CHAPTER -I
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THE PROBLEM

Untouchability is one of the unique features of the Indian society. Those castes within the orbit of the Hindu religion which were treated as untouchables were listed in a schedule in 1936 by the British government for the purpose of giving these castes some concessions because of their disadvantageous position in the social hierarchy. They came to later known as scheduled castes and were called "Harijans" by Gandhiji. However untouchability and social, economic and other types of discriminations on this ground continued to be there.

Untouchability and discriminations following from it exist in one form or the other in both the rural and urban areas of all states in India. It is evident that the discrimination and harassment of people belonging to the so called scheduled castes are more rempant in the rural areas than in the urban areas. This is a feature which can be observed every day although incidents concerning injustices done to people of the scheduled castes are not reported as much as they deserve to be.

The untouchable castes are not known by the same names in all the states of India. There are 1106 major untouchable castes in India. Some of these castes are found in more than one state but not in all the states. It is probable that a small number of people comprising a negligible proportion of the total number of persons belonging to the scheduled castes like Chamar is spread
throughout India. But they are not reported as untouchables and hence are not included in the scheduled castes population. The census of India enumerated and classified untouchable castes only of the Hindu religion and not of the other religions such as Sikh, Christian and Buddhist. Practically untouchable castes who converted themselves into Christianity and Sikh religion continued to be untouchable despite their change of religion. Untouchability and discrimination on this ground continues and yet these people are not enumerated as untouchables by the census of India.

Unfortunately untouchability has a religious sanction. Consequently in spite of the best efforts of many and also of changes in different directions in the society, untouchability has remained operative and continues to pollute the social fabric of our country. Religious sanction added social, economic and political dimensions to untouchability based on discrimination. The religious sanction created a social code of conduct which in turn created economic and political codes. For example the untouchables were not supposed to touch animate as well as the inanimate objects because it was believed that those things would get polluted if they were touched by the untouchables. In such a situation the untouchable cannot become economically independent. Every thing touched by him would get polluted and therefore persons belonging to the other castes will not touch anything that he prepares. Hence he cannot start even a restaurant. This is just one of the many examples which points out the sheer helplessness of an untouchable in the matter of pursuing a viable, gainful economic activity.

According to the code of Manu, the untouchables were not supposed to own any property. As a result they remained poor and economically
dependent in spite of the great changes in our society and the country. Similarly political rights were also not conferred on them. As a result they were treated like cattles and became slaves. Anyone who is familiar with the conditions of the slaves in the history of mankind can realize the extent of misery that these people have had to go through. The social, political and economic discrimination based on religious sanction was glorified and explained through the theory of divinity and Karma. Moreover these dimensions were well linked with each other in the process since time immemorial.

**METHODODOLOGY**

An attempt is made in brief to study the development and growth of the caste system in general and untouchability and discrimination on its ground in particular. Demographic characteristics of the scheduled castes, their position in caste hierarchy and occupational pattern in the various regions of India are studied with the help of religious scripts, secondary data available in the various historical books and documents, census and other reports. Qualitative and quantitative techniques of analysis are used with emphasis on historical and logical methods of analysis.

**OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of the study are:

1. To explore the historical background of the development and growth of untouchables and untouchability.
2. To study the social, economic and political profiles of the scheduled castes in India with reference to their social, economic and political status in the Indian society.
3. To explore that what Gandhi and Ambedkar have done for the removal of untouchability in real sense.

DATA AND SOURCES

The sources of data for this study consist of (a) The original writings of Dr. Ambedkar and Gandhiji; b) Newspaper data in record to historical and contemporary developments; (c) Data in the form of periodicals, books, reports and official documents; and (d) Observation and participant observation as a member of the scheduled castes community. The researcher of this thesis is a part of the situation which he attempts to analyse and understand in the thesis.

As one involved in the situation and often finding one self at the receiving end, it may be said that the researcher has first-hand experience of the situation and the views and suggestions advanced here may be in some way taken as authentic. While discussing the draft of this work with the guide and his colleagues, it was pointed out to the researcher that the analysis and narration in this work is marked by passion or emotion and insistence or impetience in the approach as well as language. To some extent this may be true and it may also be true that there is a bit of seeming repetition and exaggeration in the listing of incidents against the scheduled castes and the concerns and preoccupations which deeply affect them. But on the other hand it is also necessary to state that a full and proper expression should be given to the concerns and preoccupations, to the arguments and data of the untouchables castes who constitute the situation; and the researcher has tried to give a proper and full of expression as possible. The bland, neutral or
dispassionate language, said to be characteristic of the academic discourse may not be an adequate or efficient vehicle for the expression of the agonising realities experienced by the scheduled castes or untouchables. It is possible that such a background of the researcher and his eager effort to state the problems and solutions fully act as a limiting factor.

THEORIES AND CONCEPTS

We assume that society is a complex structure of communities identified both in terms of politico-economic status, social status and religio-cultural values. The untouchables are considered as one such community within the Indian national society. Therefore a society to become just must integrate these communities on the basis of equality of status and opportunity. Any society which departs from this model will create internal conflicts leading to fundamental changes.

