

C H A P T E R - I

P R O L O G U E

India is a land of deep rooted traditions. These traditions are firmly fixed in the religious practices of the popular religion Hinduism, and the Social customs in the Hindu Society.

Hinduism is the richest cluster on the variegated tree of human religion. In its effort to reach to the "Saving meaning of existence of self and attaining Salvation i.e., Moksha", it left no avenue unexplored. Hinduism, in its practical morality, is fundamentally sound in as much as it follows the spontaneous dictates of human conscience. Virtues and vices are correctly appraised and in spite of theoretical difficulties regarding man's nature and destiny, life in its concrete reality has been given true importance and is systematically ordered.

In Hinduism, men contemplate on the divine mystery and express it through an inexhaustable abundance of myths and through searching philosophical enquiry. They seek "freedom from the anguish of our human soul" i.e., "Shanthi", through acetical,

ritual practices, profound meditation and a flight to the Ultimate Reality. Indeed, the whole mankind can be proud that in India the human quest for the "Absolute Truth, Goodness and Beauty - i.e., Satyam, Shivam, and Sundaram" - has been so diversified and unrelenting through the ages.

But, to the utter disappointment and fate of a section of the Society, Hinduism was fatal and absolutely cruel in its approach. Unfortunately, in traditional Hinduism, the person soon became what Swami Vivekananda did not hesitate to call "a slave of Society" and the dignity of the person was contradicted by Social discrimination. No doubt, Hinduism, from its philosophical heights brought forth, nourished and maintained several proud systems for the peaceful co-existence of mankind. But in so doing it brought forth certain evil systems to a section of the society. And the result is millions and millions of people are forced to live in sub-human conditions, oppressed and exploited by the stronger sections of the Society.

Now, what is the origin of this state of affairs in India? What are these systems and traditions and what evils did they bring with them rendering certain millions of people to live in sub-human conditions?

To answer this, the only way is to revert back to the correct knowledge of Hinduism in which the roots of these systems and traditions are firmly fixed. So let us have a bird's eye view at the historical development of Hinduism and see how the apparently proud systems of Hinduism brought evils to a section ~~of~~ the society openly, deliberately and consciously.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF HINDUISM:

It is generally believed that 'Aryan myth is exploded'. This myth was the belief that Hinduism was the creation of the Aryans who entered India about 2000 years B.C. In fact, the Aryans found on the soil of India, races which had their own culture, religion, and occupational monopolis. The Aryans, established their supremacy. Hinduism is the result of the blending of Aryan and non-Aryan elements.

SRUTHI:

1) Vedas:- The Aryans brought with them the Aryan worshipping and propitiating a number of Gods who personified the forces of Nature. The Nature worship and its two-fold development, i.e., ritualistic and philosophical are embodied in Vedas, a collection of very ancient sacred texts. There are four Vedas: The Rigveda, collection of Praises; the Samaveda, collection of hymns which are chanted; the Yajurveda, a collection of sacrificial formulae; the Atharvaveda, a collection of charms and magic formulae. They are also called Vedic-Samhitas.

2) Vedantas:- The Brahmins, the elaborate prose treatises of sacrifices for meditations, the Aranyakas, the esoteric texts profounded by hermits in the forests, the Upanisheds in Aranyakas containing fundamental themes of Indian Philosophy (Speculations) - are considered as 'Vedantas'. Vedantas represent the richest metaphysical and spiritual quest, and it has affirmed emphatically the absolute transcendence of the divine being. Vedas and Vedantas are popularly



called Sruthi (what is heard) and are considered as Apourusheyas and they are eternal and infallible, as they are direct from God. They belong to the Vedic period 200-600 B.C. They are extolled as the primary authority in all matters of religious truth and practices of Hinduism.

