

CHAPTER TWO

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF INDIAN CASTE SYSTEM

Section One

The historical development and formation of Hinduism

There is no question of doubt that the genesis of Hinduism lies in casteism. It is a sort of division of labour. However this sort of division unfortunately appears as a sin before the downtrodden people of India. In the name of caste, millions of people were treated as non-humans and Ambedkar was the victim of that. The main contention of this sequel is to explore and analyse the concept of caste, the concept of untouchability and the relationship between caste and untouchability after Ambedkar. It is true to say that unlike other religions; there we do not find any specific historical and anthropological evidence regarding Hinduism. Many would say that Hinduism is a series of jungles and it would still remain unclear who were the real Hindus. Having said this, one thing is very clear that the locus of Hinduism is spirituality. Hinduism acts and runs with the verdict of inviolable dictums of spiritualism. It is said that “beginning with the *R̥g Vedā* to the philosophers and even contemporary political leaders, it has been seen as a unique phenomenon of spirituality linked to a practical life...”¹ As Hinduism has no definite starting point, over the course of history it gave birth extensive social inequalities without scientific basis. Having said this, Hinduism has its own virtues which cannot be ignored from historical and social-philosophical perspective. Its greatest virtue is the elasticity, its comprehensiveness, its diversity in terms of plurality and above all lack of dogma. Even many would say that real Hinduism has no ‘orthodoxy’, but it would certainly be a debatable issue. Having said this, the contribution of Hinduism to the world religion is colossal. Hinduism is

¹Omvedt, Gail, *Understanding Caste*, Orient BlackSwan, 2011, p.xii.

functioning under *Vedās* and *Upanishads* and under the womb of these two religious texts, Jainism, Buddhism, and Sikhism was developed. The genesis of Hinduism is Vedanta philosophy. Vedanta is the last word or last judgment of Hinduism because ‘the ultimate duality has been resolved into a unity in the Vedanta of non-duality.’²

The term *Hindu* is ancient deriving from *Sindhu*, the river Indus. Its root is Vedas and is presently known as Hinduism. It was developed and was ranging from the Upanishads and the formation of Vedanta thought to the amalgamation of the social order represented by the *Manusmriti*. Subsequently, it was known as Brahmanism, and Buddhism and Jainism. During this period it has been widely known as ‘Hindustan’ or ‘Al-Hind’ in Arabic. The main contention of Brahmanic Hinduism was the identification of orthodoxy where the recognition of the script Vedas had been promulgated. At that time the ideas of *Varnashramadharma*, the fourfold system of castes and stages of life as the ideal of social structure had been formed. In fact the Brahmanism had a tremendous absorptive and co-optive power regarding caste-hierarchy. It is learnt that a material foundation of this social order was laid in ‘the village productive system of caste, *jajmani* and untouchability’³. However, it remained unexplored whether the masses of the people at that time identified as Hindus. Even today within Hindus there we observe numerous local gods and goddess who remain the Centre of popular religious life. The same was prevailing in the past. Some of the non-Vedic group even rebelled against caste hierarchy of the so-called Brahmanism. As a result of that there developed some non-Hindu religious traditions, such as, Sikhism, Veerasaivism etc. The real construction of Hinduism actually began during the colonial period. It was Lokmanya Tilak who promulgated ‘Aryan theory of race’ as the mark of upper-caste Indians along with the sacred text Vedas as the core religious literature. The so-called

² See Bhavé, 1988, p.319.

³ Omvedt, Gail, *Understanding Caste*, op. cit., p.2

Brahmanical leadership was developed with the public celebration of *Ganesh Festival*. During 19th century we notice another perceptual change of Hinduism under the leadership of Shivaji, the founder of *Hindu raj* through which Hindu conservatives were mounting a full-scale attack on their upper caste reformed rivals. This trend had further been extended during 1920 with the name of RashtriyaSwayamsevakSangh (RSS) where full-scale Hindu nationalism in the name of Hindutva was formed. Hindutva appeared as Hindu nationalism and it went against muslim religion. Its strongest base was in North India where the slogan in the name of ‘Hindu-Hindu-Hinduism’ bears lot of sense. As the same region was dominated by the previous Muslim emperors, there were still a large numbers of Muslims. As a result of that, there appeared religious conflicts between the two rivals. The ideological formulation of ‘Hinduism as Nationalism’ was developed as distinctive religious community. In fact, peasants, artisans, and others identified themselves in religious terms with ‘Hindus’ and ‘Muslim’ communities and as a result of that there emerges independent entities what Gyan Pandey terms as ‘ the construction of communalism in north India’. Such communalistic religious approaches eventually took shapes at national level. There we witnessed two superseding national identity of which one led by Gandhi and the other led by Nehru and the leftists. Gandhian vision was to make India as coalition of communities within the paradigm of ‘unity among diversity’ based on tolerance and love. On the other hand, Nehru emphasised more on secular identity along with the line of modernity and socialism and in turn rejected religious communal identities.

