

## Chapter-V

### Some Critical and Evaluative Comments

In our concluding chapter an attempt has been made to review almost all of the major observations made by Ambedkar regarding the demerits of Hindu Religion as well as the merits of Buddhism. We shall also try our best to examine why Ambedkar did not accept the classical Buddhism in toto. We shall also see how far his Neo-Buddhism is capable of eliminating the major problems our society particularly the downtrodden people suffers from.

We have already seen in the previous chapters of our work that Ambedkar observes that the root cause is the Hindu Religion itself which gives birth to the social problems like caste system, untouchability, lack of unity, degradation of morality, unemployment, inhuman behavior towards the downtrodden people and so on. Therefore, let us start with the review of this observation of Ambedkar. It has already been seen that fourfold classification of *Varṇa* (*Cāturvarṇa*) has been made by the Hindu *Śāstra* itself. In the *Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā*, Srikriṣṇa Himself says to Arjuna, “*Cāturvarṇam mayā śṛtaṁ guṇa karma vibhāgaśḥ*”<sup>1</sup>. If it is taken to be true that as a matter of fact God Himself has introduced the concept of this fourfold division into the society then it cannot produce any evil in our society. The reason is obvious. We know that God by the very definition is loving. In Christianity this view has been emphatically accepted. Hindu religion also accepts the same view. In Hinduism God is variously described as *Karuṇāsindhu*, *Dinabandhu*, *Jagatpati*, *Dindayal*, *Paramapitā* etc. This clearly implies that God is loving. If God is loving like our parents then it is really inconceivable that God has done something which turns to be the cause of our sufferings. It may be that in some cases it may give birth to the sufferings of us but ultimately it happens to be the cause of the wellbeing of the whole society. Keeping this in view it can be maintained that *Cāturvarṇa* cannot be the cause of the sufferings of our society. In order to substantiate

this view the analogy of the human body can be cited. A number of the sociologists are of the opinion that our society can be compared with the body of the human being. A human body is composed of so many different organs. In the same way our society is also composed of so many individuals. So if the whole society stands for the whole body of human being then different individuals obviously stand for the different organs of the same human body. We know that each and every organ of the human body plays an important role for the growth and existence of the whole body. Likewise, different individuals living in our society play an important role for growing up, betterment and existence of our whole society. What is more important and relevant to note in this respect is that the function of one organ of the body cannot be performed by another organ of our body. The function of eyes cannot be served by our ears and nose. The function of our heart cannot be replaced by the function of our hands and legs. In the same way the function of our brain can be operated neither by our hands nor by our belly nor even by our legs. In the same manner, some of the specific activities can be performed only by a particular class of people which can never be performed effectively and successfully by the other class of people. So it can easily be understood that the fourfold division of the people made by God helps to establish the wellbeing of our whole society. Thus it is seen that there is nothing wrong in the *Varṇa Vyavasthā* of Hinduism.

Now let us see what can be said against the above argument from part of Ambedkar. Here Ambedkar may say that the analogy of our body given above is a bad analogy. We know that the function of one organ cannot be performed by the other organ. No one can deny that the function of our eyes cannot be operated by our ears or nose. But the function of one individual or the function of one class can easily be performed by other individual or the other class provided if the individual or the class are trained properly. We know that *Kṣatriyas* are the warrior class, *Vaiśyas* on the other, are the trader class as it is stated by our *Śāstra*. But if a proper training for operating the different arms used in a war is imparted to

the *Vaiśya* class and if the proper training for running trade is given to the *Kṣatriya* class then the function of fighting which is considered to be the unique property of the *Kṣatriyas* be performed by the *Vaiśyas* class and again the function of running the trade which is held as the private property of the *Vaiśyas* can be operated by the *Kṣatriyas* too. Thus it is seen that the above argument does not hold good.

In response to the objection raised by Ambedkar it can be maintained that Ambedkar here fails to understand the very spirit of the analogy given above. We sometimes in our day to day life compare somebody with some other person or some other thing or being. Ashutosh Mukherjee, for example, is compared with Tiger (Ashutosh is known as the Tiger of Bengal). Here one must understand the spirit of that analogy. Here if somebody says that this analogy is quite absurd simply because Tiger is an animal having four feet and one tail but Ashutosh Mukherjee has neither the four feet nor even one tail. Then it is clear that the person who raises this objection misses the point. Here Ashutosh Mukherjee has been compared with Tiger so far as his braveness is concerned. In the same way, one is to understand the very spirit of the analogy made above. When it is said that the function of the eyes cannot be performed by the ears or the function of our hands cannot be operated by our legs, then thereby it is meant that the function of one organ cannot be performed by the other organ so effectively. If we have a close observation then we can see that the function of one organ can be performed by the other organ to some extent. Sometimes we come across the fact that the function of our legs is performed by our hands and the vice-versa. A person who gets lost his legs either from the very birth or in any later stage of his life due to any accident walks by his hands. A person on the other hand, though in a very rare occasion, is also seen to write by his legs. Besides this, our ear or the other organs of our body also are seen to perform the activity of our eyes to some extent. Suppose the leader of a CID group asks two persons X and Y to have an enquiry whether somebody is there within the room of a particular house. Suppose

again that X is a person having his eyes of normal vision but Y is a blind person. Both of them proceed to have an enquiry about whether somebody is there within the room referred to by the leader of CID group. Mr. X enters into the room and sees that there are two persons whispering each other and comes back and informs the same to the CID leader. Y like X enters into the room and listens to the whispering and touches the two persons present there within the room. Subsequently he comes back and inform the same to the CID leader. Here one and the same act has been performed by both X and Y. But the knowledge of the presence of the two individuals within the room is attained by X through his eyes, on the other hand the same knowledge is ascertained by Y through his ears and hands. So, the above observation of Ambedkar that the function of one organ cannot be performed by the other organ cannot be accepted. The very point which is intended to imply through the analogy taken is that though the activity of one organ can be performed by the other organ to some extent but it can never be performed so effectively. It is true that one can walk with the help of hand if one can properly practice but yet he cannot walk with the help of hand as fast as a normal man can walk with his legs. The same is true in writing also. Keeping this spirit of this view we can say that though it is true that through a long and rigorous training people belonging to the *Vaiśya* class can be the warrior and thereby perform the activity of the *Kṣatriya* class yet it cannot be denied that they cannot perform this activity as effectively as it is performed by the *Kṣatriyas* class. We know that for fighting in the war what is most important is the courage and brave. But those properties are the inherent properties of the *kṣatriyas* only. They cannot be implanted or injected from outside through any teaching or training. The four fold division of the people is made on the basis of the inherent nature that is the *guṇa* and *karma*. Thus it is seen that the objections of Ambedkar against this fourfold classification cannot be accepted.



We think Ambedkar may counter the above argument by saying that though the activity of some of the organs may be performed by the other organs, but there are some organs the activity of which can never be performed by any other organs. For example, the function of the heart cannot be performed by other organs. In the like manner the function of our lungs can never be performed by any other organs. The same is equally true in the case of the function of our brain. The operation of the thinking process is strictly a private property of our brain. But if we go back to our society then we see that the function of each and every class can be performed by the other class. Besides this, if we have a close examination and analysis then we see that the exact function of a particular organ can never be performed by other organs as it is claimed in discussion above. The function of the eye can never be performed by ear and hand as it is claimed above. What is the exact function of our eyes? The exact function of our eyes is to see but is this function of seeing be performed by any other organ of our body? Our ears can hear the sound; our hands, on other, can perform the task of touching but both hearing and touching are different from seeing. More categorically to say the object of hearing is the sound; the object of touching is the softness and hardness. But the object of seeing is neither the sound nor even the hardness and softness, it is something else, it is the color. More or less same thing is true in the case of hand and the leg. The specific function performed by our leg is called walking. Can this act of walking be performed by our hand? Positively not. What our hand can perform in this respect is to make our body move from one place to another place. In this way the view of Ambedkar that the above analogy is the bad analogy can be substantiated.