SMRITHI:

All the other texts of testimony are authoritative word belong to Smrithi (Recollections), are Tradition and these are 'Paurusheyas' i.e., they are originated from an individual, Purusha. Ramayana, Mahabharatha, Bhagavadgitha in particular of Mahabharatha, Budha and Jain Scriptures, Bhagavatha and so on which are also called Puranas (the EPICS) will come under this. These Epics testify to the contemporary practices or traditions.

So Hindu Society is thus quite ancient and very complex as it emerged both from Sruthi and Smrithi.

Budha, Jain, Sankara, Ramanuja and several others interpreted Hinduism in different ways and

with the passage of time many systems, traditions and ideas have got roots in Hindu Social Organisation. Dharma Sasthras, Manusmrithi, Yajnavalkaya and Vishnu are the chief covenents for their social ideals.

MANUSMRITHI:

The Manusmrithi, whose compilation belongs to the 2nd century B.C. continues the burden of the Rigveda with regard to the castes and establish its Smrithi character of following the Sruti. It even partially reproduces the expression of the Rigveda, through its phrase: "mukha Bahu rupa detah brahmin khathriya vaisyan sudhrasya"¹, while enumerating castes. Following the sruthi it accepts only four Varnas and while doing so Manu unequivocally declares that there is not a fifth Varna beyond the additional four, "Nasti tu Panchmah"². Manu brands all others that are outside the range of the four varnas as Dasyus. Dasa in Sanskrit means

1. Manusmrithi, I - 31.

2. Ibid, X - 4.

enemy, slave etc. This meaning later dropped and in Manu's sense Dasa became for Dasyam, i.e., Service.³

The Code orders the life of the individual from long before he is born to long after he is dead. So also does it plans out the activities of a settled and ordered humanity in all the social patterns. It registers and recounts all that had come down to its days in the way of social habits, customs and usages, positive pieces of legislation as reflected in the earlier works, and it even endorses, declaims and recreates where need be, types of social behaviour considered fit by the eminent law giver.

No code in ancient times commanded such esteem as did the Code of Manu and none was fuller or even as full as this remarkable piece of legislation, as the great law giver presents a detailed code and marshals their duties and penalties in very strict terms. Its authority has seldom been

3. Dasyam - ManuIX - 410, 413.

questioned and has remained unassailable through centuries in certain circumstances and details, even derogatory to the status of certain sections of the community. Let us very briefly examine the sanctions of Manu under the Varna Vyavastha, Asrama Vyavastha and Occupational Institutions which concern us more for our topic.

VARNA VYAVASTHA:

Coming to Varna Vyavastha, in Hinduism, the traditional account of this system goes back to Rigveda in Purusasuktha.

"One fourth of the supreme being constitutes all beings while three fourths of Him are immortal and stand above, with the one fourth below, He extended on all sides animate and inanimate".⁴

"His face (of the Creator) became the Brahmin, His arms weremade intothe Khathriya, His thighs became the Vaisya. From His feet the Sudra was Born".⁴

4. Rigveda - X, 90 - 12.

The first three varnas were the Dvijatis (twice-born), their members alone were entitled to the tie of initiation (Upanayan) and to the wearing of the sacred thread. Sudras were considered as 'Eka-jatis' and were expected to serve the above three Varnas i.e., Dvijatis.

The Caste System emerged from this Varna Vyavastha. So let us see how this caste originated and subsequent results of it.

CASTE:

The word 'CASTE' comes from the Portuguese word "CASTA" signifying breed or race or kind; "homem de boa casta" is 'a man of good family'.⁵ Thus basically caste means people of the same breed.

