CHAPTER I

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The humankind has entered the Third Millennium with a lot of jubilation, celebration, festivities and fanfare. We, the people of India, celebrated our Fiftieth Year of Independence, six years ago. During these fifty five years, with the efforts of successive governments, a lot of improvements, developments and progress have been made in all fields, though not to the expected extent.

India, our motherland is a great country in the world. Many eminent scholars and historians not only from India, even from other countries have paid glowing tributes to India as .... “in some parts a very paradise on earth,” and “the Indian way of life is the only salvation of mankind.” What a great country our India is!

To substantiate this, here are the statements of from Friedrich Max Müller and Dr. Arnold Toynbee.¹

Friedrich Max Müller: “I Should Point to India”²

If I were to look over the whole world to find out the country most richly endowed with all the wealth, power and beauty that nature can bestow – in some arts the very paradise on earth – I should point to India. If I were asked under what sky the human mind has most fully developed some of its choicest gifts, has most deeply pondered on the greatest problems of life and has found solutions to

¹ Quoted by Palkhivala N.A., in his famous book, We, the People - India - The Largest Democracy, Strand Book Stall, 1984 (before the ‘Contents’).
² The heading and the italics are that of the researcher.
some of them which well deserve the attention even of those who have studied Plato and Kant – *I should point to India*. And if I were to ask myself from what literature we, here in Europe, we who have been nurtured almost exclusively on the thoughts of Greeks and Romans, and if one Semitic race, the Jewish, may draw that corrective which is most wanted in order to make our inner life more perfect, more comprehensive, more universal, in fact more truly human, life not for this life only, but a transfigured and eternal life – *again I should point to India.*

**Dr. Arnold Toynbee: “Indian way – only alternative”**

It is already becoming clear that a chapter which had a Western beginning will have an Indian ending if it is not to end in self-destruction of the human race...... At this supremely dangerous moment in human history, *the way of salvation for mankind is the Indian way* – Emperor Ashoka’s and Mahatma Gandhi’s principles of non-violence and Sri Ramakrishna’s testimony to harmony to religions. Here we have an attitude and spirit that can make it possible for the human race to grow together into a single family – and, in the Atomic Age, this is the only alternative to destroying ourselves.

India indeed is a great country. It is the land of many Gods and Goddesses, Vedas, Upanishads and other divine scriptures; the abode of glorious civilization and culture; the land of great saints and sages; the birth place of great world religions – Jainism, Buddhism, Hinduism and Sikhism; the land of Mahatma Gandhi, Ramakrishna Paramahamsa and Swamy Vivekananda; the
biggest democracy in the world with the largest electorate; and many, many more
creditable things to our glory and fame.

With all this, can we say that we are proud of ourselves as a nation particularly in the comity of nations? An objective and unbiased answer to this question would be an emphatic ‘No’. How can we be proud of ourselves when our own people were butchered, massacred and burnt alive? In the name of religion, virtual genocide was going on unabated. In the name of religion our own women were raped, people were burnt alive, including the young, innocent children. The communal fanatics burnt the houses of thousands of people; their properties were destroyed and looted. These homeless people were in refugee camps. What a shame, people belonging to this holy land, people who are citizens of this country, were in the refugee camp in their own land! The recent happenings in Gujarat which started with the reported teasing and harassing of Muslims, particularly women, and the hawkers by the karsevaks who were returning from Ayodhya by Sabari Express and the burning of three coaches at Godhra railway station, reportedly by the Muslim extremists, killing 59 passengers on 27th February 2002, which was also the most cruel, inhuman and highly condemnable act. It is not on the ill-conceived notions of vindictive attitude – ‘an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth’ – that the people were killed mercilessly and burnt alive. It is the inhuman, unquenchable thirst for the blood of a particular community that was worsening the situation every day and fresh violence of murdering and burning people alive and destroying their properties
were going on unabated. These happenings in Gujarat had made us to “bow our head in shame” as pointed out by our Hon’ble P.M. Sri. Vajpayee.

It is an irony of fate that though every religion preaches, professes and stands for love, compassion, tolerance, fairness, justice, equality, humanity, human dignity, universal brotherhood and spirituality, yet religion has been the abounding and prolific source of human conflicts and clashes, resulting in heinous crimes on humanity.

This phenomenon has become more pronounced and more predominant in recent years in India. People are becoming more caste-conscious, community-conscious, religion-conscious, region-conscious, language-conscious and what not, more to the detriment of nation’s unity, solidarity, peace, progress and prosperity. Their caste, creed, religion come first and foremost and the country and country’s interest come last.

Babasaheb Dr. Ambedkar cautioned the people of India while presenting the Constitution to the country, against this tendency, more than fifty years ago when he said:

“…… What perturbs me greatly is the fact that not only India has lost her Independence, but she lost it by the infidelity and treachery of some of her own people …”

“…. Will history repeat itself? It is this thought which fills me with anxiety. This anxiety is deepened by the realization of the fact that in addition to our old enemies in the form of castes and creeds, we are going to have many
political parties with diverse and opposing political creeds. Will Indians place the country above their creed or will they place creed above country? I do not know. But this much is certain that if the parties place creed above country, our independence will be put in jeopardy a second time and probably lost for ever. This eventuality we must all resolutely guard against. We must be determined to defend our independence with the last drop of our blood". (Cheers)4.

It is high time we heed to the words of caution of this great visionary at least now.

While communal violence erupts sporadically in different parts of the country, there are other agonizing happenings that go on throughout the country, day in and day out, perennially, in which almost 25% of the population of India is targeted, marginalized, insulted, humiliated, tortured and tormented, treated as lapers, sub-humans and non-humans. They are murdered, burnt alive, their women raped, and paraded naked in public. They are forced to drink urine and eat human excreta, which are most repugnant to humanity and human dignity. Nowhere in human history of the world we have heard such heinous, inhuman crimes or even the semblance of which committed on fellow human beings. That is ATROCITIES AGAINST SCHEDULED CASTES AND SCHEDULED TRIBES.

The National Commission of SCs/STs has recorded:

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4 From the speech of Dr.B.R.Ambedkar in the Constituent Assembly of India on 25th November 1949.
Between 1994 and 1996, a total of 98,349 cases were registered with the police, nationwide as crimes and atrocities on SCs. Of these, 38,483 were registered under the SCs/STs (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989. A further 1660 cases were for murder, 2814 for rape and 13,671 for hurt. These are the cases registered with the police. It is quite obvious and it is common knowledge too that many more cases go unnoticed, unreported, suppressed, and unregistered for various reasons.

According to another report:

Every hour 2 SCs/STs are assaulted,
Every day 3 women SCs/STs are raped,
Every day 2 SCs/STs are murdered
Every day 2 SCs/STs houses are burnt down.

These figures do not present the correct and the whole picture as they relate to earlier years and the atrocities perpetrated on these vulnerable sections in several parts of the country are only on the increase, manifesting in all sorts of diabolical, inhuman forms.

The recent one in the series is the ghastly incident of atrocity that had taken place on 15th October 2002 in a village called Duleena in Jhajjar district of Haryana. Five Scheduled Caste people mistaken by an irate mob for indulging in

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6 From the issues of Human Rights Solidarity, published by the Asian Human Rights Commission, as quoted by K. Nayar, "A Non-starter" (The Hindu, July 24, 1999).
cow slaughter, were lynched after pulling them out of the police post in the
village in full view of a Magistrate and Policemen. Even after a week, no arrests
were made and none of the ministers or ruling party representatives cared to visit
the scene of gruesome killings. The colossal negligence and apathy of the
Government and other organisations in this case are blatantly seen. In a knee-
jerk reaction, the Government, after keeping absolutely silent about the incident
on the first three days, had ordered a Commissioner-level enquiry into the
incident and also announced Rs.1 lakh compensation to the next of kin of each
deceased.  