Keeping this view in mind that the aforesaid analogy is not adequate and relevant let us sift to another analogy. We know that in a bank there are workers of the different classes. All of them taken together lead the function of the Bank smoothly and perfectly. Infact Bank is a miniature of our whole society. So, what is true in the case of a Bank is equally true in

the case of our whole society. For the sake of running the function of the Bank smoothly service of the different classes are essential. In the same way for smooth running of our society people or workers of the different classes are highly essential. The manager or the first grade officer of the Bank stands for the people of the *Brāhmin* class of our society. The fourth grade workers of the Bank stand for the *Śūdra* class of our society and the workers in between represent the people belonging to the *Kṣatriya* and the *Vaiśya* class of our society. The function of the Manager of the Bank cannot be performed by the fourth grade worker of that Bank. Similarly the function of the Brahmin class cannot be performed by the *Śūdra* class. If the fourth grade workers of the Bank are allowed to perform the function meant for the Manager of the Bank then no doubt some unwanted consequence will follow and the Bank cannot serve its purpose. In the same way, if the responsibility of performing the function of the *Brāhmin* class is handed over to the *Śūdra* class then positively it will lead to some unwanted consequence from which our whole society will suffer. From this it can be concluded that the fourfold classification of the people made by our *Śāstra* is quite scientific and it is necessary for the progress and betterment of our society. So there is nothing wrong in it.

Here on behalf of Ambedkar someone may say that in our *Śāstras* as well as in our constitution all men have been described as equal. But if men are distinguished into four classes, then how can we say that all men are equal? The term classification necessarily implies some sort of inequality. Therefore if we accept this fourfold classification of the people as scientific and logical then we cannot, at the same time, maintain that all men are equal. And again if we agree that all men are equal then we cannot accept the concept of *Cāturvarṇa* (fourfold division) as it is propounded by *Śāstras*, because acceptance of the both at the same time leads to some sorts of self contradiction.

Apparently the above objection raised by Ambedkar looks sound but if we have a close examination then we can easily understand that this objection does not hold good at all. When our *Śāstra* and our constitution claim that all men are equal then we have to keep in our mind that the equality in question is not unqualified one. I think this can be explained with what is said by Henry Sidgwick. He says, “Justice is the similar and injustice is the dissimilar treatment in similar situation.”<sup>2</sup> This clearly implies that all men are equal in similar situation. Keeping this in view it can quite consistently be said that both our *Śāstra* and constitution advise to treat all people equally only in similar situation. Following the same principle it can be said that if the situation is dissimilar then two men cannot be treated similarly. So far as the humanity is concerned both the Manager and the peon of the Bank are equal. But as long as the academic qualifications, experience and the other relevant things are concerned they are not equal at all. Therefore equal treatment of both of them gives birth to injustice instead of justice. Here if the Manager of the Bank is replaced by the peon then obviously it will lead to injustice and adverse consequence. In the like manner a *Brāhmin* is not different from a *Śūdra* so far as their humanity is concerned. But so far as their *guṇa* and *karma* are concerned a *Brāhmin* cannot be equal to a *Śūdra*. If a *Brāhmin* is replaced by a *Śūdra* then it would lead to injustice and positively hamper the progress and the development of the whole society. It is important to note that a peon can be promoted to the post of a Manager of a Bank if the peon acquires all the necessary qualifications for being so. Similarly if an individual belonging to *Śūdra* class gains the *guṇa* and the *karma* of *Brāhmin* as it is stated by *Śāstras* then he should be promoted to the *Brāhmin* class. This is what is meant by the equality of all men.

In order to substantiate his own position Ambedkar here may say that though theoretically this fourfold classification of the people sounds good but practically it takes completely a distorted form. In *Śāstra* it is clearly stated that the criterion for making this

fourfold classification is the *guṇa* and *karma* and nothing else. So *Śāstra* suggests to classify all the people of the society into four classes strictly on the basis of *guṇa* and *karma* irrespective of birth. But in our day to day life this classification is made on the basis of birth irrespective of the *guṇa* and *karma*. It is worthy to note that this violation of the criterion is taken place in our practical life not only today but the same thing was found even in the period of *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata*. When Śrīkṛṣṇa, for example, in the *Gītā* advised Arjuna to follow his *Svadharmā* i.e. *varṇa-dharma* then he did so just on the basis of his birth. And again when Karna was denied to take part in the mock fighting with Arjuna then no doubt it was done due to his birth because people knew him as *Sūtapūtra*. The case of Eklavya is not exception to it. We all know that when Eklavya expressed his desire to take the lesson of archery under the teaching of Dronachariya his prayer was immediately and directly turned down by Dronachariya. What is the reason behind it? The only answer is that he took his birth in a lower family called *Vyadh*. I think the strong desire of a tiny boy to take the lesson in archery is sufficient testimony that his *guṇa* and *karma* corresponds to the *guṇa* and the *karma* of *Kṣatriya*. And later on his unparalleled expertness and efficiency in archery without the teaching and guidance of any master bears a strong evidence of his *Brāhmin* like *guṇa* and *karma*.

The aforesaid objection of Ambedkar can be answered in two different ways:-

First, if what is claimed by Ambedkar is taken to be true that really as a matter of fact this fourfold classification is made on the basis of birth yet, there is nothing wrong in it. We know a mango tree gives birth only to the mango but not the jackfruit and the vice-versa. Similarly a *Brāhmin* positively gives birth to a son who must be *Brāhmin* by his *guṇa* and *karma* and a *Śūdra* gives birth to a son who is *Śūdra* by nature.

We think the above view can easily be countered and the view of Ambedkar can be substantiated. Though as a matter of fact it is seen that a mango tree gives birth only to mangoes but it is not true in the case of the people. Very often we come across the fact that one is an ideal *Brāhmin* but the son of him does not have even the minimum quality of a *Brāhmin*. On the other hand a father is *Śūdra* by his *guṇa* and *karma* but his son has *guṇa* and *karma* of *Brāhmin*. And the classic example cited by *Śāstra* is Prahallada who took his birth in *Rāksasa* family but became a distinguished and unparalleled devotee (*bhakta*) of God. The case of Viswamitra is also worthy to note.

Here someone may point out that the last argument given in favor of Ambedkar contradicts the earlier arguments where the name of Karṇa and Eklavya were mentioned. In the earlier argument an attempt has been made to establish the fact that the fourfold division of the people has been made on the basis of birth, not on the basis of *guṇa* and *karma*. But the immediate last argument where the case of Viswamitra and Prahllada has been cited clearly implies that the fourfold classification has been made on the basis of *guṇa* and *karma*, but not the basis of birth.

In reply to the above objection it can be said that though apparently one argument seems to contradict the other argument but actually this is not so. The case of Prahllada and Viswamitra are strictly exceptional. Exception cannot be a rule. Rule is one which is followed in almost all of the cases. Here *varṇa-bheda* is determined in almost all of the cases exclusively on the basis of birth. So there is no self contradiction between the two arguments given above.

Now question come if it is taken for granted that the fourfold classification is made strictly on the basis of *guṇa* and *karma* instead of birth then yet does Ambedkar continue to raise objection in accepting fourfold classification proposed by our *Śāstras*? Perhaps not,

because in that case the *Varṇa Vyavasthā* does not give birth to any social problems, like caste system, untouchability, lack of unity, unemployment etc. In that case profession, status etc. of one will be determined by the *guṇa* and *karma* of him irrespective of his birth. But we think that in that case the advice of maintaining such type of division is pointless. The activity of one actually is nothing but the result of ones *guṇa*. If *svatta guṇa* in a person predominates the other two *guṇas* then it is quite natural that his behavior or the activity will be *Brāhmin* like. The very question of advising him to perform the *Brāhmin* like activities becomes meaningless. The fire automatically burns due to its own nature. The water automatically satisfies our thirst due to its inherent nature. In the same way one man performs his activities due to his potential nature. Is this not useless and illogical to advise a man to perform his activities according to his inherent nature? Thus it is shown that if the fourfold division of the people is made on the basis of birth then it is unwanted as it gives birth to so many social problems and if this classification is made on the basis of *guṇa* and *karma* then it is useless.

Ambedkar says that had there been no *Varṇa Vyavasthā* man would have been self sufficient. We know self help is the best help. But as *Varṇa Vyavasthā* is prevalent in our society there is no scope for any individual to be self sufficient. Here in *Varṇa Vyavasthā* *Śūdra* has to depend upon *Vaiśya*, *Kṣatriya* and *Brāhmin* for their food, self protection and reading and writing their letters etc. respectively. In the same way *Brāhmin* also has to depend upon *Kṣatriya*, *Vaishya* and *Śūdra* for the self protection, food and other essential services like cleaning, cutting their hair etc. respectively. In this way each and every class becomes purely dependent upon the other classes. Thus this system creates an obstacle for becoming one self sufficient.

