CHAPTER IV

SOCIAL INEQUALITY & THE RELATIONAL ASPECT OF CASTE

This chapter deals with the problem of inequality from the sociological point of view, although much of the concern is expressed through economic dealings. This cannot be avoided, because any social relation that comes into picture in a particular social scene, say economic dealing or a religious dealing, in a particular society, cannot be said to be independent in itself and therefore cannot be subtracted physically and exhibited independently.

Social relations are so interwoven that none of them can be identified as an independent entity in itself. They are all interdependent and they all exist only because they all function within a common framework. Thus without economic relation there cannot be any social relation and vice-versa. Therefore, it becomes difficult to demarcate clearly between relations as social categories, economic categories and cultural categories. For example if an untouchable of Malasi village is obliged to carry the dead cattle belonging to caste Hindus, so as to skin and bury it, and for that if he is being paid by the caste Hindus, then the relation that he establishes thereby with them, becomes both economic and social. Though he
is socially obliged to do that work, it also meets an economic need of that village. That is how economic relations become social and the social become economic. In fact, the distinction between economic and social relations can never be drawn exactly. In this chapter, therefore, the social relations that we have considered have also involved crucially economic relations.

As is clear from above, it was necessary for the researcher to look at various type of relations in the units of study in a variety of contexts, and in different contexts to produce different interpretations. Social scientists do this perhaps due to the force of particular social circumstances and when they do this, then the social relations that come into play during a particular context, say, economic context, can have its own specific meaning. They can have a sociological meaning rather than a meaning more directly economic. For example if an untouchable in Bedkihal village, while harvesting does only the work of cleaning and washing the ground meant for collecting the grains and not any other work, then there arises a question as to why he does only that work and not any other work. In this economic context the established relations between the untouchable and the touchable has to be solved only through sociological interpretation. And here in this economic
context the sociologist is forced to apply tools and methods which are different from those of an economist. Thus, a particular social context, though it has a particular social purpose, generates in itself more than one end or a variety of ends. In view of this fact, the criterion of inequality as understood by economists in terms of distribution of income and wealth cannot be the only criterion in understanding the phenomenon of inequality. The criteria used here are rather more comprehensive and include such sociological factors as socio-religious rights and obligations. Therefore, in this chapter, to understand the phenomenon of inequality, attention is focussed on rights and obligations of the people due to their socio-religious system, due to their superstitions, their customs and their traditions. But in such a kind of an analysis the researcher has relied on the two aspects of inequality which the well known Indian sociologist Andre Beteille has identified. Those two aspects of inequality are termed as 'distributive' and 'relational' aspects of inequality. (Andre Beteille, 1977; 130). Here we study the relational aspects of inequality as observed in the areas of the field of studies.

The relational aspect of inequality is based on the social stratification, which useful is founded upon the beliefs and dogmas of the caste system of Hindu religious life. Whatever the base be, inequality is the most significant feature of Hindu
Social structure. Hence the religion which emphasizes salvation also leads to inequality. In this social structure the socio-economic rights of the people are predetermined by the accident of birth into a particular caste. The status of a man is almost fixed and at any rate he cannot change it. If a man is born an untouchable, then he has to lead the life of an untouchable and has to die the death of an untouchable. Dividing and grading of people hierarchically is the organizational principle of the Hindu religious order. As far as social life is concerned, even today Hindus are highly constrained, bound and conservative in their outlook towards persons outside the pale of their own caste. The Hindu social life, however, is now facing the problem of change. But the change is also being challenged by the Hindu social spirit, and the system is persisting although in a changed form. But in certain cases the orthodox pattern of life has remained almost unshaken and unaffected, continuing to be there in practice in the same old fashion. In such a changed condition then, caste has to be studied from the point of view of its two forms, its static form and its dynamic form.

The social structure of Belgaum city, Bedkihal town and Halashi village still reflects the Hindu social spirit in the same orthodox manner and people base their relations mostly still on the caste guidelines. People, however, in Belgaum
city, at least outwardly, in their public life, have departed considerably from the old value patterns, and caste as a problem of physical interaction is losing its importance. People, generally irrespective of caste, can now use all public utilities, without discrimination based on caste. The untouchables in Belgaum city can walk in any park, can go to any temple and can eat and drink in any hotel. But this does not mean that caste has disappeared once for all in Belgaum city. We can at the most conclude that by adjusting itself to the changing conditions, it has never allowed itself to be disturbed in its basic contents. Thus we can say that caste changes in form and not in content. But wherever there is a possibility, caste also operates in the same old fashion involving its older contents such as physical distance, pollution etc. An illiterate, ignorant untouchable Bhangi in Belgaum city, will never be touched by caste Hindus even if there is a compelling circumstance such as when they are both brought together in a busy common market. This can be seen as a case of untouchability in the old form. But the same caste Hindus never dare avoid the contact of the untouchable, who is literate, cultured and well-do-do, however prejudiced they may be in the heart of their hearts. The general picture can be described a untouchability in the changed form i.e., the practice of untouchability in a new form. It means that caste in a city, whenever there is
a possibility, operates in the same old form, but whenever there is necessity it operates in the changed form, that is, untouchability not outwardly practiced, while believed us. Caste, therefore, never ceases to be caste in content. Endogamy and stratification continue as before and this is enough proof of this. In Belgaum city caste as social stratification based on endogamous units arranged in order of hierarchy is still a glaring reality and no endogamous unit has really crossed its caste boundaries and thus maintains its unequal status and prestige as dictated by its principle. The members of endogamous groups, when they find any one of their members marry outside the pale of their group, collectively see to it that the person is boycotted completely or barred totally from any kind of social intercourse. The social boycott is so severe that, due to the fault of one member marrying outside the group, his or her entire family has to pay the penalty. When an intercaste married couple, a Brahmin girl and an untouchable boy, was interviewed, the girl reported that, due to her mistake, her entire family was suffering and she was driven out from her parents house once for all. Thus endogamy persists as the most important element of caste.

When we consider in comparative perspective the social social structure of the town and the village, we find that the hold of caste appears to be still strong in the village.
The old tenets of caste system in Bedkihal town and Halasi village seem to operate as strongly as they used to operate though, to a little extent, such old notions as pollution through the shadow of an untouchable or through sight are discarded. But the old notion that the touch of an untouchable defiles the higher caste Hindu is still a widely persisting phenomenon. An untouchable primary school teacher in Halasi village said "we ought to make way to caste Hindus if we both happen to pass through the same way in opposite directions, since we know that our proximity defiles them very considerably". Further, the untouchables in Bedkihal town too show the same mark of respect to the caste Hindus. They know very well that the caste Hindus, being their traditional masters, may resent if they fail to give the respect which they expect. Thus we can say with certainty that it is the same caste system evolved since time immemorial which forms, even today, an integral part of the social structure in Belgaum city, Bedkihal town and Halasi village have.

Caste, rooted in the distinction between the pure and the impure, exerts its influence even on ordinary occasions of interactions, and it is only through the study of interactions between people that the relational aspect of inequality can be experienced. Then let us take the case of Belgaum, Bedkihal and Halasi to see how people there experience relational in-
equality as prevalent, nourished by their caste structure.

