North-West Frontier Province of the Punjab. This is recorded in the *Rig Veda*, the oldest of the *Vedas*, the *Hindu* Scriptures which give their name to this period of Indian history. The people on the Indian side of the *Sindhu* were called *Hindu* by the *Persian* and the later Western invaders....The term ‘Hindu’ had originally a territorial and not a creedal significance. It implied residence in a well-defined geographical area....Aboriginal tribes, savage and half-civilized people, the cultured *Dravidians* and the *Vedic Aryans* were all *Hindus* as they were the sons of the same mother. The *Hindu* thinkers reckoned with the striking fact that the men and women dwelling in India belong to different communities, worshipped different gods and practiced different rites. As if this was not enough, outsiders have been powering into the country from the beginning of its history, and some have made for themselves a home in India....”<sup>5</sup> It is true that *Hinduism* has been able to assimilate varieties of people, i.e., theist and atheist, skeptic and agnostic,

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<sup>5</sup> Radhakrishnan; *the Hindu View of Life*. Unwin Books, London (1965) P-12.

monotheist and polytheist, nature worshippers and idol worshippers etc. Not only Indians but also the foreign conquerors were welcomed by *Hinduism*. Though they were inhabitants but they were called as *Hindus*.

From ancient time, *Hindu* society had been divided into four parts. Actually the *Portuguese* were first to call *Jatis* as *Caste* and the system as the Caste system. *Brahmins*, *Kshatriyas*, *Vaishyas* and *Sudras* - are the four *Jatis* or Castes. These were the original four castes in *Chaturvarna* system. Each and every caste had its own set of customs- '*Dharma* of the caste'. Every member of the caste was bound to follow the customs. Subsequently it is called a *Varna-dharma* or *caste-dharma*. Every member of the caste is serving their professions according to their own caste. Those who engaged in mental and spiritual work i.e. those who were working as teachers, priests, ministers and advisors of the government were regarded as *Brahmins*. Generally the *Brahmins* were expected to lead a serious and moral life than others. In general, *Kshatriyas* were the soldiers, the warriors and the ruling classes who were responsible for law and order within the state and for defence of the country from outside invasions. The king, his ministers, the nobility, the aristocracy and other functionaries of the government and the army belonged to this class. Courage and bravery were the chief virtues of the *Kshatriya*.

On the other hand, those who engaged in trade and commerce, industry and agriculture were called as *Vaishyas*. Generally they were the economic strength of the country. They formed a class of commoners and against priestly class and the nobility. They were required to consider their wealth as that of the nation at large. They were the producer of wealth and as such the richest-people as compared to the other three castes. They were doing a service to the society to producing the wealth. They used to spend a lot of money for public welfare works.

Lastly those, who were doing odd jobs and those having no capability, such as the trappers, the laborers, the unskilled workers, the fisherman etc. were known as *Shudras*.

It is true that in the early stages caste-system was quite flexible and not at all rigid. There were many instances through which one may come to know that with the change of profession anyone can change his or her caste. There are so many examples in favour of this: Parshuram, a *Brahmin*, became a *Kshatriya*, when he took to arms. Vishwamitra, a *Kshatriya*, became a *Brahmin* when he became a *rishi*. Some way Valmiki, the great author of the epic *Ramayana*, was a *Shudra* in his early life and became a *Brahmin* later. In this regard we would mention the famous hymn in the *Rig Veda*, which reads “I am a poet, my father is a doctor, and my mother is a grinder of corn”.<sup>6</sup>

But it cannot be said with absolute certainty because it is really unknown how and when caste system had been originated. Historians were trying to develop a few theories purely on the basis of guessing. It is argued that the constituents of *Hinduism* belonging to the various social groups, namely, the dark aboriginal tribes, the half civilized forest dweller, the sturdy *Dravidians*, and the highly civilized *Aryans* etc., are all coming with its own taboos, laws, customs and beliefs particularly with regard to food and marriage. They had created these for them. These different social groups were remaining in the fold of the same religion observing different laws and customs.

Now the question is that, if this theory has been taken into account then so many social groups from highly civilized to the hardly civilized would have given birth too many castes. But we come to know that *Hindu* religion accepts only four castes. Though it accepts four castes but the question of naming them i.e. the ground on which the names *Brahmin*, *Kshatriya*, *Vaishya* and *Shudra* were given to these castes, remain unanswered. Moreover, it

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<sup>6</sup> R.R.Sethi, K.S. Narang; *A History of Bharat*, Uttar Chand Kapur and Sons, Delhi, P-57.

would also remain to be unanswered how the functions of the various castes decided? Who became the *Brahmin* and who *Shudra* and why? Who made them so? If this theory does not answer these questions then it is difficult to accept it as a possible theory of the origin of caste system.

There we notice another view which states that the caste system was originated not on the basis of *guna* but on the basis of the *external complexion* of the individuals. Accordingly, it has presumed that the *colour of the body* was the deciding factor of determining castes. In fact on the basis of the colour of the body the ancient society was divided into various castes. It was revealed in the *Aryans* that the so-called fair complexion *Aryans* did not mix with the dark-skinned *Dasyus* in the *Rig-Veda* period. It is also important to point out here that superior-emperor class of the society even in the West was determined on the basis of the colour of the body of the individuals. In South Africa it was revealed during the era of Nelson Mandela and even in many parts the black-white conflict is being witnessed even in the present day scenario. Thus there we find a historical similarity between the western tradition and the *Rig-Vedian* tradition, where division in the society is made on the basis of the colour of the body. As the *Aryans* rejoiced the symbol of colour as the hallmark of *Varna*, the caste system during this period was divided on the basis of the colour of the body. As a result of that *Aryans* and non-*Aryans* were created out of the colour distinction of their bodies. Thus, as per as the colour of the body is concerned, *Aryans* were treated upper castes and non-*Aryans* were treated as lower castes, i.e., non-*Aryans* can't be born twice. Only the *Aryans*, the upper castes, known as *Dvijas* can born twice. In fact, the term *Dvijas* means twice-born. The conflict between *Aryans* and non-*Aryans* being the upper castes and lower castes were made because the upper castes always hatred lower castes. Non-*Aryans* were treated as the lower castes or non-*Dvijas* having no right to born twice.

However, this theory had not been accepted. Many substantive criticisms had been raised against the feasibility of this theory. This theory, in fact, goes against the theory of *Chaturvarna* developed in *Hinduism*. Instead of *Chaturvarna*, this theory affirms two *Varna* in terms of upper and lower castes. In *Chaturvarna* there are four different nameable castes and each castes was determined on the basis of specific functions bestowed on it. In fact, the word *Varna* appears to have a symbolic meaning. Accordingly, the four castes or *Jatis* of the *Hindu* society had been described in terms of four colours. This actually made the *Hindu* society beautiful. Here the term ‘colour’ was comprehended with regards to the quality not in terms of the complexion of body. Accordingly, every colour and castes was added its own particular types to the great field of *Hinduism* on the basis of their equality and quantity.

Many would say that the caste system is nothing but *division of labour* through which the efficiency of human beings can be reflected. But there are other sides where we have different interpretations of caste system. Even there is a section of opinion that caste system has its divine origin. In this regards they have depended their position by referring to *Purusa Sukta* from the *Rig Veda*. According to the *Rig Veda*:

*“Brahmanasya Mukhum Asid Bahu Rajanyah Kritah  
Uru Tad Asya Vaishyo Padhhyam Sudra Ajayata.”<sup>7</sup>*

It is revealed from the above *Sutras* that at the time of creation, the *Brahmin* was born from the mouth of the *purusha* (the primeval man), the *Kshatriya* from his arms, and the *Vaishya* from his thighs and *Shudra* from his feet. Basically the *hymn* has a symbolic meaning which is not signifying the divinity. Although all castes had been differed in their functions but there we perceived an equal opportunity of the various castes. In this respect Dr. Radhakrishnan’s remarks are quite significant. According to him:

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<sup>7</sup> *Rig Veda* X90,12

“Caste on its social side is a product of human organizations and not a mystery of divine appointment. It is an attempt to regulate society with a view to actual differences and ideal unity. The first reference to it is in the *Purusa Sukta*, where the different sections of society are regarded as the limbs of the great self. Human society is an organic whole, the parts of which are naturally dependent in such a way that each part in fulfilling its distinctive function conditions the fulfillment of function by the rest, and is in turn conditioned by the fulfillment of its function by the rest. In this sense the whole is present in each part; while each part is indispensable to the whole....Each caste has its social purpose and function, in its own code and tradition. It is a close corporation equipped with a certain traditional and independent organization, observing certain usages regarding food and marriage. Each group is free to pursue its own aims free from interference by others. The functions of different castes were regarded as equal important to the well-being of the whole. The serenity of the teacher, the heroism of the warrior, the honesty of the businessman, and the patience and energy of the worker all contribute to the social growth. Each has its own perfection.”<sup>8</sup>

On the basis of the above discussion, it can be said that *Purusa Sukta* does not reflect the origin of caste system. Rather what has been revealed from it is that the caste system is not discriminatory. The *Hymn* does not discriminate between caste and caste or man and man. But all men and all castes were equally important in the eyes of laws of *Hindu Dharma* and society. Many would say that the *Brahmins* were exempted from taxation and even from capital punishment in ancient India. But this perception does not bear any sense. It is certainly wrong information and does not match with the literature available.

Now the question arises if there is no difference between various castes, then what is the necessity of this division and what is the basis of the *Chaturvarna*? How can we divide one

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<sup>8</sup> Radhakrishnan; *the Hindu view of life*, Unwin Books, London, p- 76-77.

*Varna* from others? Generally the *Varna* or caste of an individual is not determined by birth, but by psychological inclination and the profession enjoyed by the respective individual. In the *Bhagavad-Gita* this fact is classified by the great ‘*Yogin*’ Krishna, who by virtue of having true knowledge of *Brahman* identified himself with God. Krishna says:

“*Chaturvarna Maya sristam*  
*Gunakarma vibhagasha*”<sup>9</sup>

If we carefully go through the inside meaning of the remarks of Krishna as stated above, we can assert the following:

1. The works of *Brahmins*, *Kshatriyas*, *Vaishyas*, and *Shudras* would be determined on the basis of the three *Gunas* (three powers) possessed by them.
2. As the *Brahmins* are dominated by *Satta Guna*, accordingly the nature of the works of a *Brahmin* would be peaceful, self-harmonious, austerity, pure, loving-forgiveness and righteousness, vision and wisdom and faith.
3. As the *Kshatriyas* are dominated by *Raja Guna*, accordingly *Kshatriya* has played a role on the society with a heroic mind, inner fire, faithfulness, resourcefulness, courage in battle, generosity and noble leadership.
4. As the *Vaishyas* are dominated by *Raja* and *Tama Gunas*, accordingly they have done the work of trader, agriculture and the rearing of cattle etc.
5. As the *Shudras* are dominated by *Tama Gunas*, accordingly *Shudras* has served for the three *Varnas*.

Regarding this issue, there we notice another theory which is namely called occupational theory. According to this theory, peoples were categorized in different castes on the basis of their occupations. Today who has called as teachers and priests, in that time they were called

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<sup>9</sup> *Gita* 4/13

*Brahmins*. Instead of this, the warrior class and other functionaries of the government were called as *Kshatriyas* and the merchants, traders, the industrialists and the agriculturists were called the *Vaishyas*. On the other hand, those who have been doing odd jobs and the unskilled labourers were called the *Shudras*. So, it is clear from it that the necessity of this division was only a classification of the profession of the individuals. With the help of this classification an individual will engage in particular professions. That is why we have called a teacher as *Adhyapak* in Hindi, *Ustad* in Urdu and *Master* or *Professor* in English. But in those days they called them *Brahmin*. Accordingly, we called a business man as *Trader*, but in those days they called them *Vaishya*. Similarly, we have called the person, who has doing odd job as a *labour* or a *coolie*, but in those days they called them *Shudra*. Actually these professions were called *Jatis*, which was later came to be known as caste and the system was caste system. After that we can say the concept of caste system came into our society for the unethical practice of this division. Because caste system has neither a divine origin nor human origin, but it is an evolutionary process which is automatically started. After that this system has constantly practiced our society and makes the system hereditary. As per as the present day scenario is concerned, it is still continue and rigidly practice our society.

It is true that *Hinduism* was not only a religion which practiced this fourfold division of *Varna*. But it would be present in other religion in the same manners. That is why we could perceive such type of systems prevailed in the highly educated society in Europe. The Clergy, the Nobles, the Commons and the serf classes of European countries are regarded as the same position of the *Brahmins*, the *Kshatriyas*, the *Vaishyas* and the *Shudras* of India. Accordingly, this type discrimination has played the key role for constituent of the Government in West Indies, China, Nepal, and Bangladesh etc.

It is true that *Shudras* were regarded as the lowest caste in *Chaturvarna* system and were ill-treated by the upper castes *Hindus*. Although all the *Jatis* or the castes stood at the same level

in *Rig Vedic* period, which has confirmed by *Purusa Sukta*, but there we perceived some differences in the financial status of the different castes. According to the earning capacity of the individuals in respective profession, their financial status differed from others. That is why in the ancient Indian society wealth was not regarded as determinative of the social status, but it was dedicated for the spiritual satisfaction. On the other hand, in *Vedic* period *Shudras* were not the only poor, but the *Brahmins* also belonged to the same class. Basically, the *Kshatriyas* were financially richer and the *Vaishyas* were the richest persons of the society. That is why; *Vaishyas* were regarded as the merchants, producers and controllers of the national wealth. But in spiritually, *Brahmins* were regarded as the top of the Society. So, in the initial stages there were not so much of differences in society. However, with the passage of time these differences did increase throughout the society and after that it was beginning of untouchability.

Having said this, it was remained unanswered from the above whether *Shudras* were untouchables or not? Because, economic status can not determine social status of the individuals, though both are important for execute the life. Some peoples hold that over the course of time *Shudras* were regarded as untouchables or were reduced to their status. But this is an erroneous view. It is true that at the beginning of caste system, *Shudras* were neither treated as untouchables nor at any stages subsequently. Actually, the social status of the *Shudra* did not change. In fact, they remained equal partners of *Chaturvarna* along with the other three castes. They still worked as farmers or skilled or unskilled labourers. That is why; we can say that they were never reduced to the status of untouchables. They had the rights to continue with their professions or to change according to their taste and aptitude. Not only *Shudras* but also the other three castes do the same.

There was another view regarding the origin of untouchability that the Out-castes became untouchable at the same stage. According to this view, *Non-Aryans* and the progeny of

*Aryans* were violated the laws of *Aryan* society. They were violated the laws with regard to food, matrimony and so on, which were usually imposed on them. In the name of punishment *Aryans* treated them untouchables. According to the testimony of *Manu*: “A *twice-born* man who knowingly eats mushrooms, a village pig, garlic, a village cock, onions or leeks, will become an out-caste.”<sup>10</sup> In this respect Swami Bhaskarananda said: “out-castes, for obvious reasons, did not enjoy the same status as those belonging to the caste-system. They had lower status in the *Aryan* society, but there is no evidence to prove that they were ill treated or hated at that time. Much later, during the decent stage of the caste-system, out-caste were treated as inferior and given the name ‘Untouchables’.”<sup>11</sup>

Stanley Rice may be regarded as the first, who studied about the origin of untouchability in India. He held that the *Dravidians* were mainly responsible for this inhuman and unethical practice. According to him, after defeating and subjugating the aboriginal tribes, the *Dravidians* reduced them to the position of serfs. They did not belong to the same race as the *Dravidians*. Naturally they assigned them the jobs which they felt beneath their own dignity to perform.

As far as racial difference of the origin of untouchability is concerned, Ambedkar in his book *The Untouchables* referred Stanley Rice. According to Rice, the origin of untouchability was founded in two circumstances, such as, race and occupation. The racial theory of Rice contained two elements, such as:

- (i) That the Untouchables are non-*Aryan*, non-*Dravidian* aboriginals.
- (ii) That they were conquered and subjugated by the *Dravidians*.

We think that this theory raised the whole question of the invasions of India by foreign invaders. In fact, there have been two invasions of India. First was the invasion of India by

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<sup>10</sup> Swami Bhaskarananda: *The Essentials of Hinduism*, Sri Ramkrishna Math, Chennai, 1998, P-25.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, P-25.

the *Dravidians*. They conquered the non-*Dravidians* aborigines, i.e. the ancestors of the untouchables and made them untouchables. The second invasion was the invasion of India by the *Aryans*. The *Aryans* conquered the *Dravidians*, which ultimately turned into *Shudras*. In this regard, we got a chain of untouchability. When *Dravidians* invaded India and conquered the aborigines they then made them untouchables. After *Aryans* came and conquered the *Dravidians* and subsequently made them *Shudras*.

It is true that *Aryans* were not like a single homogeneous people. They were divided into two sections having different cultures. One of them may be called *Rig Vedic Aryans* and the other *Atharva Vedic Aryans*. The *Rig Vedic Aryans* believed in *Yajna* and the *Atharva Vedic Aryans* believed in *Magis*. However, their methodologies were different. The *Rig Vedic Aryans* believed in the deluge and the creation of their race from *Manu*. But the *Atharva Vedic Aryans* did not believe in deluge, they believed in their creation of their race from *Brahma* or *Prajapati*. They also differed on their literary developments. The *Rig Vedic Aryans* produced *Brahmans*, *Sutras* and *Aranyakas*. The *Atharva Vedic Aryans* produced the *Upanishads*. It was learnt that their culture was so great than the *Rig Vedic Aryans*. But the *Rig Vedic Aryans* would not admit the sanctity of the *Atharva Veda* or *Upanishads*.

Another notable aspect is that *Dravida* was not an original word. It was the *Sanskritized* form of the word *Tamil*. The original word *Tamil* imported from the Sanskrit word *Damila* and later *Damila* became *Dravida*. The word *Dravida* was the name of the language of the people and did not denote the race of the people. More importantly, *Tamil* or *Dravid* was not merely the language of South India, but before the *Aryans* came to India, it was the language of the whole of country.

But there was a third aboriginal race living in India before the arrival of the *Dravidians*. Can it be said that these pre-*Dravidian* aboriginals were the ancestors of the present day untouchables of India? It was, in fact, cleared that the nasal index of the *Chuhra* (the

untouchables) of Bihar was very much distinct from the *Brahmin* of Bihar. The nasal index of *Holiya* (an untouchable) of the Canaries was far higher than the *Brahmin* of Karnataka and that the nasal index of the *Cheruman* (an untouchable lower than the *Pariah*) of the Tamil belonged to the same race as the *Brahmin* of the Tamil Nadu. So, the question is by which to determine the race of the people. This negated that the Untouchables belong to a race different from the *Aryans* and the *Dravidians*. In fact, the measurements established that the *Brahmin* and the Untouchables belonged to the same race. So, it follows from the above that if the *Brahmins* were *Aryans*, then the Untouchables were also *Aryans*. Again if the *Brahmins* were *Dravidians*, then the Untouchables were also *Dravidians*. Similarly, if the *Brahmins* were *Nagas*, then the Untouchables were also *Nagas*.