In reply to the above objection it can be said that the above mentioned allegation cannot be denied. But if we have a close look then we can see that the merits of the system in

this respect are greater than its demerits. We all are acquainted with a famous proverb, “Jack of all trades but master of none”. If one tries to perform all the necessary activities for him then he can be master of no work. If all the people of a particular society follow this policy then that society cannot be developed. We know that if an individual is engaged for a long time with the specific type of activity then thereby he becomes efficient and expert in his respective activity which will positively lead that society to its maximum development and progress. Our day to day experiences substantiate this view. Day by day our society proceeds to this direction. One example may be cited to explain this fact. Today we are seeing that in the higher studies this trained is quite evident. We see that the whole higher academic world has been divided into some broader compartments or faculties like Arts, Science, Commerce, Engineering, Medical and so on. Each and every compartment has further been subdivided into smaller units. The Arts faculty, for example, has been subdivided into Bengali, English, History, Political Science, Philosophy and so on. Different teachers are engaged with different subjects throughout their life. And again, for example, the teachers who are engaged with the study of Philosophy have further been compartmentalized. Some teachers of Philosophy are engaged with the study of Indian Philosophy, some on the other, are engaged with the western Philosophy. The journey of the specialization is not end with it. The teachers who are engaged with the study of Indian Philosophy have further been subdivided into the teachers of *Nyāya* Philosophy, the teachers of Vedanta Philosophy, and so on. This fact clearly implies that *Varṇa Vyavasthā* through the division of labour helps a lot to develop our society.

Now let us see whether Ambedkar has anything to say against this. I think this objection can be beautifully countered by Ambedkar. As a matter of fact Ambedkar has said that the above claim may be taken to be true provided the division is made on the basis of the natural aptitude of the persons concerned, but in reality the fourfold classification of the

people prevailing in our society is made purely on the basis of birth irrespective of natural aptitude. This type of unscientific division cannot ensure the progress and development of any society, on the contrary, it ensures the retreat and backwardness of our society. If this division is made exclusively on the basis of natural aptitude then Ambedkar again will say the same thing that the advice of maintaining this division is pointless. The whole thing will smoothly proceed automatically. We think the observation of Ambedkar is well grounded.

Gandhiji once said “*varṇa vyavasthā* in our society is as essential as air and water in our life”<sup>3</sup>. Let us examine this view. Gandhiji has given maximum importance upon *Varṇa Vyavasthā* of Hinduism. Sometimes he considers this *Varṇa Vyavasthā* as the essence of Hindu religion. He asks that how can a Muslim remain a Muslim if he does not follow the *Koran*? Similarly a Hindu, according to his observation cannot remain a Hindu if he does not follow *Varṇāśrama Vyavasthā*. Perhaps he had been highly influenced by the teaching of the *Gītā*. In the *Gītā* Śrīkṛṣṇa categorically says to Arjuna, “*Svadharmye nidhanam śreya paradharma bhayābaba*”<sup>4</sup>. This statement of Śrīkṛṣṇa clearly implies how much important the *Varṇāśrama* system is. If we go to *Chaitanya Charitāmṛita* then again we can see that this view has been substantiated there also. In *Chaitanya Charitāmṛita* we come to know that once Chaitanya Deva happens to meet Roy Ramānanda, a great devotee as well as a distinguished and unparallel scholar. Sri Chaitanya Deva wants to know from Ramānanda about the path leading to God. In reply Ramānanda beautifully says that it is through the performance of our *Svadharmā*, i.e. *Varṇa Dharma* the earnest love for God is taken place in our mind. The *Sloke* runs as,

“*Prabhu kahe para sloke sādhyer nirnay*

*Roy kahe svadharmācharane Viṣṇu bhakti hoy*”<sup>5</sup>.



Arjuna after seeing his near ones and dear ones gathered in his counterpart for fighting in *Kurūśetra* decided not to fight but to leave away the battle field. But Srikriṣṇa thought that if Arjuna did not fight then it would lead to unwanted consequence in Hastinapur. Srikriṣṇa knew that the duty of a King is to restore discipline, justice and peace in his kingdom. For doing so he must fight against *Kouravas*. So here the another name for performing *Varṇadharma* or *Svadharma* is to establish justice, morality and peace in the society. Perhaps keeping this importance of performing *Varṇadharma* in mind Gandhiji has passed the statement in question.

Now if we try to understand the importance of *varṇa Vyavasthā* in the light of what has been said by Srikriṣṇa in the *Gītā* then it is clear that *varṇaśrama Dharma* plays an important role in maintaining the discipline and order in our society. According to Srikriṣṇa it is the *varṇadharma* through the performance of which the discipline, order, peace and justice are preserved and maintained in society. No society continues to exist if there is no discipline, order and justice in it. We cannot live without air and water. The existence of no life can be conceived of without air and water. Similarly the existence of no society can be thought of without discipline, order and justice. Therefore the above observation of Gandhiji is well grounded. But problem crops up when we think of the other society and religion. We know that in other religions like Christianity and Islam in general and Buddhism in particular there is no room for *varṇa vyavasthā*. How can they then continue to exist? Had *Varṇa Vyavasthā* been as essential as air and water in our life then Christian, Islam and Buddhist society could not have been existent. But as a matter of fact these societies are smoothly running, may be in a better way than Hindu society, without maintaining the fourfold classification as it is suggested in Hinduism. We know that no life can continue to exist without air and water. But some societies continue to exist smoothly without *Varṇaśrama Vyavasthā*. This clearly implies that the above observation of Gandhiji cannot be accepted.

Now let us go to another important observation made by Ambedkar against *Varṇa Vyavasthā* prevailing in our society. Ambedkar holds that it is due to *Varṇa Vyavasthā* that the Hindus lack their unity and integrity. In this context he beautifully says “one Sikh or one Khalsa is equal to Sava Lakh men and one Mohammedan is equal to a crowd of Hindus”<sup>6</sup>.

Now let us see how much the above observation of Ambedkar is well grounded. I think the truth of that observation of Ambedkar can be established through our practical experience. If we look in and around our society then I think the truth of his observation cannot be denied. We come across a number of instances where Hindus though they are majority did not dare to fight with the minimum numbers of Muslims. Besides our practical experience I think the above view of Ambedkar can be proved to be true in a different way. We know the sense of unity and integrity comes from the sense of oneness. So it can logically be said that the lack of unity and integrity is generated from the lack of oneness. A Hindu feels lack of oneness due to *varṇa-bheda* which obviously gives birth to the lack of unity and integrity among the Hindus. I think there is another important reason behind the lack of unity and integrity among the Hindus. The *Brāhmins* and the *Kṣatriyas* are seen to suffer from their superiority complex. They always consider themselves to be superior to other *Varṇas*. The *Vaiśyas* and the *Śūdras* on the other suffer from the inferiority complex. They always consciously or unconsciously consider themselves to be inferior to the other two *Varṇas*. Consequently *Vaiśyas* and the *Śūdras* keep themselves away from *Brāhmanas* and the *Kṣatriyas*. Thus a distance is made among all the *Varṇas* which in turn gives birth to the lack of unity and integrity among the Hindus. So, the above observation of Ambedkar cannot be denied.

Ambedkar has raised another important objection against *Varṇa Vyavasthā* of Hinduism. Ambedkar says that *Varṇa Vyavasthā* is responsible for the unemployment, poverty and starvation of the Hindus. No one can deny the fact that unemployment, poverty

and starvation are the crying problems of Hinduism. May be the birth rate of the *Śūdras* increase to a great extent as they are uneducated and unconscious about the justification of birth control. Thus population of the *Śūdra* class becomes higher. But the service meant for the *Śūdra* class remains fixed in our society. So it is quite natural that in this situation a number of *Śūdras* will remain unemployed. Consequently they will suffer from poverty and starvation. Thus it is established once again that the observation of Ambedkar is firm footed.