Belgaum:

The relational aspect of social inequality between the untouchables and touchables in Belgaum city based on caste statuses can be analysed at various levels. As noted earlier, Belgaum is a complex city wherein people belonging to variety of castes, communities and religions live and form a complex pattern of social relations. The relationships are, of course, of secondary type, but, when observed closely, almost all of them appear caste-based and discriminatory in nature. Most people have social contacts and marriages within their own caste circles and, even on such suspicious occasions as the celebration of Ganapati festival, this can be seen. If we study the distribution of caste-communities we find that the Brahmin has his own lane, the Lingayat and Maratha have their own, the Muslim and the untouchables, their own. Whereas the Brahmin lives in Deshpande Galli, the Maratha lives in Kelkar Galli and the Lingayat lives in Shahapur and the untouchable in Chavat Galli. The localities, therefore, are more or less distributed caste-wise and though here and there a few members of other castes may live, it is one particular caste that always forms the majority in one particular locality. When a Brahmin always living in Deshpande chawl was interviewed about this
pattern of living he said conclusively. Though our people talk much about castellessness, they prefer to live mostly and consciously in the localities which are generally dominated by Brahmin population. "Not only that," he continued, "these people prefer to live where their sub-castes are in majority and here in Deshpande Chawl we Desastha Brahmins form the highest majority." That is how even the population of Belgaum city is distributed caste-wise, and caste demarcations are obvious. In order to understand the caste cleavages in the interactional patterns of the people in Belgaum city, their notions and behavioural patterns were observed very carefully, especially their notions of purity and impurity.

Notion of purity and impurity in public life:
(As experienced by touchables)

When the child is begotten and nourished in the locality of a particular caste, say Brahmin caste, then in the process of socialisation the child is taught to follow and imitate the Brahminic tradition. The psychology of a child of nine years in Deshpande Chawl, in terms of caste consciousness, can be seen operating from the following conversation of the researcher with the child.

Researcher — What is your caste Raju?
Child — I am a Brahmin
Researcher - Then what is your sub-caste?
Child - Desasta Brahmin.
Researcher - Very good; you know the Mahars?
Child - I know them, they live in Chavat Galli and some of the Mahar boys come to our school, but I don't talk to them and have friendship with them.
Researcher - Why?
Child - My parents say that they are untouchables and if I touch them, then I defile myself and degrade my caste.
Researcher - Are you very much superior?
Child - Our caste is very much superior to any other caste.

Thus the child is taught how he should behave with others very early in life. He is forced to have knowledge of caste demarcations right from start of his learning process and is encouraged to be conscious of his high his position in the caste hierarchy. When the child grows into an adult he becomes a full-fledged caste man and directly or indirectly starts practising the caste norms. When he mingle with adults of other castes, especially the untouchables, he behaves in terms of his notions of purity and impurity, which he abstracts from the social environment he lives in. Thus, the notional fear of
getting polluted by the touch of an untouchable, works always in the mind of an adult who has become socialized into the norms of caste. They became ingrained and inevitable traits. But the notional fear of man or woman or an adult of being polluted by touch, depends on his or her psychology, and this aspect of the person is not reflected in every concern of life. Perhaps this has been so only in the recent past, when there has taken place a lot of development in the material aspects of life. The Belgaum is a crowded city, and hence a caste person finds it very difficult to establish the caste of particular individuals. For e.g. when all caste people gather in the Bazaar or the Busstand, or college or canteen or any other such public place, no person may display any caste-related feature, which can be identified. In such a crowded situation, there prevails the general fear that perhaps some members of the untouchable caste may also have come to the Bazaar or Busstand and may have polluted the superior castes. The superior caste, therefore, takes it for granted that when it goes to Bazaar or travels by bus that it must have got polluted and that it should purify itself. The caste man gets polluted not only through physical contact which is direct, but also through the indirect use of utensils which might have been touched by the untouchable. The Brahmin in Belgaum city when he used hints a cold drink shop or a public restaurant, feels that the utensils he uses must have been used, maybe a little while ago in the day, by an untouchable. This
worries him about use of the pollution. Thus there are various occasions and various objects that cause of pollution. In this regard, certain orthodox higher caste persons were interviewed and the following responses were received.

A case with a Brahmin:

Q. Do you feel polluted in public life? If you have any such experience please narrate it.

Ans. In public life to identify a man belonging to a particular caste becomes very difficult, some of the untouchables wear the same type of clean dresses as we do and also behave as if culturally they are very much forward. They look like high castes, but we can suspect from their behaviour and identify them. Once I met a man when I was travelling from Bangalore to Belgaum. The man was fair and handsome. He was also looking like an educated man and was wearing a suit. We both were in the same compartment and naturally we were forced to converse. We both enquired about each other. He said that he was from Hubli. Then I started enquiring about some of my relatives there. He gave the impression that he was a Lingayat. Then naturally we came a bit closer and he offered me a cup of tea with his own hand. I was hesitant but not in a position to refuse. I took the cup of tea and consumed it. He got down in
Hubli. But after eight days I saw him in Chavat Galli, Maharwadi, in Belgaum city and I learnt that man was a Mahar by caste. I had suspected it and my suspicion come true. Because I had suspected it, immediately after arrival at my house I took bath and consumed a little Angara and purified myself. Thus in public life also we get polluted.

A Case with a Jain

Q. Do you feel polluted in public life? How do you feel polluted? Please explain.

Ans. The untouchables have developed to the level of touchables in certain respects. They have become educated and many degree-holders have started behaving as if they are equal to the high castes. Physically also it is very difficult to recognise them and their identity. Thus all we do is whenever we go out to the Bazaar etc., we observe purificatory methods and then only we feel psychologically relaxed.

A Case With A Lingayat

Q. Do you feel polluted by the touch of an untouchable?
   How do you experience untouchability?

Ans. I am a Doctor, I don't have any feeling of untouchability.
But I have to observe purificatory measures, as my wife and parents force me. Whenever I come home from hospital my mother forces me to take bath. My wife too does the same thing. They don't allow me to touch my children until I do that and then only they feel happy. In fact I myself am treated as an untouchable in my house when I come from my hospital.

A Case With A Maratha:

Q. Do you feel that the touch of an untouchable is a pollution? Please explain.

Ans. We are very near here to Maharwad (the colony of untouchables), and we can recognise the people belonging to Mahar caste very easily. Our young boys sometimes mix with the boys of untouchables, but we are helpless. But we elders treat untouchables as distinct and rarely come in contact with them. But whenever we feel their contact, we do purify ourselves.

Thus, caste as a polluting institution still works as a reality. These instances can be taken as representative of all orthodox castes in existence. The interviews with above castes indicated that the following devices were used for the purification of pollution.
(1) Washing the body with clean wet cloth after coming home from Bazaar, Busstand, park or any other public place.

(2) Bathing with hot or cold water without removing the dress after the cause of pollution, so that the dresses can be also purified.

(3) Sprinkling the water over one's own cloth after the pollution.

(4) Removing the worn clothes and wearing washed fresh clothes.

(5) And lastly if the pollution is indirect due to the use of utensils used by lower castes, as it may happen in hotels, saloons and parks, then the purification is not only through the use of wet cloth, wash or bath, but also through the use of a herb or angara (Sacred ash).

Thus the notions of purity and pollution in public life manifested in operation. This involved many devices that the caste Hindus use while purifying themselves from pollution. For example, a Brahmin, who takes water from a public place, purifies first the tap by sprinkling water.
The Responses of Touchables towards Untouchability

So as to have a definite picture of the problem of untouchability, the researcher probed a little deeper into its practice. For this purpose 150 caste Hindus were interviewed in Belgaum city to study their notions of purity and pollution, deriving from the institutions of untouchability. The responses have been arranged in the order of castes.