Thus, my own observation is that the racial theory of Untouchability not only runs counter to the results of anthropometry but it was also very little support from such facts as we know about the ethnology of India. The people of India were once organized on tribal basis and subsequently tribes have become castes. Each tribe was divided into clans and the clans were composed of groups of families. Similarly, each group of families had a totem which has some object animate or inanimate. From the concept of totem we have the concept of *Gotra* or *Kula*. Families having a common *gotra* were not allowed to intermarry for they were supposed to be descended from the same ancestor having the same blood running in their veins. The *Hindu* family was primarily guided in the matter of marriage by consideration of *Kul* and *Gotra* and secondarily by consideration of caste and sub-caste. *Kul* and *Gotra* as *Hindus* were equivalents of the totem of the Primitive Society. This showed that the *Hindu* society was still tribal in its organization with the family at its base observing the rules of exogamy based on *Kul* and *Gotra*. If the same *Kul* and *Gotra* were found to exist in different castes and communities, then it would be possible to say that the castes though socially different were racially one. The Untouchables are racially different from the *Aryans* or the

*Dravidians* because the main extent of the population in Maharashtra was consists of *Marathas*. The *Mahars* were Untouchables of Maharashtra. However, the anthropological investigation showed that both have the same *Kul*. The identity was so great that there was hardly a *Kul* among the Marathas, which was not to be found among the *Mahars*. There was no *Kul* among the *Mahars*, which was not to be found among the Marathas. The same has happened in other castes as well. Given these facts how can it be argued that the Untouchables belong to a different race? According to Ambedkar, if totem, *kul* and *gotra* have any significance, it means that those who have the same totem must have been kindred. If they were kindred then they could not be persons of different race. Thus, on the basis of the above observation it can be said, after Ambedkar, that the racial theory of the origin of Untouchability is no longer relevant. It should therefore be neglected.

According to the historical investigation, it is quite clear that till the age of Harsha there was no untouchability in India. Even Chinese travelers like Fahien and Hieun Tsang did not mention the words untouchable or untouchability in their respective accounts. Some people, however, felt that Fahien who lived here from 399 A.D. to 414 A.D. has written about the existence of untouchability in India. When Fahien came and lived here the people in general did not observe rules of high morality. The people killed neither living thing nor drunken wine nor did they eat garlic or onion, with exception of *Chandalas* only. *Chandalas* were the only people who did not observe the high rules of morality. They were named 'evil man' and dwelt apart from others. According to the view of Fahien, the *Chandalas* only hunt and sell flesh. That means, though the people in general led a highly moral life would neither kill any living being nor eat meat, garlic or onion nor would drink wine. Yet there were some people who were non-vegetarian and ate flesh.

Thus from the above it is not very difficult to understand that the common messes giving way to the *Chandalas* for avoiding contact. After all, it was a society of vegetarians who

would not like to eat even garlic or onion, where *Chandalas* did opposite. In this regard a question arises, how could they touch them or look at flesh? For that matter even touch of a person was put in question who always carried flesh. At the approach of a *Chandala* carrying flesh, they would give him way to avoid contact.

It is true that there is nothing strange in *Chandala's* living outside the village or the town. It was the compulsion of their calling. They kept swine and fowls, which others would not keep. Their profession involved hunting, slaughtering animals and selling flesh. It was the nature of their work that compelled them to live away from the habitation of the people. In this regard today's effort is always and everywhere going on to keep the slaughter houses outside the towns or villages and away from the gaze of the masses.

Ambedkar argued that if the *Chandalas* could not be untouchables as they were rulers also at that time. Then the other communities living outside the village were neither *Broken Men* (Who performing watch and ward duties with swords in hands), nor the *Buddhists Monks* counting beads. On the other hand, there were ordinary men, who were busy in their daily chores to earn their living. They were living outside the village not because they were untouchables; rather it was the demand of their professions. They skinned the dead animals, sold flesh, fish and wine and mended their nets in spare time. Such profession demanded their doers to stay away from normal habitations. Even today such works are being done at places far away from towns and villages.

As per as the questions of cow-slaughter and beef-eating are concerned, those who broke the law must have suffered punishment at the hands of the lawful authority. Declaring them as untouchables could neither have been desirable nor feasible. No king or any other authority could ever declare a part of his subjects as Untouchables. Untouchability was certainly not an unexpected eruption, but a gradual process of evolutions. It did not occur for beef-eating or professing a religion offensive to another religion.

So, it is important to know, what is the historical analysis regarding the origin of untouchability? If we go through the historical investigation, we can see that there is no mention of untouchability anywhere in India at least at the end of Harsha's reign or even sometime after. Dr. Ambedkar, however, holds a different view that has been reflected in a passage from another Chinese traveler Hieun Tsang's *Si-yu-ki*. He comes to the conclusion that untouchability had come to India probably in 400 A.D.

Dr. Ambedkar who had doubted the hint thrown by Fahien, that untouchability had probably come to India sometimes in 400 A.D. *Chandalas* were also rulers during those days. That is why they could not be regarded as untouchables. Ambedkar has changed his opinions, after learnt Hieun Tsang's account that many other communities too had their dwelling outside the town or the village. Ambedkar concluded that untouchability came to India in 400 A.D. when he knows that the cow-killing and beef-eating had been made capital offences by the Gupta rulers in 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D. At this time there were a struggle for supremacy between *Buddhism* and *Brahmanism*.

Thus, it seems clear that there was no untouchability during the days of Harsha. We could not find any reason or proof of its emergence. But this is also a fact that the untouchability did exist in India till independence. After that it was abolished legally. It means untouchability must have emerged somewhere after Harsha's rule, may be even a few centuries after. We also know that the untouchables were neither the *Broken-Men*, nor those who has belonged to the despised callings, such as the *Chandalas*, the hunters, the trappers, the fishermen, the butchers, or the turners etc. They were not even the *Dasyus*, whom the Aryans had defeated a long time ago. So questioned arises who were they?

It was important to know that, when untouchability first appeared, how and when and under what circumstances it appeared and who the first untouchables became. In this regard it was said that untouchability came after Harsha's rule or a few centuries after that. It could not

have come in the entire country all at once. As the transport and communication, in these days were very slow, it might have been a gradual process. It spread the whole of the country gradually. Actually the reason for its emergence must be of great political and social importance. The impact of which is being very severely felt even to this day. Looking at the things from this point of view it may be easier to find out the reasons for its emergence.

On the other hand, we must know who actually the untouchables are. In this respect there is a long list, which was given by Dr. Ambedkar. All the scheduled castes and the untouchables are included in that list. Going through the list we find that only one class of people who are really untouchables. Those who clean the lavatories and carry the night soil over their heads and the scavengers who clean the roads, the streets, market places and all the public places and the residential house of people are untouchables. As we know such people were already there in the country. The filthy and unclean work was done by the slaves and the slaves were not untouchables, because they performed various other duties including the rubbing the master's limbs, when desired.

Now the question is: who performed this filthy and unclean work for the common man? The answer is none. Because this dirty and unclean job were sub-divided into two parts: The first is the cleaning the lavatories and carrying the night soil over one's head. The second is the scavenging the roads and the streets. Actually the dirtier of the two was cleaning of the lavatories carrying the night soil over one's head, which nobody would like to do. The other i.e. the scavenging the roads and the streets was not as dirty as to attract abhorrence of everyone. People could be found to do this work. There was no reason to treat them as untouchables. They could not be government servants or even slaves. Keeping in view the size of a village, a town, or even a city, in those days, one can easily imagine that not a large number of people were needed to do the job of scavenging.

It is well known to all of us that the Indian houses, in the pre or even post Harsha period for some time did not have latrines. Those who were belonging to the royalty or the high and mighty could afford the luxury of having slaves to do the filthy and unclean work. At the same time it is also clear that there was no untouchability at that time. So, in that time slaves were not untouchables. In this regard we highlight the *Yajnavalkya's* theory about slavery. The meaning of his theory is that a *Brahmin*, if he was a slave, a *Kshatriya* if he was a slave, a *Vaishya* if he was a slave and a *Shudra* if he was a slave did the filthy and unclean work of a scavenger. Only a *Brahmin* would not do scavenging in the house of a *Kshatriya*, a *Vaishya*, or a *Shudra*. But he would do scavenging in the house of a *Brahmin*. Similarly, a *Kshatriya* would do scavenging in the house of a *Brahmin* and a *Kshatriya* only. He would not do this dirty work in the house of a *Vaishya* or *Shudra*. A *Vaishya* would do scavenging in the house of a *Brahmin*, *Kshatriya*, and a *Vaishya*. Only he would not do in the house of a *Shudra*. A *Shudra* slave would do this dirty and unclean work in the house of a *Brahmin*, a *Kshatriya*, a *Vaishya* and also a *Shudra*.

So, it is clear that the *Brahmins*, *Kshatriyas*, *Vaishya* and *Shudras* who are admittedly the *Aryans* did the work of scavengers, which is the filthiest of the filthy occupations. Another important thing is that *Aryans* did the scavenging which is 'filthiest of the filthy' works. Even if a *Brahmin* slave did the dirty work in the house of *Brahmin* only and would not do it for any other castes, but he would do it for an *Aryan* only. A *Kshatriya* slave doing dirty work for his *Brahmin* and *Kshatriya* master would be doing so for an *Aryan*. The same was the case with the *Vaishya* and *Shudra* slave. So, it is quite clear that slavery did exist among the *Aryans* and all caste of *Aryans* could be slave.

In this regard it is important to point out that the word 'Aryan' used here may be considered to have been used for the entire *Hindu* Society. At that time the *Aryans*, the aboriginal tribes, the *Dravidians*, as well as the foreigners who had been coming to India from time to time

were completely absorbed by the *Hindu* Society. All of them, along with the *Aryans* constituted the famous *Chaturvarna*. So, all of the four castes viz. *Brahmins*, *Kshatriyas*, *Vaishyas* and *Shudras* were the constituents of this composite *Hindu* Society.

Now the question arises, if a person, who belongs to any of the four castes, becomes a slave of any person, who were not belonging to *Chaturvarna* system and even not belonging to India itself, then what would be his position? Would he do the filthy and unclean work for his master? If he forced to do it on the pain of death, what would he do? Obviously under such circumstances some would prefer death and some would surrender to the pressure. In this circumstance the question arises: How would the society react to that? With the sympathies with them or take some strict action against them? This, in fact, is not a hypothetical question. This situation actually confronted the Indian society when the *Muslim* invasions started in India. The *Muslim* rulers and aristocracy needed someone to do this dirty and unclean work for them. Who would better fit the job than the enslaved people of their fallen enemy? All these men, women and children are belonging to all the four caste, who were enslaved by the victorious *Muslim* armies. They could be asked to perform this dirty job of scavenging for them. Many must have refused and preferred death to dishonor. The others, who were not so brave, they were compelled to do this work.

So, it may be argued that on behalf of the *Muslim* rulers the *Hindu* slaves have to do the dirty work for them, which were not entirely wrong. The *Hindu* slaves had already been doing this work for their masters before the *Muslim* rules. It is true that *Hindu* slaves did the dirty work for their masters in ancient India. But at this time the circumstances were different. It needs to be understood that the *Aryans* could do the dirty work only for the *Aryans* and that too with restrictions. The slaves belonging to the upper castes would not do the dirty work for a caste lower. During this time they had the full support and acceptance of the entire *Hindu* society. Under this circumstances how could *Hindu* slaves belong to all the

castes will do the dirty work for the *Muslim* masters, who did not belong to *Chaturvarna*? They were aliens and were considered even lower than the *Shudras*. This is how the curse of untouchability had first appeared in this country.

On the basis of the above discussion, we can easily say that there are three probable dates which can be considered the Origin of Untouchability. The first is the early eight century, when the Arabs invaded and occupied *sindh*. The second is the first quarter of the eleventh century, when Mahmud of Ghazni invaded India seventeen times. The third is the early thirteenth century, when Qutb-ud-din Aibek established himself as sultan of Delhi.

#### ORIGIN OF UNTOUCHABILITY: ACCORDING TO DR. B. R. AMBEDKAR

Generally Ambedkar's contribution in the case of finding the origin of untouchability and to procuring valuable material from the various sources is laudable. For these investigations Ambedkar comes across many missing links and solved the problem arbitrarily. He also takes the help of imagination and intuition for enquiry the origin of untouchability. But it is true that some methods are neither rational nor in accordance with the principle of objectivity. Ambedkar not only use the historical method, but also depends on rationality. In this respect he says: "...in the course of my investigations into the origin of untouchability and other inter-connected problems I have been confronted with many missing links. It is true that I am not the only one who has been confronted with them. All students of Indian history had to face them.....the question is: what is a student of history to do? Is he cry halt and stop his work until the link is discovered? I think not. I believed that in such cases it is permissible for him to use his imagination and intuition to bridge the gaps left in the chain of facts by links not yet discovered and to propound a working hypothesis suggesting how facts might have been inter-connected. I must admit that rather than hold up to work, I have

preferred to resort to this means to get over the difficulty created by the missing links which have come in my way.”<sup>12</sup>

This position of Ambedkar is not unfair and against the principle of objectivity. However, he makes his work suspect in the view of his anti-*Hindu* or anti-*Brahmin* stance. Generally Ambedkar is known as a *Hindu* or *Brahmin* baiter. According to him, *Brahmins* are responsible for generating untouchability in our society. He clearly understands that neither the criminal tribes nor the aboriginals or their poverty owe their existence to the *Hindu* Society. That is why, *Hinduism* lost its independence with the establishment of the *Muslim* rule in our country. So, the untouchables are not only the creation of *Hindu* society, but the *Muslim* rulers also responsible for these unhealthy practices. According to this view, the *chandalas*, the butchers, fishermen, public performers, executioners, and the scavengers were not untouchables. Ambedkar also admits that they were not untouchables, because from ancient times all these classes of workers existed in India. There is no untouchability till the *Manu Smriti* appeared in its present form. This is why, Ambedkar said: “If *chandalas* were untouchables how an untouchable girl could enter the king’s palace? How could an untouchable be described in the superlative terms used by *Bana*? Far from being degraded the *chandalas* of *Bana*’s period had ruling families among them. For *Bana* speaks of the *chandala* girl as a *chandala* princess. *Bana* wrote some time about 600 A.D. and by 600 A.D. the *chandalas* had not come to be regarded as untouchables. It is, therefore, quite possible that the conditions described by Fa-Hian, though bordering on untouchability, may not be taken as amounting to untouchability.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> B.R. Ambedkar: *The Untouchables, who were they? And why they became Untouchables?* Amrit Book Co, New Delhi, 1948, P- IV.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, P-153-54.

According to Ambedkar, the probable date when the untouchability entered into the Indian social system was 400 A.D. He arrived at this date by taking into consideration two date limits. Firstly, the upper date limit to which the untouchability was not there in the Indian society. Secondly the lower date limit to which the untouchability had entered into the Indian society. In this regard, he depended upon the *Manu Smriti*. In *Manu Smriti*, there is no mention of untouchability. That means till *Manu Smriti* appeared in written form, there was no untouchability in India. It is believed that *Manu Smriti* written somewhere in or after 185 B.C. On the other hand, the lower date i.e. the latest date of the coming of untouchability in Indian Society. In this regard Ambedkar first refers to the Chinese pilgrim Fahien who visited India from 399 A.D. to 414 A.D. Fahien wrote about India and her people:

“Throughout the country the people kill no living thing nor drink wine, nor do they eat garlic or onion, with the exception of *Chandalas* only. The *Chandalas* are named evil men and dwell apart from others; if they enter a town or market, they sound a piece of wood in order to separate themselves; then men knowing they are, avoid coming in contact with them. In this country they do not keep swine or fowls, and do not deal in cattle; they have no shambles or wine shops, in their market places. In selling they use cowrie’s shells. The *Chandalas* only hunt and sell flesh.”<sup>14</sup>

After that we can say that it is not clear from Fahien’s remark about India that untouchability existed in society or not. That is why; Ambedkar refers to another Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang or Yuan Chawang, who lived in India from 629 A.D. to 644 A.D. In his writing we saw the hint of untouchability. So, Ambedkar comes to the conclusion that untouchability did not exist in 200 A.D. but had emerged in 600 A.D. According to Ambedkar, an approximate date takes the help of the date of when cow-slaughter regarded a capital

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<sup>14</sup> A.S. Altekar; *state and Government in Ancient India*, Motilal Banarsi Dass, Delhi, 1958. P-47.

offence. The date of cow-slaughter became a capital offence was somewhere in the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D. So, Ambedkar takes the probable date of the origin of untouchability as 400 A.D. because it must be around this date that the *Broken Men* were declared Untouchables for their habit of beef- eating.

Generally, *Broken Men* theory is called the theory of the origin of untouchability, which has given by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. In pre-historic days the people of the society was tribal and led nomadic life. Their main occupation has being the domestication of animals like horses, goats, sheep, cows and oxen etc. They were always moving in search of pastures green. When they learned the art of farming and cultivating the land, their nomadic character started giving way to settled life. It had developed their love for land in addition to that for the cattle. But the change over form the nomadic to settle life was running very slow. While some tribes took to a settled life, in the same time others continued to be the nomads. But, this brought the new types of problems for both the nomadic and the settled tribes.

The nomadic tribes had their own problem. It was the result of constant inter-tribal warfare. It happened that a tribe instead of being completely annihilated defeated and routed. In many cases it was broken into bits. Dr. Ambedkar calls them *Broken Men*, as they had broken from their original tribes. As a result they are always existed in primitive times. But the society has being tribal during those days and tribal organization being based on common blood and common kinship. If an individual are born in one tribe, then he could not join another tribe. The *Broken Men* therefore had to live as lost individuals. That is why; they are always in danger of being attacked. In this reason they needed shelter and protection for them. That is why; the settled tribes and the *Broken Men* came to each other's help. The settled tribes needed a body of men to protect them from the repeated invasions of the nomadic tribes, which *Broken Men* provided. They needed food and shelter, to save themselves from the attack of the nomadic tribes, which the settled tribes provided them. As a result, they became

regarded as a labour. Ambedkar says: “It explains why the untouchables regarded the *Brahmins* as inauspicious, do not employ them as their priests and do not even allow them to enter into their quarters. It also explains why the *Broken Men* came to be regarded as Untouchables. The *Broken Men* hated the *Brahmins* because the *Brahmins* were the enemies of *Buddhism* and the *Brahmins* imposed untouchability upon the *Broken Men* because they would not leave *Buddhism*.”<sup>15</sup> So, according to Ambedkar, Untouchables were presented as descendants of *Buddhists* who regarded themselves as endowed with a separate identity.

From the pre-historic period these *Broken Men* were known as untouchables and they have been living outside the village. For Ambedkar, the untouchable had been living outside the village, even before they become Untouchables. That is why; they had been entitled as *Antya*, *Antyaja* and *Antyavasin*, which are given to certain communities by the *Hindu Shashtras*. According to Ambedkar, the word *Antya* means not the end of creation but end of the village. It is a name given to those people who lived on the border of the village. The word *Antya* has therefore a survival value. It tells us that there was a time when some people lived inside the village and some lived outside the village. Those who lived outside the village, i.e. on the *Antya* of the village are called *Antyaja*. Ambedkar puts forward to prove that untouchables were only the *Broken Men*; he puts the example of the *Mahar* community of Maharashtra. This is a community to which Ambedkar himself belonged. He described the relations between the *Mahars* and the touchable *Hindus*, which was existed during his days. So Ambedkar comes to the conclusion that *Broken Men* were living outside the village. They became the untouchables and that untouchables had always been living outside the village and that untouchability had nothing to do with their residence being outside the village.