Risley defines a caste as "a collection of families or groups of families bearing a common name, claiming a common descent from a mythical ancestor,

5. "Caste in India, its Nature, Function and Origins - by J.H. Hutton, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1981, p. 47.

human or divine; professing to follow the hereditary calling, and regarded by those who are competent to give an opinion as forming a simple homogeneous community."⁶

The Caste is again sub-divided into sub-castes, smaller groups. Varnas are only four, whereas castes are so many. Varna means "to choose or to select" i.e., to choose a profession. Caste is by birth. Thus originally, Varna depended upon the profession that one selected and one was free to select a profession and there was the occupational mobility. So, though a particular person was born in a particular caste, say for example, a Brahman, if he selected the profession of ruling, he was treated as a Khathriya by Varna. "The Varna Scheme has certainly distorted the picture of Caste".⁷ Varna also mean 'Colour' and whether Varna is used in this sense is controversial issue.

6. Ibid, P. 47.

7. Caste in Modern India -by Prof. M.N. Srinivas, P. 69.

CHARACTERS OF CASTE SYSTEM: (In Manu)

Mostly, the caste system includes the following characteristics as enumerated by the modern thinkers like Hutton, Ghurye and N.K. Dutt.⁸

- a) Members of a particular caste cannot wed outside their own caste.
- b) There are strict laws prohibiting the partaking of food with the members of other castes.
- c) Occupations are fixed and determined to particular caste. One cannot change the occupation and is based on Hierarchy.
- d) The Brahmins have been accorded the best place at the top.
- e) Birth determines the caste of the individuals. There is no transferring from one caste to the other.
- f) All occupations are based on the respect for the Brahmins.

8. Indian Society & Social Institutions - Dr. Vatyayan, Kedarnath Ramnath Publications (1984), Meerut, P. 144.

ASRAMA VYAVASTHA:

Asrama Vyavastha is another important foundation of the Hindu Social Organisation which consists of a) Brahmacharya Asrama; b) Grahस्था Asrama; c) Vanaprastha Asrama and d) Sanyasi Asrama. Asrama Vyavastha by itself is a very good system, but the evils are associated with the system of marriages and the consequences thereof to a section of HUMAN beings.

MARRIAGE: (In Manu)

Marriage in the Hindu Society is a religious bond and family and marriage occupy pivotal position in the society. There is strict ban on inter-caste marriage system. Even marriage from inter-sub-caste is not permitted.

Manusmriti gives all prescriptions of marriages. It was through marriages that ultimately the inheritance had to be settled and numerous social and religious rites were performed. It was through this that the so called purity of blood was sought to be maintained. Manu at the very start ordains that a

Brahmin, and for that matter also the rest of the two Dwijas, must marry a woman of his own caste (Savarnam).

Under Manu's classification, if a man was born of parents of dissimilar castes, that is, of a mixed parentage, then he was a hybrid, varna sankara, and belonged to outside Chaturvarna. Those who were out of the range of the four Varnas have been further divided by Manu into two classes: Anulomajas (from hypergamy) who are considered as 'Bahyas' (out-castes) and Prathilomajas (from hypogamy) who are considered as 'Hinas'. This hardly occurs even in the Vedic Literature. Anulomajas are commendable, but some Prathilomajas are considered as Sudras and others are branded as Chandalas. Here, one must notice that transgression of the tradition is that of the parents and punishment is to the innocent off spring!

OCCUPATIONAL INSTITUTIONS:

The Occupational Institution was attached to these four Varnas and the assigned duties were as follows:

"The Brahmin (white colour) was assigned studying, teaching, sacrificing, assisting others to sacrifice, giving alms and receiving gifts.

The Ksathriya (red colour) was assigned the duties of studying, sacrificing, giving alms, using weapons, protecting treasure and life.

The Vaisya (yellow colour) was assigned the duties of studying, sacrificing, giving alms, cultivating tending cattle and trading.

The Sudra (black colour) was given the duty of serving the three higher Varnas".⁹

Nesfield is of the opinion that occupation is the basis of the Caste system. In his view "Function and function alone is responsible for the origin of Caste system in India".¹⁰

9. Sacred Laws, Buhler, Pt. II, P. 199 and caste in India - by J.H. Hulton, P. 149.

10. "Untouchability" in "Indian Society and Social Institutions" - by H.R. Mukhi Surjeet Book Dept, PB. 1425 4074-75, Nai Sarak, Delhi-110006.