What has aggravated the situation is the 'pressure' by the Vishwa Hindu
Parishad and other organizations not to register cases or arrest those who took
part in the frenzied killing.  

In this great country, human life (the life of the SCs/STs) is cheaper than
that of the animals.

In addition to this sort of grievous, injurious hurt, murder, etc., there are
other types of atrocities like denying entry to public places like places of worship,
common drinking water wells, hotels and tea shops. There are also several subtle
and sophisticated atrocities on the SCs/STs which cause greater harm to their
personality as a whole, against which people cannot openly revolt or react. For
example the official atrocities in which officials belonging to SCs/STs even in

7 "Uneasy Calm in Jajjar village after lynching of five Dalits", Deccan Herald, October 21, 2002,
P-7-

8 "Jhajjar Incident/Police, VHP Role Criticized – Haryana Orders Probe", The Hindu, October 19, 2002.
higher positions are harassed, intimidated by oblique remarks, open criticism, suspension, spoiling their Annual Confidential Reports, etc.

Even K.R. Narayanan, the former President of India, who happens to be from the Scheduled Caste, could not escape from this cruel practice of caste system and untouchability. When he paid an official visit to France as the President of India, there appeared a news item labeling him as an 'untouchable'. in the headlines of a renowned daily in France named 'Le Figaro'. The subsequent apology of the editor-in-chief cannot undo the inexplicable and irreparable damage caused to a learned statesman, scholar and head of the biggest democracy in the world. The more perturbing aspect to the whole story is the reaction, rather the inaction of the people in India and elsewhere. While this act of vilification and venom should have been castigated and condemned by everyone, no one appeared to have bothered about this. Humiliating the head of the state is humiliating the entire country. There should have been official protests from the Government of India. But nothing happened for the simple reason that the person affected is an S.C.

Though certain organizations and people who are humanistic and progressive feel that "the crimes against SCs/STs are crimes against humanity", there has been a spate of atrocities going on unabated.

The gravity of the situation is so alarming and grave that it has drawn the attention of a few foreigner thinkers and authors also like Marc Galanter and Gail Omvedt. It is interesting to note that, while many of our politicians are totally

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indifferent and apathetic to this burning issue, the frequency of occurrence of atrocities and the resultant sufferings of the innocent people, have impelled some of the Members of the British Parliament to "condemn the continued atrocities against Dalits in India".

On June 7, 2003, a week before the Indian Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani was to arrive in London, 13 prominent British Labour Party M.P.s., had submitted a parliamentary motion condemning the continuing atrocities against the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (‘Dalits’). The motion raises the questions that all development agreements with India should be reviewed on the “basis of their effect on Dalit communities.” Seeking to put caste-based discrimination on the same footing as racism, it strongly recommends that India implement the measures suggested by the U.N. Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. The motion was a follow up of Amnesty International’s recent criticism of human rights “abuses” in India. Since this is very pertinent to the present study and contains a few more information, the entire news item is reproduced at Annexure IV.

As early as 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, proclaims that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. The chief among the rights are the right to life, liberty and security of person and property rights. In addition to these rights, the Universal Declaration enjoins on the nations to ensure to their citizens the right to education which is a pre-requisite for the flourishing of the human

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personality. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights have been followed by several International Covenants, the most important among them being the International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

At the national level, the framers of the Constitution of India have incorporated these basic rights enshrined in the International Covenants, in several provisions of the Constitution starting with the Preamble itself.

The Preamble crystallizes the purpose, objectives, significance and signature of the Constitution. It expresses in categorical and unequivocal terms that the Constitution establishes a democratic, secular and social order in which every one is assured SOCIAL JUSTICE, ECONOMIC JUSTICE and POLITICAL JUSTICE, LIBERTY of thought, expression and belief, EQUALITY of status and opportunity and FRATERNITY assuring the dignity of the individual and integration of the nation.

Further, under Part III of the Constitution dealing with Fundamental Rights which are justiciable and inviolable in character, the framers of the Constitution have very thoughtfully envisaged a battery of provisions against discrimination. While most of the Fundamental Rights enshrined in the Constitution are restrictions on the actions of the State, there are several provisions, including those dealing with the practice of untouchability, which are meant to regulate the actions of private individuals and also officials of the State.

These provisions of the Constitution in brief are:
Article 15(1) prohibits discrimination by the State on the grounds of caste, etc.

Article 15(2) removes disability and restriction with regard to access of citizens to shops, public restaurants and places of public entertainment or the use of wells, tanks, roads and places of public resort, on the grounds of caste, etc.

Article 15(3) & (4) empowers the State to make special provisions in favour of women and Backward Classes, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

Article 16 deals with reservation in government employment for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and Backward Classes.

Article 23(2) deals with compulsory public service.

Article 29(2) deals with admission to state-aided educational institutions to applicants regardless of religion, caste, language, etc., to which they belong.

Abolition of Untouchability

Article 17 of the Constitution of India abolishes untouchability in the following words:

"Untouchability" is abolished and its practice in any form is forbidden. The enforcement of any disability arising out of "untouchability" shall be an offense punishable in accordance with law.

"Dr. Ambedkar, the chief architect of the Constitution of India, took a vow earlier, "If I fail to do away with the abominable thraldom and inhuman injustice under which the class, into which I was born has been groaning, I will put an end to my life with a bullet". This was the glorious vow taken by Ambedkar. Untouchability was abolished under the Constitution of free Bharat. The vow
was fulfilled, the dream realized and the ambition materialized. The bondage ended. He said it. He did it."

Article 35 empowers the Parliament to enact laws prescribing punishments for these acts which are declared to be offenses in Part III of the Constitution.

In accordance with this provision, the Parliament passed the Untouchability (Offences) Act in the year 1955, which was renominated as the Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955, during 1976 by means of an amendment entitled Untouchability (Offences) Amendment and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 1976 making the provisions more powerful and more stringent, also adding new forceful provisions. This landmark legislation outlaws the enforcement of social and religious disabilities on the ground of untouchability and ventures to cure this social malaise, with strict penal action against anyone who practices untouchability directly or indirectly.

"Our Constitution guarantees equal rights to all citizens irrespective of their caste, creed, religion or sex. The Constitution has eradicated untouchability and has recognised all citizens to be equal. Inspite of the above said rights given in the Constitution to every citizen, the persons belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes have not received their due and have been treated with contempt and have suffered atrocities. The ordinary law of the land has been found insufficient to deal with the persons who commit atrocities on the persons belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and as such the Scheduled Tribes Council Act ..."

Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 was brought on the statute book"12.

Despite the Constitutional provisions and the provisions contained in the Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955, the atrocities against the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes continued to become rampant throughout the country. This intriguing state of affairs necessitated the Parliament to come out with a new enactment entitled THE SCHEDULED CASTES AND SCHEDULED TRIBES (PREVENTION OF ATROCITIES) ACT, 1989, which received the assent of the President on 11th September 1989.