Interestingly, Gandhi identified himself as Hindu with his breathtaking interpretations of what is meant to be a Hindu. The *Vedās, Upanishads, Smritis* and *Puranas* including the Ramayana and the Mahabharata are Hindu scriptures according to Gandhi. All these scriptures narrated Indian spiritualism. Gandhi rejected or denied anything as Hinduism that does not suited with the very

idea of spiritualism. Thus, for Gandhi true Hinduism actually bestowed in true spiritualism. He proclaimed him as a Hindu because of his firm belief on Indian spiritualism. Gandhi says, “Nothing can be accepted as the word of God which cannot be tested by reason or be capable of being spontaneously experienced.”⁴ Caste has nothing to do with religion. It would indeed be a misnomer to attach casteism with Hinduism. Such attachment or tag is extremely harmful to both spiritual and natural growth. According to Gandhi, “*Varna* and *Ashrama* are institutions with have nothing to do with castes. The law of *Varna* teaches us that we have each one of us earn our bread by following the ancestral calling.... The calling of the Brahman – a spiritual teacher- and of a scavenger is equal and their due performance carries equal merit before God and at one time seems to have carried identical reward before man.”⁵ It seems that Gandhi’s social vision had been projected as a ‘green’ projection of a sustainable, decentralized society that appeared as a revolt against the so-called powerful industrial society and it had been ended with Hinduism what intellectuals termed it as “Ram raj’ which spoke only upper caste interests.

The greatest virtue of Hinduism is *tolerance* for this it has paid a lot. Its enemies have taken advantage of it. Having said this Hinduism as a religion must now be strong, fierce and proud. Our national religion is Hinduism and as a result of that all new social and economic movements are centered within the womb of Hinduism. As a result of that there we observe religious conflict between Hinduism and Muslims. Historical point of view, the *Mandir-Masjid* was a case in point. Instead of conceiving Hinduism as universal religion, the pathfinder of every other religion, people are starting to interpret as ‘*Hindu-nationalism*’ and as a result of that all sorts of religious conflict were created in the name of religion. God has been divided in the name of temples, mosques, and gurudwaras. We can divide the earth, we can divide the sea as we like,

⁴ See Gandhi’s reply to Ambedkar’s “Annihilation of Caste” in *The Harijan*, 1979, p.82.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.83.

but we should not involve us to divide humanity. There can be many 'isms', but there is one and only one 'Isms' and it is Humanism', the genesis of all, the unification of all. It is the Truth, the Sat, the Satya, the Sat-Cit-Ananda according to Gandhi. By name one is Hindu, another is Muslim, another is Christian, but in the context of humanity there is no nominalism. Thus one has to understand the essence of humanism. In this regard, Kabir says,

"The Hindu says Ram is dear,

The Muslim says Rahiman,

They quarrel, fight and kill each other

*Never knowing the essence"*⁶

Even within Hinduism there we witness many conflicts in the name of upper and lower caste, in the name of Varna and also in the name of various *sub-isms*. As nobody knows who the real Hindu is, everybody involves into a conflict to establish himself as the real Hindu. Hinduism is nothing but a *pseudo-religious-political concept*. As Hindu was born just two centuries back, he is still a colourless, odorless, and formless illusory artificial construction. The term 'Guna' is a part of broader tradition which has given alternative traditions of Indian identities in the name of lower castes, dalits and non-Brahmins. In contemporary era, they relied heavily on some great dalit leaders, such as, Phule, Ambedkar, Periyar. In contrast to the secularist opposition to Hindutva, they voice in favour of a new radically transformed non-Hindu identity and in contrast to reform Hindu identities' they define 'Hinduism' itself as an oppressive class/caste/ patriarchal force".⁷

⁶Omvedt, Gail, *Understanding Caste, op. cit.*,p.ix.

⁷ibid.,p.xi.