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<sup>15</sup> Private Papers of Moonje, NMML, letter of Moonje ti Malaviya, August 23, 1936.

## CHAPTER - II

### AMBEDKAR: A VICTIM OF UNTOUCHABILITY

Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar was born in a *Mahar* family at Mhow in Maharashtra on 14<sup>th</sup> 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 4<sup>th</sup> 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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 17<sup>th</sup> August 1932, the Communal Award announced separate electorates for the untouchables. Finally on 24<sup>th</sup> 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 13<sup>th</sup> 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 14<sup>th</sup> 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”<sup>16</sup>. 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,

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<sup>16</sup> *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”.<sup>17</sup>

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*

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<sup>17</sup> 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".<sup>18</sup> 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."<sup>19</sup> 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

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

<sup>19</sup> 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*”.<sup>20</sup>

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*”.<sup>21</sup> 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.

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<sup>20</sup> Ambedkar, B.R. : *Annihilation of caste* P. 57

<sup>21</sup> *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."<sup>22</sup> 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"<sup>23</sup>. 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

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, p 07.

<sup>23</sup> 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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### CHAPTER III

#### FACE TO FACE CONFLICT BETWEEN AMBEDKAR AND GANDHI: UNTOUCHABLE VS HORIZON.

Before discussing about the conflict between Ambedkar and Gandhi, here we mention an extracts from Gandhi and Ambedkar conversation, which was held on 22<sup>nd</sup> September, 1932.

Ambedkar – “I want political power for my community. That is indispensable for our survival. The basis of the agreement therefore should be: I should get what is due to me. I wish to tell the *Hindus* that I should be assured of my compensation”.

Gandhi – “You are born an untouchable but I am an untouchable by adoption. As a new convert I feel more for the welfare of the community than those who are already there. At the moment I have before my eyes the dumb untouchables – unapproach – ables and unseables – of South India.<sup>24</sup>

It is well known to all of us that both Gandhi and Ambedkar were started working for the depressed classes almost all together in Bombay Presidency. Gandhi was a *Gujrati* caste *Hindu* and a *Modh Bania* by caste. He sought to raise the status of the *Depressed Classes* within the framework of all-embracing struggle for the freedom of which he was acknowledged as the father figure. On the other hand, Ambedkar was a *Marathi* untouchable and a *Mahar* by caste. He strove to raise the status of the depressed classes within the framework of British Policy. Both Gandhi and Ambedkar entered in public life as a barrister. Gandhi renounced his legal profession and turned out to be a social activist. Ambedkar was an author of scholarly works and he remained a westernized intellectual having commitment to the uplift of the *Depressed Classes*.

Generally Ambedkar was known as the “savior of the Untouchables”. Gandhi as “the father of Independence” has spoken and written more on untouchability than on any other subject.

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<sup>24</sup> CWMG, Vol.51, PP. 459-460, Mahadev Bhaini Diary, Vol-II, pp. 60-72.

Along with *Hindu-Muslim* unity, Gandhi publicly put his voice for abolition of untouchability. According to Gandhi, this was essential for India's true independence. That is why, for developing the social status of untouchables he made the popular term "Harijan" (children of God) for the untouchables. On the other hand, Ambedkar was regarded as the most highly educated Untouchables in India. He has been recognized as the untouchable's chief spokesman, the founder of a political party for untouchables. Side by side, he was moving spirit behind organizations; schools and colleges for establishing their uplift. Both Ambedkar and Gandhi were often at odds in their programs for the abolition of untouchability. In 1932, Gandhi dissatisfied about Ambedkar's attempt to gain political concessions from the British. But Ambedkar argued that, this concession is to be essential for the progress of untouchables. Working for a national goal, Gandhi was concerned as a dominant group leader. Gandhi from a moral standpoint and from a realization of the need for unity about injustice to a low status group within the nation was known as a group leader. On the other hand, Ambedkar's correlative role was to run as a militant leader of a politically conscious segment of the same depressed group. But what is important to notice here is that, the conflict between these two leaders are examined in terms of their ideological differences and the different solutions which they advocated for the resolution of one India's major social problems.

Before discussing about the matter of Gandhi's action and Ambedkar's reactions to them, it is important to know about the background and ideology of each of them. Gandhi in his autobiography identifies himself as a *Bania*. Actually Vaishya or *Bania* castes are the third in the traditional four-fold division of the *Hindu* society. Including *Brahmins* and *Kshatryas* they are also twice-born or *Dvija*. When Gandhi was fifty-two years old, he contains only a few references to untouchables or about the concept of untouchability. At the time of his assumption of the leadership of the *Indian National Congress*, he delivered his first strong

public statement on untouchability. As a politician Gandhi said: “Swaraj is as unattainable without the removal of the sin of untouchability as it is without Hindu-Muslim unity.”<sup>25</sup> And as a Mahatma he said: “I do not want to be reborn. But if I have to be reborn, I should be born an Untouchable....”<sup>26</sup> Although within few years his views regarding other caste-based practices was highlighted as different, but his statements on the evil of untouchability were clear from the first. According to him, inter-drinking, inter-dining and inter-marrying ceremony are not sufficient for annihilates the social curse of untouchability. In this regard he said: “If I had my way I would persuade all caste Hindu girls coming under my influence to select *Harijan* husbands.”<sup>27</sup> Actually, his change in attitude toward social practices was an unchanging belief in *Varnashramadharma*. According to him, untouchability had no part in the divine origin. That is why, the treatment of castes below the *Shudra* level as impure was not only inhuman, but it also harmful to *Hinduism*. He described it as a curse, an outgrowth of *Hinduism*, a poison, a cancer, a hydra-headed monster, a great blot, a device of *Satan* and a hideous untruth etc. It is true that he was not the first who was cried for the untouchables, but he was the most prominent caste *Hindu* who believed that it was harmful to *Hinduism*. That is why for remove these harmful practices it was necessary to take the responsibility of the caste *Hindu*.

On the other hand, the caste, the family status, social background and the intellectual environment of where Ambedkar was born, was totally different from Gandhi. By birth he was regarded as a *Mahar*, which was the largest untouchable’s caste of Maharashtra. They were the lower village servants. Their traditional duties were to maintenance of streets, walls etc. Their earning sources were to carrying messages, transportation away dead cattle and

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<sup>25</sup> *Young India*, 29<sup>th</sup> December, 1920.

<sup>26</sup> *Young India*, 27<sup>th</sup> April, 1920.

<sup>27</sup> *Harijan*, 7<sup>th</sup> July, 1946.

similar unskilled and polluting task. But they were not responsible for cleaning the latrines or removal of night soil. During nineteenth and early twentieth centuries most of the *Mahars* removed them from their traditional village servant role. With the help of *Mahars* leaders, the spirit of militancy and the influence of education they were acquired in the army and in the domestic service. Along with others *Mahars*, his father and grandfather were served in the army camp. From his childhood, Ambedkar humiliated and discriminated by the higher castes *Hindu* in the name of untouchability. But his educational qualification and positive thinking for his society made him an untouchable leader.

It is true that before 1930s, Ambedkar and Gandhi were not meet face to face. But from 1920s, Mahatma's social activities had aroused the interest in the mind of untouchable leaders. Ambedkar was very much interested on Gandhi in this issue. In 1925, Ambedkar was first comment about Gandhi dates back and concerns regarding the *Vaikam Satyagraha*. Ambedkar declared in the occasion of the *Depressed Classes Conference* of the Bombay Presidency: "Before Mahatma Gandhi, no politician in this country maintained that it is necessary to remove social injustice here in order to do away with tension and conflict, and that every Indian should consider it has sacred duty to do so... However, if one looks closely, one finds there is a slight disharmony ... for he does not insist on the removal of untouchability as much as he insists on the propagation of *Khaddar* or the *Hindu-Muslim* unity. If he had he would have made the removal of untouchability a precondition of voting in the party. Well, be that as it may, when one is spurned by everyone, even the sympathy shown by Mahatma Gandhi is of no little importance."<sup>28</sup>

But in 1927, Ambedkar and his followers adopted an extreme course of action like burning of *Manusmriti* and organized the *Satyagrahas* for gaining access to *Mahad Choudar tank* and

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<sup>28</sup> Zelliott, E. Gandhi and Ambedkar, Article, cit.

entered into the temples (the *Pravati temple* of Poona in 1929 and *Kalaram temple* of Nasik in 1930). Although, it is not clear that whether the temple entry *Satyagrahas* at Poona and Nasik was non-violent or not, but the result of this movement formed an atmosphere of bitterness and distrust. They did not get any support from Gandhi and even from the Congress. That is why; Ambedkar and his followers became distrustful and critical towards Congress and Gandhi. At the time of the second session of Round Table Conference, Gandhi first came to know that Ambedkar was an Untouchable. We could see that in this Conference Gandhi and Ambedkar clashed about the matter of special electorate for the *Depressed Classes*. At that time, Gandhi and his followers attempt Ambedkar to highlights the temple entry question. But Ambedkar and his followers remained indifference on temple entry question. In a meeting of the *Depressed Classes* which was held on 28<sup>th</sup> September, 1932 at Worli, Bombay, Ambedkar gave a relentless speech about this matter. Ambedkar said: “The object of the temple entry movement is good. But you should care more for your material good than for spiritual food. You did not get food to eat, clothes to wear, opportunities of educating your children and medical help for want of money. You should therefore be watchful of the political gains and you must develop your strength and struggle for gaining material advancement in life.”<sup>29</sup> After that Ambedkar told Gandhi on 17<sup>th</sup> October, 1932 that: “I must honestly say that I have no interest in the temples being thrown open, common dinners and the like, because we suffer thereby. My people have to put up with beatings and bitterness increases.”<sup>30</sup>

Although Gandhi criticized Ambedkar’s move for conversion, but at the same time he showed an empathetic attitude towards the former’s point of view. Gandhi warned the Caste *Hindus* against the injustice of treating a highly educated and cultured man like Ambedkar, as

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<sup>29</sup> Keer. D, *Dr. Ambedkar: Life and Mission*, PP-217-218.

<sup>30</sup> CWMG, Vol.51, P-462.

an Untouchable. Gandhi said: “He is pronounced as belonging to the *Depressed Classes* and as being untouchable. Intellectually he is superior to thousand of intelligent and educated caste *Hindus*. His personal cleanliness is as high as that of any of us. Today he is an eminent lecturer in law. Tomorrow you may find him a judge of *High Court*. In other words, there is no position in the government of this country to which he may not aspire or rise, and to which an orthodox *Brahmin* can raise. But that orthodox *Brahmins* will be defiled by the touch of Dr. Ambedkar and that because of his unpardonable sin that he was born a *Mahar* (Untouchable).”<sup>31</sup> Gandhi advised to Ambedkar for judge *Hinduism* not by its “Worst Specimens” but by the best it might have produced. In this respect, he asked “can a religion that was professed by Chaitanya, Jnanadeva, Tukaram, Tiruvalluvar, Ramkrishna Paramahansa, Raja Rammohan Roy, Maharshi Devendranath Tagore, Vivekananda and a host of others who might be easily mentioned be so utterly devoid of merit as it made out in Dr. Ambedkar’s address?”<sup>32</sup>In this regard, Ambedkar asked Mahatma Gandhi that, why the worst number so many and the best so few? He also attacked the *Varna Vyavasatha* in which Mahatma firmly believed. According to him: “... the reorganization of *Hindu* Society on the basis of *Chaturvarna* is harmful because of the effect on the *Varna Vyavastha* is to degrade the messes by denying them opportunity to acquire knowledge and to emasculate them by denying them the right to be armed ... The *Hindu* society must recognize the principles of the Liberty, Equality and Fraternity; in order to achieve this object the sense of religious sanctity behind Caste and *Varna* must be destroyed. The sanctity of the Caste and *Varna* can be destroyed only by discarding the divine authority of the *Shastras*.”<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Harijan, 20<sup>th</sup> June . 1936.

<sup>32</sup> Harijan, 18<sup>th</sup> July, 1936.

<sup>33</sup> Ambedkar. B.R, *Annihilation of Caste with a Reply to Mahatma Gandhi*, Jullundur, 1975, P-117.

Ambedkar contended that caste was a nation and it was a state of mind. The destruction of the caste therefore means a national change and a mental revolution. The real remedy must start on with the destruction of popular belief in the *Shastras*. People must be won over to an egalitarian outlook. Gandhi doubts on Ambedkar's statement of untouchability would not go without destruction of *Varnavyavastha*. Personally, he would restrict himself to the fight against untouchability. It was highly that at the end of it they should find that there was nothing to fight against *Varnashram*. If *Varnashram* even looked as an ugly thing, then the whole of *Hindu* society would fight against it. Humanity and an open mind were the lovable qualities of Gandhi. That is why he closed his reply to Ambedkar with these words: "At the end of the chapter, I hope that we shall all find ourselves in the same camp."<sup>34</sup>

Gandhi and Ambedkar differed on bearing of caste system and *Varnashram* on untouchability. For abolishing untouchability, Gandhi did not feel it is necessary to attack caste system. He did not think that it necessary to introduce inter-caste marriage and dinners for abolishing untouchability from *Hindu* society. That is why he wrote: "these two measures are not at all related to untouchability. No one is an untouchable in my eyes. But for that reason, is there any justice in suggesting that I should either sit down for a meal with one whom I do not regards as untouchable or marry my son or daughter to such a one? Both these things are a matter of personal preference and individual right. But it is not a matter of right to regard any man as untouchable because of his birth. That is a gross injustice and heinous sin."<sup>35</sup> But on the other hand, Ambedkar opined that untouchability was an integral part of the *Hindu* caste system. So, without abolishing caste system, it is impossible to annihilate untouchability. Ambedkar said: "The out caste is a bye-product of the caste system. There will be out caste as long as there are castes. Nothing can liberate the outcaste except the

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 259-61.

<sup>35</sup> CWMG. Vol.55. P-2.

destruction of the caste system. Nothing can help to save *Hindus* and ensure their continued existence in the coming struggle except the purging of the *Hindu* faith of this odious and vicious dogma.”<sup>36</sup> Ambedkar again argued that the only effective method for abolishing caste system was inter-caste marriage. In this regard he said: “Fusion of blood can alone create the feeling of being kith and kin and unless this feeling of kinship, of being kindred, become paramount the separatist feeling – the feeling of being aliens – created by caste will not vanish.”<sup>37</sup> That is why; Ambedkar raised his banner of revolt against caste system, *Varnashram* of *Hindu* religion for abolishing untouchability.

On the other hand, Gandhi was a firm believer of *Hindu Dharma* and *Varnashram*, but he rejected caste system. In this regard Gandhi said: “Caste has nothing to do with religion. It is a custom whose origin I do not know and do not need to know for the satisfaction of my spiritual hunger. But I do know that it is harmful both to spiritual and national growth. *Varna* and *Ashram* are institutions which have nothing to do with caste. The law of *Varna* teaches us that we have each one of us to earn our bread by following the ancestral calling. It defines not our rights but our duties. It necessarily has reference to callings that are conducive to the welfare of humanity and to no other. It also follows that there is no calling too low and none too high. All are good, lawful and absolutely equal in status. The calling of a *Brahmin* – spiritual teacher – and a scavenger are equal and their due performance carries equal merit before God and at one time seems to have carried identical reward before man. Both were entitled to their livelihood and no more.”<sup>38</sup> Gandhi sought to integrate the untouchables into the traditional *Hindu* society. Because he realized that *Varnashrama* did not produce untouchability, but untouchability was the miss-interpretation of Caste system. Gandhi

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<sup>36</sup> *CWMG*, Vol. 53, pp.259-60; the first issue of the *Harijan* weekly was published on 11 February 1933.

<sup>37</sup> Ambedkar. B.R. *Annihilation of Caste with a Reply to Mahatma Gandhi*, Jullundur, 1975, P-83.

<sup>38</sup> *Harijan*, 11<sup>th</sup> February, 1936.

expressed his views about the caste system: “*Varnashrama* is, in my opinion, inherent in human nature and *Hinduism* has simply reduced it to a science. It does attach to birth. A man cannot change his *Varna* by choice. Not to abide by one’s *Varna* is to disregard the law of heredity. The division, however, into innumerable caste is an unwarranted liberty taken with the doctrine. The four divisions are all-sufficing....The four divisions defines a man’s calling, they do not restrict or regulate social intercourse. The divisions define duties. They confer no privileges. It is, I hold, against the genius of *Hinduism* to arrogate to oneself a higher status or assign to another a lower. All are born to serve God’s creation, a *Brahman* with his knowledge, a *Kshatriya* with his power of protection, a *Vaishya* with his commercial ability, and *Shudra* with bodily labour. This, however, does not mean that a *Brahman*, for instance, is absolved from bodily labour or the duty of protecting himself and others. His birth marks a *Brahman* predominantly a man of knowledge, the fittest by heredity and training to impart learning to others. There is nothing again, to prevent the *Shudra* from acquiring all the knowledge he wishes. Only he will best serve with his body and need not envy others their special qualities for service.”<sup>39</sup>

But Ambedkar wanted to integrate the untouchables into Indian society in modern ways. He strictly criticizes of Gandhi’s hatred for modern industries and his *trusteeship* theory. According to Ambedkar, Gandhi’s socio-economic theory has not suitable for modern democratic system. He argued that, Gandhi held that modern industrialization had led to the concentration of wealth in the hands of few, for which he was critical of machinery and industrialization.

The actual reason for Gandhi’s initial hesitation to attack caste and Ambedkar’s attack on caste, *Varna* and *Hinduism* can be understood in terms of their background and the role in

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<sup>39</sup> S. Radhakrishnan(ED); *Mahatma Gandhi, Essays and Reflections on his life and work*, Jaico Publishing House, New Delhi, 1956, P-423.

public life. Being a caste *Hindu* and as a national leader, Gandhi took the role of a reconciler. It was rather unnatural for him to alienate certain sections of the society by launching an attack on caste. On the other hand, being an untouchable and having suffered on that account, being highly qualified and sophisticated and working for the *Depressed Classes* uplift with undeviating purposefulness, Ambedkar could work in a more compartmentalized fashion. This is the cause for virtuous anger on conservative *Hindus*. But Gandhi was hopeful of removing untouchability which he considered an outgrowth without pulling down the whole system. But he wanted to fight *Varnashram* and reject the authority of *Shastras* for the sake of removing an inhuman practice like untouchability.

Ambedkar had declared war on the evil of untouchability from his childhood. It was the exigencies of this war which forced Gandhi to expand the front of his battle against the frightened structure of *Hindu* Society. The ceaseless struggle against untouchability drove him to oppose all attempts to detach the *depressed classes* from the *Hindu* fold. He staked his life to fight for separate electorates of the untouchables. He negotiated a generous settlement with the *Scheduled Castes* on the question of representation. It was again put the logic of his determination to root out untouchability which he sincerely and ardently subscribed from the very beginning. That drove him to attack the other citadels of *Hindu* exclusiveness and taboos about marriages and eating without giving up either his vegetarianism or his sound tenets about personal cleanliness or hygiene etc.

