ABSTRACT

The main contention of this thesis is to explore and examine the historical, economical and philosophical perspectives of casteism after Ambedkar. After completing the thesis it seems to me that the concept of untouchability deeply associated with casteism has no scientific and rational basis. It is merely a psychological disease, a mental myth, a social evil. However, the impact of casteism is huge and it hampers the harmony, integrity of the society at large. Millions of people in the name of caste were humiliated from social, political and economic rights. The concept of caste is primarily concerned with Hinduism. In Hinduism, all Hindus were categorized under four divisions of classes, such as, Brahmin, Khatriya, Baishya and Shudra. It is commonly known as **Division of Labour**. It main objective was to divide people into four different divisions on the basis of guna (quality) and karma (action). It was clearly mentioned in Gita of *Mahabharata*. The concept of division of labour was prevailing everywhere and it is still presence in today's economic world as well. Its main objective is to extract the best from every individual. Thus, there should not be any problem whatsoever if the concept of caste is taken into account on the basis of guna and karma. However, Ambedkar revealed that in reality instead of talking caste as *the division of labours, it has been taken as the division of labourers.* This actually robs the basic rights of humans and it actually goes against the lower caste, particularly, against the Shudras who were treated untouchables religiously. Thus in Hindu religion known as Brahmanism, Ambedkar witnessed fascism and despotism in the name of religion. The problem of Hinduism is that it has not been developed on the basis of the will of Priest like Buddhism, Jainism and Islam. It has been said that Hinduism is a series of Jungles. It is very difficult to identify who is the real Hindu. Hinduism is just like an occasion and there we find many isms within Hinduism having overlapping conceptions.

Indian caste system had a prolonged historical and religious backup. The historical root of Indian caste system lie submerged in Hindu religion. Hindu religion admits varna system. There are four varnas, such as, Brahmin, Khatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. A shudra even if he possesses admirable qualities and superior to other higher caste in terms of quality has been regarded as untouchable because he was born in a shudra family. Ambedkar was against such birth oriented caste system. He claimed that all men are equal as humans and every human has the right to enjoy *liberty, equality and fraternity*. It is injustice to deprive one from human rights simply for the reason that he or she belongs to lower caste. The superiority or inferiority of men should be evaluated in terms of qualities but not in terms of the caste in which he belongs to. From historical perspective, it can be said that the *varnavyavastha* of Hindu religion actually weakened the national unity and integrity. Being a social and rational humanist, Ambedkar severely criticised the so-called caste system of Brahmanism within Hinduism. As a reformed humanism Ambedkar does not believe in unfounded faith and religious dogma. His humanism measures everything with regard to reason. He rules out the religious view that God determines everything and the rituals that we notice in Hinduism are nothing but dharma.

This does not make sense to say that Ambedkar does not believe religion. Rather he was a firm believer of religion. According to Ambedkar, every man by birth is a religious man. A man cannot survive without religion. In this regard, he had a firm faith on Hindu religion because he was born as a Hindu. However, he had a bitter experience when he came to know that he became an untouchable because he was born in Mahar family. He was deprived from everything. Like him almost 40% people at that time were deprived from human rights including *economic, political and social rights*. He protested against this. He had tried his level best to modify Hindu religion and in this regard he sought help from Gandhi. He tried to convince Gandhi about the

maliciousness of Hindu religion but failed. Gandhi, unlike Amnedkar, did not find anything wrong in Hindu religion. As the influence of Gandhi at that time was colossal, it would almost impossible for Ambedkar to revise Hinduism. Ambedkar realised that the stringent rules and principles of Hinduism particularly referred in Manu were detrimental to the mankind in general because such rules and principles actually seized economic, political and social rights. That is why, he voiced in favour of annihilation of caste. He burned *Manusmriti.*

The pertinent question that comes to my mind: Why does Hinduism defend caste system and why does Ambedkar protest it? Brahmanism in the name of Hinduism is based on spiritual and metaphysical humanism and it believes that there is a life after death and this life would be the real life. Therefore, purification of the soul, not body, should be the objective of human life. Therefore, all rituals of Hinduism are necessary for the purification of souls. Out body is contingent but our soul is eternal. There is no salvation so long the soul becomes free from the bondage. Thus, the varna or caste system is admitted in Hinduism because of spiritual haunt. However, Ambedkar does not believe in spiritual and metaphysical humanism. According to Ambedkar, such spiritual and metaphysical humanism does not ensure the fundamental and basic rights of human. True humanism must ensure the basic rights of humans, such as, the right of liberty, equality and fraternity. Ambedkar was a firm believer of liberty, equality and fraternity. What is unreasonable and irrational cannot be accepted according to Ambedkar. He studied various religions and visited most Western countries as well. He was completely aware what was going on around the world. He was a great humanist and the best seeker of social justice. He had gone through the history and literature and various historical movement as well. He did not find any rational ground on the basis of which the *varnavyavastha* or caste system as persisting in Hinduism can be supported. At the same time, he came to realise that he could not change the

dictum of Hinduism even though he was the representative of almost majority of Indian people. He was struggling all through his life, but failed to revise Hinduism. At last he took religious conversion from Hinduism to Buddhism along with millions of Indians. He felt that Buddhism as a religion offers social justice, equality, universal brotherhood. He modified Buddhism in his own way and named it as *New Buddhism*.

Thus, the issue is highly problematic from historical, philosophical and religious point of view. It repudiated the unity and integrity of nation. In the 21st century we talk in favor of global justice. Justice means *what is just*. Justice should be measured with regard to the enjoyment of basic needs and rights by every human. In Hindu religion, the caste system had been justified with regard to the *Division of Labour*. Ambedkar was against it. Division of Labour is an old concept. From economic point of view this concept is good because it maximises economic wealth.Division of Labour in Hinduism was made on the basis of birth but not on the basis of quality, education etc. This was desirable and unwanted according to Ambedkar. So long this form of caste system prevails in Hinduism, Hinduism as a religion, cannot be accepted as true religion. It then robs equality and liberty of millions of Hindus. Ambedkar found injustice in Hinduism because instead of offering the true humanistic vision, Hinduism actually instigated division among Hindus. This is, in fact, the basic problem of Hinduism. Hinduism as a religion is unorganised and dissected because nobody knows who the real Hindu is. As a result of that there is no unity, integrity among Hindus and when any religious crisis or conflict arises, Hindus perhaps would be the most suffers. History lessons us that in the past Hindus were the most victims of any racial conflicts because there is no unity in Hinduism. Thus,Ambedkar had pleaded for complete justice in Hinduism with regard to *liberty, equality and fraternity.*

It seems to me that even though Ambedkar talks in favour of social and rational humanism based on empiricism, but his very concept of humanism still functions under the womb of religion. This clearly suggests that even though he was extremely critical about metaphysical and spiritual humanism in the name of Brahmanism, but still he did not dissect himself from dynamic religion. He voices in favor of religion and morality that would ensure liberty, equality and fraternity through fulfilling economic, political and social rights. He thus conceives religion at par with social and rational humanism. In this regard he studies various religion and eventually selected Buddhism as the more acceptable religion. He then developed new Buddhism where the trio-concepts of justice can adequately be preserved.

Further it would be matter of satisfaction that over the course of history of Indian tradition the concept of untouchability is weakening. It is indeed a heartening matter. At the same time it would really be a matter of disgrace when we come to know that now and then that people are exploiting and degrading in the name of caste and creed. So long the people of India will overcome this social curse, the unity and integrity of our country would not be as strong as it would desire to be. Therefore, the best possible effort is to enhance our education system. Proper education will help people to overcome such social evil.