Section Two

Casteism and Hinduism

The great failure of Hinduism is to handle casteism in a dynamic manner. Although Gandhi has been known as the champion of Hinduism and Indian spiritualism, but many would say that Gandhi completely failed to casteism within Hinduism. Even his clash with Ambedkar at the time of the Second Round Table Conference reflected it very well that he put his identity as a Hindu before that a national leader. In this regard, many lower caste people expressed their dissatisfaction about Gandhi's version of anti-communal Hinduism. In this regard Ambedkar remarked that "this Gandhi age is the dark age of Indian politics. It is an age in which people instead of looking for their ideals in the future are returning to antiquity."⁸ It is harsh. Ambedkar in this regard acclaimed that even the dalit's perception of modernity over the hindu version of tradition is far more acceptable and progressive. The so-called Hinduism was reflected in Nehru as well. Like Gandhi, Nehru too took the existence of Hindu identity. However, Nehru ignores religious identity for building a modern India. The vision of modern India needs economic and technological development more than religious identity. According to Nehru, religion as such can "have no importance in the larger scheme of things."⁹ Nehru inclines to say that there is no point in saying that India is identified with Hinduism in which caste is to be condemned, but still he thought Brahmanic Hinduism as the 'national religion'. He says, "The mixture of religion and philosophy, history and tradition, custom and social structure, which in its wide fold included almost every aspect of India and which might be called (Brahmanism or its use a later word) Hinduism, became the symbol of nationalism. It was indeed a national religion, with its

⁸Ibid., p.6.

⁹ Nehru, J., *Towards Freedom: The Autobiography of Jawaharlal Nehru* New York: John Day CO., 1941, p.411.

appeal to all those deep instincts, racial and cultural, which form the basis everywhere of nationalism today.”¹⁰

Nehru conceives caste from functional and integrative point of view. For him caste was a group system based on service and functions. It is supposed to be an all-inclusive order having no common dogma. Thus in a sense “every group from the state to the scavenger was a shareholder in the produce”.¹¹

Buddhism and a different Interpretation of Casteism

Buddhism appeared long before Hinduism. The Buddhist vision of casteism is completely different from Hinduism. According to Buddhism, caste was nothing but a projection of the Brahmanic ideas. Buddha denied all biological (*jati*) differences among human beings. Instead of he defined and understood a person just by *what he or she did*. A man is identified not on the basis of *jati*, but on the basis of action or karma what he or she did. Buddha was born in a Naga (perhaps a trope for a tribal oligarch) family. He was against Brahmanic, he was against the caste system. He opposed to caste, the untouchables known as *Chandalas*. The Chandalas are always shown as enemies of brahmanas. In fact, Buddhism played a leading role to determine social order contrary to Brahmanism. Buddhism banked on social reform rather than rituals. In *Dhammapada* it is said, “There is no fire like passion, no chains like guilt, no snare like infatuation, no torrent like craving.”¹² Everything is flexible, transparent and momentary lasting for a moment. Buddha banked on universal compassion, love, care and seeking the welfare of all. He remarked, *attadeepabhav*(be your own lamp), be your own refuge. Buddhism by no means the only religion or teachings, but in many ways it was hegemonic and shaped the civilisation of

¹⁰ Nehru, J., *The Discovery of India*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1982, p. 138.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.253.

¹² *Dhammapada*, verse 251.

early India. Its main message is transience; it has never been a static religion like Hinduism. However, by the middle of the first millennium, Brahmanism was on the ascendance along with its black vision of a varnashrama –based society. This is the point from where casteism was developed and formed. Of course, resistance came from Buddhism and to some extent from Muslim as well. Muslim besides Buddhism bore *a message of equality*. As a mark of it there emerged Sufism which voices in favour of equality and love of god. Parallel to that, there appeared and developed dalit-bahujan which had laid the foundation of radical bhakti as a new revolt against Brahmanism. As neither of these was involved in politics, their voice did not sound much before Brahmanism. This clearly shows that the relevance of casteism of Brahmanism was not at all reflected in the same manner in Buddhism. It has been articulated by Brahmanism itself.