Response towards untouchability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Castes</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Indifferent</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Total %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>18</td>
<td>12.00</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>25.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jain</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10.66</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.66</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>25.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lingayat</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.66</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>25.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maratha</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8.66</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6.66</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>25.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mali</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8.00</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7.33</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>25.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhanger</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7.33</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8.00</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>25.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>65</td>
<td>56.65</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>34.66</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8.66</td>
<td>150.99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The responses which reflected the notions of pollution through physical contact, indirect pollution through the use of utensils presumed to be used earlier by untouchables or other lower castes or through any other means are the responses which
really reflect the pattern of interaction based on differentiation, discrimination and distinction.

Relatively speaking, Brahmins represent a more orthodox notion of pollution towards untouchability than that of any other caste and Jains, though they display almost the same degree of the notion of pollution, are slightly more liberal. Seven respondents among Jains frankly admit that they did not have such pollution notions, whereas only five Brahmin respondents had such opinion. There are two respondents who are indifferent to this notion both among Brahmins, and Jains.

Compared to Marathas the Lingayats show a greater degree of commitment to the notion of pollution. There are ten Marathas and sum Lingayat respondents who frankly admit that they don't have such pollution notion. Compared to all other castes Mali and Dhanagars have displayed the most negative attitude to pollution although they are also little hesitant to have contacts with the untouchables.

Taking the general picture as a whole, we can say that, while 56.65% of touchable respondents accept the notion of pollution and untouchability, only 34.66% of them reject the notion and 8.65% of them are indifferent towards the notion of pollution due to untouchability. But negation is an indication
that the institution of untouchability is on the verge of
decline.

The researcher interviewed twenty five women from caste
Hindus in Belgaum city on the notion of untouchability. Most
of the women showed a sense of superiority over the lower castes
and frankly admitted that they were in favour of untouchability.
In terms of participation measures, the Brahmin women are more
particular, more strict and more orthodox than their men. When
the researcher interviewed women in Belgaum city a majority of
them suspected his identity and enquired about the caste to
which he belonged. When the researcher pretended to be of the
higher caste, only then he could receive their frank opinion.

These twentyfive women belong to different higher castes. The
interviewed were five Brahmins, five Jains, five Lingayats,
five Marathas, two Malis and three Dhanagaris. Among the five
interviewed Brahmin women, four favoured untouchability and one
was indifferent about it. Among Jains three were in favour
and two had indifferent opinion. Three Lingayat women favoured
but two condemned it, and among Marathas two were in favour
whereas three opposed it. The Mali and Kuruba women were neither
in favour of it nor were they against it. They all had in-
different opinion about it.

But these responses of both men and women of touchable
castes cannot be taken to be very valid since they cannot help us to arrive at our exact conclusion. In this transformative stage of Indian society, people are not free to practise any traditional institution they like without regard to the interest of the general public. There are many legal obstacles. People, therefore, cannot practise untouchability or show any discriminatory attitude very directly in the case of untouchables as it has been abolished by the Constitution of India. Article 17 of the Constitution declared that the avoidance of physical contact with the so-called untouchable is an offence. Naturally the nature and form of practice of untouchability has changed in the changed social environment. The higher caste people now cannot say directly to the untouchables that the latter should not touch the former. So if they have to contact them, soon after their arrival at home, they follow the purificatory measures of using Bhasma (ash) Bhadha, (turmeric) or by just sprinkling of water or by putting the leaves on the head. (Aegle Marmels). Thus, today the practice of untouchability cannot be early detected as a visible item of orthodoxy. It is practised secretly, sometimes in the heart of heart. Such a practice of untouchability can be ascertained from the responses of the untouchables themselves. The detailed experience of some of the touchables about the practice of untouchability was obtained in Bolgaum city. This experience can be looked at from a subjective point of view, and labelled as private experiences of an untouchable when he comes in contact with touchables.
Untouchability as Experienced by Untouchables:

When the researcher approached the sweepers, first of all they were under the impression that he might have been some higher caste man who would resent their giving (which of course he was) correct information. The researcher then pretended to be an untouchable and only then he could get frank opinion. The responses of untouchables reflect their experience of untouchability in their private dealings with touchables, and therefore, also reflect the behaviour of touchables towards untouchables in their direct and private interactions.

Experience-1, Sweeper (Mahar):

Q. How do you experience untouchability?

Ans. Who cares for us sir? Both government and the public of higher castes are neglecting us. Is this not untouchability? When we go to clean the roads and the homes of higher castes Hindus, they know only to order us to clean a little better but when we ask for water, they point out with a finger the nearest water tap or when requested in a humble tone, they either pour it from a distance into the mouth or offer it in a separate plastic jar meant only for us. Is not this untouchability? Of course, we do not usually ask for water from higher
castes, since we know that they treat us very badly, but we cannot often go to the hotel for water nor do we carry it always with us.

Experience No. 2: (Bhangi or Telugu Madar):

Q. How do you experience untouchability?

Ans. It is usual for us to suffer it, and we don't feel it. I go to many rich and higher caste houses to clean their latrines. I am very clean as you can see me now. But still they look down on me because I do this occupation. When I enter their back doors to clean their latrine, then they warn their children not to go near me. Then they occasionally keep stale food outside the house and ask me to collect it for my use. I don't like to collect that, but as I am their servant I must do that. When they pay me, they keep the money somewhere near the door and then I should take it. I understand my position and undergo, without questioning, such experiences.

Experience No. 3: An Untouchable (Clerk in Government Office (Madiga)):

An untouchable clerk in government office who lives in Chavat Galli, when interviewed about his experience of untouchability, had the following response.
Two years ago when I joined the office as a clerk, the high caste people already working there were not happy about that. In the beginning, for about six months, they were teasing me as a man who has come as government's son-in-law without an iota of effort to obtain a job. Not only that they were always troubling me for one or the other reason and they all had secret ill-feelings towards me. They did not show a sense of co-operation to carry on the office work, especially if the work was pertaining to my own table. I too tolerated to the maximum limit. But how long should I tolerate it? I warned some of them. I warned them again and again. But when I saw them doing the same thing again, one day I took a decision to beat one of them and I did beat one of them. That created a bitter atmosphere in the office and for a long time I remained isolated as if I was boycotted. Now things in the office are smooth but turn awkward whenever there comes the question of caste. I know, and I have bitter experience, that caste Hindus practise untouchability at least indirectly if not directly.

Experience No.4: The Post Master (Chamar):

A government servant working in a post office as a post master had the following experience of untouchability as revealed in his response to the question of untouchability.
The practice of untouchability is there, but you cannot experience it right on your face. The people in my office hate me, but they cannot hate me outright. Some of them pretend to obey me, just because I am their boss. But I know they hate me very much. They have a general impression that the untouchable officer acquires his post just because he is an untouchable without having any merit. That is one thing. Secondly, they have deep-rooted and imperishable hatred for untouchables. They cannot tolerate our progress and our progress brings them irritation. I am a strict man and, in my office, I am known for that. If somebody happens to be a little lazy in his work the very next moment I serve him a memo. That is how most of them are afraid of me. But none of them is happy about that. They don't want an untouchable to be their ordering boss. That is the reason why, one day they all united and made an allegation that, 'I am very corrupt and wanted bribe from them every month'. They wanted to suppress me in my disciplinary actions against them, just because I am an untouchable. Therefore, that much is sure that they don't want an untouchable to be their higher officer. To me it is all right, I am a bold man! But if somebody else was there in my place, as an untouchable he would have paid a heavy penalty. No doubt, they look down on an untouchable officer very much.