The objectives of the Act has been clearly stated in the opening sentence of the Act itself, as:

"An Act to prevent the commission of offences of atrocities against the members of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, to provide for special courts for the trial of such offences and for the relief and rehabilitation of the victims of such offences and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

Be it enacted by Parliament in the Fortieth Year of the Republic of India..."

Though this Act came into force with effect from 30th January 1990, and more than a decade has elapsed, the desired result could not be achieved. While in many cases, the victims of ill-treatments and atrocities suffer silently as they are helpless and many cases are suppressed by political power, money power and

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12 Justice N.C. Kochhar, Judge, Rajasthan High Court in his foreword to the book Commentary on the SCs and STs (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989, written by Dr. Gurbax Singh.
so on, only a few cases inevitably came to light; and fewer cases are registered with the police. Even out of these fewer cases, after protracted legal rigmarole, very rarely there is a case in which conviction is ordered.

There is another saddening picture to this story. First, the prosecution does not frame the cases in a foolproof manner. Even the slightest weak point or loophole goes in favour of the accused. Secondly, due to inordinate delay, the witnesses are purchased and turn hostile and even the complainants change their stance confusing and complicating the case. These things happen either under the influence of money or under duress or both. This is the plight of cases particularly under the Protection of Civil Rights Act 1955, and the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989.

(1) CASTE SYSTEM IN INDIA

The word ‘caste’ comes from the Portuguese word casta, signifying breed, râce or kind; homem de boa casta is ‘a man of good family’. The first use of this word in restricted sense of what we now understand by caste seems to date from 1563, when Garcia de Orta wrote that ‘no one changes from his father’s trade and all those of the same caste (casta) of shoemakers are the same’. Yule and Burnek, who quote this passage follow it by another from a Decree of the Sacred Council of Goa in 1567, describing the Gentoos (Hindus) as dividing themselves ‘into distinct races or castes (castas) of greater or less dignity, holding the Christians as of lower degree, and keep them so superstitiously that no one of a higher caste can eat or drink with those of a lower’13.

Expressing that to define a caste is harder than to give a derivation of the term, Hutton quotes the definition given by Risley as 'a collection of families or groups of families bearing a common name; claiming a common descent from a mythical ancestor, human or divine; professing to follow the same hereditary calling; and regarded by those who are competent to give an opinion as forming a single homogeneous community'.

As defined by Kelkar, caste is 'a social group having two characteristics: (1) membership is confined to those who are born of members, and includes all persons so born; (2) the members are forbidden by an inexorable social law to marry outside the group. Each one of these groups has a special name by which it is called, several of such small aggregates are grouped together under a common name, while these large groups are but sub-divisions of groups still larger which have independent names. Thus we see that there are several stages of groups and that the word ‘caste’ is applied to groups at any stage. The words ‘caste’ and ‘sub-caste’ are not absolute but comparative in significance. The larger group will be called a caste while the smaller group will be called a sub-caste'.

Caste has two main features: one, that it has a specific occupation which is hereditary and two, it is endogamous in nature, that is, people of one particular caste or sub-caste will marry only within their distinct group and invariably never outside their caste or sub-caste. Caste determines the social status of an individual – whether high or low.

Though caste and ‘varna’ are used synonymously, they are not one and the same. ‘Varṇa’ obviously means colour. The term ‘varna’ originally meant the four classes into which the society was divided during the Rig Vedic period. The four categories were (1) the Brahman, (2) the Kshatriya, (3) The Vaishya, and (4) The Sudra, below whom are the outcastes. The Brahmans were said to have been born from the face of Brahma, the Creator (one of the Trinity), the Kshatriyas from his shoulders, the Vaishyas from his stomach and the Sudras from his feet. The colours assigned to each of the four ‘varnos’ are white for the Brahmans, red for the Kshatriyas, yellow for the Vaishya and black for the Sudras. According to the Vedas, the Brahmans acted as priests; Kshatriyas or Rajanyas were rulers, nobles, and fighters; Vaishyas were the householders doing business, trade and the Sudras were to be the servile classes to serve the three superior ‘varnas’. The first three ‘varnas’ were considered as the ‘twice-born’ (dweja) classes as they were ceremonially reborn at the initiation ritual called ‘Upanayana’ and were given the ‘sacred thread’. This ceremony and ‘sacred thread’ were proscribed for the Sudras. The term Sudra ‘does not even appear in the early parts of the collection of the Vedas’15. In course of time, the people outside ‘Varnashrama Dharma’ called ‘Avarnas’ (i.e., outside the four varnas) also called the ‘panchamas’ (the fifth class), untouchables, and later called by all sorts of names mostly demeaning, derisive, derogatory, disparaging names, starting with ‘Mlechhas’ and ‘Chandalas’ as called by Manu – said to be the ancient law-giver - down to the term ‘Dalits’16.

16 The different names for this category is given on page 34.
These 'varnas', these classes of peoples, in due course of time, depending upon their language, region, tradition, customs, rituals, the gods and goddesses they worshipped, the avocations they practised, etc., became 'caste' and castes within the castes called the 'sub-castes' and they became like water-tight compartments. Castes and sub-castes have become so rigid, inexorable and immutable that there is absolutely no opportunity for mobility from one to another.

"For although social institutions that resemble caste in one respect or another are not difficult to find elsewhere, and some of them undoubtedly have some association with caste in their ultimate origin, yet caste in its fullest sense, caste, that is, as we know in India, is an exclusive Indian phenomenon. No comparable institution to be seen elsewhere has anything like the complexity, elaboration and rigidity of Caste in India."  

The root cause for the persistence of the practice of untouchability and the perpetration of atrocities on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes is the caste system. Caste system has been the bane of our Indian society. It is a blot on our glorious culture and civilization about which more often we brag ourselves. It is a slur on the Hindu religion, which is one of the major religions in the world. It is the single most destructive, demoralizing and dehumanizing phenomenon, which divides the people of India both horizontally and vertically, into thousands of castes and sub-castes. Caste system has been used, misused and abused by unscrupulous elements to capture political power in the name of caste and to

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divide and rule the people. Caste system has taken away peace and tranquility among the people and made them to be always at loggerheads. The so-called religious mutts and institutions are built and are prospering in the name of castes. Even the educational institutions, which are considered as the temples of learning, are run in the name of castes.

Though birth is sheer accidental, life of people in different walks - social, economic, political, cultural and religious - are all based on graded inequality and the status of an individual is pre-determined, pre-destined by birth. Even when the child is in the womb of the mother, a caste label is given to the child; the child's life in society and ultimately its future and destiny are also determined by caste. Caste system has become immutable in India. It carves a permanent, indelible mark on the forehead of an individual. An individual may achieve anything in life, may go to any height of success, may change his religion, acquire higher status educationally, economically, politically, officially, spiritually etc; but alas! he cannot change his caste. Such is the destructive, damaging nature and influence of caste on the lives of people, which is affecting the very vitals of Indian society.

Comparison with Slavery, Apartheid and Racial Discrimination

The protagonists of caste system argue that caste system is not peculiar only to India. They try to rationalize that caste system is based on division of labour and such division of society prevailed in other parts of the world like the Greek City States, ancient Rome, Middle East and so on. They further argue that
there are worst forms of social systems than caste system like slavery, apartheid and racial segregation in other parts of the world.