In the Vedic period (200-600 B.C.) there was occupational mobility. It was easy to change professions frequently. Professions had not become hereditary and caste also had no religious sanctity. Thus caste and occupation were separable and it was only a matter that some were in some caste and by choosing a particular profession he was placed in that varna.

The post Vedic-period (600 B.C. - 300 A.D.) was a period of change from flexibility to rigidity insofar as caste was concerned. It was during this period that hierarchy, concept of karma and social religious immobility developed in caste in the Puranic period (300 - 1200 A.D.) was perhaps the darkest period in the History of castes. Caste system was given religious sanction. Restrictions on the mobility of professions were imposed.

It is believed that from the times of Manu, (200 A.D.) the above assignments of duties for Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Sudhras came into existence and Varna Dharma (Caste duty) was given sanctity.

Thus under the system occupational mobility was arrested and occupations became hereditary. Gradually, with the rigidity of the occupational system caste began to come into existence on the basis of the occupation. Later the occupations were prescribed Varna-wise and Caste-wise.

Those who were doing noble occupations like those of educating the people, fighting on the battle field or trade etc., became noble and began to be treated as persons belonging to the superior castes and others began to be considered as persons belonging to the inferior castes.

The other important aspect of social valuation of work was whether the work was considered with material or activity that was cleanly or uncleanly, pure or impure, polluting or non-polluting which was manifest only occasionally and sporadically.

The meanest occupations were given to the Sudras and Chandalas. The Chandalas must reside in the burial grounds and were entrusted with the work

connected to it, and other unclean occupations like scavenging and the like. Thus all the people in the impure and polluting occupations are treated as Untouchables. Let us have a close look at these Untouchables shortly after considering the Tribes.

THE TRIBES:

A tribe belongs to any of the three racial strains. Viz: 1) The proto-Austroloids who one time practically covered the whole of India 2) The Mangloids, who are still mostly located in North-East India 3) to a limited extent to the Negrito strain".¹¹ Some of the tribal groups are not only regarded as autochthanes (purest aboriginal people) of this country but also peoples represented the Greeks, Synthians, Persians and Chines.

The Tribes are not included in the traditional Hindu caste hierachy, but members of original National unit.

11. Social problems and Social Disorganisations in India - by Dr. C.B. Mamoria, Kitab Mahal, Allahabad, 1981, P. 169.

After considering various definitions given by various anthropologists Dr. C.B. Memoria observes: "A tribe is a group of people who are the inhabitants of the inaccessible forests or hill areas, belong to oldest racial groups, speak a common dialect, profess primitive religion, follow primitive occupations, live semi-naked, have nomadic habits, have love for drink and dance and are endogamous and possess a social organisation quite distinct from their neighbouring people".¹²

Different Anthropologists and Sociologists gave different names for these tribes: Risely & Dr. Elvin: aboriginals, Sir Baines: Hill Tribes, Jungle People, forest tribes, Baigas: Original owners of the country, Dr. Hutton: Primitive Tribe, Thakkr Bapa: The Adi-praja, Gurye: Backward Hindu, Dr. Das: Submerged Humanity, Others: Adi-vasi, Vana Jathi, Aranyak Vanavasi, Indegeneous people. We shall discuss further details in the next chapter.

12. Ibid, P. 169.

THE UNTOUCHABLES:

Untouchability is an institution peculiar to India. In the Westren countries a racial distinction is seen between the Negroes, the blacks and the white people. But this untouchability among the human beings is not observed any where in the world.

