The changes that have been brought by independent India have certainly affected its social structure in many ways. The changes have brought into existence new slogans such as liberty, equality and fraternity. The Constitution of India has laid down principles which are the opposite of the traditional social structure of India, and its very preamble speaks of India as a democratic secular and socialistic Republic, committed to the goals of Justice - social, economic and political. The ideas thus adopted therefore have forced the Indian social system to the situation of a transition, which could assure the people of India the hope of filling up the gap between the rich and the poor, the high and the low. But the question whether the liberal principles enshrined in the Constitution of India have helped in undermining the traditional social order of India, and thus produce a real change is one that requires deeper investigation. This chapter attempts to give an answer to this question. Thus we have seen so far that there is a contradiction between the continuing inequality and the aims of our constitution to establish equality in all spheres - economic, social and political. This contradiction is examined here only because the effects of these liberal principles in reality have proved to be confusing and
misleading. Here, it is not equality of opportunity that is important but equality of treatment that is important in the public life of present India. Let us dwell on this aspect now.

The Moribund elements of caste:

What has happened to the social structure of India after its adoption of liberal principles can be studied only by studying the main elements of caste structure. The social structure in India means essentially more than the nothing caste system, because everything revolves round caste itself. If we are to know about the impact of new principles upon our social structure then it is essential that we should know about what has happened to the main elements of caste. The main elements of caste are as follows:

(1) Occupation
(2) Pollution
(3) Food habit
(4) Restricted Inter-caste Interaction
(5) Endogamy
(6) Hierarchy
(7) Disorganisation
Occupation is one of the important elements of caste. A particular caste clings to a particular occupation. The varnas which clung to particular occupations assigned different occupations to different castes within them, and the castes became so specialised in course of time, that each caste was identified with the occupation which it carried on. The untouchable castes which are outside the pale of varna system and called a varnas have also specialised occupations to carry on. They do all the filthy occupations such as killing and skinning animals, disposing of the dead cattle, tanning the leather and seasoning etc. That is how occupation is held to be an important attribute of caste. But the employment opportunities under the new prescriptions in the new Constitution have given people new avenues of employment which have helped them to do away with their traditional occupations. As a result of that, many people have given up their traditional occupations and have taken to occupations which are not caste-based. The untouchables who have taken advantage of this new social situation have done away with traditional occupations of scavenging, street sweeping etc., and have become Government officials. So also the Brahmins, Marathas, Lingayats and others too have taken advantage this new social situation.
In Belgaum 32% of the touchable respondents agreed that they have given up totally their traditional occupations, while 44% of them say that they do their traditional occupation of minor occupation. The remaining 24% of agree that they do their traditional occupations as major occupations. Among the untouchables in Belgaum while 57% of respondents agree that they take to traditional occupation as major occupation 22% of them say that they do their traditional occupation as minor occupation and the remaining 20% agree that they do not do their traditional occupation at all. In Bedkihal 68% of touchable respondents say that they do their traditional occupations as major occupations and non-traditional occupations as minor occupations and 32% of them said that they do non-traditional and traditional occupation as major and minor occupation respectively. Among untouchables in Bedkihal, while 59% of respondents say that they do non-traditional and traditional occupation as major and minor occupation respectively, 41% say that they do traditional and non-traditional occupation as major and minor occupations respectively. In Halasi 71% of touchables do traditional and non-traditional occupation as major and minor occupation respectively, and 29% among them do non-traditional and traditional as major and minor occupations respectively. Among the untouchables in Halasi 60% of respondents say that they do non-traditional and traditional occupations as major and minor occupations respectively and the remaining 40% of respondents
say that, they do traditional and non-traditional and non-traditional occupations as major and minor occupations respectively. (The untouchable castes which have given up their traditional occupation have taken up mostly the occupation of agricultural wage labourer which is their non-traditional occupation. The touchable castes which do the traditional occupations follow mostly agriculturist occupation which are to them traditional occupation.) Thus there is an opportunity for a caste to take to new occupation, which is not strictly allowed by its caste rule and as a result of that the occupational features of caste is disappearing to a significant degree.