From the viewpoint of Ambedkar another dark aspect of *Varṇa Vyavasthā* can be cited. Demand and supply should be an open process. Our society is ever dynamic. The demand of the society is always changing with the change of time. Sometimes our society needs more amounts of soldiers and sometimes again it needs fewer amounts of soldiers. If the tensions among the different countries intensify then it is quite natural that maximum numbers of soldiers are necessary for the protection of a country. But the number of the *Kṣatriyas* who are capable and worthy of being the soldiers according to *Varṇa dharma* are always fixed. In that case people belonging to the other *Varṇas* should be allowed to occupy the profession of soldiers and thereby participate in fighting or war wherever and whenever situation demands. But according to the *Varṇāśrama* system this cannot be allowed. Thus, *Varṇa Vyavasthā* leads our country to a dangerous situation.

Another important objection raised by Ambedkar against *Varṇa Vyavasthā* or caste system is worthy to note. Ambedkar says that the influence of caste or *Varṇa* upon the ethics of Hindus are simply deplorable. Caste or *Varṇa*, he observes, destroys the sense of public charity. Hindu's responsibility and ethical duty is always caste-ridden. Ambedkar points out that there are the sense of charity and sympathy within the Hindus but it begins with the caste and ends with the caste.

Now let us see how much this objection of Ambedkar against *Varṇa Vyavasthā* or caste system is justified. It is an inherent tendency of almost all of us that we serve our duty for the people whom we consider our near ones and dear ones. It is quite natural that one considers one individual as his own if he belongs to his own *Varṇa* or Caste. But one cannot consider one individual as his own if he belongs to the other *Varṇa* or Caste. Thus it is established that the sense of charity and moral duty of the Hindus must be *Varṇa* or Caste ridden.

Ambedkar observes that it is only due to the caste that the Hindus could not be united and therefore could not make a nation. But the observation of Gandhiji is parallelly opposite to it. Gandhiji holds that castes have saved Hinduism from disintegration. Naturally question arises whose observation is correct? I think in one sense Gandhi's observation is acceptable. But in another sense Ambedkar's observation is right. Initially Gandhiji's observation is correct because the phenomenon of *varṇa* helps to maintain the unity and integrity within the different four *varṇas*. One *Brāhmin* feels unity and integrity with another *Brāhmin*. Likewise a *Śūdra* considers another *Śūdra* as his kith and kin. Thus *varṇa* system maintains compartmentalized unity and integrity. But here another point is very important to note. Though the *Brāhmin* looks upon another *Brāhmin* as his own but at the same time he feels himself to be disunited and disintegrated from the people of other three *Varṇas*. Thus a fence is erected among the different castes. So this fact cannot be denied that the compartmentalized unity and integrity leads to lack of universal absolute unity and integrity. Had there been no division of *Varṇa* in Hinduism all Hindus would have been united and integrated and thereby would constitute a single whole. So, ultimately Ambedkar's observation that because of the *Varṇa Vyavasthā* Hindus have been divided into different folds and cannot give birth to any nation is justified.

Gandhiji holds that the four fold divisions of *Brāhmin*, *Kṣatriya*, *Vaiśya* and *Śūdra* alone are fundamental, natural and essential. The innumerable sub castes that are sometimes convenience but often a hindrance should be annihilated at the earliest.<sup>7</sup> Here a question arises why only the fourfold divisions alone are fundamental, natural and essential, why the five-fold or six-fold or the two-fold divisions are not natural? No convincing answer has been given by Gandhiji. Gandhiji emphatically asserts that *Varṇa* system does not connote superiority or inferiority but he also mentions that it cannot be denied that in reality some sort of hierarchy has been evolved in *Varṇa* system. He further says that hierarchy is inevitable, when all *Varṇa* except a common goal of life.<sup>8</sup> Is it not the case that Gandhiji here suffers from self contradiction?

Gandhiji observes that it is due to the *Varṇa* system that Hindu society could stand. I think this observation of Gandhiji can hardly be accepted. If this observation of Gandhiji is taken to be true then what's about the progress of the other developed countries where there is no room for *Varṇa*. The progress and development taken place in western country is so high that it cannot be compared with the progress and development of India. Now if we conclude that the unparallel progress has been taken place in the western countries because there is no room for *Varṇa* then would it be illogical and lack of truth? So again this observation of Gandhiji cannot be accepted. Gandhiji repeatedly and categorically points out that *Varṇa* System is a natural order of society and therefore he opposes all the attempts to destroy the *Varṇa* System.<sup>9</sup> Question comes: Is this observation of Gandhiji really true? We know that what is natural must be universal. Say for example, the phenomena of hunger and thirst are natural property of the human beings. Therefore those phenomena are true of any human being irrespective of caste, creed, gender and country. Had *Varṇa Vyavasthā* been really a natural phenomenon it would have been presence in all communities and in all countries. But as a matter of fact this *Varṇa* system is not present in all communities and in

all countries. This fact clearly shows that this observation of Gandhiji is not true. Mahatma Gandhi is highly concerned about the preservation of the fourfold division of *Varṇa* system in Hinduism. This fact implies that *varṇa-vyavasthā* is not natural. Had it been really natural then the very question of its destruction and preservation is pointless. If we are hungry then it is quite natural that we shall look for fruit. If we are thirsty then it is natural that we shall look for water. Can we meaningfully say that those natural tendencies of us should be preserved?

Gandhiji holds that even if one had managed somehow to learn a profession other than ones 'Hereditary' one, i.e. other than one's *Varṇa*, one must not earn a living by it i.e. one should earn one's living by means of doing one's hereditary vocation only.<sup>10</sup> Here again the problem comes if someone earns mastery over any profession other than one's hereditary one then why one must not earn a living by it? No special reason has been shown by Gandhiji in this regard. If Gandhiji's observation is true then society cannot make any progress. We know that day by day the demand of our society is increasing. Accordingly avenue of new activities are opening up. How can these new activities be adjusted as they are not our hereditary activities.

Another important observation made by Gandhiji regarding the status of *Varṇa* should be examined. Gandhiji says, 'There are four *Varṇas*, all equal in status, and they are determined by birth. They can be changed by a person choosing another profession, but if *Varṇas* are not as a rule determined by birth, they tend to lose all meaning'<sup>11</sup>. Ambedkar does not agree with Gandhiji on this issue. Ambedkar says that our birth cannot be the criterion for the distinction of the four fold *Varṇas*. Infact birth is the standard for the distinction of the caste or *jāti*. If birth is taken as the standard for the distinction of *Varṇas* then in no way *Varṇa* canbe distinguished from caste or *jāti*. Here Ambedkar has raised a serious objection against Gandhiji. Ambedkar holds that Gandhiji confuses *Varṇa* with the caste and he has made this confusion consciously in order to cheat common people and to

satisfy the vested interest of his own. Ambedkar observes that there were two ‘I’s in Gandhiji. One is his spiritual ‘I’ and another is political ‘I’. His spiritual ‘I’ takes an initiative to spiritualize the politics. But his political ‘I’ is a selfish ‘I’ who knows very well that the society cannot bear the whole truth. Gandhiji, Ambedkar observes, is quite conscious that if he tells the truth and thereby tries to destroy this caste system then there is every possibility that he loses his political position. Keeping this in view Gandhiji intentionally tries to make the down trodden people fool by confusing *Varṇa* with the Caste. Now let us examine whose observation is correct? More clearly to say whether the observation of Gandhiji that the criterion for distinguishing the four fold *Varṇas* is birth or the criterion in question is the *guṇa* and the *Karma* as it is mentioned by Ambedkar is correct. So far as my own observation is concerned I think the observation of Ambedkar in this regard is correct. First of all let us go to *Śrīmad Bhagavat Gītā*. In *Śrīmad Bhagavat Gītā*, Śrīkṛiṣṇa categorically says to Arjuna that the four fold division of *Varṇa* has been made by Himself. But at the same time He says that this fourfold division has been made by Him on the basis of *guṇa* and *karma*. “*Cāturvarṇa mayā sṛṣṭam guṇa karma vibhāgaśḥ*”<sup>12</sup>. Here if we ponder over the case then it can easily be understood that when Śrīkṛiṣṇa categorically says that the criterion of the division of fourfold *Varṇa* is *guṇa* and *karma* then it clearly implies that He negatively intends to mean that our birth cannot be the criterion for the same. Thus it is seen that what is said by Śrīkṛiṣṇa in the *Gītā* to be the criterion of the division of *Varṇa* directly goes against the view of Gandhiji. If we are to understand the very spirit of what is said by Śrīkṛiṣṇa in the *Gītā* then I think elaborate discussion of the terms *guṇa* and *karma* should be given. The term *guṇa* actually stands for *sattva*, *rajaḥ* and *tamaḥ*. *Varṇa* also represents the same. Generally by *Varṇa* we mean color of different kinds. But metaphorically *Varṇa* means different *guṇas*. This view is substantiated by the first verse of *Samkhya-kārikā* where *prakṛti* has been compared with *lohita-sukla-kṛiṣṇa varṇam*. We know that in Sāṃkhya Philosophy *pūruṣa*