The dominance of Brahman on Hinduism

It is indeed true to say that the domination of Brahmanism on Hinduism was colossal. Hinduism has paid for this. In fact Brahmanism shades Hinduism. Hinduism dominated by Brahmanism was designed to deceive the masses and in turn established upper-caste hegemony. It considered caste as slavery by way of making religious illusion. Thus, in a sense Hinduism has been treated as a religious deception. Jyotirao Phule appeared not only as a dalit but also described as an ‘affluent OBC’ caste. He not only raised voices against Brahmanism, but also his polemical works attacked Brahmanism. Phule sought to unite the shudras (non-brahmins) and shudras (dalits). For him dalits were not only oppressed but also downgraded because of their earlier heroism in fighting Brahman domination. For him the shudras and shudras jointly represented an oppressed and exploited mass. While inventing the traditional Aryan theory, Phule took his critique of Brahmanism and caste to a mass level. Brahman rule seized state power and religious

hegemony to maintain exploitation. It seems to us that Phule's theory appeared as a kind of emergent historical materialism where economic exploitation and cultural dominance are interwoven. Phule has been treated as the founding figure in Maharashtra not for the very reason that he was anti-caste but also by the farmers, women's and rural-based environmental movements. Like all major dalits and spokesmen of the low castes, Phule attempted to establish an alternative religion based on religious equality. He vehemently rejected Hinduism because of its superstitious nature. He talked in favour of *Sarvajanik Satya Dharma*. Where the father becomes a Buddhist, the mother a Christian, the daughter a Muslim, and the son a Satyadharmist. This clearly suggests that there is no place for a 'Hindu'.

Caste system though has been widely condemned for its various defects but it has gathered in the course of vast journey from the ancient times to the modern era. There we notice proponents and opponents both Hinduism and Casteism. Many would say that Hinduism has a great unifying force. Contrary to that there we notice a perception where Hinduism has been conceived as the most fearful and pernicious theology or religion where downtrodden and low caste people were treated through the worst-social arrangement. For them Indian caste is the condensation of all the pride, jealousy, and tyranny of an ancient and predominant people. Hinduism in the name of caste actually robbed common humanity. According to Smith, the main loophole of Hinduism is that it treats caste system from dogmatic point of view. Actually it shuts off Indians from free association with the foreigners. As a result of that Indians in most general cases fail to understand the foreigners. The upper caste, particularly, the Brahmins would not mix with the foreigners. This actually made Hinduism as a narrow based religion. It has a long historical background. It was there in the Hindu society in the ancient times and had carried its defects in

the modern era. In this regard, Nehru said, “Probably caste was neither Aryan nor Dravidian. It was an attempt at the social organisation of different races, a rationalization of the facts as they existed at the time. It brought degradation in its train afterwards and it is still a burden and a curse; but we can hardly judge from it from subsequent standards or later developments.”¹³

However, if we carefully read Hinduism after Gandhi, we have slightly a different interpretation. Undoubtedly Gandhi was a firm believer of Hinduism and Indian spiritualism. His interpretation of Hinduism in most general cases differs from others. For Gandhi, caste system (Varnashrama) is inherent in human nature and Hinduism has simply reduced it to a science. It does attach to birth. As a result of that a man cannot change his Varna by choice. To deny the Varna is to deny the law of heredity. Having said this, Gandhi does not think that creation of innumerable castes within the fold of Hinduism is good for this religion. Rather it is an unwarranted liberty taken with the doctrine. We do not think that all created castes within Hindu religion has historical significance. Most of the caste within Hinduism was unorganised and unscientific lacking inherent worth or reason. However, the four divisions of caste actually define social duties but in no way regulate or restrict social intercourse. They confer no privileges. Therefore, there is no point in saying that Hinduism being a religion offers the higher or lowest status to the Hindus. The genesis of Hinduism is that all are born to serve God’s creation. This does not make sense to say that Brahmin is remitted from bodily labour or from the duty of protecting himself and others like a Kshatriya does. A Brahman is a man of knowledge, the fittest by heredity and training to impart learning to others. This again does not make sense to say that it prevents the Shudra from acquiring all the knowledge he wishes to have. Thus, it seems to us that Gandhi advocated in

¹³ Nehru, J. *The Discovery of India*, Meridian Books Ltd., London, 1960, p.73.

favour of four divisions of caste. According to Radhakrishnan, 'the system of caste is the outcome of tolerance and trust'¹⁴. Caste was the answer of Hinduism; it was the instrument by which Hinduism civilised. According to Wilkins, it is by means of these distinctions that the Hindu religion has been so well preserved.