Thus, Gandhi came to wrestle with the inherent contradiction in his passion. He had to abandon his belief that *Hindus* should only apply their ancestral occupation or marry within caste. When he finally discarded *Varnashram*, which is based on birth, he was not surprisingly begun to approve inter-caste, *Savarna-Harijan* marriages as well as inter-communal marriages. His own son married a *Brahmin* lady and Gandhi gave his blessing to the union. It is true that before his death Gandhi had come to the same position as Ambedkar

had taken at the beginning of this great debate. Gandhi discarded his old views of the *Varna* system. Ambedkar also modified his stand on the issue of the *Scheduled Tribes*. Although, the congress had effective control over the *Constituent Assembly*, but it did not place its party interest above the nation's interest. It inducted into the *Constituent Assembly* by eminent non-Congress men. Ambedkar himself was brought into it by Sardar Patel. The essential role of the Congress in Constitution-making was stressed by Ambedkar himself. Ambedkar confessed that his election as chairman of the *Drafting Committee* pleasantly surprised him. He pointed out that it was the disciplined functioning of the Congress which made the smooth passage of the Draft Constitution possible.

Gandhi and Ambedkar are the most important persons for the contribution of the social advancement for the *harijans*. But their social identity was different. Gandhi came from a caste of *Vaishya*, whereas Ambedkar was born into an Untouchable caste. Gandhi approached the problem of untouchability from the standpoint of an upper caste *Hindu*. He wanted to decompose out untouchability from the fabric of society. On the other hand, Ambedkar struggle against the exploitation which the untouchables had suffered by the upper caste *Hindus* across the centuries. As a believer of *Hindu dharma*, Gandhi felt that it is important to reform the *Hinduism* of the outgrowth of Untouchability. On the contrary, Ambedkar was convinced that the problem of untouchability was a part of *Hinduism* and it was enshrined in its sacred scriptures. It is not easy to remove this unhealthy practice from the *Hindu* society. It is clear from it that the differences between Gandhi and Ambedkar are not merely personal approaches, but it's continue to be debated within Indian Society even today. On the basis of this discussion, we shall make a brief examination of the backgrounds and values which influenced and motivates their styles of leadership in their respective struggles against untouchability.

Regarding the concept of untouchability, there was a vital point of difference and disagreement between Gandhi and Ambedkar. On the subject of reform Gandhi also differed from and disagreed with Ambedkar. Gandhi believed that reform must be propelled from the hearts of *Hindus*. That is why; they could be substantial and effective. Thus, Gandhi's method of removing the ill and prompting the *Hindus* was to think and repent for the overall suppression. They committed upon their brothers. When some *Hindus* suffered for the sake of the untouchability, at this time this change of heart could be possible. Then other *Hindus* would see this suffering and naturally follow their example. But Ambedkar felt the urgent need of arousing the conscience. He also felt the hearts of the *Hindus* for which purpose various *satyagrahas* had formed a very important plank. After the Poona Pact of 1932, a change came about in this policy. Gandhiji himself gave to more definite and clear-cut objectives, i.e., asking for safeguards, reservations and special legislation. Later on Ambedkar offered his well-planned scheme of *socio-politico-economic* reforms relating to the problems of untouchability. This reformatory idea was a logical development of his analysis of the problem.

Ambedkar was a practical politician who had come to the conclusion that the higher caste *Hindus*, especially *Brahmins* had nothing to gain but much to lose by the reforms of caste and untouchability. His remedies would elicit little and not co-operated with them. He could not get them any implement, because he himself was an untouchable and according to *Hindu* conduct he could not overstep the social barriers. His pleadings went unheeded to them. In these circumstances what could be done? After the careful consideration, he found another way to move towards the goal.

Ambedkar was clearly understood that this idea is not always fully realizable, because one had to make concessions due to a variety of indispensable considerations. But his approach about this era was more practical. He stated that the surest way of the depressed class has

elevation lay in higher education, higher employment and better ways of earning and living. In this way, one day they would get their elevation and they got well placed in the scheme of social life. Similarly, they would become respectable and they become respectable. One day we could perceive the religious outlook of the orthodox was sure to undergo change. If this did not happen, then it could do no injury to their material interests.

It is well known to all of us that, the main aim and mission of Ambedkar's life were to try to lead the depressed classes towards a higher social, political and economic status and to free them from the stigma of untouchability. The aim of Ambedkar's life was to secure complete equality for the depressed classes and bring them equal status with other *Hindus*. Under this circumstance he selected for himself the field relating to social reform-abolition of caste and untouchability. That is why; he would have to plan an all-round attack on the system of caste and untouchability, which was extremely difficult. To promote of this direction firstly he explains in a convincing manner - the defects, shortcomings and evil impact of the caste system and how these hindered the removal of untouchability. For this purpose he wrote a number of books. But according to me, the greatest contribution of Ambedkar lies as a leader of the *depressed classes*. He was able to awaken them from their lowly existence and the life of degradation and ignominy which they were leading from thousand years. He made them conscious of their weaknesses and told them how these rendered them powerless.

On the basis of the above discussion we can say that, Ambedkar's life was a noble dedication to the cause of social reform in India. He was the builder of modern India, who fought relentlessly to establish a society based on the democratic ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity. He endeavored to eradicate sorrow from their life through a reconstruction of the social and economic order. He was very much well known about the economic property which could be available to every human being and tried to realizing them from a life of degradation and misery. He had aroused and awakened the depressed classes against social

injustice and instilled in them the spirit of self-reform, self-emancipation, self-reliance, self-respect and self-confidence etc. He tried to free their minds from the inferiority complex. According to him, these people had because of their belief belonged to the lowest strata of the *Hindu* society. This was inculcated in their mind by custom and usage, which has sanctioned by religion. That is why, he strongly protested against the social, political and economic segregation, which has practiced by the high caste *Hindu* society.

Now the question is: why Gandhi and Ambedkar have always conflicted with each other rather than dialogues? So it is important to understand how this happened. Though Gandhi has been regarded as the great national leader who always ready to compromise with the British in putting the 'social movement', but the reality is not so simple. Basically, Ambedkar's nationalism was expressed at many points. Gandhi himself made it clear that his first concern about this issue was not so much independents. Actually their family background made the different views regarding the social issue. Ambedkar, being an untouchable, runs his social movement for the development of *Dalit* rural and urban peoples. On the other hand, Gandhi, as a *Hindu* upper caste, access to all the wealth and resources for the upper castes. That is why Gandhi's 'social base' did not see the same as he did. There are many standard works set up by Gandhi regarding the issue of untouchability and caste. Although there are so many questions arises regarding 'moral' and 'political', but Gandhi has taken a passion, in fact, played a central role in building the conflictless Society.

There also we noticed the conflicts between Gandhi and Ambedkar about the meaning of Indian independence. But they were similar in placing the nature of that independence ahead of mere freedom from British control. In fact, Ambedkar seems to have a soft spot for Gandhi, perhaps taking him as a new phenomenon different from the *Brahminic* elitist leaders. Gandhi's photo had adorned the *pandal* for the *Mahad Satyagraha*: even the demands of the untouchables were put in terms of 'their rights as *Hindus*'.

Generally, Ambedkar has challenged *Hinduism*. He has become disgusted with the *Savarna Hindus* for the treatment that he and his people have received at their hands. He proposes to leave not only them but the very religion that is his and their common heritage. Many of the texts that Ambedkar quotes that the *Smriti* cannot be accepted as authentic. The law of *Varna* teaches us that we have each one of us to earn our bread by following the ancestral calling. It defines not our rights but our duties. The profound mistake that Ambedkar has made in his address is picking out the text of doubtful authenticity. Religion has to be judged not by its worst specimens but by the best it might have produced.

On the other hand, Gandhi has completely disagreed from the views of Ambedkar on the subject of Caste. In this issue he took the role of opponent to Ambedkar. But Ambedkar said that he had never hankered for the publicity. Ambedkar in his speech said that caste has ruined the *Hindus*. *Varnavyavastha* is like a leaky pot or like a man running at the nose. *Varnavyavastha* will degrade the masses and denies the opportunity to acquire knowledge. *Hindu* society must recognize the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity. *Varna* can be destroyed only by discarding the divine authority of the *Shastras*. Mahatma said that the text cited by Ambedkar is not authentic. Ambedkar points out that the masses are too illiterate to know the contents of the *Shastras*. None of the Saints ever attacked the caste system, but they were believer of the caste system. The teaching of the Saints might break a caste; they did not give the masses which taught not to break. Again Ambedkar questions that - why the worst are so many in numbers and the best are few? The religious ideas are completely a wrong ideal. Actually the *Hindus* who always try to realize a high social ideal in their life; it will make India a happy place to live in. So, the society which is based on *Varna* or Caste is a society which is based on a wrong relationship. In this regard, Ambedkar questions why Gandhi did not practice what he preaches. It is well known to all of us that by birth Gandhi were a *Bania*. Before he became a Mahatma, he chooses his career as a lawyer. In leaving

law he became half saints and half politician. That is why; Ambedkar says that Gandhi is clinging to a false view of the social life. Gandhi agreed that the caste system was better than class system. Because according to him, caste was the best possible adjustment of social stability. Ambedkar again questions why does Gandhi cling to the theory of everyone following his or her ancestral calling? The essence of the Gandhi's conception of *Varna* is the pursuit of ancestral calling irrespective of natural aptitude. So, the difference between caste and *Varna* as understood by Gandhi is not clear. According to Ambedkar, for this confusion Gandhi has deceiving himself to the people.

Ambedkar has disgusted for the wrong ideals and wrong social life of *Hindus* and *Hinduism*. According to him, the *Hindu* leaders are quite unfit for the task of moral, intellectual regeneration. For their beliefs, *Hindu* leaders have become filled with an illicit passion when one proposes to deprive them of their companionship. Ambedkar argued that, even Mahatma is not an exception. That is why; Ambedkar specially criticized the *Hindu* caste system and its authority. Although he argued that inter caste dining and inter caste marriage is not sufficient to annihilate the caste system, but the real method of breaking of the caste system has to be explored. He thinks that religion has to be judged not by its worst specimens but by the best it might have produced.

Whatever may be the real break came in the period 1930-32 between Gandhi and Ambedkar with the events of the *Round Table Conference* and the Puna Pact. It is not only the issue of Gandhi's rationalism versus Ambedkar's separatism. But it was rather that of *Dalit* autonomy within a broader national community. Generally Ambedkar had gone to the first *Round Table Conference* as a representative of the untouchables. Here he was almost alone among organized *Dalit* opinion, not only asking for separate electorates, but in saying it would be satisfied with reserved seats if there were adult suffrage.

In this conference he gave a powerful expression of support for independence and arguing that untouchables needed '*swaraj*'. Because only with it could they have a chance of sharing in political power – the requirement for their liberation. Ambedkar put his voice for separate electorates for untouchables along with *Muslims* and other minorities. But Gandhi opposed this demand and gave his emotional speech at the second *Round Table Conference*. Gandhi did not oppose separate electorates for *Muslims*, but he opposed about the demand of separate electorate for the untouchable. As a 'national' leader and a *Hindu*, he argued that the untouchables should be treated as part of *Hinduism*. Even for the sake of winning the freedom of India he would not seal the vital interest of the Untouchables. But he claims himself in his own person to represent the vast mass of the Untouchables. He said, 'it would create a division in *Hinduism* which I cannot possibly look forward to with any satisfaction whatsoever'<sup>40</sup>.

We could see the subsequent *Communal Award* and in time of *Poona Pact* Ambedkar did not change his heart. That is why; he spoke of the events with great bitterness that "to my mind there is no doubt that this Gandhi age is the dark age of India. It is an age in which people instead of looking for their ideals in the future are returning to antiquity"<sup>41</sup>. That is why; Ambedkar was ready to return to Indian tradition, specifically *Buddhism*. According to him, Gandhi's village-centered ideal was identified with upper caste dominance and with a denial of autonomy. This was confirmed when Gandhi set up the *Harijan Sevak Sangh*. Ambedkar argued that the aim should not simply be uplift of untouchables, but their main aim should abolition of caste. On the other hand, Gandhi refused the issue of purifying *Hinduism* and of upper caste. *Hindus* were 'making expiation' for their sins of untouchability. Practically the result was to have a nation-wide body of high-caste social reformers, wandering through

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<sup>40</sup> Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar: *Writings and Speeches*, vol. II, Bombay, d.d. P.662-3

<sup>41</sup> *ibid Freedom versus Freedom*, , vol. I, P. 350-2

untouchable quarters cleaning up children and propagandizing against drunkenness, deriving a certain amount of self-respect. But in the process binding the low caste to a national movement dominated by what Ambedkar saw as the '*bourgeois-Brahman*' elite. Ambedkar's insistence on *Dalits* and low caste holding power to create their own liberation was certainly correct as against Gandhi's paternalism.

This paternalism was also to flaw Gandhi's most telling critical trust regarding the path of development itself. *Hind Swaraj* was originally written in Gujarati in 1909. It was a powerfully argued indictment of industrial civilization, denouncing parliament, factory exploitation, the practice of modern medicine and law and even modern transportation. Gandhi later comes down a good deal from its most extreme direction. But it continued to indicate what he considered an ideal direction, a village-centered, handicraft-oriented production system, with fulfillment of basic but minimal needs. The questioning of modern industrial development in *Hind Swaraj* has come to seem more and more relevant as the ecological and human destructiveness of contemporary capitalism grows and the 'statistic' alternative is discredited. Gandhi also succeeded in giving a mood of action that was an alternate to both 'Moderate' petitioning and 'Extremist' terrorism that was militant, morally-based and capable of rousing the masses.

On such issues Gandhi seems to have more to offer than Ambedkar. Ambedkar was a socialist but Gandhi was not. Through the 1930s it was with *Marxism* and the left that he seemed to be more interested to interact than the Gandhians. But the left was accenting heavy industry-based centralized development uncritically. The left also assumed that villages would mainly be a source of surplus, not the heart of society with any dynamism of their own. Ambedkar fitted into this rather easily; village to him were only 'cesspools' from which *Dalits* must escape. He assumed, private property was the source of exploitation (he took this as the heart of Marxism, still valid) and thus could be ended by 'state socialism' –

nationalization, the collectivization of land. This did not deal with hierarchical control of the administrative bodies, and exploitation by the elites (mainly *Brahmins*) who were at their top. As against this, Gandhi's comment that: "God forbid that India should take to industrialization after the manner of the West. The economic imperialism of a single tiny island kingdom is today keeping the world in chains. If an entire nation of 300 million took similar economic exploitation, it would strip the world like locusts look remarkably prescient."<sup>42</sup> But surely part of the reason for Ambedkar's industrialist system was that the Gandhian alternative – the only viable model appearing at the time- seemed elitist and caste-biased. It was not simply a matter of a village orientation but of *Ram Rajya* with an uncritical acceptance of elite *trusteeship* of an opposition of industrial devastation tied to a religion belief in the limitation of needs. He makes this clear:

"We not that the mind is a restless bird: the more it gets the more it wants, and still remains unsatisfied. The more we indulge our emotion the more unbridled they become.... Observing all this, our ancestors dissuaded us from luxuries and pleasures. We have managed with the same kind of plough as existed thousands of years ago. We have retained the same kind of cottages that we had in former times, and our indigenous education remains the same. It was not that we did not know how to invent machinery, but our forefathers knew that, if we set our hearts after such things, we would become slaves and lose our moral fibre. They, therefore, after due deliberation decided that we should only do what we could with our hand and feet. They further reasoned that large cities were a snare and a useless encumbrance and that people would not be happy in them, that there would be gangs of thieves and robbers, prostitution and vice flourishing in them, and those poor men would be robbed by rich men.

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<sup>42</sup> Cited by Ramchandra Guha, *Chipko: A Grassroots Perspective on the Environmental Debate*, P.18.

They were, therefore, satisfied with small villages. The common people lived independently and followed their agricultural occupation. They enjoyed true Home Rule”.<sup>43</sup>

The self-sufficient village was linked to the paternalistic rule of kings in a society regulated by intellectuals (*Brahmins*). Not surprisingly, Ambedkar rejected it. It is however too bad that there was no real debate, throughout the 1930s and 1940s, on the nature of technology and industrialization in national development.

With all their differences, Ambedkar and Gandhi stood on the same side on some issues, most crucially on that of non-violence. Part of the difficulty in dealing with this is the discussion has been almost ritualized in India - Partly perhaps as a reaction to Gandhism. *Marxists*, at any rate, frequently seem impelled to eulogize violence as their differentiating feature. Particularly when, as with the *Naxalites* were the effort is to break out of the reformism of the established parties and parliamentary framework. ‘Violence’ is identified with being ‘revolutionary’; and even *Marxist* academics have a strong tendency to argue that ‘violence’ exerted in social agitation is a sign that more revolutionary. Lower- class interests are being expressed, while opting for *Satyagraha* or other non-violent mass methods is a characteristic of movements based on property – holding interests. Nor does it explain why Ambedkar opted for non-violence, unless his taken as simply a petty- bourgeois mass-leader. The difference between Gandhi and Ambedkar is that Gandhi claimed that non-violence was for him a ‘principle’ and not just a ‘policy’ (while for the Congress, he felt, it could only be adopted as a ‘policy’). For Ambedkar, it was primarily a policy. Yet Ambedkar also quite seriously dealt with the issue of means and ends. It was for him, is an important differentiating features between *Buddhism* and *Marxism*. If Ambedkar appears more rational to us today, it is not because of the effort to give a moral basis to politics (much of Gandhi is

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<sup>43</sup> *Hind Swaraj*, P.232-3

very compelling in this respect) but because the *advaita* base of Gandhi's religion-non-violence out of a desire to limit action upon the material world. The rejection of needs linked with rejection of technology and sexuality-is not one which we would choose. There are problematic dilemmas of these aspects of Gandhian non-violence, including the agonizing over the mercy killing of a sick calf at his *ashram* and his apparently unquestioned belief- a stark warning to feminists that their appreciation of Gandhi should be limited- that a girl would be better off being killed if one could not prevent her being raped. With this entire problem, the contributions of a non-violent policy of mass struggle remain, particularly in an age when the forces of military technology are providing to be more rampantly destructive and brutalizing than ever.

On the basis of the above discussion, we can say that the contribution of Mahatma Gandhi towards eradicating untouchability can never be over-emphasized. While others only preached the Mahatma practiced what he preached. Firmly believing in the equality of all human beings, he hardly found any justification in only a particular class of people doing the dirty work of scavenging and toilet cleaning. He not only condemned this practice, but also showed the way to others by actually doing this dirty work himself, at the *Calcutta Congress* Session in 1901. He writes in his autobiography, "My Experiment with Truth", as follows:

"There was no limit to insanitation. Pools of water were everywhere. There were only a few latrines, and the recollection of their stink still oppresses me. I pointed it out to the volunteers. They said point-blank; that is not our work, it is the scavengers work. I asked for a broom. The man stared at me in wonder. I procured one and cleaned the latrine. But that was for me. The rush was so great, and the latrines were so few, that they needed frequent cleaning; but that was more than I could do. So I had to content myself with simply

ministering to myself. And the others did not seem to mind the stench and the dirt.”<sup>44</sup> He continues to write: “But that was not all. Some of the delegates did not scruple to use the verandahs outside their rooms for calls of nature at night. In the morning I pointed out the spots to the volunteers. No one was ready to undertake the cleaning, and I found no one to share the honour with me of doing it.”<sup>45</sup>

On the other hand, Ambedkar’s contribution towards the eradication of untouchability was certainly extraordinary. His writings, his speeches and his activities throughout his life, rather his entire life itself is a story of his untiring efforts for the eradication of untouchability. Despite a great challenge, he succeeded in his aim though partially. Untouchability was legally banned by the constitution of free India. It was a great victory for Dr. Ambedkar, at least *de jure*, if not *de facto*. The day, however, is not far when his dream is fully realized and *de facto* eradication of the centuries old evil practice is also achieved if and only if the politicians are stop using this social ill for their own upliftment.