and *Prakṛti*, the two ultimate realities, have been recognized. In Sāṃkhya Philosophy *Prakṛti* is held to consist of the three *guṇas* of *sattva*, *rajaḥ* and *tamaḥ* in a state of equilibrium. It is further stated that *Sattva*, *Rajaḥ* and *Tamaḥ* can be compared with whiteness, Redness and Blackness respectively. The same view is held by *Svetāśvetara Upanishad* too. We also come across the same type of opinion in *Mahābhārata*. In *Mahābhārata* also *sita* for white, *asita* for black, *pita* for yellow and *rakta* for red are used to stand for *Brāhman*, *Śūdra*, *Vaiśya* and *Kṣatriya* respectively. Thus it is seen that in different religious texts the colors white, red, black etc. are used to stand for *Sattvādiguṇas*. Owing to this reason given above birth cannot be the criterion of the division of *Varṇas* like *Brāhmin*, *Ksatriya*, *Vaiśya* etc. Thus the name *Varṇabheda* becomes appropriate and meaningful. These three *guṇas* are seen to belong to all men but in different proportions. This difference of the proportions of the different *guṇas* gives birth to the difference of the people. This difference of the *guṇa* accounts for the difference in the different *Varṇas*. It is further to note that pleasure, pain and indifference come from *Sattva*, *Rajaḥ* and *Tamaḥ* respectively. Thus *guṇabheda* accompanied by *karmabheda* accounts for *Varṇabheda*. The *karmas* prescribed for one *Varṇa* are completely different from the *karmas* determined for other *Varṇas*. Say for example, *Yajana-Yājana*, *adhyāyana*, *adhyāpanā* etc. are prescribed for *Brāhman*. Ruling of the country, protection of the subjects and maintaining the law and order within the state are the activities reserved for *Kṣatriyas*, agriculture and trade are prescribed for *Vaiśya* and lastly *Śūdras* are advised to render service to the upper three *Varṇas*. All these things as it is stated above clearly imply that *Varṇabheda* is based on *guṇa* and *karma* as it is understood and pointed out by Ambedkar, but not on birth as it is observed by Gandhiji. But the division of caste or *Jāti* on the other hand is based on birth. The son of *Brāhman* is necessarily a *Brāhman*. So far as the caste system or *jāti vyavasthā* is concerned a *Brāhman* is a *Brāhman* by caste or *jāti* simply because he has taken his birth in a *Brāhmin* family. But the son of a *Brāhmin* may be a



*Brāhmin* by *Varṇa* which implies that he may not be a *Brāhmin* also. Whether the son of a *Brāhmin* will be a *Brāhmin* by *Varṇa* or not it purely depends upon his *guṇa* and *karma* irrespective of his birth. The son of a *Brāhmin* should be treated as a *Brāhman* if and only if there will be predominance of *Sattva guṇa* in him and he takes *yajana-yājana* etc. as his profession or *karma*.

Ambedkars view can be substantiated by refuting the view of Gandhiji in terms of some more informations given below. We can cite here one of the important slokes from *Śrīmad Bhāgavad* which runs as

“*yasya yat lakṣaṇaṁ proktaṁ paṁso Varṇābhi-vyanjakam*

*Yat anyatrāpi dṛśyeta tattenaiḥ vinirdibed*”<sup>13</sup>.

Here *Sama* and *dama* are the distinguishing two virtues of *Brāhmin*. If these two virtues *sama* and *dama* are seen to be present in individuals belonging to other *Varṇas* then they should be treated as *Brāhmin*. In the same way “*Samadibhireva Brāhmanadi Vyavahāro mukhyaḥ na tu jātimatraditi*” categorically says that one’s *Varṇa* is to be determined not by one’s *jāti* but by one’s *guṇa* like *Sama*, *Dama* etc. The same thing is said by *Mahābhārata* too. In *Mahābhārata*, Yudhisthira points out that if the *guṇas* of *Brāhmin* like *Sama* and *Dama* are seen to be present in *Śūdra* then he is no more a *Śūdra* but he is a *Brāhmin*. But if on the other hand the qualities like *Sama* and *Dama* are absent in some *Brāhmins* then they are no more *Brāhmin*, they are either *Śūdra* or *Vaiśya*. “*Na vai bhabet Śūdra Brāhmāno na ca Brāhmanaḥ*”<sup>14</sup>. The above view is substantiated by Bhṛgu in *Sāntiparva* of *Mahābhārata*. Here Bhṛgu describes to Bharadwaja how *Varṇabheda* has been taken its birth. He says, ‘*ityetaih karmabhirvyastā dwijā Varnāntaraṁ gatāḥ*’. Mahādeba in *Umāmaheśwara Sambāda* describes that one’s birth in a *Brāhmin* family does not necessarily make one *Brāhmin*. What makes one *Brāhmin* is his character. He says that if a *Śūdra* conquers his

senses and becomes pure in his mind then he is very much a *Brāhmin*. The same view is supported by *Bhakti Śāstra* when it says “*Chandālopi dwijaśrestho Haribhakti –Parāyanah*”. We can see the same view in *Chaitannya Charitāmṛta*. “*Kivā vipra kivā nyasī śūdra kane noi/jei kṛṣṇa tattvabettvā sei guru hoi/*”<sup>15</sup>. Here some concrete examples have already been referred to from authentic Hindu *Śāstras* who were treated as upper *Varṇas* by virtue of their *guṇas* though they took their birth in lower *Varṇas*.

Prof. Tapan Kumar Chakravarty, Retired Prof. of Jadavpur University, West Bengal, has written a thought provoking enlightening Scholarly article entitled *On defense of Varṇa Vyavasthā*. In his article Prof. Chakravarty raises an objection against Ambedkar. He says that as a matter of fact *Varṇabheda* and *Jātibheda* are purely different but unfortunately Ambedkar fails to understand this distinction and confuses one with other. He further points out that sometimes Ambedkar recognizes the distinction between *Varṇa* and caste. What Prof. Chakravarty claims implies that Ambedkar suffers from contradiction. To authenticate what we are saying we may quote him. Prof. Chakravarty says, “Ambedkar seems to confuse between *Varṇabheda* and *jātibheda* for he argued that inequality resulted from *Varṇa* with *Jāti*. At times, however, he acknowledged that they were not only fundamentally different but were also fundamentally opposed”<sup>16</sup>.

I cannot agree with the aforesaid observation of Prof. Chakravarty. I think Ambedkar never confuses *Varṇa* with *Jāti*. Rather he sharply criticizes Gandhiji when he confuses *Varṇa* with *Jāti*. What Ambedkar says is that so far the definitions of *Varṇa* and *Jāti* are concerned it is clearly evident that one is purely different from the other. We know that the definition consists in the differentiating property (*Vyavartakadharmā*) of the thing to be defined. Here Ambedkar categorically says that the differentiating property or defining property of *Varṇa* is the worth (*guṇa* and *karma*). But the defining or differentiating property of *Jāti* is birth. “varna and caste are two very different concepts. Varna is based on the

principle of each according to his worth – while Caste is based on the principle of each according to his birth. The two are as distinct as chalk is from cheese”<sup>17</sup> ..... Ambedkar here raises the objection that though theoretically *Varṇa* and *Jāti* are clearly different but practically *Varṇa* has been turned into *Jāti* as in both of the *Varṇa* and *Jāti* the birth has been taken as the defining property. This is the reason why Ambedkar claims that in Hinduism both *Jāti* and untouchability come from *Varṇa* system and which in turn directly comes from Hindu religion itself. Thus it can quite consistently and logically be said that the root cause of both the *Jāti* and Untouchability is the Hindu religion itself. “It must be recognized that the Hindus observe Caste not because they inhuman or wrongheaded. They observe Caste because they are deeply religious”<sup>18</sup>. This observation made by me is clearly substantiated by what is said by Ambedkar pointed out by Prof Chakravorty himself in his article mentioned above. At times, however, he acknowledged that “they were not only fundamentally different but were also fundamentally opposed. The former was based on worth while the latter on birth”<sup>19</sup>.