Our point of contention is that from Historical perspective the system of castes has survived for so many centuries and is still going strong. It has passed through various conflict stages over the centuries and even in the teeth of extreme opposition from many quarters, within and outside, Hinduism as a religion speaks volumes about its strength, merit and usefulness. It is based on division of labour and it enables not only economic independence and spiritual bliss, but also overall social security. Even though its rigidity and exclusiveness has often been criticised and condemned but eventually it proved most useful features towards preservation of Hindu religion and culture particularly in the medieval period when the Islamic onslaught had emerged the very existence of Hinduism. Thus, it seems to us that the so-called defects associated with Hindu caste system were misnomer in the sense that they were created or are being created out of false interpretation of Hinduism. To know about Hindu religion is to know about truth; the inherent worth of Hinduism lies in its proper understanding of the inner most worth, i.e., spiritualism. It has been stated that the caste system believes in the policy of collaboration and co-operation and insists that the law of social life should not be cold and cruel competition but harmony, co-operation and willing assistance. The individuals of the society are not rivals. Every man has its own individual nature and habit developed on the basis of his own historicity and trained in a particular manner under particular circumstances. Naturally, it would be extremely difficult to adjust in another group different from the one of its origin. Radhakrishnan says, "each man is

¹⁴Radhakrishnan, *The Hindu View of Life, Unwin Book*, op cit., .67.

said to have its own specific nature (*Svabhava*) fitting him for his own specific function (*svadharma*) and changes of dharma of function are not encouraged. A sudden change of function when the nature is against its proper fulfillment may simply destroy the individuality of the being.”¹⁵ Every man has or possessed some dominant characteristics. However, there is no point in assuming that such characteristics are exclusive to the concerned persons. The dominant characteristic of Brahmans of learning and acquiring knowledge; the Kshatriyas of fighting, the Vaishyas of trade and commerce and the Shudras do not possess any of these as highly developed. Having said this, nobody denies the fact that all people possess all qualities though in different degrees. The Brahmin has in him the possibilities of a warrior. When caste system came into existence every vocation had at heart the service of the society with an eye at perfection. Professional excellence rather than monetary gain was the chief source of satisfaction and pleasure. It has been anticipated by many great thinkers as well. Radhakrishnan shared the same perception as well. For him the caste idea of vocation as service never encouraged the notion of work as a degrading servitude to be done grudgingly and purely from the economic motive. Indeed the worker has the fulfillment of his being through his work. According to *Bhagavadgita* one obtains perfection if one does one’s duty in the proper spirit of non-attachment. Fortunately, the world is so arranged that each man’s good turns out to be the good of others. The work of a man is the expression of his life. He was dominated by the impulse to create beauty.

As per as division of labour is concerned there is no place in the caste system for the envy, jealousy or frustration for failure to find opportunities for financially better vocations. Having said the caste system has degenerated into an instrument of oppression and intolerance. It tends to perpetuate inequality and develop a spirit of exclusiveness. This is no longer surprising

¹⁵Ibid., p.79-80.

because nothing can remain unaffected for a considerable period of time. Even great religion like Hinduism and Christianity could not remain unaffected over the course of history. Like Hinduism, caste system too is an evolutionary process. Initially, it was in the name of Jatis and subsequently in modern era it came to be known as caste. Most of the ills of the caste system developed when materialism gained precedence over spiritualism and the monetary wealth over professional satisfaction. Caste system is nothing but a self-evolving institution appeared much earlier than the Rig Vedic period. Being of self-evolutionary character the system has not been created by any authority, mundane or divine. Those who ascribe it to Manu, should know that Manu was only a rishi, who wrote whatever he saw. It is humanly impossible to collect millions of people from all over the country and divide them into four parts.

Section Three

The origin of Untouchability: A Historical Perspective

It is important to be pointed out here that untouchability had no place in the caste system. All the castes were equally important and hence they enjoyed equal social status as explained by the PurusaSukta of the Rig Veda. Accordingly it would be wrong to assume that Shudras were untouchables because Shudras too were a part of Chaturvarna. Dr. Ambedkar has given a list of 429 communities which are the communities of untouchables. It was prepared by the Government of India in 1935 and is attached to the orders-in-council. To this order-in-council there is attached a schedule divided into nine parts of which one part refers to one province and enumerates the castes, races and tribes which are deemed to be untouchables. This list, according to Ambedkar, may be taken to be both exhaustive and authentic. Of course it was prepared to serve political purpose, i.e., to divide the Hindu community and to make it weaken against the