(2) Pollution

Since each caste is engaged in its own occupation (if not fully at least partially) and since there are certain castes which have to carry on filthy and unclean occupations, there has emerged a common notion among castes that the castes engaged in low kind of occupation pollute the castes engaged in high kind of occupation. Thus the notion of pollution involves avoidance of the contact with low caste by the high caste. But due to the removal of disabilities based on caste, the low castes, especially the untouchable castes, have got access to all public utilities such as roads, restaurants, wells and such other utilities. This has eliminated the concept of pollution at
least in the sphere of public life. In Belgaura 90% of untouchables agree that there is no bar for them to use any public utility including even important temples in the city. But 83% of untouchable respondents in Bedkihal say that they are not allowed to enter the temple gates of the town, and while 94% of them say that they have access to all other public utilities including the hotels and saloons the rest did not respond at all. In Halasi all untouchables say that they have access to hotels but not to the temples except the Basaveshwar Temple which is located in their own locality.

(3) Food habits:

Each caste is supposed to consume a particular type of food which is traditionally prescribed by the caste rule. The food habits of castes vary from caste to caste and no caste can eat the food which is not admissible by the law that the caste codes regulate. Traditionally the Brahmins and the Lingayats should be strict vegetarians, the Marathas may eat fish and mutton but they cannot eat beef. So also the other lower castes like Bedar, Muslim, Talawar and Kurubar may eat what Marathas eat but they cannot consume beef. Untouchables traditionally should eat beef and should eat even the flesh of dead cattle. That is how the castes were regulated by the food prescriptions of caste.
But the rigidity of such prescriptions has been gradually disappearing and all the castes are becoming liberal in their consumption of food items. Owing to the impact of Westernisation and other such newly developed liberal trends the Brahmins and Lingayats who are supposed to be strict vegetarians are becoming non-vegetarians. In Belgaum 36% of touchable castes (including the Brahmins and Lingayats) agreed that they consume non-vegetarian food which is against their caste rule. Some of them agreed that they even to the extent of consuming beef, which is the most defiling item of non-vegetarian food compared to mutton and chicken.

So also 31% of touchables in Bedkihal and 24% of touchables in Hadasi agree that they have started consuming non-vegetarian food items. Thus the food habit of touchables is losing its rigidity at all the three levels—the city, the town and the village.

The untouchables who are supposed to eat beef have shown an increasing tendency to give it up. In Belgaum 37% of untouchables agreed that they do not consume beef and while 13% of them said that they are strict vegetarians, the rest said that they eat any kind of dish. In Bedkihal 18% of respondents said that they do not consume beef, while 5% of them said that they are strict vegetarians. The rest said that they eat any
kind of dish. In Malasi among untouchables almost all chalawadis
said that they neither consume beef nor do they prefer to eat
any other non-vegetarian item of food. That is how as far as
the food habit is concerned there is an upward mobility from
the point of view of untouchables and downward mobility from the
point of view of touchables.

Thus the food habit which was supposed to be there as one
of the features of caste has been disappearing.

(4) Restricted Inter-caste interaction

Traditionally the castes were restricted in their social
intercourse. If the castes were to act then they were forced
to act only within the limit of their caste rules. All the
castes among the touchables were restricted to do their own
caste occupations. If the Lingayat was to do the occupation of
cultivating the field, then the Brahmin was confined to the
occupation of teaching, praying and propitating. Thus also were
all other touchable castes were confined to their caste activity.
The untouchable castes were required to discharge their duties
and occupation within the limitations of untouchability, un-
approachability and unseeability. The untouchables were not
allowed to take to the occupations which were not permitted to
them by their caste rules. No Brahmin or Lingayat would eat a
type of food that was not permitted by their respective castes rules and an untouchable could eat only that type of food that was allowed by his caste rules. No caste could dare to practice an act that prohibits its customary code. Thus caste should try to abide by the code of its conduct as prescribed by its Dharma (the caste religion).

The social contacts of the castes were also determined by their customary codes. The untouchable, due to his disability of being born into an untouchable caste, was not allowed to have free contact with higher castes. The touchables were also prevented from free interaction with untouchables. That is how restrictions on intercourse were strictly observed by each caste whether high or low. The Brahmin should not love an untouchable but an untouchable should not hate Brahmin, according to their respective customs. Hence prohibition formed an important characteristic of caste.