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<sup>44</sup> M.K. Gandhi; *An Autobiography*, Navjivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, Reprint1959, P-163.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*,P-163.

## CHAPTER - IV

### POETIC APPROACH OF THE CONCEPT OF UNTOUCHABILITY: WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO RABINDRANATH TAGORE.

It is true that Rabindranath Tagore was an icon of Indian culture. He was born in the Jorasanko Mansion in Calcutta on 7<sup>th</sup> May 1861 in a wealthy *Brahmin* family. He was the ninth son of his parents - Debendranath Tagore (Father) and Sarada Devi (Mother). Dwakanath, the grandfather of Rabindranath Tagore was a rich Indian landlord and a social reformer. His oldest brother Dwijendranath was known as a philosopher and poet. Tagore did not like the conventional education in his child days. That is why he had started his study at home under several teachers. When Tagore was eleven years old, he had completed his *Upanayana* ceremony and then he left Calcutta to tour India with his father. At first, they were visited Santiniketan estate and Amritsar. After that they went to the *Himalayan* hill station of Dalhousie and here Tagore reads several biographies and studies history, astronomy, modern science, Sanskrit etc. At the same time he had examined the classical poetry of Kalidasa. After this long journey they returned Jorasanko and then Tagore completed a set of major works.

Rabindranath Tagore was the first Asian who won the *Nobel Prize* for his collection of poems *Gitanjali* in 1913. In this time he established *Viswabharati University*. His two songs from *Rabindrasangit* are now the *national anthems* of India and Bangladesh. He was generally known as a poet, philosopher, musician, writer and educationalist etc. He was called as *Gurudev* to his followers. In the period of later 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century he had reshaped Bengali literature and music. It is true that, Tagore was a mesmerizing representative of the Indian culture which influence and popularity spreaded throughout the world.

It is well known to all of us that, Caste system is the first and foremost which are poisoning the very springs of national life. Rabindranath Tagore also aware about the purposes for

which it served and the value of the principles on which it was framed. According to him, when the *Aryans* came to India, they had to encounter the previous inhabitants of the country. Basically, the *Aryans* were dominated by the spiritual impulse. Although they were organized a social system which was based on the recognition of spiritual unity as well as racial differences, but they did not adopt the lazy device of either extirpating the native peoples or reducing them to slavery. When different peoples could live together in mutual harmony and enjoying the freedom to maintain their differences, the caste system was instituted as a social unity. Generally the social organization of India was based on the principle of understanding. In this regard Tagore said: "It is not the case in Europe that all classes do their respective, legitimate functions, and thus try by their collective efforts to maintain the social organization; on the contrary, they are mutually antagonistic: every class is always on the alert to prevent others from growing stronger. Thus the social harmony is destroyed. . . India has tried to reconcile things that are mutually alien to each other. . . She set limits to and fenced off all the rival conflicting forces of society and thus made the social organism one, and capable of doing its complex functions." <sup>46</sup> According to him, every good society should have a section which is corresponding to it. It was a work of art in the Indian social organization. The *Brahmins* are recognized as leaders and they have enjoyed the top of society. In the political fortune India passed through several vicissitudes. The society has not been much surprised and the ideals and traditions were long preserved by this class. Actually *Brahmins* were the trustees of tradition and the conservers of the religious spirit. The ideal *Brahmins* were count poverty as a privilege, consider learning their calling and pursue the ideals of spirit with self-sacrifice in a disinterested manner. The characteristic features of *Brahmins* are scorn of wealth and the pursuit of spirituality, reckless of praise or blame. Not

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<sup>46</sup> Modern Review, December 1910.

only in economics but also in other matters division of labor is now recognized to be a valid principle of a social organization. According to him, if we cannot make our clothes or our shoes for ourselves and trained men to do these things much better than we can for ourselves, then why should we not have a class set apart for artistic production and spiritual discovery? As a symbol of art and beauty, the members of this class are discover and bring home to the community. So, this class happens to consider higher than the others. The tradesman and the merchant are contribute to the physical needs for spiritual health and joy to the community. The leaders of society are regulating these things by which the community ought to take pleasure. According to him, those who are in the thick of the conflict of the world have not the time to think of the welfare of the whole community. In the name of God, the *Brahmins* have lost their old self-sacrifice and spirituality. That is why they have no claim to the respect and regard of the other classes. The *Brahmins* were drilled the other classes into submission and decreed their inferiority. As a result they destroy the place of their respect and prestige. In this regard Tagore said, "When the *Sudra* joined his palms in submission to the *Brahmanical* decree of inferiority, on that very day was dug the pit for the fall of the *Brahmins*."<sup>47</sup> The *Brahmins* do not possess their ideals and spiritual strength which would win respect. But there is no question of doubt that the hierarchy of values has been incorporated in the caste system of India.

According to Tagore, the main aims of caste system are to establish the universal brotherhood and love. The basis and end of Caste system is freedom. Man is not a mere creature of the moment by which we can solve our purposes and then throw off. But man is an eternal being whose purpose and destiny are to express his free spirit in actions of the world. Tagore argues that the modern class system of the West is material in its outlook, but the caste system is

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<sup>47</sup> Modern Review, September 1917, p. 33?

really spiritual. We cannot satisfy the deeper needs of man whenever we practice the materialistic division of Caste. We have to take a lesson from the caste system for building a spiritual civilization, which will be based upon love and brotherhood, freedom and fellowship etc. It is not like that we are holding a brief for the caste system as it prevails in India at the present day. But we are aware that we have come to a time when that institution requires modification. In this way the rigid and exclusive caste system has served its purpose and one day it must vanish. Tagore said that: "It has largely contributed to the freedom from narrowness and intolerance which distinguishes the *Hindu* religion, and has enabled races with widely different cultures and even antagonistic social and religious usages and ideals to settle down peaceably side by side. . . But this very absence of struggle, developing into a ready acquiescence in any position assigned by the social system, has crushed individual manhood, and has accustomed us for centuries not only to submit to every form of domination, but sometimes actually to venerate the power that holds us down . . . The regeneration of the Indian people, to my mind, directly and perhaps solely depends upon the removal of this condition."<sup>48</sup> Actually caste system failed to recognize the flow of life, the mobility of mind and the flexibility of characteristics. It also failed to realize that in human beings differences are not like the physical barriers of mountains. The soul of the caste system has departed and that is why India is now worshipping with fear. The vast social mechanism created by man is now crushing the soul. So, the independent thinking and individuality are suppressed. Every individual are caught in the wheels of the machine. Again Tagore argued that, if we cripple our minds and narrow our freedom by confining it to our closed prisons like the child *Amal* in the *Post Office*, then we shall not recover us from our

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<sup>48</sup> Modern Review^ August 1910 and February 1911.

illusions. So, for the air and light of God, it is necessary to break open the gates and pull down the walls of our closed house.

Tagore does not analysis the social problems from the narrow economic or utilitarian point of view. But he brings his spiritual vision to stand on the social problems and lifts them up to a higher idealist plane. Generally his attitude to them was determined by the spiritual vision. According to him, the present social conflict would be abolished, if people adopted the right attitude to life and developed respect for the divine in man. It is true that the materialist view of life makes us afraid of poverty. But according to the spiritual vision of life, poverty is not the cause of social discontent. Although India is very poor, but centuries of spiritual discipline have given the Indian peoples so much self-control and self-suppression. When a great famine invades the country or death-dealing disease stalks through the land, then the Indian people submit to it in humble resignation. In the time of suffering and distress, they beg and pray, mope and pine, and at worst, weep and die in silence, handing over their souls to God. Their calm acceptance of pain and silent submission to suffering are the wonder of the world. That is why Tagore argues that materialist view of life is the root cause of social discontent and the remedy for the social unrest is a spiritual one.

Tagore argues that greatest enemies of nations are not their foreign foes, but the forces that dwell within their borders. According to him, real obstacles to Indian progress lie in regions where the *British Government* has no way. The blind superstitions, the deification of customs, the ancient institutions which make for discord etc. are responsible for the present degenerate condition of India. Tagore questioned that why is India only a dependency and not a partner? Why is she merely in the group without being of it? Why is she a veritable outsider among the nations of the *British Empire*? Why are the forty million untouchables kept down by the people of India? Why are they in Hinduism but still not of it? Why are they considered pariahs among the peoples of India? Tagore thinks that India is only reaping the fruits of her

past karma. Only India treats her lower classes throughout the society. Till caste prejudice and religious pride disappear from India. That is why there is no right to complain of the race hatred and race prejudice of the outside world. We cannot ask for absolute political freedom so long as we welcome cruel tyranny in social life. We cannot break life into fractions. We cannot say we shall be free in religion. Although we are fighting for freedom in politics, but we are enslaved in social life. Tagore argues that God helps the nations to recover their souls by the ages of suffering. Though the stars are always in the heavens, yet man sees them only at night. The misfortune that has overtaken India will help her to look up to the stars of eternity, which shine as brightly in the heaven above as in the heart below. The hard school of misfortune is needed to tear India from the false idols of commerce, luxury, and pleasure and bring her back to God. Suffering is the penalty which India has to pay for the corruption of centuries. Through it the soul of India is being glorified and her spirit is regenerated. Under the urge of sorrow, suffering and subjection nations like individuals rise to their spiritual heights. God is chastising the people of India and calling them to repentance. So Tagore thinks that contact with the West has made India become conscious of her weakness and unworthiness. In this respect Tagore says: "To-day India is on every side defrauding and humiliating her in scripture, religion, and society; she is not awakening her own soul by means of truth and sacrifice, therefore she is not getting from others what she otherwise might have had. Therefore, the union with the West is not becoming complete in India; that union is not bearing full fruit, but only giving us shame and pain."<sup>49</sup> But Tagore is not a skeptic to laugh at the condition of India. He is dreadfully earnest and has neither the time nor the mood for skepticism. The undertone of sorrow in his writings is due to the consciousness that India is not doing her share. The present condition of India makes his heart sick. That is

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<sup>49</sup> The Future of India.

why he says: “Our endeavors after political agitation seemed to me unreal to the core and pitifully feeble in their utter helplessness. I felt that it is a blessing of Providence that begging should be an unprofitable profession, and that only to him who shall be given. I said to myself that we must seek for our own inheritance and with it buy our true place in the world. What is that inheritance? The ideals of simplicity of life, clarity of spiritual vision, purity of heart, harmony with the universe, and consciousness of the infinite personality are in all creation.”<sup>50</sup>

Now we are trying to explain and examine some literatures, drama, stories and poems of Tagore, where he highlighted about inequality of the society or castes:

CHANDALIKA:

*Chandalika* was written by Rabindranath Tagore in the year of 1938. It was recreated to perform on stage as a part of the ongoing 14th *Bharat Rang Mahotsav* in Delhi. *Chandalika* has been performed and staged in many languages with multiple interpretations across the country and out of the country. Tagore was living with his literary works and music which will never stop. The main character of this drama is *Chandalika*. She performed on stage by the name of *Prakiti*. *Chandalika* was an untouchable girl and she was the daughter of a black magician *Chandala*. She has raised a voice for the silenced and marginalized peoples of India who were humiliated by the higher castes peoples of the *Hindu* society. She was a rebel who questioned about communal norms which relegated her to an existence of a lesser being or an untouchable. Generally, the *dancing body* of *Chandalika* indicates a symbol of mobility, resistance and autonomy. Through her dance movements *Chandalika* articulated her anger and loves. She has articulated her anger against a social status which has imposed upon

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<sup>50</sup> Shantiniketan, Introduction, pp. 2, 3.

her. On the other hand, she has articulated her love for a monk who respects and acknowledges her as a human being.

We can see in the first part of the drama, a flower seller was selling her flower. *Prakiti* wants to buy some flowers from her. But the flower seller avoids her without any response. After that a milk seller enters on the stage. Again *Prakiti* wants to buy some milk from her. In that time a women vociferates that:

In Bengali:                   “ওকে ছুঁয়ো না ছুঁয়ো না, ছি,  
  ও যে চণ্ডালিনীর ঝি -”

In English:                   “Oke chhunyo naa chhunyo, chhi,  
  O je chandalinir jhii” –<sup>51</sup>

(Meaning that don't touch her, touch her, tut, because she was a daughter of *Chandala*.)

After that a ring seller coming on the stage and again *Prakiti* wants to buy some rings for her. She puts her hand for taking the ring, at that time a woman threatening her. And again *Prakiti* listen this word:

In Bengali:                   “ওকে ছুঁয়ো না ছুঁয়ো না, ছি,  
  ও যে চণ্ডালিনীর ঝি -”

In English:                   “Oke chhunyo naa chhunyo, chhi,  
  O je chandalinir jhii”<sup>52</sup> –

(Meaning that don't touch her, touch her, tut, because she was a daughter of *Chandala*.)

In this way *Prakiti* was insulted by her nearest friends, whenever she was going to close with them. She realized that the main cause of this negligent was to birth in the house of a *Chandala*. Being a *Chandala* girl, she has no right to physically took anything from the

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<sup>51</sup> Tagore, R. Rabindra Natya – Sangraha, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Viswabharati, Calcutta, 1406 (Bengali), P- 738.

<sup>52</sup> Tagore, R. Rabindra Natya – Sangraha, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Viswabharati, Calcutta, 1406 (Bengali), P- 739.

others. Her physical touch will make them impure. According to them, she was not like a human being. That is why *Prakiti* argued that:

In Bengali:

“যে আমারে পাঠাল এই  
অপমানের অন্ধকারে  
পুজিব না, পুজিব না সেই দেবতারে, পুজিব না ।  
কেন দিব ফুল, কেন দিব ফুল,  
কেন দিব ফুল আমি তারে -  
যে আমারে চিরজীবন  
রেখেদিল এই ঝিক্কারে ।”

In English:

“Je amare pathalo ei  
Apomaner andhokare  
Pujibo na pujibo na sei debotare, pujibo na.  
Kyano dibo ful, kyano dibo ful,  
Kyano dibo ful ami tare –  
Je amare chirojibon  
Rekhedilo eii dhikkare.”<sup>53</sup>

(Meaning that, I don't worship that God, who gives me this life. This life has full of darkness and affront. Those who kept my entire life in indignation, I don't give him flowers.)

It is true that there is no meaning to leads a life where she has full of insult and indignation of others. *Prakiti* has neglected, humiliated and faced inequality everywhere from the society. It is impossible to lead a life where she did not found any respect from her own religion. But one day she has got respect from an unknown person, which has changed her life. *Prakiti* was

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid, P- 739.

bathing her calf near of a stript. Suddenly she sees that a *Buddhist Monk Ananda* was coming across her. *Ananda* wants some water from *Prakriti*. In this respect *Ananda* said:

In Bengali: “জল দাও আমায় জল দাও,  
রৌদ্র প্রখরতর, পথ সুদীঘ  
আমায় জল দাও ।  
আমি তাপিত পিপাসিত,  
আমি শ্রান্ত,  
আমায় জল দাও ।”

In English: “Jal dao amay jal dao,  
Rouidra prokhorotaro, path sudirgh  
Amay jal dao.  
Ami tapito pipasita,  
Ami sranto,  
Amay jal dao.”<sup>54</sup>

(Meaning that, give me some water, because the sunlight is keenness and the road is overlong. Please give me some water. I am thirsty and exhausted by the heat of sun. Please, give me some water.)

But *Prakriti* refused his request and she informed him: as a daughter of *Chandala*, she has no rights to give him water. *Prakriti* Said:

In Bengali: “ক্ষমা করো প্রভু, ক্ষমা করো মোরে -  
আমি চন্ডালের কন্যা,  
মোর কুপের বারি অশুচি ।  
তোমারে দেব জল হেন পুণ্যের আমি

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid, P- 740.

নাহি অধিকারী,

আমি চন্ডলের কন্যা ।”

In English: “Khama karo probhu, khama karo more –

Ami chandalero kanya,

Mor kuper bari ashuchi.

Tomare debo jal heno punyer ami

Nahi adhikari,

Ami chandalero kanya.”<sup>55</sup>

(Meaning that my lord please remits me, I cannot give this water for your drinking. The water of my stript has regarded as impure, Because, I am a daughter of a *Chandala*. Being a *Chandala* girl, I have no right to give you water. I could not earn this type of virtue.)

So, it is clear from the above quotation that, *Chandala* has been treated as untouchable during the time of Tagore. They have no right to lead a life where they will live with others. Actually day after day they were humiliated, exhausted by the upper castes *Hindus*. But when the *Hindus* were going to detach *Chandalas* from their religion, in that time they were accepted by the other religion, which is namely called *Buddhism*. The *Buddhists Monk Ananda* talked her that, she was not 'impure'. He argued that, a child is coming from the same almighty like others. That is why there is no division between *Prakiti* and him. *Ananda* said:

In Bengali: “যে মানব আমি সেই মানব তুমি কন্যা ।

সেই বারি তীথ বারি

যাহা তৃপ্ত করে তৃষিতেরে,

যাহা তাপিত শাস্তরে স্নিগ্ধ করে

সেই তো পবিত্র বারি ।”

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid, P- 740-41.

In English: “Je manob ami sei manob tumi kanya.

Sei bari tiirtho bari

Jaha tripta kare trisitere,

Jaha tapita srantere snigdho kare

Sei to pabitra bari.”<sup>56</sup>

(That means there is no difference between you and me, because we all are produced by the same almighty. On the other hand, which will appease the thirsty persons, calm the exhausted persons are always called pure and pilgrimages water.)

Naturally, *Prakriti* surprised for getting this respond from the *Monk*. For a moment she just realized about the truth and necessity of her life. This is important to notice here that, all this was happening when *Prakriti* had internalized herself as a victim of society. She was running her life with the stigma of untouchability. In this situation this type of behavior changed her life. That is why, when she recounting this incident to her mother, she says, "This is my new birth. In satisfying his thirst I feel baptized. I am aware of myself now mother. I now know what freedom tastes like." In this regard she said:

In Bengali: “আমি চন্ডালী, সে যে মিথ্যা, সে যে মিথ্যা

সে যে দারুন মিথ্যা ।

শ্রাবনের কালো যে মেঘ

তারে যদি নাম দাও ‘চন্ডাল’

তা বলে কি জাত ঘুচিবে তার,

অশুচি হবে কি তার জল ।”

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid, P- 741.

In English: “Ami Chandali, se je mithya, se je mithya

Se je darun mithya.

Sraboner kalo je megh

Tare Jodi nam dao ‘Chandal’

Ta bole ki jat ghuchibe tar,

Ashuchi hobe ki tar jal.”<sup>57</sup>

(That means it is false that I am a *Chandala*, it is really false. If we will give the name of the dark could of *Srabana* as *Chandala*, then how it is possible to change his castes or to blemishes this water as impure.)

She again said that:

In Bengali:

“নিজের নিন্দা করো না,

মানবের বংশ তোমার,

মানবের রক্ত তোমার নাড়ীতে ।

ছি ছি মা, মিথ্যা নিন্দা রটাস নে নিজের,

সে - যে পাপ ।

রাজার বংশে দাসী জন্মায় অসংখ্য,

আমি সে দাসী নই ।

দ্বিজের বংশে চন্ডাল কত আছে,

আমি নই চন্ডালী ।”

In English:

“Nijer ninda koro na,

Manober bansho tomar,

Manober rakto tomar narite.