ORIGIN OF THE UNTOUCHABILITY:

History of these untouchables is quite interesting. As pointed out in Introduction, it started with the coming of Aryans, who were very advanced and civilised people. They defeated the aboriginals of India and gradually they proceeded to from North to the South and later they faced with the problem of having wives. Due to shortage of Aryan women, they started marrying Dasyu girls. Those who married Aryan girls, refused them from their fold. They also did not like to marry their sons and daughters and gradually the whole system became very rigid. And such people became to be called as untouchables. In "Caste India" J.H. Hutton writes, "the origin of the position of Untouchability is partly racial,

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partly religious and partly a matter of social custom". Prof. Rice also confirms this.

1. Racial Factors: The fundamental causes of Untouchability are racial factors. The Victor always considers himself superior to the vanquished and wants to be spared by the latter's influence. In the opinion of some scholars the Aryans designated some derogatory names to the non-Aryan races settled in India and considered them untouchables.

2. Religious Factors: Religious beliefs and conventions are also causes of Untouchability. In religion much importance is given to purity and divinity. As a result of this purity it was considered essential to remain pure to the people who engage in impure occupations. In this way Untouchability originated in the religious factor.

In the words of Dr. Ghurye¹³ "Idea of purity, whether occupational or ceremonial, are found to

13. "Caste and Race in India" - by G.S. Ghurye, Popular Prakasam, Bombay Pvt. Ltd., 1986.

have been a factor in the genesis of caste or the very soul of the idea and practice of untouchability".

3) Social factors: Social customs and conventions shared the burden of maintaining the untouchability by the religious and social causes. Refusing the entry of the untouchables to the places of public worship, bathing, tanks, wells, shops, hotels, schools etc., are examples of this kind.

As per Dharma Sastras and Manu's code who are these untouchables? There are five different classes, though all of them are not found in each of them. These five are, 1) The off spring of a Sudra father and a Brahmin mother.¹⁴ 2) The off spring of an unmarried woman,¹⁵ 3) the off spring of union with a Sagothra woman¹⁶, 4) the off spring of a person who after becoming an ascetic, turns back to embrace again the householder's life¹⁷ and 5) the off spring of a barbar father and Brahman mother.¹⁸

14. Both Sastras Bouddayana I, 8; Gouthama IV, 16-18; Vashishtha XVIII; & Manu X, 47, also (Caste, class and occupation - by G.S. Ghurya, P. 51, 216.

15. Veda-Vyasa Smruthi.

16. Veda-Vyasa Smruthi.

17. Acc. to Yama Quoted in Parasara Madhava.

18. Anusasana Parva of the Mahabharatha 29 - 17.

These are called Chandalas. Despite this classification, it is obvious all the same that he first definitely is a generic specification while the rest have only the locus standi of the Chandala due to their degraded state unborne by and in contravention of the injunctions of the Sastras. Manu while naming the off springs of the mixed castes as a result of their union mentions this first basic class of Chandalas, and others are certainly because of them following lapses of a social forbidding and extremely derogatory they come to assume the status of a Chandala. But the more plausible explanation would be that the Chandalas were a degraded group of aborigines. "What constitutes a Chandala are not always consistent, for there appear to have Chandalas by works as well as by birth".¹⁹ Dharma-sastras and Manu use some other words like antyas, antyajas, antyavasin, bahya and also svapakas close to the sense of asprisya, i.e., untouchables.

19. Caste in India - by J.H. Hutton, P. 151.

Oxford university Press, Delhi, 1989.

Dr. Ambedkar²⁰ says, "There must have been in primitive Hindu Society settled tribes and Broken Men. The settled tribes founded the village and formed the village community and the broken men lived in separate quarters outside the village for the reason that they belonged to a different tribe and therefore, to different blood. To put it definitely the untouchables were only Broken Men. It is because they were brokenmen that they lived outside the village".²⁰

Whatever be the origin of this untouchability, the untouchables faced all possible types of disabilities--social, religious, economic, political, educational and so on, for centuries generations after generations.

Dr. Majundar has written, "The untouchable castes are those who suffer various social and political disabilities many of which are traditionally prescribed and socially enforced by higher castes."