Muslim community. Further it was made to enhance the spirit of separatism amongst the people of India. Thus, its historical consequence was enormous. It blocked the progress of India. It aimed at separation. It favoured separate electorates or reservation of seats for every conceivable group, such as, Hindu, Sikh and European. It was not satisfied by making a division between Hindus and Muslims, attempt was made to divide among the Hindus by giving separate representation to the scheduled castes. This led to Gandhiji's fast unto death and consequently to Poona-Pact the result of hectic effort by the Indian leaders to save the life of Gandhiji. The signatories to the Poona-pact were Ambedkar and Rajagopaachari, popularly known as, Raja Ji, representing the scheduled caste and the caste Hindus respectively. By Poona- pact the seats were reserved for the scheduled castes. Of course there are some common concepts regarding the origin of untouchable. Some people opined that Shudras were untouchables with the passage of time. However, many would think that this perception is wrong. They were neither untouchables at the beginning of the caste-system, not at any subsequent stage. The Purusasukta in the Rig-Veda clearly mentioned to the equality of the four castes in the social set up. It compared the social body just like a human body. Human body is functioning just like an organic whole where each organ is mutually interdependent with other organ. Very similar way the four castes constitute the social body and they contribute in a coherent manner for the betterment of the society or community. Then how could the Shudras under such a system, be untouchables? The social status of the Shudras did not change at any subsequent stage. In fact they remained equal partners of Chaturvarna along with the other three castes. Even today they worked as farmers or skilled or unskilled labours but never ever reduced to the status of untouchables.

It was mentioned that the caste system became hereditary. Accordingly, the Shudras did not lost their status of social equality with other castes. They were free to continue with their professions.

It was true not only for the Shudras, but also equally true for the other three castes as well. Thus the assumption that the Shudras were untouchables or were reduced to that status subsequently is incorrect. They were neither untouchables at the beginning of the caste system nor at any time later on. Even they always enjoyed a social status of equality with the rest of the three castes of Chaturvarna. The question then naturally arises where the concept of untouchables comes from? Some would say that the out-castes became untouchable at some stage. Who are the out-castes? Non-Aryans and the progeny of the Aryans who violated the laws of Aryan society pertaining to food, matrimony and so on, were usually considered out-castes. It can be said after Manu that “a twice-born man who knowingly eats mushrooms, a village pig, garlic, a village cock, onions or leeks, will become an out-caste.”¹⁶ The position of out-castes was so low that in the later centuries even their touch was held to be polluting. However, many would say that out-castes in the very outset were neither ill-treated nor hated in spite of their lower status. 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 the time. Much later, during the decadent stage of the caste-system, out-castes were treated as inferior and given the same ‘untouchables’.”¹⁷ Having said this, it is quite clear that till the age of Harsha there was no untouchability in India. Even Chinese travelers like Fahien and Hieun did not mention the words untouchable or untouchability. However, Ambedkar held a different view. Taking cognizance of a passage from another Chinese traveler, he comes to the conclusion that untouchability had come to India probably in 400 A.D mainly as a result of the struggle for supremacy between Buddhism and Brahminism.

¹⁶Radhakrishnan,., *The Hindu View of Life, Unwin Book*, op cit.,
P.41

¹⁷Bhaskarananda, S., *The Essentials of Hinduism*, Chennai, 1998, p.24.

The Concept of Broken Men: Historical Perspectives

Untouchability was certainly not a certain eruption, but a gradual process of evolutions. It did not occur for beef-eating or professing a religion distrustful to another religion. Ambedkar had advanced a theory of the origin of untouchability by introducing the concept of Broken-Men. This theory in fact referred to the inter-tribal feuds to prehistoric days. The so-called broken men were converted to Buddhism and came into conflict with Barahmans on the issue of beef-eating and were declared untouchables by the later. In pre-historic days the society was tribal and led a nomadic life. Their main occupation was to learn the art farming and of cultivating the land in addition to that of the cattle. Thus, their nomadic character stated giving way to settled life. This brought about new types of problems for both the nomadic and settled tribes. The tribes had war-like natures and they were never at peace with one another. The tribes were nomadic because of their inter-tribal warfare related with stealing cattle, stealing women, and stealing gazing cattle in the postures of other tribes. It often transpired that a tribe instead of being completely annihilated was defeated and routed and in many cases it was broken into bits. Ambedkar called them broken-men because they had broken from their original tribes. The broken-men needed food and shelter, again to save themselves from the onslaught of the nomadic tribes. These broken-men later on became untouchables. They were living outside the village since pre-historic days. The untouchables were living outside the village even before they became untouchables. As such untouchability had nothing to do with their domiciles. There developed many other corollary linguistic terms which are synonymous with the term 'untouchability'. The terms Chandalas, Antya, Antyaja, Antyavasin were mentioned in Hindu Ahashtras. In this regard, Ambedkar says that in his view, the word Antya means not the end of creation but the end of the village. It is a