But due to the modern changes the restriction concept of caste has been declining considerably in certain spheres of public life, though it is commonly observed in the spheres of private life. When a Brahmin caste man takes his job in a Government office, he cannot behave there in the same old fashion with an untouchable. But he can behave with an untouchable in the same old fashion when he is in his own house. In Belgaum
27% of touchable respondents including Brahmins and Lingayats said that they do not behave with an untouchable employee in the same old fashion though they inevitably have to behave with them in that fashion in their own house. The rest said that they do not have much contact with untouchables and even if they have they try to avoid such contacts. 15% of untouchable respondents who do job in the Government offices said that they have their friendship with touchables but that friendship is limited to their public life and never entered the private. But in public life they said none of the touchable employees dare to displaying the superiority concept of caste. But the rest of the untouchables said that they do experience the pangs of untouchability wherever they go. In Bedkihal while 16% of touchable respondents agreed that they treat untouchables as equal in the public life, the rest said that they never treat them as equal as though they are scared of them while treating them unequally. In Halasi also while 17% said that they treat untouchables as equal in public life, the rest did not agree to do so, even if they are afraid of untouchables while treating them unequally. Among the untouchable respondents in Bedkihal 14% of them agree they are rarely treated as equal while the rest say that they are not at all treated as equal and in Halasi, while 15% of untouchable respondents say that they are treated as equal in public life at least occasionally, the rest say that they are never treated as equal.
However at least to certain extent the restrictive interaction of caste is declining in importance and that is clear from the respondents' views.

(5) Endogamy

A man or woman has to marry within his or her own caste. If they intermarry breaking their caste circle, then they will have to face a very bad time. Sometimes the consequence is so bad that it leads to the total boycott of the married couple and the couple has to face the problem of survival. Thus for the intermarried couple the problem of interaction is very hard.

In the changed circumstances, though intercaste marriages are encouraged by the Government, only stray instances of such marriages occur in real life. The consciousness of superiority never allows the caste Hindus to go in for intercaste marriages. The parents of superior castes like Brahmin, Jain and Lingayat prohibit their girls and boys even to interact with the low castes, thus encouraging in the young people the consciousness of caste. Further even if there are certain families which like the progressive idea of intercaste marriages, due to the fear of insults and abuses in public life by other families, they avoid such marriages, thereby helping the endogamous circle to continue. Sometimes the violation of endogamy leads to rigorous
penalties and punishments. Hence endogamy becomes so important a characteristic of caste that some scholars opine that there cannot be any difference between endogamy and caste.

In Belgaum while 93% of touchable respondents do not accept intercaste marriages only 7% of them approve intercaste marriages. But they cannot practice it, due to the fear of boycott, insults and abuses by others around. When intercaste married couples were interviewed for the purpose of knowing their experience the unhappy couples, complained that this boycott was not only by their fellow men in the lane but also by even in their public life and every where they were subjected to abuses and insults. Further they said that it was not only the married persons who were barred from social intercourse but all the members of their family, including children. A Brahmin girl who married an untouchable boy reported with grief that she never went to her parents' house after marriage due to the fear of her father's threat of killing himself, and occasionally her mother came to see her very secretly. In Badkhali almost 98% of respondents agree that they do not like intercaste marriages since that not only violates Jati Dharma but also lessens their importance in public life. 2% of them did not respond at all. In Halasi also 96% of respondents did not give positive sign for intercaste marriage and 4% of them did not respond at all.
Among untouchables in Belgaum 83% of respondents accept intercaste marriages, but they also say that, that is not possible at this stage. The rest 17% of respondents do not accept intercaste marriages. In Bedkihal among untouchable respondents, while 77% of them accept intercaste marriages the rest 23% of them do not agree to intercaste marriages. Among the untouchable respondents of Halasi, 74% accept intercaste marriage while 26% of them do not. However in all the units of our study the untouchable castes have shown more favourable opinion for intercaste marriage than the touchables.

Thus endogamy is still persisting as the most powerful characteristic of caste.

(c) **Hierarchy:**

The castes are fixed in compartments of gradation and the graded castes have feelings of superiority and inferiority. In the descending order each caste is superior to caste below it and in the ascending order each caste is inferior to the caste above it. Hence in the hierarchical arrangement each caste is so placed as to have one below it and one above it. No caste can change its position in the hierarchy since it cannot move vertically either up or down in the scale of gradation. Thus hierarchy as a characteristic of caste is chronic and powerful. In the units of our study, the hierarchy of
Caste has remained a strong force, keeping castes isolated from each other. How heavy and formidable a task it is to break the hierarchy of caste can be seen through the study of lower caste identity in terms of its way of life and the limited social mobility in the units of our study.