Experience-6: Lecturer in a college (Mahar Caste):

As a lecturer an untouchable Mahar had the following
response towards the question of untouchability.

"As a lecturer they like me but as an untouchable they hate me. It means even if some of them like me it does not mean that they treat me as an equal. They like me just because I am a teacher. They cannot totally do way with their feelings of untouchability. It so happened one day that, I was invited for a dinner by one of my Brahmin friends who is my colleague. But on the pretext that, the place was congested inside the house, I was made to sit outside the dining hall, whereas all other friends who were of higher castes sat inside the house. I felt insulted but what to do? It was my mistake that I went there. But after all, what is it? It is their foolishness and it is how they display their wrong notions. I know I am not less than any of them. But this is how they insult us just because we are untouchables. They always show a sense of untouchability. Only thing is that the practice is not very direct."

Experience - 7 : (Chammar Caste):

A chammar in Belgaum city who does the work of Cobbler, had the following response towards the question of untouchability.

"They (the high castes) do come to me and recognise me too."
I have contact with some of the rich higher castes and I go to them whenever they send me the message that I have to repair their shoes, foot-wear etc. But whenever I go to their house, they never take me inside. They ask me to stay outside their door. If I ask for water they pour the water from a distance and even the payment they have to make, they do it, from a distance. I feel unhappy but I realise my position."

The above responses give us detailed information regarding the experience of untouchable individuals, as to how experience untouchability in their private or face-to-face dealings. The responses clearly show that there exists untouchability even now as a problem and operates in the same old fashion whenever there is a contact or interaction between touchables and untouchables. Thus the notion of purity and pollution is as strong as it was earlier.

Untouchables Responses in General:

The answers of untouchables in general to the question whether untouchability is still experienced by them, can be arranged in the following order of castes. (As per the schedule, questions were put to 150 untouchables in Belgaum City belonging to different castes and families):
Responses of Untouchables about Untouchability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Castes</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Indifferent</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
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<td>16.67</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1.33</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>30</td>
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<td>0.67</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL 136 90.67 6 3.99 8 5.33 150 99.99

If we look at the above responses we can see that 90% of untouchables experience untouchability in some form or the other. However, some respondents among all the castes show indifference towards untouchability as experienced by them and are perhaps not very much involved in the problem of untouchability. Further three among the Dhors and two among the Chammar say that there is no untouchability at all. Maybe they had only liberal customers belonging to higher castes who may not have looked down on them in their bargaining with them. But when looked at other responses from other caste groups it is clearly a really functions phenomenon. For example Mahars and Shangis say that there is untouchability now to the same degree as it
used to be in the old traditional days. The many too have the same opinion although one respondent among them did not experience the practice of untouchability.

Therefore from the respondents point of view untouchability is pursued even in modern days. Belgaum city proves to be the best proof of this as we can see from the respondents' statements.

Bedkihal:

Turning our attention to Bedkihal town, we can see what kind of inequalities people experience in the pattern of social interactions.

Bedkihal is a town that is being exposed to all modern amenities of urbanised city life. Naturally the town is exposed to developments that have occurred at various levels in the cities. Such a town is bound to be aware of the liberal principles which require people to live a harmonious life, based on social equality. It is very difficult to pursue the interaction of the people here as it appears to be very complicated. The town contains many castes and as we saw earlier, though exposed to city life it has retained most of its village character. Its lanes are arranged caste-wise and reflect the
social structure of the village as in the past. In their day-to-day activities people develop face-to-face contacts and mostly know each other. But the contact is not as clear as it appears to be at the village level. This means is that it relates to their secondary nature, but their social structure mostly exhibits primary type of relations. In such a type of social structure the caste system is bound to play a very important role in various aspects of life. Our task in Bedkhal town, to begin with, was to find out how untouchables experience untouchability in the various aspects of their life.

Untouchables in the system of untouchability (A general picture):

The system of untouchability works on the assumption that whenever there is a contact between the castes getting polluted and castes causing pollution, it is the former that should take precaution to avoid the latter or otherwise it gets polluted by its touch and soon after that it has to take purificatory measures. But in Bedkhal, people belonging to various castes are forced to come together for a variety of purposes. The higher caste people depend upon Holayas, Madigas, Dhors, and Chamars in a variety of ways. The higher caste people want Holayas to remove dead cattle, to clean roads and serve as a major agricultural labour while the Dhor man carries on his old occupation of tanning
the leather the chammar traditionally supplies foot-wear, shoes, and whips to the agriculturists. That is how the social structure of Bedkihal is woven into a texture of interdependence in which people cannot do without the services of untouchables. The untouchables, being poor landless labourers, depend upon caste Hindus for their very subsistence. Even for basic items of survival, they have to run to the caste Hindus. The untouchables donot have grocery shops, clothshops, hotels, and grinding machines, and for all of such things they have to depend upon caste Hindus. Thus the degree of dependence of untouchables on the caste Hindus is more than the degree of dependence of caste Hindus on untouchables. Given such a frame of social structure, let us examine how the reciprocal relations between untouchables and touchables function, and how their interactions help maintain the inherited status of castes.

**An Untouchable Chammar and Brahmin - An Example of Social Distance during Bargaining**

The social distance between untouchables and the top higher castes such as Brahmins, Jains, Lingayats, and Marathas is particularly significant in their interactions. However, among all the four top castes the Brahmins maintain more or less the same old traditional order even in their present-day functioning.
The social relationship between an untouchable Chamar and Brahmins can be clearly seen in the latter's dealings with a Chamar.

"If a Brahmin wants to have a foot-wear from an untouchable Chamar, then the Brahmin will have to order it from a Chamar. But giving order for the foot-wear to a Chamar, the Brahmin himself will not go to the house of a Chamar but he takes the help of an higher caste servant to do that. He takes the measurement of his feet on a paper and sends it through a higher caste servant to an untouchable Chamar. The Chamar then takes the note of the size and shape from the printed feet on a paper and prepares the foot-wear. After the preparation is over, neither the Brahmin Servant nor the Brahmin himself will come to take it from the Chamar. They think that if they take it directly from the Chamar, they will be polluted. Even their house itself will be polluted. Therefore, the Chamar himself has to take it to the house of the Brahmin. But he cannot enter the Brahmin's house. He stands ten feet away from the Brahmin's house and just leaves the foot-wear there itself. The Brahmin then purifies the foot-wear with cow dung or cow urine and sometimes even with cow milk before taking them inside. Then at the place where the foot-wear is purified, The Brahmin pours some quantity of jawar, or rice in exchange for the foot-wear. The grain will be then taken by the untouchable Chamar as a reward or price."
This was the brief account an untouchable chamar gave when he was asked about his dealings with a Brahmin.

An untouchable chamar and other higher castes:

When the chamar was asked about his dealings with other higher castes, he gave the following response. He said that even some of the orthodox Jains showed the same type of interaction with him whenever they wanted to have foot-wear from him. The Jains too order the foot-wear like Brahmins, and they do not take it directly from the chamar, and only after purifying it. But he said that the Lingayats and Marathas do not behave this way with chamars, although they get polluted as do the Brahmins and Jains. He said "The Lingayats and Marathas can purify themselves when they go to the house of the chamars. They can even purify the foot-wears just by sprinkling the water from the chamars house itself." But he also said that they, too, purify the foot-wear again when they take it home. The difference between Marathas and Lingayats, and the Brahmins and Jains, was that the latter do not go to chamar's house directly whereas the former can and do, go to chamar's house directly for this purpose.