In order to justify his claim that Ambedkar confuse *Varṇa* with *Jāti* Prof. Tapan Kumar Chakraborty says “Ambedkar seems to confuse between *Varṇabheda* and *Jātibheda* for he argued that inequality resulted from *Varṇa* and *Jāti*”. Here if we have a logical analysis then we can easily understand that the above statement has nothing to do with substantiating what Prof Chakravorty claims. The above statement says that one and the same effect called inequality is produced out of the two different causes, one is *Varṇa* and the other is *Jāti*. It never says that *varṇa* nad *jāti* is one the same. On the contrary, the fact that here the *Varṇa* and *Jāti* are different has been established by the conjunction ‘and’ used here. If the conjunction ‘or’ were used only then the above mentioned observation of Chakravorty would have been substantiated.

The following quotation made by Prof. Chakraborty seems to substantiate his claim in question. The quotation runs as “the original four classes have now become four thousand castes”. Here the statement cited by Chakraborty within the quotation clearly shows that the four *Varṇas* themselves have been turned into Castes or *Jātis*. But a little reflection shows that here Ambedkar likes to mean that though as a matter of fact there is a gulf of difference between *varṇa* and caste but the people belonging to upper *varṇas* consciously convert *Varṇa* into *Jāti* (*Caste*) in order to fulfill their vested interests. The living example of such person, as it is clearly stated by Ambedkar, is Gandhiji himself.

If we have a close examination then we can see that the criterion of *Varṇabheda* was shifted from *guṇa-karma* to birth from the ancient days. It is already stated earlier that initially Karṇa was not allowed to participate in the mock fighting with Arjuna simply because he was known as *Sūtapa*putra. So far as the *guṇa* and *karma* are concerned he was not different from Arjuna. If *guṇa* and *karma* is the criterion for *Varṇabheda* then why *Karṇa* was not permitted to participate in the mock fighting. Eklavya is also not exception to it. So far as the worth or potentiality (*guṇa*) of archery of Eklavya is concerned there was none to compare with him but yet Dronacharya did not agree to accept him as his student simply because he took his birth in lower family (*Vyadha* Family).

Whether *varṇāśram dharma* is an essence or an integral part of Hinduism:

I think we should address one of the important issues that is whether *varṇāśram dharma* is an integral part or essence of Hinduism. The reason for addressing this issue is obvious. We all know that Ambedkar in the last stage of his life left Hinduism and embraced Buddhism in order to fulfill his mission of life that is to establish an ideal society called *Samatā Samāj* where each and every human being will be treated equally and enjoy liberty, fraternity, dignity and justice. Here a question has been raised regarding the justification of

the conversion of Ambedkar along with his fellow *Mahars*. A number of scholars including Mahatma Gandhi argue that the society Ambedkar was dreaming of could have been established within the frame work of Hindu religion with certain modification of Hindu religion. According to the observation of Ambedkar the root cause of *jāti vyavasthā* and untouchability is the *varṇa vyavasthā* underlying Hinduism. So here naturally a question arises if the *varṇa vyavasthā*, the root cause in question, is removed from Hinduism then the problem is solved. Here comes the justification of the above question whether *varṇa vyavasthā* is an essence of Hinduism or not. If *varṇa vyavasthā* is an essence and integral part of Hinduism then it cannot be removed from Hinduism. But if otherwise then it can easily be removed from Hinduism. Suppose one suffers from cancer located in one of the hands of him. In that case doctor can save him just by cutting out that hand. But if someone suffers from the cancer of heart then the very question of curing him just by cutting his heart is pointless. Now if Hindu religion stands for a person and *varṇa vyavasthā* stands for a cancer affected organ then the question comes whether *varṇa vyavasthā*, the cancer affected organ, is like a hand or like a heart. If it is like a hand then it can easily be annihilated and saved Hinduism. But if otherwise then it cannot be eliminated from Hinduism. Both Ambedkar and Gandhiji observed that *varṇa dharma* is an essence therefore an integral part of Hinduism. That is why the question of eliminating *varṇāśrama dharma* from Hinduism is quite impossible. In this regard Ambedkar can be quoted from his one of the famous books *Annihilation of Caste*, “..... next to impossible”. In this context Gandhiji remarks that “*varṇāśrama dharma* is as air and water”.

Let us examine whether the observation of Ambedkar and Gandhiji is correct or not.

As per the explanation given by *Gītā*, *Chaitannya Charitamrita* and *Śrimad Bhāgavad varṇasram dharma* is the primary stage leading to the highest goal that is the *summum bonum* of our life and according to all of them it is not an essence or integral part of Hinduism. In

*Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā* Śrīkriṣṇa says to Arjuna ‘*Svadharme nidhanam śreya para dharma bhayābhaha*’. Similarly when we go to *Chaitannya Charitamrita* then we come across same sort of observation there also. Once Sri Chaitannya Deva happens to meet Roy Ramananda, one of the distinguished scholars on different *Śāstras* and asked him what is the exact *pāth* leading to our ultimate goal (*sādhya*). In reply to this question Roy Ramananda describes the path which consists of many steps. In the very first step of that path Roy Ramananda mentions of *Svadharmā* or *Varṇadharmā*. The first look runs as “*Prabhu kahe para sloke sādhyer nirṇaya. Roy kahe svadharmā caraṇe Viṣṇu bhakti hai*”. Viṣṇu Purāṇa also says the same, “*varṇāśramācārbatā puruṣeṇ paraḥ pumān. Viṣṇurārādhyate panthā nanyas tattaṣkāraṇam*”.

Here *Chaitannya Charitamrita* and *Viṣṇupurāṇa* categorically maintain that the performance of *varṇadharmā* leads to the satisfaction of Viṣṇu, the God. According to Hindu *Śāstras* *Bhakti mārga* is the superior most among the rest ones. But *Bhakti* or devotion to God cannot be attained without the grace of God. Performance of *varṇāśrama dharma* makes God happy and thereby shows His kindness to the devotee. I think the very logic behind the whole observation is that infact the four fold classification of *varṇadharmā* has been made by God Himself as per the evidence derived from *ṛk Veda* and *Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā*. So in one sense it is the very intention of God himself that *varṇadharmā* should be followed by people living in society. If someone follows *varṇāśrama dharma* then obviously thereby he satisfies God and makes him pleased. So far as our discussion is concerned it seems to us that *varṇāśrama dharma* is an essential and integral part of Hinduism and in that sense it is the essence of Hinduism. But if we proceed further to *Chaitannya Charitāmṛita* and *Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā* then finally we understand that *varṇadharmā* is not an integral part or essence of Hinduism. In mentioning the immediate next step of the path leading to our ultimate goal Roy Ramananda says that the path leading to our ultimate goal is to surrender the result of

our activities to God. It is important to note that Chaitannya Deva was not satisfied with the first answer given by Roy Ramananda. He clearly says that performance of *varṇadharma* is quite external (secondary) and not the essence of the path leading to our ultimate goal. The second step of the path leading to our *summum bonum* as it is understood and mentioned by Roy Ramananda runs as ‘*prabhu kahe eha vāya āge kaha ār, Roy kahe kṛṣṇe karmārpaṇ sādhyā sār*’. More or less the something has been said in *Śrīmad Bhagvad Gītā*. It says, ‘*yat karaṣi yadśnāsi yajjuhosiddāsi yat. Yattapasyasi kaunteya tat kuruṣva madarpaṇam*’.<sup>20</sup>

The fact that the performance of *varṇadharma* is not an essence and integral part of Hinduism can be understood if we proceed further and come across the next step of the path in question. It runs as ‘*prabhu kahe eha vāya āge kaha ār, Roy kahe svadharmatyāg bhakti sadhyā sār*’

The same spirit has beautifully been expressed by *Śrīmad Bhagvad*. Here the sloke containing the spirit in question goes as,

‘*ājñāyāibam guṇān doṣān*

*Mayā diṣṭānapi svakān*

*Dharmānsamityajya yaḥ sarvvān*

*Mām bhajet saca sattamaḥ*’<sup>21</sup>.