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid, P- 743.

Chi chi ma, mithya ninda ratas ne nijer,

Se – je pap.

Rajar bonshe dasi janmay asongkhya,

Ami se dasi noi.

Dvijer bonshe chandal kato ache,

Ami noi chandali.”<sup>58</sup>

(Means that don't spread humor yourself, because you have come from human heredity, human blood is circulates in your vein. It will sin to spreads humor for own. I was not like a maid who was born in the king's family. There are so many *Chandalas* who was born in *Dvija*'s family. So, I am not a *Chandala* girl.)

On the basis of the above discussion, we can easily say that, by this drama Tagore basically wanted to point out, about a defile part of our society where we have practiced inequality in name of *Hindu Dharma*. Tagore clearly described that with the negative effects of the untouchability how an untouchable has led her life with a desire in her mind. It is true that the *monk* appeared as an embodiment of freedom to *Prakriti*. Although *Ananda* was not the central character of the play, but by this character Tagore awaken the society from the myth of untouchability and its unethical practices. This drama was not written for *Ananda*'s journey. According to Tagore, it has *Prakriti*'s journey which occupied the centre-stage of the drama. It is indeed ironic to see how a girl named *Prakriti*, which meaning *nature* and which could be fascinated in a web of class, caste and gender distinctions. So, it was fullness to address *Prakriti* as an untouchable girl. This was clear from the last quotation, when *Prakriti* said that she was not a *Chandala*. It is true that, we cannot say someone as *Brahmin* as he was birth in a *Brahmin* family. According to *Prakriti*, there were thousand examples which

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid, P- 743.

would reflect that a man born in a *Brahmin* family, but his performance was like a *Chandala*. On the other hand, there were so many *Chandalas* whose performance is like a *Brahmin*. Birth cannot determine the castes of the individuals. Castes will be determined according to the performance of an individual.

So, we can easily say that Rabindranath Tagore's remark on untouchability is clear from his drama *Chandalika*. Generally, he did not support the practice of untouchability in our society. He did not believe in the theory of caste system of *Manusmriti*. Tagore criticized the by-birth distribution of caste system of *Manu*. On the other hand, Tagore pointed out that only *Hindu* religion has been practicing this untouchability from many years, whereas all the other religions will be ready to accept these peoples in their religion without any discrimination. Tagore wanted to give this message to the *Hindus* that untouchable peoples may change their religion. So, I think Tagore's *Chandalika* was giving a message to our society and aware the *Hindus* for their unhealthy practices of untouchability.

RATHER RASHI:

Rabindranath Tagore wrote *Rather Rashi* for the society to teach against the discrimination of human beings. A Chariot was taking the key role of the entire drama. When our society has practiced untouchability in their everyday life and the so-called *Brahmins* has imagined that they were the superior in this globe, at that time *Rather Rashi* has been written for awakening everyone for overcoming this unhealthy practice. Generally, *Shudras* were exhausted and day to day they have lost their rights by the domination of *Brahmins* in *Hindu Dharma*. Ultimately *Shudras* have been regarded as untouchables. In this way, they have lost their identity and also their rights to entry in the temple. But *Rather Rashi* shows that *God* himself was trying to balance all the castes altogether.

In the first part of the drama, we observe that all the upper caste *Hindu* gathered in near of a temple for observing a religious festival, where they will move a *Chariot* from one temple to

another. But the *Shudras* were not joining this festival, because recently they have entitled as untouchables. Whatsoever except *Shudras*, everyone joined the festival and preparing for move Chariot. But there was a person who was realizing and understanding this matter. He is not a mere human being; but is superior to human being. This super human being, for whom the festival has arranged, wants to teach about the discrimination of the peoples. That is why we can see that in the time of moving the Chariot they faced a serious problem. They realize that today the rope, by which the Chariot will move, is contrary to the earlier. Sometimes, it looks like a boa and sometimes as a trail of *Hanumana* of *Lanka*. Someone argues that it looks like a river flowing of *Jamuna*, or the trail of snake, or trunk of *Ganesha* etc. The *Brahmin* class peoples, the troopers, the businessmen, the common men – everybody is trying to move the Chariot one by one with the help of their own conduct and power. But they all are failed to move the Chariot. After that, the higher class women worship the “Daari Devota” (Rope God) by their own conducts. But the Chariot does not move. After spend long time and power, they all understand that it was impossible to move the Chariot by them, because God is not happy with them. It is true that traditionally *Shudras* were moving the Chariot. But today they have been regarded as untouchables by the custom of *Hindu Dharma*. That is why they have no right to touch the Chariot. But it also to be true that without them, the so-called *Hindus* were unable to move the Chariot. Although all the *Hindus* understood about this matter, yet they would never acknowledge this. In this regards a conversation of a failure trooper is important to highlight. He said that:

In Bengali:

“ও যে আমাদের কাজ নয়, তাই ।

ক্ষত্রিয় আমরা, শূদ্র নই, নই গোরু ।

চিরদিন আমরাই চড়েই এসেছি রথে ।

চিরদিন রথ টানে ঐ ওরা - যাদের নাম করতে নেই ।”

In English:                   “O je amader kaj nay, tai.  
Kshatriya amra, Shudra noi, noi goru.  
Chirodin amrai charei asechi rothe.  
Chirodin rath tane oi ora – jader nam korte nei.”<sup>59</sup>

(That means, being a *Kshatriya* it was not their work, because they were not like a cow. From ancient time they were sitting on the top of the Chariot and the *Shudras* actually moved the Chariot, whose name did not speak.)

It is true that in ancient time the Chariot moving ceremony was serving by the *Shudras*. They have the right to enter into the temple and worship of God. They also joined to every religious festival of *Hindu Dharma*. After that, they have been deprived by the cunning *Brahmins*. According to them, *Shudras* were not *Dvija Varna* and that is why they have no right to maintain *Upanayana*. This *non-dvija* determination indirectly makes them untouchables. Being an untouchable, *Shudras* has lost their right to enter into the temple and move the Chariot. Because, according to the upper caste *Hindus*, the Chariot will be impure by the touch of *Shudras*. But we can see, by his empyreal power God informs *Shudras* that, the Chariot cannot move without them. After hearing these, breaching the entire rules and customs of the upper caste *Hindus*, they touch the rope and the Chariot. We can see without any difficulty the Chariot moves by the pull of the *Shudras* or the Untouchables.

On the basis of the above discussion, we can say that, *Shudras* were humiliated by the upper caste *Hindus* in the time of Tagore. They deprived from their religious, social and political rights. *Shudras* were entitled as untouchables and being an untouchable they had no right to enter into the temple. That is why they did not able to share their pleasure or pain in front of God. But Tagore argued that God was not happy without *Shudras*. All men are equal in the

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid, P- 573.

mind of God. Nobody will treat as untouchables in the eyes of God. According to Tagore, God indirectly teaches our society against to deprive someone for his rights.

The outlook of the above discussion, gives rise to some points that need to be taken care of. Firstly, there is a difference between Tagore and Ambedkar regarding the status of *Shudras*. Tagore shows that *Shudras* were regarded as Untouchables, whereas Ambedkar argued that *Shudras* were not the Untouchables. Secondly, Tagore's opinion about the overcome of Untouchability will be possible and this was performed by the God himself. When our society was misbalanced by inequality, prejudices, partiality etc. then God himself will take the necessary actions. In this regard Gandhi's view was that, the upper castes *Hindus* will raise their hand for the upliftment of the Untouchables. Finally Ambedkar said that, neither God nor the upper castes *Hindus* shall give this right. It is possible when the humiliated untouchables were fights against it.

It is well known to all of us that Tagore from his childhood was very much interested about *Baul Gan* (Folk Song). Lalon Fakir was regarded as a great *Baul Singer* and Tagore was deeply influence by Lalon Fakir. According to Tagore, *Folk Song* of Lalon Fakir actually reflected the inside of human being. *Baul Gan* comes from the heart of human being. It is natural and unbiased in the true sense of the term. Lalon Fakir, according to Tagore, was the true musician who actually represents through *Baul Gan* the neighbor of rural communities. In short, Tagore was one of the leading advocator of *Baul Gan*. Lalon Fakir was living in Kustiya, Shilaidah district, which was located very adjacent to the area of Tagore's *Jamindari*. Tagore was attracted by the language of these songs basically written for the investigation of *Moner Manus* (Real Man or Friends or Spiritual God). The term *Moner Manus* is particularly relevant in the context of my thesis. The problem of Untouchability does not bear any sense if we think that the people belonging to our community or society or belonging to the same religion are our *Moner Manus*. If my neighbor is my *Moner Manus*,

then how can I treat him Untouchable? We can not do it. We can do it only such a case where the perception of *Moner Manus* as reflected through *Baul Gan* is absent. If we carefully go through the meaning of *Baul Gan* of Lalon Fakir, we come to realize that each of the song reflects the spirituality of the individual. The force of each song actually touches upon the stream of human life and by cognizing the inner meaning of this song, one come to aquire the harmonious relationship and cordiality with his fellow beings. Tagore realized it's very well that the song of Lalon Fakir actually helps a lot to bridge a harmonious relationship among the members of the society. The society is in need to have a harmonious relationship because the society is dissected or divided in various sects and take the paths of *Himsa* in the name of Untouchability. Whatever the origin of Untouchability may be, it is our general perception that Untouchability is a social curse which can not be accepted under any short of imagination. Untouchability is a social event, a curse, a misnomer, an evil which hampers the harmonious relationship among the people of the society. As a result of that the society is facing many unwanted social conflicts and maladies due to false perception of the concept of *Varna*, *Varnavyasastha*, Caste system etc. The concept of the division of labour which is relevant from economical perceptive has been misplaced and misapplied in various ways. As a result of that it actually goes against its objectives set forth in its inauguration. Considering the prevailing situation, it is pertinent to bring back the concept of *Moner Manus* of Lalon Fakir through which all such evils can be eradicated from the society.

Actually, most of the song of Lalon Fakir was written in respect of spiritualistic manner. But there are some songs, which generally described about the social system of the *Hindu* religion. Here we mentioned one song of Lalon Fakir, which he was written about the caste system of *Hindu* society:

In Bengali: “জাত গেল, জাত গেল বলে  
এ কি আজব কারখানা ।  
সত্য কাজে কেউ নয় রাজি -  
সবই দেখি তানা না না”-

In English: “Jaat gelo, Jaat gelo bole  
A ki ajob karkhana.  
Satta kaaje keu noi raaji –  
Sabii dekhi tana na na”-

(Meaning that, there are wonder event that was happened in our society regarding the name of caste, where everybody was shouted for lost their identity or caste. But no body was ready for doing their true or right work.)

Generally at the time of Lalon Fakir, our society was badly affected by the unhealthy practice of casteism. Everybody has maintained the practice of Untouchability. They were very carefully removed themselves from the touch of Untouchable peoples. Because they believed that a single touch will lost their purifications. But according to Lalon, they all were busy to serve false duty. There is no any single person who was interested to perform his right actions. For this reason, he questioned that:

In Bengali: “ব্রাহ্মণ - চন্ডাল - চামার - মুচি  
এক জলেই সব হয় গো শুচি’

In English: “Brahman – Chandal – Chamar – Muchi  
Ak Jalei sob hoi go Suchi”

(Meaning that, Brahman, *Chandala*, *Chamar* and *Muchi* – all are purified by the same water)  
He questioned that, if Untouchables are different, then how the Untouchable peoples were purified by the same water, by which *Brahmins* also purified? Actually he wanted to aware

the common people about the unhealthy practice of Untouchability. That is why he again said that:

In Bengali: “জন্মের আগে কি জাত ছিলে ?  
জন্মে এবার কি জাত নিলে ?  
কি জাত হবা যাবার কালে ?  
এ কথাটি ভেবে বলো না”

In English: “Janmer aage ki jaat chile?  
Janme ebar ki jaat nile?  
Ki jatat hoba jabar kale?  
A kothati vebe bolo na.”

(Meaning that, what was your Identity or caste before your birth? What is your identity after birth? And what will your identity at the time of your death? Please answer to me.)

It is true that there was no identity before birth of a child and there will no identity at the time of his death of a person. So, why we will identify ourself as a member of particular caste at the living period?

That is why *Rabindranath Tagore* in Poem no-15 of his poetry “*Patraput*,” says that:

In Bengali: “ওঁরা অন্তজা, ওঁরা মন্ত্রবর্জিত,  
দেবালয়ের মন্দির দুয়ারে -  
পূজা ব্যবসায়ী ওঁদের টেকিয়ে রাখে,  
ওঁরা দেবতাকে খুঁজে বেড়ায় তাঁর আপন স্থানে -  
সকল বেড়ার বাইরে,  
সহজ ভক্তির আলোকোঁ”

In English: “Ora antaja ora mantrabarjita.  
Debaloyer Mandir dware  
Puja babsaye othr thekia rakhe.

Ora debotake khuje beray tar apon sthane

Sakal Berar baire,

Sahaj vaktir aloke.”<sup>60</sup>

That means, *Antaja* or Untouchable peoples have no right to learn the religious scriptures and pray the God into the area of temple. The so-called *Brahmins* constipate them in front of the gate of temple. That is why they plagiarize their God in to their mind. In the help of pieties they meet with God.

In the last of this poem he also said:

In Bengali: “হে চিরকালের মানুষ, হে সকল মানুষের মানুষ -

পরিত্রান করো,

ভেদ চিহ্নের - তিলক - পরা,

সংকীর্ণতার উদ্ধাত থেকে।”

In English: “Hey chirokaler manus, Hey sakal manuser manus,

Paritran karo

Vedchinher- tilak- para

Sankirnatar oudhatta theke.”<sup>61</sup>

Tagore requests the people to overcome this practices and narrow thinking. According to him this type of thinking separates the human beings, which is against the welfare of the society.

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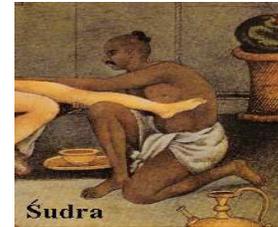
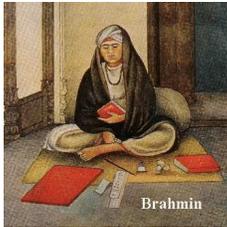
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<sup>60</sup> Tagore R.N, *Patraput*, Reflect Publication, 2003, p.44.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, p. 45

## CHAPTER - V

### UNTOUCHABILITY: INS AND OUTS



Whenever we like to discuss about untouchability two issues must be dealt with: *Varna* system and Caste system. But the question comes: what is the root cause of untouchability? There are divergences of opinions among the scholars. Some of them are opinions that *Varnavyavastha* is the root cause of untouchability. But on the contrary, some other argues that it the Caste system, not the *Varna* system which is the root cause of untouchability. Ambedkar belongs to the first groups. He observes that caste system is the immediate cause of Untouchability; it is not the root cause. The root cause of untouchability, according to him, is the *Varna* system. *Varna* system gives birth to caste system and the caste system, in turn, gives birth to untouchability. Ambedkar deals with the caste system in one of his famous books called *Annihilation of Castes*. But Gandhiji and Tilok do not agree with him on this point. They argue that *Varna* system has nothing to do with untouchability. *Varna* system advises us only to follow the profession of our four-fathers and nothing else. It never says that some of them are untouchables or inferior. It plainly classifies human beings into four categories, *Brahman*, *Kshatriya*, *Vaishya* and *Shudra* on the basis of their worth, not on birth. It further says that all people belonging to the four *Varnas* are equal as human beings. They opine that untouchability, in fact, comes from the caste system. The *Varna* system has nothing to do with the caste system. The two matters are purely different. *Varna* is determined on the basis of worth but caste is determined on the basis of birth. Caste,

according to Gandhiji, is nothing but a custom though he frankly admits that he does not know about the source of that custom. Now let us see and examine which view is acceptable and why?

It is well known to all of us that the Hindu religious Scriptures speak about four *Varnas*, namely- *Brahmin*, *Kshatriya*, *Vaishya* and *Sudhra*. According to the *Rig Veda* these four *Varnas* came from the different parts of the body of *Prajapati* or *Brahma*. In *Gita*, here also *Lord Krishna* says, he creates this division according to the *Guna* and *Karma* of the individuals for generates the society in frequently. We think there is nothing wrong in this theory. Because if it is necessary to classify the people for running the society in frequently and where the classifications were made by the worth (*guna* and *karma*) of the individuals, then it must be supportable and logical among us. On the other hand, if everybody wants to perform same work for the society, then it is impossible to run a society in frequently. So, it is necessary to perform different works for the future betterment of our society. At the same time, it is also true that all types of works would be regarded as equal. Similarly, every worker must be regarded as equal for their equal role in society. But whenever we come to know that, someone has been humiliated in the name of this classification and the practice and then it would be very difficult to accept and support this theory as correct. On the other hand, it would remain unanswered from this theory that, who would make this classifications and why anyone would accept his or her decision as correct? If we think that God himself makes this classification of the individual, then everybody honor his decision as correct. But according to *Hindu* religion, God is not perceptible. God is omnipresent and unphysical. So, God cannot make this division physically. If God is unphysical then how he makes this division for physical man? It is necessary to classify the people in two different sections. It is also to be true that why the people will accept this classifications of the imperceptible God. So it is clear from the above discussion that the four fold divisions of *Varna* system cannot

made by the God. On the other hand, if we think that a board will take the power for these classifications, then we cannot say that this decision will make as correct and everybody will not accept their decision as correct, because there must be a scope of guilty. So, the *Rig Vedic* concept of *Varna* system does not regard as correct and it is totally illogical theory.

According to me, to overcome this situation and to overcome this problem *Manusmriti* has provided the theory of caste system. According to this theory, *Varna* of the individuals is not determined by worth, but it will be determined by birth. Birth will decide the social status of the individuals. It opines that, if a child will born in a *Brahmin* family, then he/she will be regarded as a *Brahmin*. Similarly, if a child will born in *Sudhra* family, then he/she will be regarded as a *Shudra*. This would equally be true in the case of other two *Varnas*. There is no necessity for accepting the existence of another authority or God for make the decision for identifies the social status of the individuals. Genetically peoples will divide in different groups. In this way we can easily be overcome the problem of *Varna* division of *Rig Veda* and *Gita*. If we will accept this theory as correct, then we will maintain both - the supremacy of God and the division of people without any help of the physical God or any board of people. We can say that, according to worth, God sent or gives birth of an individual in a particular family or *Varna* family. But this theory also is not without its defects. Because, we could see there were so many *Brahmins*, though they were born in *Brahmin* family, but their *guna* and *karma* is not like as *Brahmins*, however they were regarded as *Brahmins* in our society. Similarly there were so many *Shudras*, whose *guna* and *karma* like as *Brahmins*, but they were regarded as *Shudras* throughout his life. In this way we realized that by birth classification of *Varna* is not makes according to the *Guna* and *Karma* of the individuals. So, it is clear from the above that birth will not determine the *Varna* of an individual. That is why we can conclude that the theory of *Varnavyavastha* and caste system is not regarded a satisfactory theory of *Hindu* religion regarding *Varna* division of our society.