Of course, at the dawn of human history and civilization there was a social institution called slavery in many parts of the world. People were living in clans and tribes without any fixed territorial settlement. Wherever there used to be a war between two tribes or clans, the victor in the tribal war became the ruler and the vanquished became the slaves to serve the conquerors. As observed by Jagjivan Ram. "In Europe strong territorial governments brought about a change not only from tribalism to territorialism, but also the imposition of a national or cradle religion led to the institution of tribal differences". Further, this institution of slavery started disappearing with growing awareness of human values, human dignity, sense of equality and brotherhood both among the victors and the vanquished.

There were certain other inhuman practices prevailing in certain parts of the world. The worst form of this practice was in South Africa called Apartheid. The Whites, who were colonial rulers in South Africa, discriminated against the Blacks. Many of the nations in the world decried South Africa for its practice of Apartheid. South Africa was ostracized in the comity of nations and membership was refused in the United Nations. After prolonged fight and several years of suffering and imprisonment of their leaders like Nelson Mandela, they at last won their great cause, ending this age old practice.

In the United States, racial discrimination against the Black also ended with the American Civil War, of course, after great struggle. Now the Blacks are part and parcel of the country, merging with the mainstream of American life. They participate freely in the activities of social, economic and political life of America. Since America is a country of opportunities and upholds human values and human dignity, liberty and equality, the Blacks are outstanding in several fields like sports, films, fine arts, literature and so on.

Now we are beset with the questions: why this caste system, caste discrimination, the practice of untouchability and the resultant atrocities on the weak, innocent people are becoming rampant and are growing more and more intense? Why the efforts of the successive governments to eradicate untouchability have become futile? Why the efforts of several social and religious reformers have become a cry in the wilderness? Why even the laws and legislations have failed?

The main reason is: slavery, apartheid and racial discriminations were only social institutions and social practices without any sort of sanction behind them. Whereas, casteism, caste system, caste discrimination and the practice of untouchability have religious sanction behind them. These practices have emanated from Hindu religion, and they have religious sanction. Manusmriti and several scriptures created and upheld the caste structure in the Hindu society and the practice of untouchability is legitimized. That is why caste and communal feelings, caste discrimination, the practice of inequality of the people and ill-treatment of those who are in the lower strata, have become deep-rooted in
the minds of people and have gone deeper in the vitals of the society. People all over the country are becoming more and more caste conscious. There is an all pervasive ‘social schizophrenia’ among the people in our country.

**Genesis, Historical Growth and Development of Caste System in India**

Dr B.R. Ambedkar has very aptly observed “he who does not know history cannot create history”. Therefore, to understand the caste system better and to understand its ramifications, including the practice of untouchability and to study the causes of atrocities, it is absolutely necessary to know the origin, historical growth and development of caste system in India.

While examining the genesis of caste system, Sri Jagjivan Ram has stated, “The institution of caste, with its corollary – untouchability – is a peculiar and complex social phenomenon. Its roots are deeply buried in dim and distant antiquity and, therefore, it has not been possible for scholars to be unanimous about the origin and growth of this unique system”.20

“The origin of caste and of untouchability lie deep in India’s ancient past and the evidence of these origins provided by the archaeological and literary sources now available is, at best circumstantial, consequentially, scholars have been forced to engage in considerable speculations in their efforts to reconstruct the past history of untouchability. What we now have are not hard and clear

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19 Sarah Ban Breathnach, in her famous best seller *Simple Abundance*, uses this term to indicate the pervasive conditioning of the people to be others and not themselves; to be a second-rate version of somebody else rather than being a first-rate version of themselves. The researcher felt that this term summarizes best the obsession, attitude and behaviour of the people in India with regard to caste.

but a variety of competing theories, all of which have proved difficult to substantiate in a convincing manner".21

Despite the divergence of views of the scholars regarding when and how the caste system took its birth in India, they are all of the unanimous opinion on certain aspects.

♦ That it all started with the Aryan invasion of India. For several centuries they were in constant conflict with the indigenous people named Dravidians, whom they looked down upon as culturally inferior and shunned as ritually unclean.

♦ That when the indigenous people were ultimately conquered by the Aryans with their superior military power, some of the defeated people withdrew into regions that were not occupied by the Aryans and others continued to stay in the Aryan dominated society as separate inferior castes.

More frequent references are made in the post-Rig Vedic literature about the primitive forest-dwellers who were called Chandalas. Although Chandalas were severely stigmatized in the later Vedic period, it was only in the period between 600 BC and 200 AD that ‘untouchability’ appeared as such. In Dharma Sutras and in Kautilya’s Arthasastra, the ‘Mixed Caste Theory’ of the origins of untouchability is enunciated. However, it is in the Manusmrithi that this theory

as well as Varna theory and classification of castes in a hierarchy based on occupation and degree of pollution received its classic statement.

According to Manu, the so-called ancient Indian Law-giver, untouchability is the punishment for miscegenation between a member of the high caste and that of a low caste or an out case. P.Lakshmi Narasu, quotes Santiparva of the Mahabharata that “The Sudras and Vaishyas acting most willfully began unite themselves with the wives of Brahmans”. He further states that “without the least compunction Manu speaks of Chandalas and other lower castes as the offsprings of adulterous Brahman women. The bovine practice said by Strabo to be common in Ancient India is attested by the Mahabharata”. Thus the children of such unequal pairs became untouchables, and greater the social gap between the two parents, the lower the status of their children.²²

Dr. Ambedkar’s thesis on the origin of untouchability as expounded in his book ‘The Untouchables’ (1948) is altogether a novel one. The distinction between the Hindus and the untouchables in its original forms, before the advent of untouchability, was the distinction between Tribesmen and Broken Men from alien tribes.

Dr. Ambedkar explains what he means by broken men. When primitive society began to settle down and to cultivate, certain tribes remained nomadic and warlike. They began to attack the settled tribes as the latter were wealthier. The settled men needed defenders as they had lost their warlike spirit. They employed Broken Men – defeated nomads and stray individuals who needed

protection and shelter. They became the mercenaries of the settlers but were not allowed to stay within the settlement. They were kept at a distance as they belonged to different tribes. They were treated as Broken Men and as mercenaries. It is the Broken Men who subsequently came to be treated as untouchables.

There are two roots from which untouchability has sprung:

(1) Contempt and hatred for the Broken Men, as for Buddhism by the Brahmins.

(2) Continuation of beef-eating by the Broken Men after it had been given up by the others.

Dr. Ambedkar believes that the root cause of untouchability lies in a pronounced cultural or racial difference of contempt and hatred, coupled with a close economic dependence of the inferior on the superior one.

According to Dr. Ambedkar, "Caste existed before Manu. He was an upholder of it and therefore, philosophized about it, but certainly he did not and could not ordain the present order of Hindu society. His work ended with the codification of existing caste rules and the preaching of caste dharma. Dr. Ambedkar accepted sub-division of a society as quite natural. But the unnatural thing about these sub-divisions is that they have lost the open-door character of the class system and have become self-enclosed units called castes. "Some closed the door and others found it closed against them". His observation as to how the non-Brahmins also followed the closed-door system is quite interesting. "Endogamy or the closed-door system was a fashion in the Hindu
society and as it had originated from the Brahmin caste it was whole-heartedly
imitated by all the non-Brahmin sub-divisions or classes, who in turn, became
endogamous castes. It was due to "the infection of imitation".23

Further Dr. Ambedkar quotes Walter Bagehot who explains how this
imitation was based on the belief system.

"We must not think of .... imitation as voluntary or even unconscious.
On the contrary, it has its seat mainly in very obscure parts of the mind, whose
notions, so far from being unconsciously produced are hardly felt to exist; so far
from being convinced before hand are not even felt at that time. The main seat of
the imitative part of our nature is our belief. ..."24

That is how caste system spread far and wide, creating thousands of sub­
castes in the country.