The same message has been given by *Śrīmad Bhagvad Gītā* in the last chapter when SriKṛṣṇa says to Arjuna, ‘*sarvvadharmān parityajya māmekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja. Ahaṁ tvyāṁ sarvvapāpebhya mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ*. [ref. *Śrīmad Bhagvad Gītā*, 18/66]

So far as the above discussion goes it clearly implies that *varṇāśrama dharma* is something that has to be rejected and follow only the *Bhakti mārga*. We have to keep in our

mind that the essence or the highest teaching is imparted by master to his discipline at the end. From this it can be concluded that what is taught by SriKriṣṇa to Arjuna at the very end of the *Gītā* is the very essence of his teaching. In the final teaching of the *Gītā* SriKriṣṇa categorically advises Arjuna to remember the God only by giving up all the *dharma*s advised by Him earlier to follow.

Different *mārgas* like *karma mārga*, *jñāna mārga*, *bhakti mārga* are the different steps of a stair case to reach at the ultimate stage of our spiritual development. *Varṇāśrama dharma* is the very first step to reach to our ultimate goal. One can reach from the first floor to the second one by jumping some of steps of the stair case. In the like manner in the spiritual field also one can reach to one's ultimate goal by jumping some of the steps of the stair case. In that sense *svadharma* or *varṇāśrama dharma* is not an integral part of Hinduism.

This view can be substantiated by some authentic instances cited by different *Śāstras*. Prahlāda is a living example of this case. I think, here another example of double promotion may be cited. We come across some of the unparallel brilliant students who are given double promotions. Generally one student of class V gets promotion for class VI and again a student of class VI gets the next promotion for class VII but some of the exceptional brilliant students are given double promotions. Suppose one reads in class V but due to his double promotion in the next year he gets admitted in class VII jumping class VI. In the same way we also happen to come across some of the persons in the spiritual field who can reach their ultimate goal by jumping some of the steps of the path leading to that goal. Prahallad for example, became an unparallel devotee from the very childhood. So he did not follow the preliminary steps to reach to his supreme stage of his spiritual life.



I think the spirit of the above description can be substantiated by the elaborate discussion of different *mārgas* leading to our ultimate goal. Infact the whole Hindu religion is fundamentally bifurcated into four compartments according to the four divisions of *mārgas* leading to our ultimate goal. Let us start with the *jñāna mārga* first. *jñāna mārga* is or *jñāna mārga* is one of the important *pāths* leading to our ultimate goal. The main aim of this *mārga* is the attainment of *ātma-sākṣātkāra* or the direct vision of the true nature of *jīvātman*<sup>22</sup>. The main thesis of *jñāna mārga* consists in the fact that bondage necessarily comes from the ignorance of realities, the truths or the ignorance of our soul. This clearly implies that liberation comes from the knowledge of the realities, truth, our souls. But it is important to note that the concept of realities, truth or souls varies from school to school and sometimes philosopher to philosopher. Let us go to *Advaita Vedānta*. According to *Advaita Vedānta*, there is only one ultimate reality i.e. Brahman. There is no reality other than Brahman and that Brahman by the very nature is *sat cit* and *ānanda*. One falls in bondage because he does not have true knowledge about the actual nature of his soul and Brahman. Infact our soul is essentially identical with Brahman. But due to our ignorance we identify ourselves with our body which is the creation of *māya* and the problem crops up. We become the subject of sufferings. The three *guṇas* *svatta*, *rajaḥ* and *tamaḥ* belong to our body or *māya*. But body, *mayā* etc. which are different from Brahman must be false (*Brahma satya jagat mithyā jīva brahmaiba nā paraḥ*). The *svadharma* or *varṇa dharma* which is necessarily related with the different *guṇas* like *svatta*, *rajaḥ*, *tamaḥ* etc. must also be false or at least irrelevant. For attaining liberation what is essential is the knowledge that I myself is Brahman (*Aham Brahmasmi*). Thus it is seen that for the attainment of *mokṣa* or liberation *svadharma* or *varṇadharma* is not essential.

Now let us go to the Sāṅkhya philosophy. Sāṅkhya philosophy is known as dualistic. It believes in the reality of *pūruṣa* and *prakṛiti*. *Pūruṣa* is conscious but inactive, *Prakṛiti*, on

the other hand, is active but unconscious. *Prakriti* is the material cause of the world. The world is the result of the evaluation of *prakriti*. Bondage, according to Sāṃkhya philosophy, is the result of the lack of *vivekjñāna* (knowledge of discrimination) of *pūruṣa* and *prakriti*. In reality *pūruṣa* or soul is purely different from *prakriti*. But due to our ignorance we mistake one for another. *Prakriti* is the equilibrium state of the three *guṇas*, *svatta*, *rajaḥ* and *tamaḥ*. So our body which essentially comes from *prakriti* consists of the three *guṇas*. The body of each and every individual necessarily consists of the three *guṇas* but the proportion of all the three *guṇas* in each and every individual body is not one and the same. In some of the persons *svatta* predominates but in some other, the *rajaḥ* or the *tamaḥ* predominates over the other *guṇas*. Accordingly Hindu *Śāstras* propose to distinguish people into four *varṇas*, *Bhārman*, *Kṣatriya*, *Vaiśya* and *Śūdras*. Thus it seen that *svadharma* or *varṇadharma* is essentially related with *guṇa* and *prakriti*, but as I am *puruṣa* I must be different from the *prakriti* and the *guṇas* and obviously from our body. Therefore the *varṇadharma* that is *dehadharma* cannot be our own *dharma*, the *dharma* of our soul or *puruṣa*. In this way it is seen that *varṇa dharma* is not an integral aspect of Hinduism. If we have a close study about the other systems then we come across more or less the same view that our soul is purely different from our body. *Varṇadharma* is related with the different *guṇas* of our body. Therefore in one sense it is *dehadharma* but as a soul we are different from our body and therefore our *dharma* must be something other than *varṇadharma*. Now let us go to the *karmayoga*. The term *karmayoga* has been used in different senses in our religion. According to *Śrīmad Bhagvad Gītā* *karma yoga* consists of the following religious duties: (1) worship of God (*devārcanā*); (2) performance of the sacrifice (*yogā*) in the consecrated fire; (3) control of the sense organs (*indriya-saṁyama*) by arresting their outward movement towards external objects; (4) control of the mind (*manas-saṁyama*); (5) giving away the money earned in a righteous way in charity (*dāna*) either for the worship of God or for performance

of *homa* or to deserving persons etc; (6) observance of austerities (*tapas*) in the form of performance of prescribe rites such as fasting; (7) visiting holy religious centre's and bathing in sacred waters (*pūṇyatīrth-pūṇyasthāna-prāpti*); (8) recitation of the Vedas and study of the teachings of the sacred texts (*svādhyāya tadadārtha-jñānābhīyāṣa*); and (9) practice breath control (*prāṇāyāma*). But it is worthy to note that it is not essential that one has to follow all the religious duties mentioned above. One can observe some of them depending upon the potentiality and choice of the individual concerned. What is most important here is that one must perform his duty with the spirit of sacrifice for sole purpose of self realization. Keeping this in view *karma yoga* has been described in the *Gītā* as *niṣkāma karma*. But it is important to mention that if one is to perform *niṣkāma karma* in the true sense of the term then he must understand the logic behind it. One must know the difference between the matter and the soul. He must further know the difference between the *jīvātman* and *para ātman*. He also knows the relationship between them. For this reason at the very outset Arjuna was taught about all these things in detail by Śrīkṛṣṇa. One can performed *niṣkāma karma* when one knows the real nature of his soul. When he knows that his soul is not different from the souls of the others he becomes motivated for the service for others. Swami Vivekananda, for example, sacrificed his whole life for wellbeing and betterment of others simply because he knew that he is essentially identical with others. Mother Teresa sacrificed her whole life for nursing the patients and the old ones for same reason. If we have close examination then we can see again that our *karma yoga* becomes meaningful when we know the real nature of our soul. One can perform *niskāma karma* when he transcends the limited boundary imposed by the sense of our body. So far as our body is concerned one is essentially different from the others. But as far as our soul is concerned we all are identical. So the sense of identity which gives birth to *niskāma karma* comes from the knowledge of the real nature of our soul. Thus

it is seen that the *karma yoga* has nothing to do with the *varṇa dharma* which is essentially related with the different *guṇas* belonging to our body.