20. The Untouchable - by Dr. Ambedkar, P. 31.

Bharatiya Prandha siksha Parishad, Jethavana
Maha Vihara, Sravasti, Bularampura,
U.P. 1969.

Some of these disabilities suffered by these untouchables for generations through centuries, are furnished hereunder briefly.

i) Social Disabilities: The untouchables are not to be touched by any person. They had to live outside the village. They had to live in places like burrial grounds. They should not work in the day time. The meanest occupations like the funeral work, scavenging and the like were given to them. They should not walk on the roads. If they had to do so they had to give a warning to all the others by beating sticks so that the caste Hindus may not get polluted by their touch. Their very sight polluted the caste Hindus. Even their shadow could pollute a caste Hindu. They could have no social contacts. They should not participate in any social function, festivals, marriages or any other parties. They should not use public wells, from where the people belonging to the other castes draw water. They should not use the public ponds. Use of public hospitals, inns etc. were out of bounds

for them. The washerman would not wash their clothes. The barber should not shave him or give them hair cutting. They could not use any metal pots. In their marriages, they could not use any palanquins, or use horse for riding. They were socially cut off and they had no social respect. Dogs and pigs were treated better than the untouchables. Life was a mere curse to them.

ii) Religious disabilities: The untouchables could not enter the temples and the doors of the temples are closed on them. They had no right to worship the god or goddesses of the temples. They could not take a dip in the holy waters in the tank or river. They cannot take the dead body to any ghat for burning. They could not study any religious book. He could not perform any religious ceremony by himself and the Brahmins will not perform any religious ceremony at their houses or places. All religious were well out of their bounds.

iii) Economic Disabilities: As the public roads were closed to them during the day time, they were required to work only at night. They could not practice a profession which was rewarding because that was the monopoly of the high caste people. One of the serious economic disabilities was that the untouchables could not own property. They were not permitted to purchase any piece of land either in the urban or in the rural areas. They were not expected to amass wealth. If some how amassed wealth, they were not permitted to run their business in any locality along with other caste people. They were supposed to engage themselves only in un-rewarding traditional occupations which they had been carrying out since generations. They were not even permitted to engage themselves in professions which were being carried by the people of other three castes. Due to their low income, they could afford to live in houses. They lived in mud huts without proper protection from the rain, heat and the wind. They could not afford to make

their both ends meet. They had to work in the land of their land lords without any payment. This reduced them to the status of a slave.

Political Disability: No untouchable was ever allowed to hold any administrative office or to work in any office. Thus he was completely excluded from the administration. He was not allowed to participate in political activities. He had no right to vote. He could not attend any assembly or meeting in which politics of the area or locality was being discussed.

Educational Disability: The children of the untouchables could not study on educational institutions where the children of high caste were studying. It was because the children of the untouchables were not permitted to mix with the children of the high caste. They could not put their shadow on them. In some of the religious books it is stated that the untouchables should not study, more particularly the religious books. If some how or the other even the son of an untouchable still insisted upon

on study he was required to sit outside the class, far away, either in the scorching heat of the sun or peircing cold wind in the winter. Due to such restrictions the untouchables became educationally backward.

Pecularity of the Untouchability:

There are two distinct aspects of untouchabilities - temporary untouchability i.e. pollution caused by an act of contamination and permanent untouchability. Manu referred to both.

The first of these refer only to certain circumstances in which when once a caste member of the varnas was rendered temporarily impure, and could obtain purity and thereby his original normal status after performing purificatory rites like bathing, sprinkling with water, taking of panchagavya, giving alms to the Brahman and by various other methods of 'prayaschittas' detailed in them. But this phase of pollution can attach only temporarily and to a person who normally is pure.

A man of the twice-born caste or even a Sudra can be rendered impure by touching a Chandala, a menstrual woman, and outcaste, a woman in child bed, a corpse, or one who has touched a corpse, and the remedy can instantaneously follow a bath.