(2) MEANING AND DEFINITION OF ‘ATROCITY’

To get the correct and accurate meaning of any word, it is advisable to
consult the Dictionary.

The etymology of the word atrocity is given below:

Atrocity n. great wickedness or cruelty. 1534, In the writings of Sir Thomas
More, borrowed, perhaps through influence of Middle French
‘atrocite’ from Latin ‘atroctas’, from ‘atrox’ gloomy, cruel.

23 Ambedkar, B.R. Dr. "Castes in India, their Mechanism, Genesis and Development", compiled
24 Ibid, p.18.
fierce, originally meaning "having a gloomy face" (stem 'atr' related to 'ater', black, dark + a lost noun 'öqws' eye, face); ity - a suffix forming noun from adjectives and meaning condition or quality of being.

For a clear understanding of the word 'atrocious', it is better to start with the root word 'atrocity'. Webster has given the meaning of both these words in his book Webster’s Third New International Dictionary,

Atrocious, adj. (L. atrac, atrox, gloomy, cruel)
1. Marked by or given to extreme wickedness (leading an ~ life) (an ~ criminal).
2. (a) marked by or given to extreme brutality or cruelty: grossly inhuman (his ~ treatment in prison), an ~ dictatorship) (b) outrageous violating the bounds of common decency: uncivility, BARBARIC (the ~ exploitation of human beings in mines and mills).
3. (a) extremely painful; marked by intense distress: GRIEVIOUS (he had known long and ~ suffering from wounds in the war (b) marked by extreme violence: savage fierce: MURDEROUS (~ assault and battery)
4. If such a kind as to fill with fright or dismay: APPALLING, TERRIBLE (to ~ truth flazed in the night lightning): (an ~ accident), utterly revolting: ABOMINABLE (~ weather) (~ working condition), (b) markedly inferior in quality (an ~ speller) (~ manners).

Atrocity adv.
Atrociousness – atrocity, n.
Atrocity L atrocitat – atricitas, atroc, atrox.

1. (a) quality or state of atrocious. (the tyrant’s ~ in dealing with the prisoners) (b) something that is atrocious (1) an execrable situation [situation or circumstance (having to put up with the atrocities of living in a narrow minded society)], (2) a gross departure from social correctness or good taste (drunken guests committing one ~ after another (a hat that was an utter ~).

2. A savagely brutal or cruel deeds: esp: an act violating the code of human restrictions morally imposed on belligerents (accused of war atrocities)

**Definition**

From the meaning given by Webster, it could be clearly understood as to ‘what is ATROCITY?’

We could define ‘Atrocity’ as follows:

“Atrocity is an act marked by or given to extreme wickedness, extreme violence, brutality or cruelty which is grossly inhuman and outrageous, violating the bounds of common decency”.

“Atrocity is something atrocious as a detestable situation or circumstance of having to put up with the atrocities of living in a narrow-minded society, a gross departure from social norms and mores and a savagely brutal and cruel deed, violating the code of human restrictions morally imposed on the dominant category of people”.

27
There are many codes and international covenants regarding the treatment of the prisoners of war. The whole world condemned the inhuman treatment of the Jews by the Nazis, in unequivocal terms for gross violation of this code of human dignity and covenants. When such is the case with regard to prisoners, enemies, and antagonistic aliens, how could atrocities be committed on fellow-citizens, in a democracy, with impunity, flouting the legal and constitutional provisions. One wonders, is there a Government, is there law or 'rule of law' in this country!

The Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989, has not defined the term atrocity in its general or legal sense. But the acts and offences that would constitute 'atrocity' and the punishment to be given, as enumerated in the Act, are given in Chapter 3.

What is Untouchability?

The term 'untouchability' or 'untouchable' has not been defined in the Constitution. There are no statutory definitions of these terms. Under these circumstances, the definition and views of some authorities will throw light on the subject.

Mr. Justice N. Srinivasa Rao has observed that "the subject matter of Article 17 (of the Constitution of India) is not untouchability in its literal or grammatical sense but the practice as it had developed historically in this country. In the Act also, the use of the word 'untouchability' refers to the meaning of the term in the context of historical development of the practice and does not connote its literal meaning. The literal construction of the term would include persons
who are treated as untouchables either temporarily or otherwise for various reasons, such as their suffering from an epidemic or contagious disease or on account of social observance such as one associated with birth or dearth or due to social boycott resulting from caste or other disputes. Untouchability in such circumstances has no relation to the causes which relegated certain classes of people beyond the pale of the caste system\textsuperscript{26}.

In the words of \textbf{V.S. Nargolkar}, “Untouchability is largely an out-growth of the system of caste and caste in its turn is the illegitimate child of the concept of Varma\textsuperscript{27}.

The definition given by \textbf{Dr. Ambedkar} is: “Untouchability is the notion of defilement, pollution, contamination and the ways and means of getting rid of the defilement. It is a case of permanent, hereditary stain which nothing can cleanse”\textsuperscript{28}.

\textbf{According to Dr. M.C.J. Kagzi}: “It connotes the caste action or practice of non-touching of the members of the lowest caste Hindus by the caste Hindus. It means separation, segregation and isolation of such persons from the higher caste Hindus. It means keeping the Harijan untouchables away from, and outside the main social stream from misplaced fear of pollution, requiring them to keep themselves aloof from places of public resort and also temples. It accompanies social segregation, economic isolation, non-entry into educational institutions.

\textsuperscript{26} G.S. Sharma, \textit{Legislation and Cases on Untouchability and Scheduled Castes in India}, Allied Publishers, New Delhi, 1975.
disqualification for the learned profession, trade and industry. It implies absence of social inter-course, and forbids a marriage between a higher caste Hindu with a low caste Hindu. It results in socio-economic discrimination, loss of status, absence of civil personalities and civil liberties, perpetual social boycott. It is so to say discrimination, segregation, disability, inequality, liability caused only by low caste birth” 29.

Prof. Marc Galanter is of the opinion: “In its broadest sense ‘untouchability’ might include all instances in which one person treated another as ritually unclean and a source of pollution”.

A second somewhat narrower sense of the term would include all instances in which a person was stigmatized as unclean or polluting or inferior because of his origin or membership in a particular group, i.e., where he is subjected to invidious treatment because of difference in religion and membership in a lower or different caste.

Thus we arrive at a third and still narrower sense of the term ‘untouchability’ – as referring only to those practices concerned with the relegation of certain groups ‘beyond the pale of the caste system’ that is confining it to those disabilities imposed on groups commonly regarded as ‘untouchables’.