**Immobility through Sanskritisation**

Through such process of mobility as Sanskritisation, a caste can try to change its position, although it will be of no use in actual practice. It can imitate the ways of life of higher castes and that way it can attempt to claim the position of higher castes. But merely claiming the superior position is of no use, since it cannot change its position in actual practice. Claim is different from possession. Thus it will have to question the superiority of the higher caste, whom it is imitating. But the success of such an attempt depends upon the attitude of the model caste towards the imitating caste. If the model caste treats the imitating caste on par with it granting it its own status, then imitating caste no doubt becomes successful in its mission. On the other hand, if the model caste looks down upon the imitating caste in the same old fashion then the purpose of imitating caste fails, because it will have to continue in the same old position. But if the model caste shows an attitude of equality towards the imitating caste, then it will have to lose
its superiority over to the imitating caste. But losing superiority means, not becoming equal to the imitating caste but becoming little less in position than the imitating caste, because in the system of caste, castes cannot be equal. Inequality being the basic spirit of caste, one caste cannot move up unless the other is brought down. Thus immobility is also a characteristic of caste. This being the fact it becomes impossible for a model caste to give up its superiority to the imitating caste and accept an inferior position. Thus in actual practice the imitating caste remains inferior even if it claims equality through its mobility process. Despite this difficulty if the imitating caste is to become equal to the caste whom it is imitating then such possibility will be realized only if the model caste and imitating caste both undergo a course of revolution at two levels. First of all they both should open their closed doors to each other i.e., they must disintegrate as individual groups and secondly they should become one and the same caste i.e., they must integrate. This two level revolution means one and the same thing, because once they open their closed doors to each other, then they can become one and the same caste. Without this revolution if the castes say that they are equal then their equality will be unreal. -The endogamous circle is maintained only because the castes have rigid notion of superiority and inferiority. This feeling among castes is itself the basis of endogamy. And if endogamy is not done away with while establishing
equality, it will also mean that the notions of superiority and inferiority are not done away with.

Thus if the mobility process of caste is to become a real process of structural change then the following needs should be fulfilled.

(1) The mobilising caste not only should mobilise but should also question the superiority of the caste whom it is imitating.

(2) The model caste should give up its superior position over the mobilising caste or the imitating caste.

(3) Or else both the mobilising caste and the model caste should open their doors to each other or the endogamous circles and they should become one and the same caste.

Unless these needs are fulfilled the mobility process will be of no use for a caste wanting to change its position.

In Belgaum, Bedkihal and Halasi, almost all the untouchable castes have followed the ways of life of one or the other higher castes. Actually there is no difference between the castes as far as their way of life is concerned. Each adopts one or the
other type of rite or the ritual from every other caste and
patterns its life in a fashion that makes actually no difference
between itself and other castes. But it is only the Brahmin
caste that serves as a model for the ways of life for all other
castes. All the life-styles flow down from Brahmins who are
at the top, to the castes which are below them. Though Brahmin
and Lingayat life styles appear to be different, they actually
are one and the same in their content and purpose. Thus if there
is difference then the difference is only at the level of detail
and not such as to make the caste entirely different from all
other castes. This case is true at least in the present context.
Thus castes as far as their culture, language and tradition are
concerned are not very different from each other, though they
also accept the principle of exclusivity.

The rites and Rituals of Desasta and Untouchables:

In Belgaun city, Mahars, Mangs, Chamars and Dhors follow
the way of life of Desasta Brahmins, who are sometimes also
addressed as Rigvedis or Apastambhs. Previously the Desasta
Brahmins were Grahstas, or laymen taking no alms and earning
their living as writers, merchants, traders, money-lenders
and landowners. Some of them were also astrologers and husband
men. But now-a-days most of them have got jobs in Government
offices even though they have not given up their original
occupations. Thus Desastas as a class have become well to do. From birth till death, untouchables follow many religious rites, though certain vedic rites like Upanayana ceremony are not observed by them. Some of them also wear the sacred thread, though a special ceremony to initiate such people is not celebrated. The sacred ash with which the untouchables rub their forehead is also done in the same fashion as that of Desasta Brahmin. The Mahar man who wears the sacred thread, before he begins to eat offers some of the food to his Gods, and sprinkles a ring of water round his plate. He places three to five pinches of cooked rice mixed with butter on the right side of leaf plate, pours water on the rice and pours a spoonful on the palm of his right hand, sips it, and eats six pinches of rice and then begins to eat. If it is not observed by everybody, everyday, at least on special occasions this rite is observed compulsorily by every one. But modern young men who hate God, caste and Brahmin, reject it and hate those who follow such rites. Many other rites including, prenatal, childhood, marriage and death rites are observed by untouchables in Belgaum, which resemble the Desasta rites.