According to me, Ambedkar was the first Indian, who was very much aware about this illogical and unscientific division. It is true that if there is no logical or scientific explanation for this classification, then it must be criticized by others, especially by those who were victimized by this theory. Ambedkar was victimized by it. He was an educated untouchable and humiliated by this very unscientific theory. Ambedkar recognized that the *Hindu* religious scripture speaks about such type of system which is not possible to apply in practical life. He argues that the bad effects of this classification spreaded throughout India very fast. That is why, Ambedkar claimed that, *Varnavyavastha* is the root cause of untouchability and caste system is the final cause for spreading untouchability throughout our society.

According to me, whenever we are going to discuss about the theory of *Varnavyavastha* and caste system, a misinterpretation is generating in our mind. According to me, this is the *outer meaning* of this theory. But I think there is an *inner meaning* in it and there is nothing wrong in the interpretation of the *Hindu* religious scripture about the issue of *Varnavyavastha* and caste system. The concept of *Varna* is the soul of *Hindu Dharma*. *Hindu* religion is meaningless without division of *Varna*. If we deeply think and realize the theory of *Gita* and *Manusmriti*, then it will be clear. There is a relation between *Varnavyavastha* of *Gita* and caste system of *Manusmriti*. According to *Gita*, God himself has made this classification according to the *guna* and *karma* of an individual. That means God has determined this classification on the basis of the performance or action or worth of an individual. On the other hand, *Manusmriti* says that caste or *Varna* of an individual will determine according to the birth of an individual. If we accept the theory of *Gita* and *Manusmriti*, then we can say that, if a child is born in *Shudra* family, then his or her action or performance must like as *Shudras*, because according to his or her *guna* and *karma* God send him or gave birth in *Shudra* family. Similarly to birth in a *Brahmin* family, a *Brahmin* child must perform as like

as *Brahmins*. According to their birth, they were compelled to perform this type of action. It is also true that the heredity and the environment basically help them to grow up in a mind which will reflect after by their action. So, there is a relation between personality and performance. An individual will perform his duty according to his or her personality. We know that personality of an individual will depend upon the heredity and the environment. So, the future performance of an individual depends upon in which family or environment he or she was brought out. It means, genetically the *Brahmin* child will perform as like as *Brahmins* and the *Shudra* child will perform as like as *Shudras*. So, we say that *guna* and *karma* of an individual depends upon the birth of the individual. There is no opportunity to change their *guna* and *karma*.

But the question is by which performance God will determine the *Varna* of an individual or gives birth of an individual in a particular *Varna* family? Is it according to the performance or *guna* and *karma* of present life? Or is it determined on the basis of the performance of previous life action? According to me, the interpretation of this theory is not said about present life action; it is depended upon our previous life actions or performance. We know that Hinduism accepts the theory of rebirth and the immortality of the soul. According to this theory, we can easily be saying that, this life is the effect of previous life action. On the basis of the performance or the *guna* and *karma* of previous life, God will decide the social status of the next life of an individual. So we can say that, the birth in a *Brahmin* family is the result of the performance of previous life's action, which was like as a *Brahmin*. Similarly, to birth in a *Shudra* family is the result of the performance of previous life's action, which was like as a *Shudra*. So, the *guna-karma* or the performance of an individual will determine in what family or caste he or she will born. I will try to discuss this matter as an example: suppose 'A' is an individual, in his 50<sup>th</sup> no. birth he born in a *Brahmin* family. It is not necessary that he was also a *Brahmin* in his 49<sup>th</sup> no. birth. He has born in a *Brahmin* family on his 50<sup>th</sup> no.

birth, because his *guna-karma* or performance was like as *Brahmins* on his 49<sup>th</sup> no. birth. So, the theory of *guna-karma* of *Gita* and the theory of by birth determination of *Manusmriti* is to discuss in respect as a theory of *Varnavyavastha* and caste system.

If we accept this theory as correct, then the question and legitimate one arises, how a *Shudra* will born in a *Brahmin* family, in his next life. According to *Manusmriti*, there is a possibility to born in an upper *Varna* family. If a person performed his duty rightly in his present life, then he will be born as an upper caste from his present status in the next life. So, there is a contradiction among the theory of *Guna-Karma* and the theory of rebirth. In this respect we can say that this theory is contradicted with the theory of *Puranas*. According to *Purana*, a man will born again as a human being after complete 86<sup>th</sup> lakh steps of life. If it is true then we will say that a man will born in a *Shudra* family according to his or her previous life actions, where he or she was not lived as a human being. Naturally the question arise: why a man will accept his present life identity, which is determined according to his or her previous life, where he or she was not human being. So, according to me it is a fake theory which has been realized by Ambedkar very easily.

On the other hand, if we accept this theory as correct then the question arises: if there is only four *Varnas*, then how does *Manusmriti* define the other *Varnas*? It is true that, there were thousand types of *Varna* that has been mentioned by *Manusmriti*. *Manusmriti* entitled this *Varna's* as *Castes or Sub-castes* on the basis of the matrimonial status of the parent. According to *Manusmriti*, those who are coming from those parents, who were not belonging to same *Varnas*, were regarded as *Castes*. If the parents are coming from different *Varna*-family and they gives birth a child, then their child has regarded as different *Castes*. His or her (children) identity has determined as a caste *Hindu*. So the definition of castes is different in *Manusmriti*. It is true that the opposite marriage (*Anuloma* and *Pratiloma* Marriage) were strictly hated by *Manusmriti*. According to *Manusmriti*, the child can't identify himself with

the identification of their father and mother's identity. Generally they were called as mongrel (*Samkar Varna*). These types of Childs were neglected and humiliated by the rules and custom of *Manusmriti*.

Again the question arises, if these out-castes were regarded as mongrel, then how they will be able to birth another child? There is no example in species throughout the universe where mongrel animals are able to birth a child. For example: *Khachhar* (Mixed product of dickey or horse), *Hasjharu* (mixed product of duck and hedgehog) were not able to birth any children. There were no such instances where *Khachhar* birth a *Khachhar*, or *Hasjharu* birth a *Hasjharu*. Their life is the last life for their heredity. So the question is, if men are also regarded as mongrel in respect of their parent's matrimonial status, then how they birth their child? If they really like as a mongrel, then how a *Chandala* gives birth a *Chandala* child? But according to *Manusmriti*, the son of *Chandala* has regarded as *Chandala*. So, it is clear from it that the theory of *Varnavyavastha* of *Manusmriti* is self-contradictory. It has no scientific value.

It is also important to mention here that though theoretically *Gita* argues that *Varna* division will make on the basis of *Guna* and *Karma* of the individual. However, in *Mahabharata* we noticed several instances which were totally different from this theory. It is well known to all of us that, in *Adiparba* of *Mahabharata* created by Byasdeb; emperor *Drupada* has arranged a program of choosing of bride groom one self from amongst a number of invited suitors for his daughter *Drupadi*. We can see that, emperor *Drupada* mainly emphasized on heroism for *Drupadi*'s marriage not on the racial inequality. In the venue we can see that, though *Karna*, the 'suta-putra' of *Kunti* shows heroism but *Drupadi* denied him to marry by questioning his racial identity because *Karna* entitled as a sutaputra. Refusing his father's proposal *Drupadi* married *Arjuna* and later she got five husbands.

On the basis of the above discussion, it can be said that if this theory has been regarded as false, then the theory of birth determination of *Varna* (*Manusmriti*) will take the place of guilty. At the same time, if this theory has regarded as guilty, then the *karma-vada* theory of *Gita* will be regarded as false. Finally, we can say that *Hinduism* was not out of guilty regarding the theory of *Varna* division or caste system.

Again it is still put in question that what is the basis of generating untouchability? Generally *Hinduism* has practiced untouchability from ancient time throughout our society. Can we say that only *Varna* system is responsible for this practice? Or is it coming from the bad effect of the caste system? Or both *Varna* system and caste system would be responsible for generating untouchability throughout India? One thing is important to note here is that: the definition of *Veda*, *Gita*, and *Manusmriti* etc. regarding *Varna* system or Caste system, mainly holds two different meanings. One is outer meaning and another is inner meaning. According to *Veda*, four different *Varnas* have been created from the different parts of body of *Prajapati* or *Brahma* and they all are equal in respect of serving their performance in society. Every part of the human organs is important to live an individual without any challenge. So, there is no inequality in the inner sense of *Varna* system. But the outer reflection of this theory was totally different. The outer meaning is, for coming from the mouth of the primeval man or *Brahma*, the *Brahmins* took the higher rank in the society, *Kshatriyas* took the second and *Vaishyas* third. Naturally *Shudras* were regarded the last section of the society, because they were coming from the feet from the primeval man. In this regard they were hated, discriminated, humiliated by the upper three *Varnas*. They have been compelled to do odd job. As a result, their scavenging works made them impure and finally this impurity reach them in the identification of Untouchables.

On the other hand, the inner meaning of *Gita* is clear. According to *Gita*, the distinction will make on the basis of *Guna* and *Karma* of an individual. We know Samkhya Philosophy

discuss about three *Gunas*, i.e. *Satta*, *Raja* and *Tama*. All the *Gunas* are present in every human body and we know the nature of a human being according to the priority of a particular *Guna*. According to *Gita*, those who possess *Satta Guna* will be regarded as *Brahmins*, those who possess *Raja Guna* will be regarded as *Kshatriyas*, those who possess both *Raja* and *Tama Gunas* will be regarded as *Vaishyas* and those who possess *Tama Guna* will be regarded as *Shudras*. On the other hand, *Karma* means action or performance of the individuals. According to *Gita*:

“*Brahamankshatriyavishan Shudranan Cha Parantapa.*

*Karmani Prabibhaktani Svavabpravabaiguna.*”<sup>62</sup>

That means the *karma* or duty has distributed according to the nature of the particular *Guna* or worth. Serenity, calmness, forbearance, forgiveness, and patient etc. are the natural duty of the *Brahmin*. They must have spiritual knowledge and wisdom – knowledge of God-realisation, which was obtained through devout study and wisdom of knowledge. They must have purity of heart, mind and body. They did not allow perversity or corruption to creep in. The primary purpose of the *Brahmin* is to help transform society’s exemplary human beings into godly beings. On the other hand, the primary objective of the *Kshatriyas* is to help transform ordinary human beings into exemplary human beings. The *Kshatriyas* are expected to guard the welfare and prosperity of society by serving the people. They are charged with bringing moral stamina and adherence to duty through courage, fearlessness, resourcefulness and ingenuity in the face of changing conditions. They must be examples of law, justice and generosity. They must lead by inspiring the populace through good example. Lastly, *Vaishyas* are regarded as the society providers and servers. The workers are regarded as *Shudras*. The combined responsibilities and expectations of these two grouping is to prepare, supply and

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<sup>62</sup> *Gita*, 18<sup>th</sup> section, 41<sup>st</sup> sloka.

equip society with the goods and services it needs. *Vaishyas* are charged with the activities of economics and commerce such as growing food, rearing cows for milk and dairy products, the honest manufacture and exchange of merchandise and trading. *Shudras* are the foundation. They provide the strength and sinew of society by working with, for and in the service of all segments of society.

We know that Lord Krishna has made the classification of *Varna* on the basis of *Guna* and *Karma* of an individual. But being an unphysical, Krishna himself cannot do this distinction in front of the peoples of the society. To overcome this situation the outer meaning takes the important role. *Manu*, the law giver of *Hindu Dharma*, transformed this classification in respect of birth. Birth will determine the different four *Varnas*. But here the question of *Guna* and *Karma* is not fulfilling. So, this theory has taken the position of guilty.

Again *Manusmriti* has produced the castes, sub-castes and out-castes. But the scriptures *Manusmriti* has faced in question, that how it relates different castes altogether? We could see that whenever *Manusmriti* has given the definition of their relation, every time *Manu* has produced a new caste. In this way unknowingly there were thousands of castes increasing in our society which is totally unscientific. Though the castes, *Hindu* were felicitated by *Manusmriti* but the out caste was not accepted by him. After that this out caste *Hindus* were regarded as Untouchables.

There is no question of doubt that humans are the superior agents in the globe by virtue of possessing humanity and rationality. Humans have the ability to judge what is good or bad, what is right or wrong and what one ought to do and not ought to do. That is why in traditional ethics humans are considered to be the only legitimate moral agents. Humans are autonomous and their autonomy is guided by their rationality. Since humans are rational, self realization is the key of humans. But when we come to know that there underlies some

discrepancies or inequalities in the society, having no rational and scientific basis, then surely human's rational position puts under scrutiny.

Untouchability was prevailing in barbaric fashion during eighteenth century onwards and it is prevailing till today in our society in many different ways. The intellectual class of the present Indian society actually plays dual roles. In public places they very often are used to state that the concept of untouchability has no rational basis and it should be eradicated in its all forms from the society. However, they play different role in their practical life. Thus, untouchability is not something manifested in outer gesture, it is something lies within. They feel that untouchability is a social evil and no one can support it. There is no scientific or rational basis of untouchability. Untouchability has no constitutional basis. The so-called untouchability that we witness in India is a social issue based on prejudices. In fact, everyone has its own choice and there is nothing wrong in it. But why is individual choice voiced not in terms of individual's quality but in terms of individual's caste and religion? There is no question of doubt that no community or society or country can develop without mutual understanding and interpersonal communication. In this regard, relations hold the key, an important key of uplifting the society. If everything is determined in terms of the *Varna* systems irrespective of the quality of individuals then it would be the greatest blunder of the present society. It would really be a disgrace to the Indian society when we come to know even today that a section of people is being deprived from their basic needs simply because they are belonging to a particular caste.

Does it make sense to say that state is responsible for this? In fact one should not blame the state. The concept of untouchability is not a legal concept nor even be a concept that can be solved legally. It is rather a social and religious concept that cannot be solved politically. On the contrary, the concept of caste system has been politicized. Thus, instead of solving this problem the political system of India actually lingers it. This was so happened in the past and

it continues at present as well. Who can ignore the tussle between Ambedkar and Gandhi regarding the perception of untouchability? Ambedkar approaches a scientific analysis of religion and criticizes the spiritualistic form of religion. In this regard, he rejected *Hinduism*. For Ambedkar so long *Hinduism* as a religion stands, untouchability will prevail in the society. Contrary to Ambedkar, Gandhi favours *Hinduism* and also the caste system of *Hinduism*. Accordingly, Gandhi did not agree with Ambedkar as far as the concept of untouchability is concerned.

Although the issue of untouchability is unanimously condemned by all, it is still prevailing in the society not in the same sense as Ambedkar himself had been suffered, but in an invisible way one can easily realize if he or she is conscious of it. How can we overcome the concept of untouchability? Fortunately, we have already overcome the dark age of untouchability. In the past untouchables were identified by physical appearance because at that time some physical bars were imposed on untouchables in terms of their dress, food, cloths etc. Equally, the upper caste was so vocal in favour of untouchability. However, over the course of time, there we notice a drastic change as far as untouchability is concerned. The same has happened in other parts of the world. This is the blessing of civilization. Thus, untouchability in most Indian states is not visible in barbaric fashion. An untouchable does not find any difficulty when he travels by bus or train. He may not find any problem to take food with others belonging to higher castes. These are good signs. But at the same time when we come to know that there are some societies where untouchability is a cause of concern, then we feel disgrace ourselves as the most intellectual representative of the globe.

Untouchability is not something prevailing only in India. Historically, untouchability was prevailing elsewhere in the globe. Untouchability is there in South Africa, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and most of the countries where religion is the key of determining the social status of the individuals. However, the fate of untouchables in India was miserable than other

parts of the world. In fact, India was the badly affected country as far as untouchability is concerned. In India untouchability is understood in terms of behavior based on the concept of pollution and it has religious and secular sanctions. It is conceived that untouchables would remain untouchables by virtue of their deeds in the previous birth. Ironically, both *Hindus* as well as the untouchables are socialized in this belief. Where such belief comes from? Is it something present in *Hinduism*? Or is it something that has been injected by the so-called dominant class? According to Ambedkar, *Hindu* religion in which he belongs to is the culprit of promulgating inequality among humans. We examine the *Manusmriti*'s standpoint in due course. There are plenty of remarks which would actually create a great amount of distrust and inequality among castes. The social position of untouchables was miserable, they were basically right less. An untouchable has to perform many duties without enjoying any rights. Untouchability, in fact, even goes beyond colonialism. During colonialism a movement was created in order to overcome it, but there was no movement against untouchability before the appearance of B. R. Ambedkar. It was Ambedkar, who, in fact, protested and revolted against untouchability. The number of untouchability is not small, millions of people were considered to be untouchable. The question is: why were they not protested? They did not protest simply because due to some social and religious constraints they had been somehow or other convinced that they were untouchable. Colonial form of exploitation was revolted in terms of national freedom and there were no social and religious constraints. But the so-called untouchables were economically brittle, educationally illiterate, and culturally backward. They had no right to say anything; they had been compelled to believe that they were untouchables. Thus, the concept of untouchability is not something that can be eradicated by passing a bill in the parliament. As a social and religious issue, such problem can only be overcome by implementing a revolutionary change in *Hinduism*. Ambedkar throughout his life had tried his level best but failed to do so. Even Gandhi did not agree with

Ambedkar to change the caste system of *Hinduism*. Only time will tell whether untouchability can be removed from the *Hindu* society or not.

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## CONCLUDING REMARKS

The main objective of my thesis is to explicate and examine with special reference to Dr. B. R. Ambedkar the Socio-Philosophical understanding of untouchability of past as well as present. Untouchability is a disease, a social one. It is a social disease manifested in the society, community and within the form of life. It is no longer constitutional and hence it cannot be justified or evaluated with regard to constitutional law. That means a victim of untouchability cannot solve his problem by taking the help from law. Untouchability is a concept, a social sanction having no rational and scientific basis. However, it was prevailing in the past and in some sense or other it is still prevailing at present.

What then is the basis of untouchability? If untouchability has no rational and scientific defense, how it was prevailing and is still prevailing in the society in some sense or other? This is the most important question that needs to be taken care of at the very outset. It is observed that the source and locus of untouchability is deeply rooted in Hinduism in some sense or other. In this regard, many critiques including Ambedkar would like to say that Hinduism is responsible for creating untouchability. This position is extremely tricky one and no resolution has yet been taken without begging question regarding this position. Of course, when we are engaging to discuss about the socio-philosophical understanding of untouchability with regards to past and present, we have to focus on the locus and source of such social disease. Most of our discussion developed in this thesis with special reference to Ambedkar on the one hand and Hinduism or Hindu religion on the other hand. Ambedkar was the victim of untouchability like millions and millions of other untouchables. Hinduism or *Hindu* religion in the loose sense of the term in some sense or other would be responsible of creating untouchability. Even if, it is claimed that Hinduism or *Hindu* religion being a universal religion and having a lot of historical background cannot be responsible for

generating untouchability, still it can be said that there are some vested interested people in the name of *Brahmins* behold Hinduism and misinterpreted Hinduism in their own account which eventually might be responsible for creating untouchability. My general position is that the concept of untouchability is in some sense or other is rooted in Hinduism and then priest of Hinduism were responsible for doing that.