Therefore for higher castes the foot-wear that a chamar prepares, if taken directly from him, becomes an item of pollution.
The same type of interactions are manifested whenever there is social dealing between other untouchable castes and touchable castes. The Madiga prepares various kinds of ropes that are required by touchable Hindus. But even in his case whenever there is a transaction with the latter the rope will not be taken directly by caste Hindus. It will be purified first and thereafter taken into the house. Such type of interactions usually are highly orthodox in nature and help to continue the same old notions of purity and pollution.

There are certain interactions which involve direct contact between untouchables and touchables. The Mahars in Bedkihal town form the major agricultural labour force and almost all the agricultural works are carried on by the untouchable Mahars. In such a case the contact becomes closer and the relations more interdependent. The people belonging to various castes, especially during the agricultural seasons, are forced to work together. But the contacts nevertheless are not free from restricted behaviour. An untouchable or a touchable cannot behave as freely as he likes as he has to observe certain norms hundred down from their forefathers. The following observation was made during the field work for
this study in Bedkihal, when the touchable and untouchable labourers were working together in an agricultural field.

(1) Both touchable and untouchable labourers go to work in the agricultural fields belonging to higher caste.

(2) The touchable labourers will be usually fewer than the untouchable labourers.

(3) During the course of work an untouchable worker must have his own working tools, and he cannot exchange freely his working tools with touchable labourers.

(4) The untouchables must work on the other side of the touchable labourers so that the touchable labourers may not touch them even unconsiously.

(5) The untouchables are not supposed to keep their items (e.g. an item of food, an items of tools used for work etc.) in the same place where the touchables keep their items.

(6) The untouchable and touchable workers cannot take rest or lunch, under the shade of the same tree, nor do they dine together.
(7) The untouchables are not allowed to fetch water from the well after the lunch is over but they have to drink the water fetched and poured to them by the touchables.

(8) The touchable castes can serve the remaining food to untouchables after the lunch is over whereas the untouchables cannot serve it to touchables even if they have enough of it to spare.

(9) During the time of harvest the untouchables are not allowed to enter the threshing ground where the grain harvested is collected and where the harvest god is worshipped.

(10) If the untouchables during the working hours wanted to chew, or smoke tobacco and if they do not have it, then they beg it from caste Hindu workers, who can serve it to untouchables from a distance.

(11) The untouchables cannot touch any of the utensils that are brought to the working field of agriculture by the higher caste workers.

Thus however direct the contact the touchable and untouchable shall have to maintain distance on all occasions.
The method and practice of untouchability varies from occasion to occasion.

A case study of Bhimrao - an untouchable worker:

The researcher stayed with Bhimrao, an untouchable Mahar, so as to observe of untouchability as experienced by him in his personal life. During the five days' stay with him the following experience was recorded.

Bhimrao then on that day get up in the early morning i.e. 6.0 a.m. His wife Achkutai who gets up earlier, keeps Bhimrao's morning meal ready for him. He then takes bath with cold water, finished his morning meal and gets ready with his working instruments. He keeps the instruments on his shoulder and leaves them hanging behind his back. He also takes with him noon meal so that he can have it in the afternoon, when there is a resting hour for him. He leaves for his master's house to seek his order as to where he is to work that day. He arrives at the Master's big bungalow where a tractor, a tempo, a truck, a car and a scooter are standing in an arranged fashion in their places meant for them. He then just keeps his instruments in a ruined old useless cart standing there for years and it gets nearer to the bungalow-door. But he will not enter it since he is prohibited to do so. Then the researcher, who happens to be his friend, asks him to get in. But he refuses,
with a nod of his head. Being an untouchable, he has the fear that he may pollute the door and even he may dishonour his master. There are many workers belonging to higher castes or to the caste to which the master belongs and all of them have access to the house and to any part of it. They go in and come out of the house, after meeting the master. Bhimrao greets one of them and enquires whether the master is up and ready to assign him the work. But master is not ready and is still in the bathroom. Bhimrao is, therefore, asked by one of the workers to wait for half an hour and then the master will be ready. He waits. The researcher too waits with him. Then after an hour, there comes out into the corridor (verandah) a pot-bellied person wearing a turricot Dhoti, a matching shirt, and a turban (Mai Mal Pataka). His body structure itself is an indication of his wealth. Bhimrao then pretends to be very submissive and faithful and greets his master heartily, though from the outside near the door of corridor. The master then looks at him, and comes to the door. The master asks him in a roaring tone.

Master: "Yeh Shimayya, what did you do yesterday?"

Bhimrao: "I did watering of tobacco plants yesterday," in a humble tune.
Master: "You do the same today too" as an ordered.

"Yes sir," says Bhimrao and starts his trip to the field called Nagzeri (Nagzeri is an agricultural garden owned by Wondre Bapu, the Master of Bhimrao). The researcher too, follows him to note his further activities. The worker, then on the way to the garden, starts describing the wealth of Wondre Bapu and talks about his sons and grandsons. We then arrive at the garden where a Bungalow is being constructed by the landlord. There, all the higher caste workers can rest, take food and gossip whenever there is afternoon rest from the work. There are many workers belonging to higher castes. Bhimrao greets them all. But he does not enter the Bungalow. He goes to a separate grass-shed prepared for Mahars and keeps his food basket hanging there itself. There are also other workers belonging to the caste of Bhimrao. But they are from a different village and have come there for work all the way walking a distance of 7-8 miles. They all share the shelter of the shed with Bhimrao. Then Bhimrao takes an earthen pot kept there in the shed, and goes to take water from the tank nearby. The water from the well is collected in the tank for the use of cattle, os etc. As Bhimrao goes near the tank and is about to take water from the tank, there comes a voice from the building saying, "The oxen have yet to drink water from the tank and until that is done, Bhimrao you should not take water from the
Bhimrao then without question keeps the pot as before in the shed and proceeds to the field where he is to water the tobacco plants as per the order of his master which given in the morning. The researcher follows Bhimrao. There Bhimrao, till 2.0 p.m., carries on his laborious work of watering the plants. As there is an underground pipe-line to the distant well, the water comes up and flows towards the field where Bhimrao is watering the tobacco plants. He waters the plants row by row and completes one third of his days work by 2.0 p.m. As it is afternoon he proceeds to take lunch and rest, as allowed by custom. The researcher, as he goes to the shed, asks Bhimrao, as to why he is not allowed to take water from the tank before the oxen are taken to the tank.

"I will take water now" says Bhimrao, "If I take water before the oxen are taken to the tank, then the oxen will not drink the water since water gets polluted and even if they drink, that is not good for their health. So as to avoid that we untouchables should always take water from the tank after the oxen are taken to the tank."

Bhimrao then takes his earthen pot and brings water from the tank. The oxen have already been taken to the tank and there is now no objection to his using it. The other untouchables from distant villages have not yet come. Bhimrao informs
that they have gone to some other distant place to work and
they will be going back to their village from there itself.
Even they take their food in the shed only.

Shimrao has extra meal in view of his assumption that the
researcher may accompany him to the field. He had asked his
wife that day to prepare better food. At the request of Shimrao
the researcher shares the food with him. The lunch then is over.
Then researcher tempts Shimrao to talk about himself.