Among the prenatal rites the Carbhadhara (conception) rite is strictly observed. Soon after marriage the man and woman are not allowed to cohabitate. A ceremony is arranged on the right occasion when the time for conception is proper.
Usually the time for conception is held to be proper only if the newly wed wife is free from her monthly course. That means the conception should take place after the stoppage of impure blood so that the man approaching his wife will not waste his semen which his woman receives after sexual union. Usually any day after the fourth day of monthly course is held to be proper for conception. But only nights are prescribed for conception and days are prohibited. The man approaching his wife before the fourth night is supposed to pollute himself and also taken to be guilty of sin because his semen was scattered in vain.

These beliefs are common among untouchables as are among Dasast Brahmins. As do the Desata Brahmins, the Mahar and Dhors have the belief that, approaching the wife during her Ritu, (conceiving period) is a sacred and compulsory duty of every married man. According to Manu, "Remaining true to his wife one should approach her in every Ritu". Parasara not only enjoins this but also threatens the non-conformist with sins," one who though in good health, does not go to his wife during her Ritu, attains the sin of causing abortion without any doubt. The duty of approaching the husband was equally binding on wife, when she became pure after her monthly course. Parasara says, A woman, who having bathed does not go to her husband becomes a swine in her next birth" (P.B.Pandey, p 1976, p.57). This kind of beliefs are present both among Brahmins and untouchables.
When a woman conceives and the child starts growing in her womb many such other minor rites are frequently observed lest the child's growth should be affected by evil forces. In the seventh month of her pregnancy, the woman is presented with a bodhis and robe on that occasion, line of red powder of Kunku are drawn on her feet, turmeric is rubbed on her body and a feast is given to her relatives. This ceremony is observed in the same way as among the Desastas.

When a woman gives birth to a child then the sutaka (pollution) rituals are observed, and the woman and her husband are not allowed to enter the main doors of house for 10 days. On the 11th day the sutak ritual ends and both wife and husband are allowed to enter in the main part of the house. On the thirteenth day of the child's birth, the child is named and the jatuka (Horoscope) of that child is prepared. On that occasion a feast is given to all the members of the caste. During the first or the second year of the child his head is shaved except for a tuft of hair on the crown. These rituals of untouchables also resemble those of the Desasta Brahmins.

Previously the boy or girl was married before he or she came of age. But now-a-days, the boy or girl is married only after he or she comes of marriable age. The betrothal is confirmed by the boy's parents presenting the girl with an
ornament and after this the marriage ceremony can be performed any time. Before the wedding a ceremony called 'bhastagi' is observed and sugar and packets of betelnut and leaves are offered to relations and friends. The bride and bride-groom are rubbed with turmeric on the day before the marriage and in the evening a ceremony called boundary worship or simant puja is performed, when the boy is visited by the girl's parents, worshipped and presented with clothes and ornaments. Before the time appointed for joining hands, the house gods are worshipped and the boy and girl at their houses are rubbed with turmeric and bathed four times in hot water. Then the boy is seated on a horse and with music and a party of relations and friends taken to the girl's house. Then the boy and girl walk round the Agni (fire) five times. Here the priests repeat the verses and the guests throw rice mixed with red powder on the heads of the boy and girl and the couple throw garlands of flowers round each other's neck and also the boy ties the mangalsutra round the neck of the girl. After this is over a feast is given to friends and relatives. Thus ends the marriage. Before the marriage the horoscope of the girl and boy are taken into consideration so that there is no problem in the future for happy and prosperous life for the girls and the boy.

The death rituals which the untouchables observe in Belgaum also resemble those of the Desasta Brahmin. And when death
occurs in a family, the married dead are cremated. If the father dies, the sons shave their heads. Though they do not allow widow marriage, they do not always enforce the rule that a widow should shave her head.

The rites and rituals of Desasta Brahmins have been imitated by untouchables for generations, but they have not changed their traditional social status in any way and they have not allowed untouchables to mobilise in the scale of hierarchy.

The rites and rituals of Jain and untouchables (A case of Bedkihal):

The rites and rituals of untouchables of Bedkihal town resemble both those of Brahmins and of the Jains of that town. In fact the differences between the Jain and the Brahmin customs and traditions are only minor.

When the child is born, the untouchables of Bedkihal like the Jain consult the astrologer, usually a Brahmin, to fix the name that should be given to the newly born child. Then the astrologer consults his almanac and, considering the day and hour at which the child was born, he suggests the letter with which the name should begin. If he says that the name should begin with letter A, then the head of family suggests the name
such as Anil, Ashok, Arjun, Anjli, Anita etc. The hair of both boys and girls is cut on any day between the beginning of the seventh and the end of the twelfth month. As among Jains, a ceremony is held by untouchables when an unmarried girl comes of age and no special ceremony is held when a married untouchable girl comes of age.