The first and foremost problem of Hinduism is that, being a religion it was in its inauguration was unorganized and it was remain unorganized in the past for a prolong period of time. As a result of that many religious commentators would interpret Hinduism “is a series of jungles”. Thus, it is not clear even today who the real *Hindus* are. But Hinduism or *Hindu* religion advocated *Varna-Vyavastha* or *Varna* systems in term of four-fold caste systems, namely, *Brahmin*, *Kshatriya*, *Vaishya* and *Shudra* in a hierarchical order. It was recognized that as far *Varna-Vyavastha* is concerned the *Brahmins* are the superior and the *Kshatriyas* are the most inferiors. Now my contention is that, if Hinduism is a series of jungles and nobody knows who the real *Hindus* are in the true sense of the term, then the so-called *Varna-Vyavastha* or *Varna* system as promulgated by Hinduism is based on unsound argument and it would remain fictitious and unfounded. It might be the case that in the process of socio-philosophical development there are peoples who enjoy and designated as *Brahmin* even though there may be the possibility that they were not coming from *Brahmin* class. The same may be the case in the rest of the other three divisions. Therefore, it may be said that the *Varna-Vyavastha* is itself defective in its inauguration. Of course, Hinduism has a point to defend *Varna-Vyavastha*. They refer the quotation of Lord Krishna, who says:

“*Chaturvarna Maya sristam*  
*Gunakarma vibhagasha*”<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> *Gita* 4/13

Of course, if we believe Hinduism, then we have to follow the message of Lord Krishna, because He has been treated as God in Hinduism. Our concern is not about against the message of Lord Krishna with regard to *Varna-Vyavastha*, rather what we intend to say here is that, those who have been regarded as *Brahmin* may not be real *Brahmins* and those who have been treated as *Kshatriya*, *Vaishya* and *Shudra* may not be real *Kshatriya*, *Vaishya* and *Shudra* respectively. Our concern is that, even if we carefully scrutinized Hinduism to the best of our knowledge by taking the help from literature, we would no longer be in a position to identify who were the real *Brahmins*, were the real *Kshatriyas*, were the real *Vaishyas* and finally were the real *Shudras*.

Moreover, Lord Krishna classified *Varna-Vyavastha* not on the basis of birth of the *Hindus*, but on the basis of *guna* and *karma* or quality and activity performed by a particular *Hindu*. But this was not maintain at all in the ground of reality for which millions and millions of *Hindus* in the past were treated as untouchables and most importantly Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, the architect of Indian constitutions was the victim of untouchables. Ambedkar, being an educator and social reformer said that, at the time of birth of any *Hindu* whatever, there we do not find any distinctive blood. From scientific point of view, there is no point in saying that the blood of a *Brahmin* kid at the time of birth is different from the blood of a kid of non-*Brahmins*. The blood remains the same of all kids irrespective of *Varna-Vyavastha*. Therefore, my point is that the *Varna-Vyavastha* of Hinduism may be accepted as a *division of labor* based on purely *guna* and *karma*, but not as a *division of laborers* based on *guna* and *karma* was implemented and is being implemented and applied everywhere in the world. There is nothing wrong in it's, because, it helps immensely for maximizing the productive capacity of the respective person. Today in global economy we are extremely abided by the division of labor. Today economic environment acknowledges and banks in favor of efficiency, competency and creativity of the individuals arising out of *guna* and *karma*,

quality and activities as well as education of the concerned people. So, my position is that if *Varna-Vyavastha* of Hinduism works or functions along with the intention of Lord Krishna, then there is nothing wrong in *Varna-Vyavastha*. It should be accepted and acknowledge both from religious point of view as well as from socio-cultural and socio-economical point of view. More importantly, I do reckon it is extremely relevant even in today's economic domain.

So, there is nothing wrong in Hinduism and even Ambedkar would agree it, regarding the *Varna-Vyavastha* along with the line of Lord Krishna. If the message of Lord Krishna regarding *Varna-Vyavastha* was being implemented, then millions and millions of people in the past as well as present would not perhaps be the victim of the social curse of untouchability. However, we find a different interpretation of *Varna-Vyavastha* in Hinduism. According to Ambedkar, the *Varna-Vyavastha* of Hinduism or in modern terms the caste system of Hinduism was being treated not on the basis of *guna* and *karma* as it was supposed to be the case, but on the basis of birth which eventually shaped *division of laborers* in Ambedkar's terms instead of *division of labor*. This causes all types of social problems associated with *Varna-Vyavastha* or Caste system.

Untouchability is a concept which goes against humanism. It hates and treats humans as non-humans. Out of literature has been developed on the very perception of untouchability, its origin, but still this social concept is in some sense or other is prevailing in the mind of the people. As a result of that *Hindu* community at large is suffering from unity. We think Hinduism as a religion is good; there is nothing wrong in Hinduism if it is evaluated carefully. However, the only problem of Hinduism is that it was not well organized like other religions.

The problem of untouchability, we think, might be solving considerably if it did not involve with politics. I think that Ambedkar himself in some sense or other had politicized this issue

along with Gandhi. We think that from socio-political and socio-philosophical perspective Ambedkar finds religious justice in Hinduism. For Ambedkar, Hinduism as a religion fails to retain religious justice because instead of eyeing all Hindus equal, it creates religious hierarchism and religious anarchism within Hinduism. Ambedkar was a religious person. He was fond of religion. He said that a man cannot survive without religion. He born as *Hindu* and he desire to die as a *Hindu*. But after his born he comes to know that he was an untouchable because he was belong to *Mahar* community – a community that had been treated as untouchable in Maharastra at that time. As a result of that he was the victim of the social curse of untouchability and he was struggling against the curse of untouchability throughout his life. The history is known to all of us. However, Ambedkar tried his level best to eradicate untouchability throughout his life. He revolted in many different ways, agitated in different ways, gave proposal to many political leaders, particularly to Mahatma Gandhi, to overcome the social curse of untouchability. He felt it very well that without the help of Gandhi; untouchability cannot be eradicated from Hinduism. He involve into different conflicts with Gandhi regarding Hinduism. Ambedkar found the loopholes in Hinduism as far as religious justice is concern. Gandhi thought the other way round. According to Gandhi, as a universal religion, Hinduism is pure and holly. There is nothing wrong in Hinduism. Gandhi advised Ambedkar to forgo the concept of untouchability. Instead of that Gandhi introduces the concept of *Horizon*. *Horizons* are those who are the son of God. Therefore, the debate between Ambedkar and Gandhi had been widening regarding Hinduism and the perception of untouchability. Gandhi said that the concept of untouchability is based on wrong perceptions. Rather everybody should come forward and take those distress people who are socially, economically and culturally backward. In this regard Gandhi, unlike Ambedkar, opened up the mission of Harizon. In this regard did not refer anything about Hindu religion. On the contrary, Ambedkar's concept of untouchability is directly associated

with the negative aspect of Hinduism. In our sense, as Ambedkar has been the victim of untouchability for which Hinduism in some sense or other was responsible, it was natural for Ambedkar to criticize Hinduism. However, in Gandhi's case the situation is completely different. Gandhi was a bona fide *Hindu*. He was committed to his own religion, i.e. Hinduism. He tried to find out the real *Truth* in Hinduism. According to Gandhi, *Truth* means God and God means *Sat*. Thus  $Truth = God = Sat$ . So, Gandhi tried to reveal the concept of *Sat* or *Sattva* or *Sat-Cit-Ananda* in Hinduism. This is how the difference between Ambedkar and Gandhi stood up. Ambedkar realized it that it is mainly for the Gandhi that any change in Hinduism would not be materialized. So, he needs the support from Gandhi. But Gandhi turned out to help Ambedkar regarding untouchability. At the end of his life, Ambedkar revolted against Hinduism with the support of almost five millions untouchables and took religious conversion from Hinduism to Buddhism.

We think that it was in same sense or other would be treated as a defeat of Ambedkar. Ambedkar, I do believe, at the end surrender to Hinduism and left Hinduism. The task of Ambedkar against Hinduism thus remained incomplete. Having said that there is no point in saying that the concepts of untouchability is justified in any civilized sense. Untouchability of any sort is unwanted, undesirable and unaccepted. If untouchability is linked with Hinduism, then it is of course would be regarded as the misinterpretation and misconception of Hinduism. Whatever the position may be, one thing should be kept in mind that in the years to come everybody, irrespective of caste and creed, should join their hand to eradicate such social evil.

Let me to focus a little bit about the origin of untouchability. So far we have claimed that Hinduism is responsible for creating untouchability where the priests of Hinduism were guilty. But we are yet to know the origin of untouchability. We have seen that as far Hinduism is concern, neither one belonging to *Varna-Vyavastha* would be treated as

untouchables. So, if the four different castes are not treated as untouchables, then who would be treated as untouchables? In this regard there we find a concept of *Antaja*, a *Varna* that is completely different and distinct from the four *Varna-Vyavastha* of Hinduism. The *Varna-Vyavastha* of Hinduism is acknowledged as *Svavarna* and *Antaja* is treated as *Avarna*. In Hinduism, *Antaja* or *Avarna* is created out of *Pratiloma* marriage, where *Sankara* comes from the parents where the father is belonging to lower castes (i.e. *Shudra*) and the mother is belonging to the higher castes (i.e. *Brahmin*). Such type of marriage is not accepted in Hinduism. Even Sri Sri Thakur Anukul Chandra while talking about marriage completely denies *Pratiloma* marriage. According to Thakur a progeny coming out of *Pratiloma* would be detrimental for the welfare of the society and community at large. So, the progenies (*Sankara*) coming from *Pratiloma* would be treated as *Antaja* or *Avarna* of the society. This *Avarna* would be treated as untouchables. This is one of the important sources of untouchability.

Is it acceptable in context of today's society? Certainly it is not. If this prescription of Hinduism is taken into account, then there we find a large number of *Antaja*'s in our society. In India there are hundreds of cases that we can identify where the marriages were held in the name of *Pratiloma*. The modern society at large forgoes the caste, the creed, the *Varna*'s; rather it gives importance on education and economy. Therefore according to *Hindu Shastra*, if we will stick to the concept of *Pratiloma* then the number of *Antajas* would be numerous in numbers.

The second informative source or origin of untouchability was generated out of beef eating. There was a period of time in the past when it was promulgated that all beef eating peoples were treated as untouchables because it goes against the sanctity of Hinduism. It is just a religious injunction associated with the food habit and as far as religion is concerned there is nothing wrong to say. Hinduism as the foundation of spiritualism is based on vegetarianism.

This is the general approach of Hinduism. However, as a religion it can set up its own standard and if any *Hindu* violates this religious sanction he might be treated as untouchables. He cannot violate the sanction of religion in which he belongs to. However, Hinduism as a religion cannot set up a general principle that all beef eating peoples would be treated as untouchables. Hinduism as a religion has no right to say that a *Buddhist* or a *Muslim* or a *Christian* who is eating beef would be treated as untouchables. If it does, then to me it crosses its limits.

So, putting into perspective these two sources of untouchability, we can say that Ambedkar had been treated as untouchable because he was born in an untouchable family. His parents had been treated as untouchables and his forefathers were belonging to *Antaja*'s. As a result of that Ambedkar by birth was regarded as untouchables. So, Ambedkar has no right, at least from *Hindu* religious perspective, to be treated as one of the four caste of *Varna-Vyavastha*. So, Ambedkar by birth belongs to *Avarna* and the *Varna-Vyavastha* is based on *Svavarna*.

So, from the humanistic point of view we can say that untouchability is a social curse and it cannot be tolerated by any means whether it is acceptable to any caste or *Varna*'s whatsoever. But what is the possible means to overcome it? How do we overcome it and realize the society from the curse of untouchability? It seems to us that if we mixed up *Varna* system with Caste system that was happen in the past, then there we do not find any acceptable means to overcome such social curse. That is why the concept of untouchability appears in the society in the name of *Antaja*. Ambedkar himself was victimizing for it. However, if we strict to the concept of *Varna-Vyavastha* within *guna* and *karma* according to Lord Krishna and also do not mixed up *Varna-Vyavastha* with caste system, then we can easily avoid the concept of *Avarna* or *Antaja*. In such a case we have to forgo the difference between *Anuloma* and *Pratiloma*. To resists the concept of untouchability we have to ignore the concept of *Pratiloma* and *Anuloma*. The question then immediately arises: does this

modification hamper the sanctity of Hinduism? Ambedkar throughout his life had tried to do this, but he failed because the rules and principles of Hinduism are stringent, rigorous and inviolable. That is where the problem actually hinges on. Ambedkar was a dynamic social, economic and political reformist. He tried his level best to reform Hinduism from Socio-philosophical perspective. But he failed.

On the basis of the above observations we may conclude by saying that the concept of untouchables has a lot socio-philosophical impact. An untouchable loses so many social and political opportunities by virtue of being treated as untouchable. Therefore, a resolution should be drawn against untouchability whatever its origin might be the case. Every human is an integral part of God according to Rabindranath Tagore. Therefore, to designate a person as untouchable is to designate the *being of the person* as untouchable. And to designate the *being of the person* as untouchable is to designate the being of the God as untouchable. We have seen a lot of debate and conflict about the origin, locus and ground of untouchability. Whatever the reason we have in favor of untouchability but in 21<sup>st</sup> century it would be treated as human disgrace irrespective of the reason laid down in favor of it. It is our responsibility to guide the people in a proper direction and one must take the help from religion. But one must resist the concept of untouchability as his or her level best in the society in which he or she belongs to. Untouchability was regarded as a social curse, it is being regarded a social curse and it will be regarded a social curse in the days to come. Our main objective is to overcome this social curse completely by way of understanding and apprehending Hinduism or *Hindu* religious in proper.

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*Editor-in-Chief*

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## **SOCIAL IMPACT OF UNTOUCHABILITY: WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO Dr. B. R. AMBEDKAR**

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There is no question of doubt that humans are the superior agents in the globe by virtue of possessing humanity and rationality. Humans have the ability to judge what is good or bad, what is right or wrong and what one ought to do and not ought to do. That is why in traditional ethics humans are considered to be the only legitimate moral agents. Humans are autonomous and their autonomy is guided by their rationality. Since humans are rational, self realization is the key of humans. But when we come to know that there underlies some discrepancies or inequalities in the society. Having no rational and scientific basis, then surely humans' rational position puts under scrutiny.

Untouchability was prevailing in barbaric fashion during eighteenth century onwards and it is prevailing till today in our society in many ways. The intellectual class of the present Indian society actually plays dual roles. In public places they are used to state that the concept of untouchability has no rational basis and it should be eradicated in its all forms from the society. However, they play different role in their practical life. Thus, untouchability is not something manifested in outer gesture, it is something lies within. They feel that untouchability is a social evil and no one can support it. There is no scientific or rational basis of untouchability. Untouchability has no constitutional basis. The so-called untouchability that we witness in India is a social issue based on prejudices. In fact everyone has its own choice and there is nothing wrong in it. But why is individual choice voiced not in terms of individual's quality but in terms of individual's caste and religion? There is no question of doubt that no community or society or country can develop without mutual understanding and



interpersonal communication. In this regard, relations hold the key, an important key of uplifting the society. If everything is determined in terms of the Varna systems irrespective of the quality of individuals then it would be the greatest blunder of the present society. It would really be a disgrace to the Indian society when we come to know even today that a section of people is being deprived from their basic needs simply because they are belonging to particular castes.

Does it make sense to say that state is responsible for this? In fact one should not blame the state. The concept of untouchability is not a legal concept nor even be a concept that can be solved legally. It is rather a social concept that cannot be solved politically. On the contrary, the concept of caste system has been politicized. Thus, instead of solving this problem the political system of India actually lingers it. This was so happened in the past and it continues at present as well. Who can ignore the tussle between Ambedkar and Gandhi regarding the perception of untouchability? Ambedkar approaches a scientific analysis of religion and criticizes the spiritualistic form of religion. In this regard, he rejected Hinduism. For Ambedkar so long Hinduism as a religion stands, untouchability will prevail in the society. Contrary to Ambedkar, Gandhi favours Hinduism and also the caste system of Hinduism. Accordingly, Gandhi did not agree with Ambedkar as far as the concept of untouchability is concerned.

So although the issue of untouchability is unanimously condemned by all, it is still prevailing in the society not in the same sense as Dr B.R.Ambedkar himself had been suffered, but in an invisible way one can easily realize if he is conscious of it. How can we overcome the concept of untouchability? Fortunately, we have already overcome the dark age of untouchability. In the past untouchables were identified by physical appearance because at that time some physical bars were imposed on untouchables in terms of their dress, food, cloths etc. Equally, the upper caste was so vocal in favour of untouchability. However, in the course of time there we notice a drastic change as far as untouchability is concerned. The same has happened in other parts of the world. This is the blessing of civilization. Thus, untouchability in most Indian states is not visible in barbaric fashion. An untouchable does not find any difficulty when he



travels by bus or train. He may not find any problem to take food with others belonging to higher castes. These are good signs. But at the same time when we come to know that there are some societies where untouchability is a cause of concern, then we feel disgrace ourselves as the most intellectual representative of the globe.

Untouchability is not something prevailing only in India. Historically, untouchability was prevailing elsewhere in the globe. Untouchability is there in South Africa, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and most of the countries where religion is the key of determining the social status of the individuals. However, the fate of untouchables in India was miserable than other parts of the world. In fact, India was the badly affected country as far as untouchability is concerned. In India untouchability is understood in terms of behaviour based on the concept of pollution and it has religious and secular sanctions. It is conceived that untouchables would remain untouchables by virtue of their deeds in the previous birth. Ironically, both Hindus as well as the untouchables are socialized in this belief. Where such belief comes from? Is it something present in Hinduism? Or is it something that has been injected by the so-called dominant class? According to Ambedkar Hindu religion in which he belongs to is the culprit of promulgating inequality among humans. We examine the Manusmriti's standpoint in due course. There are plenty of remarks which would actually create a great amount of distrust and inequality among castes. The social position of untouchables was miserable, they were basically right less. An untouchable has to perform many duties without enjoying any rights. Untouchability in fact even goes beyond colonialism. During colonialism a movement was created in order to overcome it, but there was no movement against untouchability before the appearance of B.R. Ambedkar. It was Ambedkar who in fact protested and revolted against untouchability. The number of untouchability is not small, millions of people were considered to be untouchable. The question is: why were they not protested? They did not protest simply because due to some social and religious constraints they had been somehow or other convinced that they were untouchable. Colonial form of exploitation was revolted in terms of national freedom and there were no social and religious constraints. But the so-called untouchables were



economically brittle, educationally illiterate, and culturally backward. They had no right to say anything; they had been compelled to believe that they were untouchables. Thus, the concept of untouchability is not something that can be eradicated by passing a bill in the parliament. As a social and religious issue, such problem can only be overcome by implementing a revolutionary change in Hinduism. Ambedkar throughout his life failed to do so. Even Gandhi did not agree with Ambedkar to change the caste system of Hinduism. Only time will tell whether untouchability can be removed from the Hindu society or not.

### **Conclusion:**

Analyzing the thought of Dr. Ambedkar, it became quite clear that he was a rationalist and not against Hindu religion. But he was against the religion which teaches one man to hate another. He accepted that the religion which teaches the lesson of equality and brotherhood. But the Hindu religion did not accept the principle of equality and brotherhood in general behavior. The universal declaration of human rights as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations includes the rights of the education, the right to choose one's own marriage partner, the right to vote and hold public office and the rights to receive equal pay for equal work etc. All these rights were not guaranteed to the untouchables, as such in India no attempt was made to strengthen respect for human rights or fundamental freedoms. There are no proper atmosphere was created to promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among the Hindus. That is why his great declaration is that- unfortunately, he was born a Hindu, it was beyond his power to prevent that, but he solemnly assures us that he will not die a Hindu.

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