Researcher: "Are you not allowed to take water from the well?

Bhimrao: "No, I am prohibited as I am an untouchable. I can
at the most take from the tank where all animals drink and that
too only after they drink. Every morning the tank is cleaned
and fresh water is stored."

Researcher: "How about other workers who belong to higher
castes? How do they treat you? (the researcher tried to draw
him a little more)."

Bhimrao: "Raja Peekshya Gadyachach Dimak just, (It means, there
is more conceit among slaves than in the king himself). They
boss over me even more than Wondre Bapu himself— and often they
trouble me also. If I do not obey their orders, then they comment
on me saying that I am an arrogant untouchable. Somehow I manage.
I never talk to them now."

After some time there arrives a car and the master (Malik) gets down. Coming nearer to the Bungalow he shouts. "Heh Bhimaya, what are you doing? Did you finish the work?"

Bhimrao then, full of fear and reverence, replies,

"No sir, still there is work, I shall complete it soon."

"Are you sleeping or what? Only after completing the remaining piece of work you should go home. You have to do some other work tomorrow." The master (Malik) roars.

The master also then calls upon a higher caste worker and asks him to get work from Bhimrao completed that day itself and then the master leaves.

Bhimrao gets ready with his tools and starts towards the field. It is by now 3.0 p.m. As he is going, one of the workers belonging to a higher caste shouts at him saying that he will be there to see the work completed. Bhimrao walks on without replying, and starts working.

Bhimrao works very hard. He sweats as the sun beats hard on his black skin. He breathes hard. But he cannot stop work until he completes it. As if he takes it as a challenge, he finished his work in time. After the completion of the work he gets down to take rest. He then talks to the researcher.
"See, the people don't have faith in us. They don't know us. They just own the land and we all cultivate. Really sir, it is only Mahars who cultivate the land, and the others just own it. That is all."

Then came a higher caste worker, surprised to see that Bhimrao had already completed the work. He said, "well done, Bhimrao".

But to that in reply Bhimrao said,

"We are only meant for that what is surprising? No surprise if we do well?" The higher caste worker felt hurt. But Bhimrao pacified his feelings by asking for tobacco from him. The higher caste worker pretended to have very little of it but gave it to Bhimrao but gave it from a distance. Bhimrao took it, mixed it with lime and started chewing it. Then with his tools he got ready to go home. But while leaving the field, his face appeared to be full of self-pity. Observing his face, the researcher just followed him.

This experience of Bhimrao as an untouchable helps us arrive at the following conclusions,

(1) Bhimrao as an untouchable has to be submissive to his master.
(2) As an untouchable, he cannot enter the house of a high caste master.

(3) Higher caste master treats his low caste worker as low and uses harass words while forcing him to work hard.

(4) The higher caste master treats his workers on the basis of caste and not on the basis of efficiency of the worker. He has more regard for higher caste worker than for an untouchable worker.

(5) The higher caste workers treat lower caste workers as low and use an ordering tone towards them.

(6) The lower caste worker cannot take water freely from the tank, and the well is strictly prohibited for lower caste worker.

(7) The higher caste workers cannot behave freely with lower caste workers.

(8) There is no co-ordination between lower caste workers and higher caste workers.

(9) The lower caste workers are allowed to take water from the tank meant for animal use.
(10) The lower caste workers have to use the tank only after it is used by animals, and the water tank is every morning cleaned for that.

Experience of untouchables in general:

To understand how untouchability is experienced by different men in public life, interviews were held with 125 respondents of untouchable caste belonging to different families and sub-castes in the Belkhal town.

Responses of untouchables about untouchability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Castes</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Indifferent</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mang</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
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<td>92.8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.8</td>
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</table>

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Mahars, according to our data based on interviews, maintain that 100% casteism and untouchability are practised even now in some form or the other. Mangs also hold the same view. But one of the chamars and two of the Dhor respondents believe that there is no untouchability at all. The indifferent respondents are there in every caste among untouchables, but their number is below 5 per cent.

But looking at the totality of untouchability we can say 95% of untouchables experience untouchability.

Responses of touchables about untouchability:

When we turn our attention towards what touchables say about untouchability i.e. whether they practise untouchability or not, the responses were received in the following way.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Castes</th>
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<th>%</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Indifferent</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Total %</th>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
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<td>66.4</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From the above responses we can say that 90% of Brahmins and Jains still accept the notion of untouchability, although some respondents have rejected the practice of untouchability. Compared to the Marathas and other touchable castes the Lingayats have shown more a positive response on untouchability although we find among them also respondents who reject the practice of untouchability.

Taking a general view, we can say that untouchability exists in Bedkihal town.

**Touchables in the system of untouchability:**

The notion that an untouchable pollutes a higher caste man can be seen in every walk of life. Therefore, the question of how a man gets polluted and how he can be purified can be ensured by a detailed study of specific cases. A comparatively more orthodox family was chosen from each different higher caste and one person of the family was interviewed for the purpose. The higher caste families chosen were Brahmins, jain, lingayats and marathas.

**Brahmin:**

Q. How do you come into contact with untouchables and how do you get polluted?
Ans. We usually don't come in contact with untouchables. Because even if we have to take work from them in agriculture etc., we do it through higher caste workers, usually the lingayats. We come in direct contact with them only on unfortunate occasions, say, if somebody dies in our house or if some cattle dies in our house. Last year our father expired. The Mahars then had come into our verandah to carry the corpse's vestiges to the burial ground. Naturally the house was then polluted and it had to be purified. Usually cattle die in the cattle shed itself. We at that time need not have to go to the cattle shed. Our higher caste workers ask the Mahars to take the dead animal for their use. We go to the cattle-shed only after it is purified. But there are several occasions on which also we are polluted. If we go to Sidheshwar temple, there the untouchables also have to move beyond a touching distance. In the Bazaar also, the same thing happens. Sometimes Mahars pass through our lane where our children play and touch them. And that is how several times we get polluted.

Q. How do you purify the pollution?

Ans. After somebody's death the house is thought to be not only polluted but also that it has lost its stability. Because of that we have to please some of the house Gods and Goddesses. Therefore, a religious ceremony is arranged and all the house Gurus, Pandits and Bhadjis will be invited. At that time the
house which is thought to be polluted due to the crops or because of the entry of Mahars will be cleaned. So as to clean the house several purifying items such as cow dung, cow urine, or to some extent, cow butter milk etc., are used. Purification is usually carried out late in the day. But cow urine is essential for purificatory act. If we get polluted on routine occasions, say, while going to a temple, a Bazaar, or the busstand, then we sprinkle water or urine on our clothes, take bath or remove the worn clothes and wear new ones.

Jain:

Q. How do you come into contact with untouchables and how do you get polluted?

Ans. Really we come into contact with untouchables at different levels of our dealings with them. But usually males and only a few of us come in contact with them. Contact is however not very direct. But knowingly or unknowingly we do feel polluted whenever we go to bazaar or temple or busstand, where we come into contact with untouchables and other such low castes. We cannot avoid them there, nor can we order them not to touch us there. But we are careful about them whenever there is such an occasion. We even order our children not to mingle with untouchable children whenever they go to school and our children too are
careful. Untouchables come to our fields, and without our
knowledge use our water tanks. Which we too sometimes use.
We sometimes touch their implements and other such utensils.
But we regard our pollution to be most horrible whenever they
enter our houses and verandahs. They do so whenever some one
dies in our house, to carry the corpses to the burial ground.
They also enter our cattle-sheds, whenever a calf or cattle
dies. Thus on various occasions we feel polluted by un-
touchables.