Now let us deal with *Bhakti mārṅa* or *Bhakti yoga*. *Bhakti yoga* occupies central position in the territory of Hinduism. Infact supreme importance has been rendered to *Bhakti yoga* by most of the fundamental *Śāstras* of Hinduism like *Gītā*, *Śrīmad Bhāgavad*, *Chaitannya Charitāmṛita* etc. the term *Bhakti* comes from the root word *bhaja* which means *sevā* (*bhaja sevāyām*). *Bhakti* with reference to God means constant meditation with intense love for the Supreme Being (*snehapūrvam-anudhyānam*). *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣhad* beautifully says, “the self (Brahman) cannot be attained by the study of Vedas, nor by meditation nor through much hearing. He is to be attained only by one whom the self chooses. To such a person, the self reveals its true nature.”<sup>23</sup>

Here the observation of Rāmānuja is very important to note. In this context S.M. Śrinivasa Chari says, ‘the implication of this statement, as explained by Ramanuja, is that mere *śravaṇa* (hearing), *manana* (reflection) and *nididhyāsaṇa* (meditation) undertaken without intense love for God, (*bhakti*) cannot serve as means to attain God. Only that individual on whom God showers His grace can achieve Him’<sup>24</sup>. The next question which immediately comes is whom does God choose to receive His grace? In reply Rāmānuja says one who is dearest to God is chosen by Him (*priyatma evahivaraṇīyo bhavati*)<sup>25</sup>. Here the *Gītā* says, ‘To those who crave for eternal union (with Me) and meditate (on Me), I bestow with love that clear divine vision (*buddhiyoga*) by which they attain Me [Ref. BG X.10., page-101]. According to *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣhad* there is no other way of attaining God excepting *bhakti*.’<sup>26</sup>

It is important to note that *bhakti yoga* also presupposes knowledge. In this context let us cite some of the important observations. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣhad* observes that

*upāsanā (bhakti)* is to be performed only after knowing Brahman. It further says, ‘Verily, the self (*Brāhman*) is to be seen, to be heard, to be reflected on, to be meditated upon’<sup>27</sup>. The Chāndogya Upaniṣhad says, ‘He who understands the self seeks it’<sup>28</sup>.

So far as our discussion about *upāsanā or bhakti yoga* is concerned it is seen that *bhakti yoga* necessarily presupposes the knowledge of Brahman or God and soul. A true devotee must know that he is essentially a soul, different from body. The soul does not have any *varṇa* that is *svatta*, *rajah* and *tamah* of his own. Therefore it is not essential for a *bhakta* (devotee) to follow *varṇadharma*. Any soul can be a *bhakta* irrespective of his *varṇa*. Thus it is seen once again that *varṇadharma* is not an integral part or essence of Hinduism.

Now let us examine whether the observation of Ambedkar that *varṇāśram dharma* is an essence and integral part of Hinduism can be substantiated. I think a number of arguments can be offered from the end of Ambedkar to counter our observation mentioned above that *varṇadharma* is not an essence or an integral aspect of Hinduism and thereby establish the view of Ambedkar himself. Here on behalf of Ambedkar it can be said that jumping of some of the steps of the stair case and double promotion cited above are applicable only for some uncommon personalities. This is not applicable to the common people. Exception cannot constitute any rule. Rule is different from exceptional cases. Thus from the part of Ambedkar, it can be shown that *varṇāśram dharma* is an essential and integral aspect of Hindu religion.

Though apparently it appears that there is no room for *varṇa dharma* in the exercise of any one of the *mārgas* leading to our ultimate goal but if we have a close examination then we can understand that infact the case is otherwise. This fact cannot be denied that the proper performance of all the *mārgas* necessarily presupposes the knowledge of the true nature of our soul and God or *Brahman* but this knowledge in question cannot be attained in a day. For attaining the knowledge of the true nature of the soul and God one must have some

preliminary knowledge and perform some activities. Among the different preliminary activities and the knowledge, the knowledge of *varṇadharma* and performance of the same is obviously one. Say for example, it is already stated above that one cannot be a true devotee unless and until God showers his kindness upon Him. But God cannot shower His kindness upon anybody else. God can do so if He considers one to be His near one and dear one. In a word he must be pledged to that person. But it is already discussed that performance of *svadharma* or *varṇadharma* makes God happy and pleased. Thus it is seen that *varṇadharma* has a great role to play in making some one worthy of being a true devotee.

Beside the above arguments another cumulative argument can be offered from the end of Ambedkar. Reflection upon *Śrīmad Bhagvad Gītā* clearly shows that *varṇāśram dharma* is an integral part of social, political and economic life. Therefore, so far as the social, political and economic aspect of our life is concerned *varṇāśram dharma* must be treated as an essential part of Hinduism. This *dharma* is not essential only in the transcendental state of our life. When Śrīkriṣṇa advises Arjuna to follow his *svadharma* that is the *varṇāśram dharma* and to fight with the *kauravas* then he repeatedly argues that as a king his prime duty is to ensure the discipline, justice and wellbeing of the subjects living in his kingdom by removing the injustice and punishing the people engaged in anti social activities. Ambedkar purely denies the transcendental aspect of religion as he denies the heaven, hell, God, immortality of the soul and so on. He recognizes only the phenomenal that is the practical aspect of our life. Therefore his religion is confined within the boundary of our present life. The utility of religion according to Ambedkar is exclusively concerned with our socio-economic-political life. If so then *varṇāśram dharma* must be an integral aspect of Hinduism as it is instrumental to establish discipline, wellbeing and justice in the society.

Reference:

---

<sup>1</sup> *Śrimadbhagbad Gītā.*, caturtha adhyāya, śloke 13

<sup>2</sup> William K. Frankena, *ETHICS*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Prentice Hall of India Private Limited, New delhi – 110001, 1993, p. 49.

<sup>3</sup> B.R. Ambedkar: *Annihilation of Caste* P-42, 1944

<sup>4</sup> *Śrimadbhagbad Gītā.*, tṛtīya adhyāya, śloke 35

<sup>5</sup> *Chaitannya Caritāmṛita*

<sup>6</sup> *Annihilation of Caste*, P 42, 1944.

<sup>7</sup> *Young India*, 8.12.20.

<sup>8</sup> CWMG, Vol. XIX, 174.

<sup>9</sup> *B.R.Ambedkar writings and speeches*, Bombay, 1979, Vol. IX, 275.

<sup>10</sup> M.K. Gandhi., *An Autobiography*, Ahmedabad, V, ch-3.

<sup>11</sup> CWMG, Vol. L. p. 233.

<sup>12</sup> *Śrimadbhagbad Gītā.*,p. 42.

<sup>13</sup> *Śrimadbhagbad Gītā.*,7/11/35.

<sup>14</sup> *Mahābhārata, Vanaparva*, 180,312/108.

<sup>15</sup> *Chaitannya Caritāmṛita*, madhyalīlā, aṣṭam pariccheda, p. 213

<sup>16</sup> Tapan Kumar Chakraborty, *In defence of Varṇavyavastha*, p. 02

<sup>17</sup> B.R. Ambedkar: *Annihilation of Caste*.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> *Śrimadbhagvad Gītā*, 9/27.

---

<sup>21</sup> *Śrīmad Bhagvad*, 11/11/32.

<sup>22</sup> *Gītābhāṣya of Rāmānuja with Tātparya-candrikā* (Ed. P.B. Annangaracharya, Conjeevaram, 1940).

<sup>23</sup> *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, III.2.3.

<sup>24</sup> S.M.Srinivasa Chari, *Vaisnavism, Its Philosophy, Theology and Religious Discipline*, Motilal Benarasi Dass Publishers Private Limited, Delhi edition: 1<sup>st</sup>, 1994.

<sup>25</sup> *Rāmānuja Bhāṣya on Vedantā Sūtras* (2 volumns) (Ed. Uttampur T. Veeraraghavacharya, Madras, 1968), 1.1.1. p.19.

<sup>26</sup> *Bhagbad Gītā*, XI. 53.54.

<sup>27</sup> *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣhad* with Raṅgarāmānuja Bhāṣya VI.5.6, Uttamur T. Veeraraghavacharya, Madras and published by Tirumala-Tirupati Devasthanam, 1954].

<sup>28</sup> *Chāndogya Upaniṣhad* with Raṅgarāmānuja Bhāṣya VIII.12.6, Uttamur T. Veeraraghavacharya, Madras 1952]