name given to those people who lived on the outskirts of the village. The word Antya has therefore, a survival value. Thus, it seems to us that there was a time when some people lived inside the village and some other lived outside the village and that those who lived outside the village were called Antyaja. All broken-men in this sense were Antyaja because they lived outside the village. According to Ambedkar, all untouchables were only the broken-men. The Mahars community of Maharashtra in which Ambedkar himself belonged to, were treated untouchables because they lived outside the village. In Maharashtra the Mahars were found in every village. In every village of Maharashtra there was a wall and the Mahars had their quarters outside the wall. The Mahars enjoyed 52 rights against the Hindu villagers which were professionally much neglected. Some of these were the right to collect food from the villagers; the right to collect corn from each village at the harvest season; the right to appropriate the dead animals belonging to the villagers. Thus, there was a period of time in the history of India when Broken-men belonging to their tribes came to the settled tribes and made a bargain whereby the Broken men were allowed to settle on the border of the village. As Broken-Men were living outside the village, Broken-Men became Untouchables as Untouchables always had been living outside the village. Untouchables lived outside the village at the outset. They were not departed and made to live outside the village because they were declared Untouchables. They lived outside the village because they were recognised as Broken-Men. They were belonging to different tribes different from the one to which the settled tribe belonged.¹⁸

The point is that if Chaturvarana had penetrated the entire social fabric of India, how could the Broken men remain unaffected and immune from it? If Chaturvarana in the name of Brahmans, Kashtryas, Vaishyas and Shudras were there in the rest of the society, why not amongst the

¹⁸ See Ambedkar, *The Untouchables*, Amrit Book Co., New Delhi, 1948, p.30

broken man? Of course there was no *Chaturvarana* amongst the broken men. All broken men became Buddhist later to become Untouchables after a clash with Brahmans on the issue of beef-eating. For Ambedkar, broken men were Buddhist. They did not revere the Brahmans, did not employ them as their priests and regarded them as impure. It was period when there existed an aversion between the broken men who adopted Buddhism and the Brahmans. According to Ambedkar there was not concrete evidence on the historical front that broken men eventually became Buddhists. He said, “We have no direct evidence that the broken men were Buddhists. No evidence is as a matter of fact necessary when the majority of Hindus were Buddhists. We may take it that they were.”¹⁹ Thus from evidential front it seems confusing because Ambedkar believed that broken men were Hindus and at the same time he failed to conceive that there must be Brahmans amongst their own people. Our point of observation is that if all the broken men became Buddhists but still there was reasonable ground that the Brahmans were against Buddhists or vice-versa. Ambedkar felt that broken men did not respect Brahmans and did not hire them as their family priests. Even it was claimed that Buddhists did not require the Brahmans for fulfilling their religious ceremonies because they have their own monks for the purpose. Even they did not need the Brahmans for their family priests. Thus, it seems even though majority of Hindus were Buddhists, but it does not make sense to that majority of Hindus were converted to Buddhism. It was an alien practice because at that time there was no concept of religion that we are being witnessed at present. At that time people accepted anything that pleaded to them without taking it seriously. Naturally, people at that time accepted Buddhist principles and made them as a way of life. There is no point in saying that they first converted into Buddhism and then reconverted into Hinduism. It was a fact that kings who patronized Buddhism as well as Hinduism. Harsha worshiped Buddha, sun and Shiva at the same time. Even

¹⁹Ibid., p.76.

in today we notice parallel worshipping both in Hindus families as well as Buddhist families. Today people realise it very well that there is no place of dogmatism in religion.