'Untouchability' then, as used in Article 17, is confined to invidious discriminations against certain not readily definable classes of persons.\(^{30}\)

The Committee on Untouchability Headed by L. Elayaperumal defines: "Untouchability is a basic and unique feature of the Hindu social system and order. It is generally held these days that it is an economic backwardness of the people concerned. But the simple fact is forgotten that while economic issues are present in all other countries, untouchability is a unique problem confronted in this country only. It does not require much research to realise that the phenomenon of untouchability in this country is fundamentally of a religious and political origin. Untouchability is not a separate institution by itself, it is a corollary of the institutions of the Caste system of Hindu Society. It is an attitude on the part of a whole group of people. It is the spirit of social aggression that underlies this attitude."\(^{31}\)

From these definitions and from the practice of untouchability that is in vogue, even today, we could form certain conclusions:

- that untouchability and its practice are exceptional, incomparable and inimitable to Hinduism;

- that untouchability does not mean only not touching someone for health or hygienic reasons, but it is a mindset of the so-called superior


that it is thrust upon the people, calling them untouchables, by coercion, chicanery and cunningness of the higher religious segments of society;

- that it is inextricably intertwined with illiteracy, ignorance, poverty and caste;

- that it is a stain, a stigma permanently ascribed to some people of the Indian populace. However high they might elevate themselves intellectually, economically, officially or otherwise, this stigma and ridicule of untouchables will continue; and

- that it is the mental attitude and behaviour which are manifested starting with the simplest form of contemptuous “frowning” to prevention of entry to public place, deprivation, exclusion, excommunication, upto most extreme, cruel, inhuman acts of humiliations, ill-treatments, harassments and atrocities.

(3) UNTOUCHABILITY AND ITS PRACTICE

Ever since the ingenious, crafty brains of the higher strata created the caste system and its concomitance - ‘untouchability’ - in the name of religion, people have been practicing untouchability for ages. The so-called
'untouchables' were denied entry to places of worship and public entertainment. They were denied access to the sources of drinking water, shops, hospitals, and educational institutions. They were forced to do unhealthy, unhygienic jobs. They were insulted, assaulted, and treated as inhuman beings. They were murdered, burnt alive and their women paraded naked, and raped. Several atrocities which are beyond human imagination were perpetuated against them.

The practice of untouchability is continuing on and on and the atrocities on the ex-untouchables in free India are going on unabated, even after more than fifty-five years of Independence. The Constitution has abolished untouchability and its practice in any form. The enforcement of any disability arising out of 'untouchability' shall be an offence punishable in accordance with law. The successive Governments at the Centre and at the States are complacent that the two enactments: The Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955 and the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989, would take care of the matter and nothing more needs to be done, except spending money from the budget for the so-called 'welfare' activities of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and dealing with the cases of atrocities as and when they occur.

This research work focuses, among other things, on the perpetuation of the practice of untouchability, the perpetration of atrocities on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, their causes and on the preventive measures which will bring some lasting solutions.
DIFFERENT NAMES FOR SCHEDULED CASTES AND SCHEDULED TRIBES

The 'untouchables', through the ages, have been called, rather 'labelled' and 'branded' by different names, most of the times in accordance with the whims and fancies of the upper caste people.

Manu, who is considered as the ancient law-giver of the Hindus or as Dr. Ambedkar calls him as 'the person who just codified the Hindu law', called the untouchables as Mlechhas and Chandalas. They were called as Panchamas (the fifth class) and Avarna (the prefix 'a' indicates 'non', like in words such as a-himsa, a-shanti, a-manush, etc.) meaning 'non-varna' - outside the four varnas, because they were the lowest and outside the social strata, below the four varnas: Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Sudras and serving these varnas, doing all sorts of menial and undignified jobs. Avarna would also mean a 'non-entity'. They were called asprushya – the Sanskrit equivalent for 'untouchable'.

Antyajas, Atisudras, Nishadas and Paulkasa are other names used for the untouchables. They are also called 'outcastes', pariahs a Tamil word derived from para or parai - the drum. It is a matter of interest and concern to note that 'the practice of untouchability and discrimination was so common and rampant that this word 'pariah' has found place in the English Dictionaries, meaning "an outcaste; one of a low caste in southern India and of Burma; fig. one despised by society"33. Now it has been used as a common word in English vocabulary to mean a person who is an outcaste, a social leper, a social outcaste despised by

A British Minister in some context said “I will treat him as a pariah”. When protests were made for using this derogatory word which wounded the feelings of the people called pariahs, the Minister explained that he only used a word found in the English Dictionary. However, he apologized for using the word.

They were called ‘Exterior Castes’, used by J.H. Hutton and ‘Depressed Classes’ by the British. This term was widely in vogue during the British regime and for a few years even after Independence.

The term ‘Harijan’ was first coined by Narasimha Mehta. It is said. That an untouchable woman wanted to admit her son to an orphanage run by Narasimha Mehta in Gujarat and could not give the name of the father of the boy as she was a Devadasi or prostitute. Narasimha Mehta, in his own wisdom, gave the name of the father as ‘Harijan’ meaning the child of Hari – also called Vishnu the Creator. This term was adopted and popularized by Mahatma Gandhiji and very widely used for quite sometime mostly by the followers of Gandhiji and the Congressmen in the earlier years.

This term ‘Harijan’ was a bitter anathema to Dr. Ambedkar. He considered the term as ignominious and preposterous. Even during the Round Table Conference held in London, he shunned the use of this word and wanted these people to be called by a dignified name. Dananjay Keer explains

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34 Wilfred Funk, Norman Lewis, 30 Days to a More Powerful Vocabulary, Binny Publishing House, Delhi, 1980, pp.98 to108.
35 S.M. Michael, Editor, in his Introduction to the Book Dalits in Modern India.
clearly the views of Dr. Ambedkar and Gandhiji regarding the usage of the name ‘Harijan’ to described the Scheduled Castes, as follows:

“Meanwhile, the Congress Ministry in Bombay while amending the Local Boards Act, described the Scheduled Castes as ‘Harijans’. It thrusted this name down the throats of the Scheduled Castes though Dr. Ambedkar, their accredited leader, who had captured 13 reserved seats out of 15 in the Province, had opposed it tooth and nail and even staged a walk-out on the issue. It was Gandhi’s wish and his devotees did not care for the wishes of the community concerned.

“It was, however, a fact that at the second session of the Round Table Conference, Dr. Ambedkar had suggested that the Depressed Classes should be called Protestant Hindus, Non-Caste Hindus or Non-Conformist Hindus. Gandhi might have picked one from these, but in such matters he behaved dictatorially. Later Ambedkar renamed them Buddhajan and broke their connection with God Hari, as Buddhism does not believe in God and Soul”36.

For quite sometime, may be upto the early part of eighties, the term ‘Harijan’ was used by people to refer to the Scheduled Castes and without knowing the implications or due to ignorance, the Scheduled Castes called themselves ‘Harijans’, particularly in the rural areas. In some of the northern districts like Bijapur, people used to have ‘Harijan’ and other names of castes and sub-castes as surname. While working as the Special Deputy Commissioner of Bijapur District, the researcher observed this and appealed to the leaders. social

36 Dananjay Keer in his book Mahatma Gandhi, A Political Saint and Unarmed Prophet, p.646.
workers, officials, the teachers and the people concerned to see that the caste and sub caste names including ‘Harijan’ is not used as surname and to make necessary changes in school records and to enter any other name like the village name, ‘house’ name like ‘Hadimani’, ‘Moolimani’, ‘Kattimani’, etc., or even the names of the vegetables such as, Menasinakai, Ulagaddi, etc., which used to be the practice among other castes.

However, the word ‘Harijan’ started losing its currency even among the Congressmen and now it has become almost obsolete.