SIGNIFICANCE AND JUSTIFICATION OF THE THESIS

The literature available so far on this problem has been extensive but fragmentary and outdated. The thesis therefore attempts to advance a systematic account of an important development in the Indian society. It attempts in fact to examine and analyse why the unquestioned leaders of the scheduled castes in India, like Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhiji took the historic decision of erudition the untouchability. It is from this perspective that the thesis examines briefly the views of these two stalwart on socio-political transformation of untouchability with their different agenda.
The thesis also examines Gandhiji's role and position in order to see why Dr. Ambedkar rejected it. Dr. Ambedkar rejected Gandhiji's position because it was an attempt to solve the problem within the Hindu framework.

The untouchables are concerned people. Arbitrarily assigned the lowest position in the Hindu caste system, they remain sunk in poverty, steeped in misery and totally defenceless. Today they are the targets of a most organised violence.

The scheduled castes in India are the victims of an apartheid which has existed for centuries. What is worse, this form of discrimination has almost always had the sanction of society, state and religion.

The assault on the untouchables castes or the Harijans or the children of God as Gandhiji named them at social, economic and political levels is the result of a complex combination of causes that are perpetuated in many ways, both wantonly and unconsciously.

ORGANISATION OF THESIS

The thesis starts with introductory chapter which includes aims and objectives, problems, importance of the study. One of the main aims and objectives of this study is to help eradicate untouchability and the upliftement of downtrodden and promote participation of untouchables in the national main streem. We argue that until we cultivate and synthesis the philosophy envisaged by Mahatma Gandhiji and Dr. Ambedkar, the progress, prosperity and harmony of the country is not possible. Until and unless the development of new sense of socialness among the caste Hindus and the untouchables, the development of our country and upliftement of the downtrodden can not take place.
The present study is restricted to the important aspects of untouchables especially in the Indian context. Much importance was given to their socio-political agenda of Ambedkar and Gandhiji views which were relevant to the problems of untouchables. The sphere of their socio-political ideas are too wide. It is difficult to cover the whole range of related problems within the restricted time and space.

Therefore we restrict ourselves to only those aspects which have direct bearing in the topic of research.

The second chapter discusses the caste system and untouchability in India in the historical background of Indian society. In this chapter we discussed the remedies for caste ridden Hinduism, understanding and misunderstanding of Varnadharma, consideration of Varnadharma by Gandhi and Ambedkar, eit., At the Pre-Vedic period of Varnashrama there might not have been any discrimination but at the later period discriminations, inequalities, some social evil practice have crept in. The notion of casteism as a hurdle for Hinduism is also considered. These issues are discussed in detail.

The Third chapter deals with the conditions of untouchables. How they were suffering from numerous social disabilities, how they were denied their social status by the caste Hindus, how they were deprived of political power and how they were kept aloof from the rest of the Hindu people. how they were forbidden to accumulate wealth, prosperity and progress, how religious restrictions were imposed on them and treated as slaves or serfs, how they became as the fourth or fifth varna of Hindu religion. How they were put
The Fourth chapter deals with the difficulties which were faced by Mahatma Gandhiji regarding eradication of caste system and untouchability even from his family members and Ashramites. Principles procedures adopted by Gandhiji for the eradication of untouchability were discussed in this chapter. It was one of his purpose to create awareness among caste Hindus and untouchables therefore he toured entire India. Gandhiji opined that untouchables were also treated as Hindus in the fourfold system. He never accepted separate identification of untouchables from Hindus. Because of this he opposed separate electorates for the Harijans but accepted separate reservation for them. It was well known as the Poona pact of 1932. According to Gandhiji religion should be mixed with politics.

In the Fifth chapter were discussed Dr. Ambedkar's socio-political transformation for the emancipation of untouchables. According to him political power is the main key for upliftment of down trodden from the yoke of Hindu social slavery. It is futile to preach religion amongst people without first removing their poverty and their sufferings. Therefore religion should be for man and not man for religion. To Ambedkar equality is the end and state socialism is the means to achieve this end. It means that all means of production should be under the control of society according to the principles of state socialism i.e. to retain parliamentary democracy to avoid dictatorship and to establish socialism. For allround development of personality of individual and development of society education is very essential. Education is as necessary for female as it is for male.
Dr. Ambedkar warned that if one's education is detrimental to the welfare of the poor the educated man is a curse to the society. Therefore character is more important than education according to him. These are considered in this chapter.

In the Sixth chapter we have explained the differences between Ambedkar and Gandhiji on untouchability. According to Dr. Ambedkar if political, economic and social conditions of untouchables were improved then the transformation could begin. According to Mahatma Gandhi in addition to these, the religious condition, self elevation and spiritual knowledge were also equally important in transforming the lot of untouchables. For Ambedkar social justice, liberty, equality and fraternity are essential whereas for Gandhiji these should be complementary for internal purification of religion is properly used then it can really solve many of our problems not only at the individual level but even at social level. Ambedkar does not agree with Gandhiji and rejected outrightly all these things.

The Seventh chapter is on attempt to put together the summary of previous chapter. Mahatama Gandhi and Dr. Ambedkar both investigated the causes of the social decline of the country. They attempted to prescribe a formula to eradicate social inequalities. Therefore the views of both Gandhiji and Ambedkar are very relevant for the present day society. We are sure that the present study will open up avenues not only for the upliftment of the untouchable but even to the scholars who want to work further in this field.