But there are some who can never become pure, for, they are permanently impure, being impure from birth. They always cause others impurity and pollute them with their touch and while the others whom they touch can regain their purity through observance of certain rites, they themselves can never become pure. They are untouchables. This kind of untouchability, peculiar to our society, that concerns ourselves for the moment.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar - an Emancipator:

Dr. Baba Saheb Bhim Rao Ambedkar came on the Indian scene when the tide of socio-political revolution was sweeping the land. The accident of his birth as an 'untouchable' in Mehar caste, gave a touch of poetic justice to the role he played during India's

transition from a colony to a republic. "Politically, he stood for a united self-governing community of Indians with special safe-guards for the depressed classes. He was a socialist, but socialism for him meant little without social and religious equality."²¹

In his early life he suffered severe disabilities at the caste Hindus, and his life constitutes a running commentary of the new consciousness which dawned on these classes in India, with a tremendous awakening of self-respect. He had risen from dust to the liberator and an emancipator of the 'Untouchables'.

"Participating in the historical process; the total achievement - the building up of a rich, dynamic and creative new order out of inert, supine and caotic mass of scattered ignorant peoples, like a man who had never been witnessed in India before. He wrote and taught the untouchables of India to

21. Dr. Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi, to the awakening of SCs. in FISE AND AWAKENING OF DEPRESSED CLASSES IN INDIA", by S.R. Kamble, National Publishing House, New Delhi-2, p. 144.

rise to the full stature of their growth. He impressed in their minds that they were not slaves but respectable human beings. He was the incarnation of defiance of evil and the triumph of right over the wrong. He was a great scholar and fearless leader of the Untouchables.

MAHATMA GTANDHI - the father of the nation:

Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the nation also felt that the time had shown that the evil system of untouchability still remained a canker in the body politic of Hinduism. Mahatma Gandhi extolled the virtues of Dr. Ambedkar and respected his mighty intellectual personality.

THEIR CONTRIBUTION IN DIFFERENT LINES:

Both tried for the emancipation of the untouchables, but the lines of approach were quite different. One was revolutionary and the other was evolutionary. One wanted to reform the existing institution of the Hindu society, the other wanted to create a new order based on the concept of justice and equality of all men.

To Ambedkar the institution of untouchability was a sin and was to be destroyed the sooner the better, and therefore, the Chaturvarna system must go, and Hindu society must have a platform shorn of all inequalities. To Mahatma Gandhi it was a religious question. He upheld the Chaturvarna dharma and proposed gradual changes in it so that in the course of time Hindu hearts would be changed. Dr. Ambedkar eulogised Gandhiji's great work and services for the depressed classes; but he always opposed him tooth and nail, saying, Mahatmas, like fleeting phantoms, raised dust, but raised no level! He had great hatred towards ludicrous social reformers when he said: "Saints and reformers have come and gone but untouchability has remained as it is." He wanted a complete and revolutionary transformation of Hindu society. Mahatma Gandhi, whose mighty personality bestrode the country like a colossus, preferred peaceful non-violent changes in the Hindu society. He is a spiritual leader of the downtrodden, whereas Dr. Ambedkar, born among them was a natural leader of the depressed classes, and was the liberator of the down trodden.

A PERIOD OF TRANSITION AND CRISES:

The inauguration of the Republic of India has ended the period of intense political change but it has ushered in a new period of social cultural and economic development whose influence upon the religious situation is truly immediate. Its encounter with the traditional ways of life and ancient beliefs provokes a crisis which deeply affects the religion of the masses. The factors at work are many: Industrialisation and economic growth, religious reformism side by side with the radical humanism and the advance of materialism indifferentism and atheism, the slow penetration of Christian ideas and ideals, the permanence of Hindu other-worldiness, the surviving attraction of old mythologies and the growing fascination of Science and technology. These conflicting factors make the present situation complex and confused.