Now, another name is given to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the place of ‘Harijans’ and the term is very widely used. ‘Dalit’ is that word that is very loosely used by people in journalistic writings, books, speeches, etc., to refer to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and others. Of course, there are certain Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes organizations called Dalit Panthers (which has now been merged with the Republican Party of India) and Dalit Sangarsh Samiti (DSS as they are popularly called). Now there are a few factions of D.S.S. with different nomenclatures, using the word ‘Dalit’. But this does not mean that the entire Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes population could be called as Dalits and that they have consented to be called by that name. This term is in no way different from the word ‘Harijan’, and this name is thrust upon the people concerned, much against the wishes of majority of them. Who are the people who use this term very freely and frequently in their writings and speeches? It is mostly the non – SCs & STs, barring the DSS and their factions.
John C.B. Webster, in his article “Who is a Dalit?” states about the origin of the word ‘Dalit’ as follows:

“Dalit (‘Depressed’ or ‘Broken’) is not a new word. Apparently it was used in the 1930s as a Hindi and Marathi translation of ‘Depressed Classes’, the term the British used for what are now called the Scheduled Castes. In 1930 there was a depressed classes newspaper published in Pune called Dalit Bandu (‘friends of Dalits’) (Pradan, 1986:125). The word was also used by B.R. Ambedkar in his Marathi speeches. In the Untouchables published in 1948, Ambedkar chose the term ‘broken men’ an English translation of ‘Dalit’, to refer to the original ancestors of the untouchables, for reasons which must have been self-evident because he did not explain them”. 37

The veracity of this statement, the different views and interpretations of this term ‘dalit’ its impact on the minds of the people, etc., will be discussed at a later stage. Suffice it is to say here that one meaning that is attributed to this word is that it refers to the Hindu untouchables – the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, as per the Constitution and the Government of India orders; and another view is that it is applicable to all those who are subjected to discrimination and ill-treatment like the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, Christians (Dalit Christians as they are called) working class, landless and poor farmers and women, irrespective of caste.

The term Scheduled Caste was first coined by the Simon Commission. The Commission and its Education Committee and Finance Commission thoroughly studied the cases of the people who were till then called as untouchables, the depressed classes or the backward classes, and then coined this nomenclature. Subsequently, this name was incorporated in the Government of India Act, 1935 in Section 309. Though Mahatma Gandhi had, through his weekly *The Harijan* and his Harijan Sevak Sangh and other organizations, his propaganda and his fasts, tried to designate these classes as *Harijans*, the framers of the Constitution, the largest bulk of whom were staunch followers and devotees of Gandhi, surprisingly adopted the term coined by the Simon Commission.\(^{38}\)

Though the Constitution of India has named these categories of people as Scheduled Castes, it does not define this term. Article 341 of the Constitution empowers the President, after consulting the head of the particular State, to notify by an order “The castes, races or tribes or parts of or groups within castes, races or tribes which shall for the purposes of this Constitution be deemed to be Scheduled Castes in relation to that State”. The second clause of the Article empowers Parliament to pass a law to include in or exclude from the list so notified by the President “any caste, race, or tribe or part of a group within any caste, race, or tribe”.


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Therefore, the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are those Castes and Tribes which are listed in the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Order, for the time being in force. The present study is confined only to these people. The names of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes of Karnataka are given at Annexure I and Annexure II respectively.

(5) **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

1. To study the meaning and definition of atrocity and to explore the types, manifestations and modalities of atrocities on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes from the subtler to the crudest and most cruel forms.

2. To trace in brief the genesis, historical growth and development of caste system, untouchability and atrocities on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

3. To study the cases of atrocities which were committed in Karnataka from 1980 and to analyze the causes – social, economic, political and others.

4. To study the emergence of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribe movements in Karnataka and their role in relation to cases of atrocities.

5. To examine the effectiveness in the implementation of laws and legislations in combating and in preventing atrocities.

6. To review the remedial and rehabilitative measures taken up for the amelioration of the victims of atrocities and to come out with suggestions and recommendations regarding rehabilitative and preventive measures.
(6) HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

Hypothesis No.1

In a society that is in the process of transition from tradition and conservatism to modernity and liberalism, those in the higher state of social hierarchy have an attitude and tendency to dominate, oppress, suppress and ill-treat those in the lower strata.

Hypothesis No.2

Awakening, self-assertion and the craving and clamoring of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes for self-identity and retrieval of human dignity, claiming equal rights, equal status and opportunity, have led to more violence on them.

Hypothesis No.3

Given the social structure and fabric of the Indian society, a psychological transformation in the perception, attitude and behaviour, a PARADIGM SHIFT, of those in the upper strata, as well as the others in the lower strata, is necessary to bring about social justice, social change and social transformation.

Hypothesis No.4

Personal transformation through self-help, self-esteem and self-elevation leading to social change and social transformation, is the lasting solution for this social evil.
(7) METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The period taken up for the study is from 1980 to 2001. Of course, the origin, the historical growth and development of atrocities, (including the pre-independence and post-independence years) in Karnataka, is discussed in a succinct manner. This period of twenty years is considered to be neither too short nor too long for the purpose of study, for, a shorter period than this would render it difficult to draw proper conclusions and a longer period would cause problems regarding manageability and treatment of the subject effectively.

Primary Sources:

Since the main focus of the study is to get into greater details of the causes of atrocities under three main categories, i.e., political, social, and economic, important cases which are symbolic have been studied and analytical discussions on the symptomatic cases have been made. For this purpose, the original and raw data, like the basic reports of the field-level officials concerned with the welfare of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and the law enforcement authorities have been studied.

The other primary and original sources of study, including the relevant Acts, Rules and Regulations, Govt. Orders, Govt. files, reports of the National Commission on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, reports of the special Legislative Committees, reports of the Director General of Civil Rights Enforcement and Annual Reports of the Governments have also been studied.
Secondary Sources:

There are not many books directly concerned with the subject. There appears to be no research papers also on this subject except for a solitary work done by Dr. N.D. Kamble of the Institute for Social Economic Change, Bangalore. There are a few articles on the subject published in books, magazines and newspapers. These sources, books and research papers on allied subjects like caste system, abolition of untouchability, protection of civil rights, emergence of Dalit Movements, the books on and by Dr. Baba Sahib Ambedkar, and other political and social reformers have been consulted.

The reports, articles, news items, etc., that appeared in magazines, journals and newspapers, along with reports, representations, etc., made by various Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribe organizations, have also been perused.

It has been the mission and vision of this endeavour to transform the lives of the vulnerable, marginalized sections of the society, through the ‘inside out methods’ of self-help, self-knowledge, self-elevation and self-esteem, professed and practised by Baba Sahib Ambedkar and many others who have risen from dust to doyen. Therefore, several books on self-improvement, empowerment, personality development, transformation, self-realization, etc., have been gone through in detail.

39 The book by Dr. N.D. Kamble entitled Atrocities on Scheduled Castes in Post-Independent India (15th August 1947 to 15th August 1979).
Survey and interviews:

Mere study of the cases, examination and explanation of the causes of atrocities on SCs/STs will not make the study complete. In order to make the study relevant and meaningful in the present context, rehabilitative and remedial measures have been recommended. For this purpose, a selective survey has been conducted, circulating a questionnaire among the important persons and personalities to be reckoned with and their personal views and opinions on the causes of atrocities, remedial and rehabilitative measures have been recorded and used in the work.

Apart from all this, being a member of Scheduled Caste, the author himself has personally seen and known, experienced and encountered the demonical attacks of atrocities and discrimination. As the administrator working in different capacities in the state, particularly as Sub Divisional Magistrate and District Magistrate, Director of Backward Classes and Minorities and Director of Social Welfare (Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes welfare), the researcher has handled the cases of atrocities and also taken preventive steps and rehabilitated the victims.

