PREFACE

India is a developing country and is in the process of change in all spheres including economic, social and political.

This is a common opinion that in India traditional caste view is gradually changing due to various factors. The British policy was to keep the Indian people divided on the basis of religion, caste and language. In order to have complete democracy in India, the leaders of the independence movement felt it necessary to pay special attention to the disabilities which 15% of its population suffered at the hands of high castes. It was the late Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, a premier leader of untouchables, who demanded equal rights for untouchables in independent India. The seeds for the removal of untouchability in India were sown as early as fifteen years before independance with the organization of "All India Anti Untouchable League" which was later on called Harijan Sevak Sangh by Gandhiji. The aims of the organisation were stated as follows.

"Carrying propaganda against untouchability and taking immediate steps to secure as early as practicable that all public wells, dharamshalas, roads, schools, crematoriums, bathing ghats and temples be declared open
to the depressed classes provided that no competition or force shall be used and only that peaceful persuasion shall be adopted towards this end," (Ambedkhar, 1946).

The caste rituals and taboos are so mixed with religion that sometimes it is very difficult to separate the two. This is the reason that in the traditional government measures to speed up the change in the caste system of India, it is suggested that in education, the emphasis should be given on subjects helpful in the removal of superstitions. Perhaps humanities and liberal arts might be helpful in developing a secular and liberal trend among the young people.

This process will take some time, but in the long run young people will have an appreciable influence on the social institutions. As a matter of fact the real problem area in the system was not division into four castes, but the ill-treatment by caste Hindus towards untouchables, the concept referring to the practice of avoidance of contact with them by members of other Varnas. "Considering the general disabilities experienced by the lower castes (Sudras) and the almost inhuman conditions of the untouchables, the framers of the constitution of India (which came into force on 26 Jan, 1950) included special provisions in the constitution to abolish
untouchability and to assure equality of opportunity to all citizens irrespective of caste, creed, religion or sex. The constitution also included provisions for special privileges (e.g. reservation of legislative seats, jobs and educational facilities) for the members of the lower castes.

Present study is an attempt to determine the attitude of college students of the Bundelkhand region towards religion and untouchability. No such study has been done in this area on this subject, therefore, the attempt has been made to gather and analyse the opinion and attitude of students. The students represent new generation and have newer outlook towards various social problems. How far the attitude of this group has changed and how they view the problem in a broader social context, is the main theme of this study. Present study has been taken up with following considerations.

The legal abolition of untouchability, while being a great step forward, could not by itself open opportunities for the downtrodden masses who had been oppressed for centuries and psychologically conditioned to believe that salvation can only come through service to the upper caste. Students can perceive this problem in more objective manner and may indicate the change in
future social structure. In order to explore how the caste system could survive, indepth study of use of the religious, political, social and economic factors has been undertaken. Whether religion and untouchability had become part of the social mores of the oppressed class themselves has also been investigated. Role of urbanisation, industrialization and land reforms in bringing about modification in religious and caste feelings has been studied.

The proposed study at the present juncture is quite important because the recommendations of the Mandal Commission may result in deepening of the caste divisions in our society. The study pin points the view of the students towards solving this problem because student community has been either pro-reservation or anti-reservation. Study can also help in reshaping the policy of reservation in jobs and other spheres.

Findings of the study can also be of help in understanding the new rebels of power structure and caste system and how equality of opportunity can be provided to the oppressed.

Study is expected to be useful to planners, administrators and the institutions who are directly associated with the programme of oppressed. Since the
study has limited perspectives, further indepth research can be carried out in certain undiscovered areas. The whole study is divided in to different parts and includes ten chapters as given in contents.

The research was done under the guidance and supervision of Dr. Gargi, Principal of Arya Kanya Maha Vidyalaya, Jhansi. Incidentally she has been the moving spirit behind my taking up this work and has encouraged me from inception of this work till its end. Despite her very busy schedule, she shared her precious moments to guide and to discuss the research design, the schedule, the tabulation plan and the draft of chapters. She went through all the written material and suggested improvements. I express my sincere gratitude for her kindness and guidance without which work was not possible.

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(Signature)

(MANJU KULSHRESTHA)