SECULARISM:

Modern India shares with the whole modern world the new faith which technology has implanted in the heart of man. It is a faith in man's capacity

to solve his own problems by purely human means and methods. It refuses to contemplate any reality which transcends this world. Hence it persists in envisaging all material, social and cultural problems in the perspective of a secular mentality. Even if religion is not positively rejected, it is relegated to the background; considered as practically irrelevant, it has no part in the planning of the new society; at best, it is reduced to some kind of purely individual ethics or human idealism. The hopes of the modern man based on the power of Science to renovate the world.

TOUCH WITH THE WEST:

What the contact with the West brought to India is the practical inspiration and example of a society in which the individual's initiative can shape the society, as well as refuse to be totally shaped by it. The consequent change in the Indian mentality was due to the initiative of a few individuals, the reformists, who lived and worked in an atmosphere of reaction. Their main concern was to fight against

specific social evils sanctioned by the ancient tradition, such as the burning of widows, enforced perpetual widowedhood and untouchability.

The Unification of India under British rule, and the ideals of Nationalism and Social Equality imported from the West, lent their dynamic support to the new ideas. Again contact with socialism from the Soviet Union of Socialistic Republic and China and their philosophies of life based on Carl Marx, Lenin and Mao, changed the attitudes of the millions of people under servitude and utter poverty with class exploitation. The present day dialectical materialism further widened the gulf between the "haves" and "have nots" and the "class struggle" for survival is a perpetual cold war.

EQUALITY IN DEMOCRACY:

The democratic ideals of equality was bound to clash with the caste system, which is based on a principle of inborn-inequality. In a more pragmatic manner, the political strife between parties prompts

political leaders to coax the lower castes and untouchables in order to win their votes. Deeper even than political expediency, there was the desire of saving Hinduism itself from ruin. If the untouchables and depressed classes, becoming more conscious of their social importance, decided to leave Hinduism for Christianity or Buddhism, where they would no longer suffer from the disabilities of caste distinctions, it was imperative for Hinduism to broaden its conceptions and give a place in its fold to those despised classes.

Mahatma Gandhiji realised this dangerous trend in India and this is the reason why he renamed all these people as 'Harijans' (people of God Hari) and started "Harijanoddarana" movement. Unfortunately, the religious efforts towards greater equality failed to neutralise the reaction of casteism. The mass conversion to Buddhism led by Dr. Ambedkar was specifically intended as a condemnation of the incapacity of Hinduism to break its traditional framework of social discrimination.

The framers of the constitution of Independent India did what they could at the level of law under the Chairmanship of Dr. Ambedkar who himself was a direct subject to this menace.

POSITION IN INDIA TODAY:

India today has numerous communities of the untouchable communities. Fortunately such a list was prepared and published by the Government of India in 1935 and this list intends 429 communities. Reduced to numbers it means that to-day there exist in India - to - million people whose mere touch causes pollution to the high caste Hindus. Surely, the phenomenon of untouchability among primitive and ancient societies falls into insignificance before this phenomenon of hereditary untouchability for so many millions of people we find in India today. This type of untouchability stands as a class by itself without a parallel in the history of the world.

SITUATION IN ANDHRA PRADESH:

In Andhra Pradesh too, in particular, in Guntur District the situation is not different. Only

in cities and towns the practice is not much seen. The reason can much be attributed to the Education, position in the job and economic well being. In villages, these people are suffering from the disabilities even today. But a good lot of reaction is observed in the villages as they are suppressed and exploited by the stronger sections continuously.

CONCLUSION:

We shall examine the various articles of the Constitution worth mentioning to uplift this section of the society and different measure that the Government of India and the State Governments have taken to bring up these down trodden tribes and castes and how the measures and targets are not fully realised by the people to whom they are aimed at and how the only means to achieve this is only in and through Education and the need to study their attitude towards education etc., in the next chapter under the head "Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes".