The researcher has also seen and experienced official discrimination and harassment now and then. Without being biased or prejudiced, these personal knowledge and experiences are shared in an authentic manner in the study, along with his strong conviction and personal experience that among other things, personal transformation and self-elevation, character and competence building are the antidote and panacea for any sort of discrimination and atrocity.
The study is of paramount importance in the present context in which there is ever-increasing incidence of discrimination, ill-treatment and atrocities on the weaker sections. The emerging trends of awakening, awareness and self-assertion among the deprived sections is ever increasing and is unstoppable. The growth of literacy among these people, though slow but steady, the educated among them vying with the forward categories for distinctions in the academics and also selections to the coveted positions in services in government and also in private enterprises, the emergence of leadership among these people at all levels, even the small economic advancement among the poorer sections are some of the major contributing factors to their growing awareness and the craving for self identity and human dignity.

The Centenary Celebrations of Dr. Ambedkar's birthday during 1990 - 1992, throughout the country were observed with much pomp and festivity. The Government of India under the Premiership of Sri. V.P. Singh, who was committed to the cause of the weaker sections and backward classes, besides celebrating the centenary on a grand scale, took some exemplary, landmark steps to mark the centenary birthday celebrations of Dr. Ambedkar. Some of the major steps were:

1) Dr. Ambedkar was conferred the country's highest award "Bharath Ratna", posthumously. Many progressive people felt it was a very belated decision. "Should it take several decades for

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40 Dr. Ambedkar, the indefatigable champion of the downtrodden and their emancipator, the Chief Architect of the Constitution was born on 14th April 1891.)
the people of India to realize the greatness of this noble son of India and to pay their gratitude for his invaluable contributions made to this country?” was their question. Many were of the strong view, (the researcher is also one among them) that Dr. Ambedkar richly deserves international awards like the “Nobel Prize” for emancipating the lives of millions of people of India, the weaker sections, backward classes, women, labourers, the impact of which is continuing even today and will continue to benefit the posterity.

2) Installing the portrait of Dr. Ambedkar in the Central Hall of the Parliament.

3) Extending reservations to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes who have converted to Buddhism – which was the demand of these people for many decades.

4) Establishment of Ambedkar Foundation at Delhi and taking up several schemes and activities for the welfare of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

In Karnataka also there were official functions at the state level conducted on a grand scale and in an unprecedented manner and there were celebrations at the District and Taluk levels also. Besides this, several Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and Backward Class organizations also celebrated the centenary on a grand scale.
Not to be left out, every political party also celebrated the centenary. AMBEDKAR JYOTHI, organized by Mariswamy, I.P.S., went throughout Karnataka covering all the districts, spreading the message of Dr. Ambedkar and distributing the literature of Dr. Ambedkar.

The Government of Karnataka also launched several new, innovative programmes like starting residential schools for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribe students, one in each Revenue Division; with the help of Government of India many residential schools were sanctioned to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribe organizations; Dr. Ambedkar Research Centre was started; Dr. Ambedkar statue was installed in front of the Town Hall in the historic city of Mysore.

The reason for mentioning all this development is to point out that though the Birth Anniversary of Dr. Ambedkar used to be celebrated by Government and other organizations, it is after the Centenary Year more and more organizations, political parties, have started celebrating the birth anniversary. The Centenary Year of B.R.Ambedkar has seen a plethora of publications, thus adding to the growing literature on Ambedkarism, Dalit Politics and Dalit Movement. As a result of all this, more and more awareness and awakening are kindled in the minds of people and make them feel “Enough is enough. I will not anymore allow myself to be exploited by others, for whatever reasons, and I will establish my self-identity and self-honour, at any cost”. This awareness and ever-increasing urge for self-respect, self-assertion and the burning desire to recapture

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their lost dignity and to claim equal status and opportunity with the ‘so-called’
forward castes and communities, are a rude shock to the people who were
hitherto enjoying the unflinching respect and unquestioned servitude of the
Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes for several centuries. Hence more
backlashes, more ill-treatments and atrocities are wreaked on the Scheduled
Castes and Scheduled Tribes. But now these people remain no more as passive
and mute sufferers. They have not only started questioning the unjust claims and
illegal actions, they have also started to resist, react, revolt and retaliate which
further infuriates the intolerant, dominant castes and the perpetrators of atrocities
and they indulge in more violence against the weaker sections with a view to
“teach them a lesson and show them their place”.

Even the small, peripheral improvements made by the weaker sections in
their personal life style, in getting some jobs, getting some land granted by
Government or purchased, going for higher education, getting distinctions, doing
some business, being efficient, and shining in different fields, etc., become
sources of heart-burning, jealousy and hatred among the traditionally dominant
castes who were under the grand illusion that “the improvements and progress
are the monopoly of the superior castes and definitely not of the Scheduled
Castes and Scheduled Tribes who they call “untouchables”. For that matter, even
dressing well, wearing foot-wears, looking neat and smart are an eyesore for
those who still blindly cling on to the caste paradigm. The result of all this is,
they express their fury through ill-treatment, discrimination and atrocity, though
not on the same progressing people, but on the latter’s kith and kin, and others in
their colony or on Dr. Ambedkar’s statues by defilement.
The weaker sections have realized that suffering is inevitable for them. If they remain passive and accept and tolerate the inhuman treatment of others, they have to suffer. If they react violently, revolt and retaliate, then also they have to suffer. Therefore, some of them who are educated, who treasure their self-respect more than anything else, have chosen to suffer fighting with the dominant castes rather than suffering as weak, meek, sub-human beings. Thus a vicious circle is created: more atrocities, more reactions and retaliation; more disregard and more retaliation, more atrocities. This trend will continue to the detriment of peace and harmony of the people and the country, creating frustration and discontentment among the weaker sections, if nothing is done about this. Therefore, the study of this subject has gained paramount importance in recent years.

Further, the study of this subject and finding out solutions for this burning problem, would bring about unity, peace, progress, prosperity of the country and would also absolve the country of the blame of keeping more than 25% of the population under perpetual subjugation of some sort or the other and continuing to treat them as second-rate citizens.

Further, this study and the findings would inspire and enthuse the progressive minded people to give serious thought to this burning issue, to take up more studies and explore the possibilities of establishing a better, harmonious, social order in the country, where everyone is given equal status, opportunity and human dignity.
In the words of Sri. P.S. Krishnan⁴², “The issue is not only one of liberating the Dalits from the agony of what has been a painful marker of their identity, it is also in the moral context, one of cleansing the soul of India of the evil of caste and caste based oppression that has besmirched it. At a material level it is one of preserving the integrity of India and ensuring that its dreams of prosperity are not turned into ashes. The Dalit search for a new identity is thus the search for a new India of equal citizens”.

Under these circumstances, it is felt necessary to study the cases of atrocities, the causes of atrocities, the ramification, repercussions and impact of atrocities on the weaker sections, the emergence of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribe Movements, the interplay and impact of religion, caste and politics, with regard to atrocities, rehabilitative and remedial measures and to suggest preventive steps to mitigate the incidence of atrocities.

⁴² Sri. P.S. Krishnan, an IAS Officer who held different top level positions in the Government of India including that of the Secretary to Government of India, Ministry of Welfare, has devoted his life for the welfare and wellbeing of the SCs and STs. This quote is from his article “Untouchability and Atrocities” in the book The Emerging Dalit Movement, edited by Walter Fernandes, Indian Social Institute, New Delhi, 1996.