Religion is a way of life, a form of life in the light of famous philosopher Wittgenstein. There are many different types of religion, different types of way of life, just as there are different types of forms of life. Even though every form of life is unique in itself, but there is no point in saying that they are not related with each other. What would be wrong if I being a Hindu will go to Buddhist temple and priest for a while in Buddhist temple? What would be wrong if a Buddhist will go to Hindu temple and priest for a while in Hindu temple? To say that every religion is different from other religion is false. Religion is Truth, Reality and in this sense the very objective of each religion remains the same. The only visible difference we note is different ways of life. Therefore, it may be said that the antipathy between Brahmins and Buddhists must be personal concerned with one or a few individuals and in no way it would be read as a general social phenomena. In this context, Ambedkar quotes from Manu: "That there existed hatred and abhorrence against the Buddhists in the mind of the Hindus and that this feeling was created by the Brahmins is not without support. Niklant in his Prayaschit Mayukha quotes a verse from Manu which says: If a person touches a Buddhist or a flower of Pachupat, Lokayataka, Nastika and Mahapataki, he shall purify himself by a bath."²⁰ Many other instances very similar to this were recorded in the scripts. There were some instances where the king's brother in law was offended by some monk and so beats any monk that he comes across. Here a particular person was offended by another. There appears no general antipathy between the Brahmins and the Buddhists. Religious war was created in the past out of misconception of the insight of concerned religion. It is very much presence even in today's environment. False religious

²⁰Ibid., p.77.

interpretation is a disgrace to humans because it would invite war, conflict and alienation. History taught us. In this regard Radhakrishnan says, “Wars of religion which are the outcome of fanaticism that prompts and justifies the extermination of aliens of different creeds were practically unknown in Hindu India. Of course, here and there outbursts of fanaticism, but Hinduism as a rule never encouraged persecution for unbelief.”²¹ According to Radhakrishnan, true Hindu religion would be a happy hunting home where peace and harmony is prevailing. Many varieties communities of men can lead a peaceful life under the umbrella of Hindu religion. Even many would say that ‘the crusade of Hindu state against Buddhism or Jainism is rarely met with in ancient Indian history.’²²

Were Buddhism and Jainism distinct from Hinduism? If it would be so then the point of religious conversion comes into consideration. Many would say that Buddhism and Jainism were treated as the reformed movements within the domain of Hinduism. If it were to the case then there is no point in saying that there was religious conversion of Hinduism to Buddhism. This is indeed an insightful philosophical observation. According to Radhakrishnan, religious conversion was not way of way because in a sense, Hinduism may not be treated as the first example in the field of a missionary religion. In this sense, Buddhism and Jainism were not treated as separate religions. In this sense, the question of untouchability does not arise even in the case of a Buddhist as well as a Jain. In the strict sense of the term, Hinduism was not a religion because it was a general perception that religion has a specific founder/s that one would be missing in Hinduism. Many would say that Hinduism as religion is a series of jungles where there is no founder of it just like there is founder of Christianity, in Islam. Even we can say that the foundation of Hinduism lies in the existence of God, we cannot cover all Hindu people within the orbit of Hindu religion

²¹Radhakrishnan, S. *The Hindu View of Life*, Unwind Books, London, p.40.

²²Altekar, A. S., *State and Government in Ancient India*, MotilalBanarsidass, Delhi, p.55.

because out of six only five schools of Hindu philosophy believe in the existence of God, while one, the Samkhya philosophy of Kapila does not believe in God. Still they were all regarded as Hindus in the real sense of the term. Even Mahavir, the founder of Jainism, did not believe in the existence of God, nor did Buddha. When question regarding God was asked to Buddha, he was simply smiling and saying nothing.

Thus, it may be claimed that the concept of Broken men in no sense was associated with the religion, cannot be supported by the well-judged verdict of religion because there we do not find any religious dictum about the concept of Broken Men. All these things were created over the course of history by those influenced priests for fulfilling their vested interest. Charvakas were extremely critical about the rituals and ceremonies witnessing and observing within religions. However, they were materialists and one cannot support the standpoint because of their adherence to extreme materialism. Our point is that there is no place of religious tolerance in ancient India's social system. People in general were tolerant towards the vires of others. This should be case. One may have a perception of his own religion. But it should not be perceived as dogmas without which the meaning of life would be futile. Religion should be conceived as a way of life and nothing else. Religion is 'dharma', the very essence. According to Radhakrishnan, the term 'Hindu' had originally a territorial and not a credal significance. It implied residence in a well-defined geographical area. Aboriginal tribes, savages and half-civilised people, the cultured Dravidians and the Vedic Aryans were all Hindus, as they were the sons of the same mother.