Q. How do you purify the pollution?

Ans. When the pollution is through direct contact such as
happens when an untouchable enters our house or due to the
corpse of our dead, we do purify the entire house by holding a
religious ceremony. To such religious ceremony we invite
Jain munis or sadhus and then cleanse the house with red clay,
cow dung or cow urine. We also use to clean the house. We
see that the whole house is quite pure again. It contacts
such as contacts through the common use of the market, bus,
road and festival places, we purify just by sprinkling holy
water preserved by the sadhus or by bath, or by just sprinkling
the vibhuti, we also remove the polluted clothes and wear new
ones.
Lingavat:

Q. How do you come into contact with untouchables and how do you get polluted?

Ans. We always come in contact with untouchables. Basically we are an agricultural family, though two of our brothers are employed in government service. We always depend upon untouchables to carry on agricultural work and many workers belonging to untouchable caste come in contact with us everyday. We deal freely with them but we don't allow them to touch us physically. Nor even our children etc. If they touch our implements we don't take it as pollution since we warn them to wash the implements and keep them. We can afterwards touch the implements. But whenever there is physical touch we take it as pollution. Further we don't allow them inside our verandah. They can come and go from outside the door itself. But there are certain occasions such as death (whether or cattle or man) when we have necessarily to invite them inside our verandah to lift the corpses wastages or the dead cattle. We feel at that time that our entire house is polluted. The pollution may be either due to the corpse or due to the entrance of untouchables inside the house, and we take both as pollution. To some extent we also feel polluted whenever we go outside our house, say, to bazaar, busstand or temple.
Q. How do you purify the pollution?

Ans. The purification of pollution depends upon the degree of pollution. If an untouchable enters our house due to the inevitability of his service such as lifting the dead man's wastages, then we feel it is pollution of a higher level. But the corpse also adds to the degree of pollution. Therefore we have to arrange a religious ceremony to purify the house. We at that time clean our house with earthen clay, cow dung or after that, some times one can wash the house with lime and purify it. We invite swamijies, Sadgurus and Bhoajan gathering. That involves also gift to the Sadhus. We also gather relatives and members of the same and superior castes, and observe a ceremony. It is a purificatory ceremony at a higher level.

Further if the pollution is only to a small extent, by touch or contacts etc., then we just sprinkle water or take bath or sprinkle vibhuthi and purify ourselves.

Marathas:

Q. How do you come into contact with untouchables and how do you get polluted?

Ans. We come into contact with untouchables on several occasions, while tilling our land, while sowing, while harvesting or while
working together for some other type of work. But the physical contact between us is not very common. But sometimes one has to come very close, so close that we cannot avoid touching them. We feel it in our mind that the untouchable is touching us, but we also feel that we are helpless. For if we have to lift some heavy load, or heavy items, then we cannot do that without the untouchables. At that time inevitably we touch each other and naturally get polluted. But such pollution is not as great as the pollution that comes about when an untouchable enters our house on unavoidable occasions of death etc. But inspite of fear of untouchability we can always avoid untouchables. We do allow their contacts although we feel the pollution in mind.

Q. How do you purify the pollution?

Ans. For common contact pollution we just sprinkle water or wash the clothes or we just sprinkle Bhendar. If the house gets polluted we purify the house by cleaning it entirely with cow-dung or mud or by washing it with lime powder.

From the above interview with orthodox families in Bedkihal town, it can be established easily that the practice of untouchability due to the notion of pollution still persists in the orthodox world. In such cases, untouchability is still mostly direct and still considerable.
Halasi village like Bedkibal town embodies all the important caste groups that make the traditional way of living almost according to the smriti. Therefore all the castes, excepting a very few can be said to exist in Halasi village, making it thereby into multicaaste village. Naturally the social relations between people in Halasi village has to be complex and contradictory. But the orthodox tenants of Hindu social structure which the Halasi village has followed for centuries have not lost hreshold even in these fast-changing days. The relational pattern of the people in Halasi village is based on caste, and each caste has its own lane and locality. The untouchables in Halasi village, as do the other untouchables in the surrounding villages, have their lanes on the outskirts of the village, and their locality at the first sight itself and by its nature identifies itself as an untouchable locality. Though the village is multi-caste, it is not vary large and therefore people estab­lish mostly direct and face-to-face relations. As the people are clustered in a limited space, it is possible for every man to know every other, in terms of the caste to which a particular man belongs of his family condition, and his occupation etc. There are various areas of life which bring people into contact with each other, and a particular social purpose is met only when such contact is occurs. Naturally the untouchables come in
contact is involved. Naturally the untouchables come into contact with touchables for a variety of purposes. Let us then examine the social interactions between touchables and untouchables, and see how such relations govern the institution of untouchability. Untouchables come into contact with touchables at two levels of their dealings with touchables.

(1) Traditional dealing and (2) Agricultural Dealing. Let us examine the institution of untouchability in these dealings.

**Traditional Dealings and Untouchability:** *(Individual experiences of untouchables)*

Traditionally the untouchables in Halasi village work as scavengers, street sweepers, cattle drivers and messengers. These are the tasks which are still carried on by untouchables in Halasi village. A particular untouchable family is tied up with a certain number of touchable families to carry on such traditional work. Whenever a touchable family finds the service of an untouchable family necessary, then it goes only to that untouchable family with which their families are traditionally tied up. If somebody dies in a touchable family, then to pass on the message to their relatives in some other villages it is the untouchable family hereditarily tied, to that of the dead, that has to do this job. On such occasions touchables have to deal with untouchables very directly. But that involves a number
of polluting residents, and touchables have to adopt purificatory measures. When the untouchables pollute it means a particular way of them on such occasions or any other such occasions. Whenever is carried on by them, they experience a particular kind of treatments I am the touchables noted by detailed study of certain number of untouchable. The individual cases presented in what follows bring out the nature of the relations and treatment involved. The data was collected through the method of interviewing and observation.

Case No.1: Chalawadi

Q. What is the way you are treated when you go to your master’s house to carry out the activities involved in taking the corpse or the dead cattle to the burial ground?

Ans. A lot of defilement is involved. When the cattle dies in the high-caste family to which our family is tied for generations to do its filthy work, then that family consults us in connection with the work of taking away the dead cattle, of cutting it off and of burying it. But when the cattle dies no body will dare touch it except we untouchables, since we only can do that work and nobody else. Naturally then, even if the cattle has died in the verandah of a house we only have to go there and lift it out. But we have to enter the house inevitably and that makes their whole house polluted in its, and raises the need to be
purified. After the defilement of the house some of the orthodox families even leave the house and stay in some other house or place, until the house defiled is purified. The same thing happens even after the death of a human. Death, whether of humans or cattle, is the only occasion we enter the higher caste houses and on other occasions we cannot even see their doors. When the cattle dies, and when we enter their houses to carry its dead body all men and women, especially the women, will be out, in view of their presumption that our entry defiles them totally. That is how we are avoided by the touchables on such occasions as death.

Case No.2: Chalawadi:

Q. What are the defiling works you carry on and how do you defile the higher castes?

Ans. The main work of our caste according to tradition is to remove the dead cattle, to keep clean the village streets and to serve caste Hindus by fulfilling other similar direty duties. We still carry on such occupations and such occupations are being assigned to untouchables family-wise. But while carrying on such occupations we have to come in to contact with touchables very directly, and that defiles them very seriously. But we cannot avoid that, because if for e.g. the cattle has died in
in the house itself, we shall have to go into the house. Otherwise touchables don't touch it and when we go inside the home that defiles their house totally. Such occasions for them are regarded as very unfortunate, and they have to purify the house so polluted.

Madiga:

Q. What is your traditional occupation? Does that defile caste Hindus?

Ans. The traditional occupation of our caste is to prepare ropes for various uses in the village. Apart from that we also remove dead cattle and do other such dirty occupations, whichever is assigned to us by the caste laws. But certainly the duties we do defile the caste Hindus. For example the rope we make is used by caste Hindus and that defiles the caste Hindus. But that defiles not because of its intrinsic property but because of its being prepared by us. Therefore caste Hindus take the material prepared by us only after its purification.

Untouchability in Agricultural Dealing:

In Halasi village untouchables supply the major agricultural labour force to the caste Hindus. Almost all the caste Hindus employ untouchables in their agricultural field to carry on
different types of work all through the year. The caste Hindus and untouchables then certainly have to come into direct contact with each other. In such a direct contact the interactions that follow involve social distance between them due to the notion of untouchability. The social distance in their agricultural dealings was observed as follows:

1) Untouchables cannot interact with touchables in the agricultural field in the manner that involves physical contact or touch.

2) Untouchables cannot exchange working tools with touchables. In fact, untouchables must have their own tools.

3) Untouchables cannot work in the same line where touchables work so that touchables cannot touch the untouchables.

4) Some of the most orthodox Hindus, especially Brahmins, cannot employ untouchables for sacred work such as sowing or reaping.

5) Touchables and untouchables cannot rest together in the same place and dine together.

6) Untouchables must keep a certain distance whenever they work with touchables, in case the work is very direct.
(7) While harvesting, untouchables cannot enter the threshing ground lest it should be polluted by their touch. The entry of untouchable into the threshing ground is regarded as a misfortune.

(8) Untouchables should drink the water that is poured by the touchables and they cannot use the water pot that is used by the touchables.

(9) The untouchables must not keep their utensils in the same place where the touchables keep theirs.

(10) The untouchables cannot touch any of the utensils of the touchables.

Thus social distances is observed even in agricultural dealing, which is a very direct type of social interaction. Therefore the social distance between touchables and untouchables is observed even at the level of agricultural work in the Malasi village.

**Touchables and their concept of untouchability**

The case Hindus in Malasi village have held the same
notional feelings of untouchability as do the caste Hindus in
the other units of our study. To understand the concept of
untouchability as observed by them, questions were asked and
the following answers were received from them.

Q. How do you observe untouchability?

Ans. (Brahmin) "We observe untouchability at various levels
and the degree of untouchability depends upon the kind of
contact. There are certain occasions which make the services
of untouchables very necessary and those occasions bring un-
touchables into a very direct contact with us. If a cattle
dies in our house to remove that dead cattle the service of
an untouchable is inevitable. We cannot even touch that dead
cattle let alone remove it. But to remove that dead cattle, the
untouchable has to enter our cattle shed, of use the back door
of the house itself. We have separate cattle sheds to shelter
our cattle. If the cattle dies there then that shed because of
the untouchable's entry into it, gets polluted in addition to
polluten due to the death of that cattle. We consider untouch-
able's entry into our house or even into our cattle shed as a
curse. His contact with us brings us distress and only on
unfortunate occasions he has to come into contact with us.
Untouchables also come into contact with us in public life,
say, in Bustand, Bazaar etc., and since we know and recognise
untouchables, we feel polluted also due to such contact."
Q. How do you purify the pollution?

Ans. The purification depends upon the kind of contact. If the pollution is due to the entry of an untouchable into our house or due to the death of a cattle then we consider it as a great pollution. To purify this pollution we wash the entire house. If the pollution is due to personal contact, then we take ordinary purificatory measures such as bathing, sprinkling of water, using sacred ash etc.

Lingayat:

Q. How do you observe untouchability?

Ans. Untouchables always come into contact with us in fields of public life etc. We cannot do without untouchables. But we observe untouchability even in the ordinary course of life. Even if the contact is at the ordinary level of dealing, the untouchables don't touch us. They know their position and behave accordingly. However on certain occasions we get polluted in public life. We sometimes travel commonly in a common bus. That involves even their physical touch. But on special occasions such as death, the contact becomes so direct that untouchables have to enter inevitably our houses. If a cattle dies to remove that cattle the untouchable has to enter our house. Sometimes we have separate cattle sheds.
But cattle sheds are adjacent to our houses, and their entering the cattle-shed is as good as entering our house itself. That time the house gets polluted. Usually we don't allow the untouchables to enter our houses.

Q. How do you purify the pollution?

Ans. If we feel that the house itself is polluted then we wash it and purify it. If the pollution is through personal contact then we take bath, sprinkle water, and use the surendash.

However, the Jains behave towards the untouchables in the same way as do the Brahmins. In the case of Marathas and other middle castes such as Kurubas and Malis, the observance of untouchability is not that rampant as among Lingayats and Brahmins. But the notion of untouchability as pollution phenomenon works in every caste which is above the level of an untouchable caste. Some of the orthodox Marathas have held the same ideal of untouchability as do the Brahmins and Lingayats. However Kurubas and Malis have shown concession in this regard. The Kurubas and Malis say that they too are untouchables if they go to the higher caste houses, especially the Brahmin houses.

Towards Responses:

To understand the general attitude of people towards
untouchability in Nalasi village, the general view of different
caste people was collected. The different caste people inter-
viewed in this regard were, in all hundred in number. The
responses are arranged in the following order of castes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caste</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Indiff.</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brahmin</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jain</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lingayat</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maratha</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurnia</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mali</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>77</strong></td>
<td><strong>77.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>12.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
<td><strong>11.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When we look at those responses carefully, it becomes
clear that Brahmins have shown the least change in attitude
towards untouchability as before. The Jains are similar to
Brahmins in this regard. But Lingayats, Marathas and middle
castes have shown some decrease in the tendency to observe
untouchability.
Untouchables' Responses:

The untouchables gave the following responses when asked about the observance of untouchability as experienced by them. The responses are arranged in the order of castes among untouchables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caste</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Indifferent</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chalawadi</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>85.42</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madar</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hulsar</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The number of untouchables interviewed was fortiesight. In Halesi village the Madar and Hulsar castes have only two and one house respectively, and all other houses belong to the Chalawadi. Therefore, responses are mostly collected from Chalawadies. Almost all, about 90 per cent of Chalawadies, admit that they experience the practice of untouchability in their every day life. And the same opinion is also held by the other two castes namely Madar and Hulsar.
The empirical evidence presented and analysed in detail so far suggest certain broad conclusions. First, the evidence is strong that social inequality governs inter-caste behaviour in the units of our study, and it takes the form of untouchability. Secondly, while all touchables accept the notion of untouchability, their actual practice of it shows considerable variation as between caste. Thirdly, while chosen in the socio-economic environment seems to work against it, untouchability shows a great tenacity to persist. There is no doubt that for the bulk of the untouchables studies, untouchability is a basic fact of their daily lives. This is a matter that must cause great concern all those dedicated to the ideals of equality and humanity, and above all, it must prompt the untouchables themselves to consider initiating revolutionary action in the cause of an equalitarian, democratic society. It is now more an ideal than a reality.