When a boy or a girl is to be married, then the Jataka (horoscope) of both the boy and the girl are considered for mutual fitness. Only if the Jatakas are found to match, further arrangements for marriage are pursued. After consultation with a Brahmin a lucky day is chosen, when the boy’s father and mother with a few neighbours, go to the girl’s house with betel nut and leaves, turmeric and red powder, sugar, a robe and bodice and a silver girdle or anklets. At the girl’s house a party of men and women assemble and in their presence the girl is brought glad in a new robe and bodice or ornaments. The turmeric and red powder are given to all the married women present and sugar and betel nut are handed to all. This ceremony is called vidaghalane or the distribution of betel leaves. It confirms the marriage contract and the actual marriage ceremony may take place on any subsequent day.

After consultation with a Brahmin the marriage day is selected. Two or three days before the wedding day, in the
presence of a priest, or a Guru, the boy is anointed with oil and covered with turmeric. Ganapati is worshipped by the boy's father. On the right side of the outer door of the house, a mango pole is set up and rubbed with turmeric and red powder, frankincense is burned before it and two betel leaves and one betel nut are laid on the ground in front of it. This is called devakecha kamb or the 'guardian pillar'. Then the priest prepares ten strings or kankans with a piece of turmeric and a mango leaf fastened to each. Five married women rub the bridegroom with oil and turmeric and bathe him. When the bridegroom has been bathed, five or six men and one or two married women with five or ten strings and oil and turmeric, go with music to the bride's house. The bride is seated on a low stool, and, in the presence of five married women, her lap is filled with a coconut, some rice, dates, plantains, lemons, betelnuts, a comb and a box of red powder. Then the bride is rubbed with oil and turmeric and bathed. Of the five strings which have been brought from the bridegroom's house one is tied to a pestle in the bride's house; a second to the guardian pillar, which has been set at the door of the marriage booths and a third is wound round a small earthen pot, kalash or kara, which with a hole in its side has been dotted with lime spots and its mouth closed by a coconut. The two remaining strings are kept for the wedding. The bridegroom's party after a dinner of cakes and sugared milk, called turmeric dinner or 'haladiche jewan' return to the bridegroom's house.
Next a booth is set up in front of the bridegroom's house and a dinner of sweet meats called deva-jevan or god's dinner is given. When the dinner is over the bridegroom is dressed in a waist cloth, an over-waist cloth and a coat and head scarf. A marriage crown or 'bashing' made of pitt is fastened to his forehead. Of the five strings which were received from the priest one is tied to an earthen jar, two are tied to the mango post, and two others are taken to the bride's house. When everything is ready in bride's house the bride is brought to the marriage booth, where the bridegroom is made to sit on the stool. The bridegroom then rises and stands facing west. The priest holds a curtain between the bride and the bridegroom and starts reading holy verses. Grains of red rice are given to all those who assemble there. And when the priests shout out savadhan and drop the curtain, the red rice grains are thrown over the heads of the bride and the bridegroom. The bride and bridegroom then garland each other. The remaining strings are then tied to the right wrist of bride and bridegroom and bride's father and mother. After this is over, a sacrificial fire or homa is kindled and worshipped. In the evening again the sweet meats are given to all who gather for marriage. Thus ends the marriage. This marriage pattern of untouchables is borrowed from Jains and there is not even an iota of change in the marriage styles of Jains and untouchables of Bedkihal.
The untouchables of Bedkihal bury the dead. When the bier is ready the dead body is washed with hot water laid on the bier and is covered with white sheet. The nearest relations then carry it on their shoulders to the burial ground with no music and bury it. The sons of the deceased shave their heads, except top-knot, and even the montache. This custom of carrying the dead resembles that of the Lingayats and Marathas and not that of the Jains and Brahmins. The Jains also bury the dead but only if the dead are unmarried.

Thus the rites and rituals observed by the untouchables of Bedkihal resemble those of the Jains in many ways. But this imitating is never seriously considered by Jains, and they never treat the untouchables any more than untouchables.

The rites and rituals of Chalawadis and Lingayats - A case of Halasi.

Like the Lingayats, the Chalawadis (untouchables) of Halasi wear Lingam or a phullus as a religious symbol. Previously on the day the child was born the priest used to fasten the Lingam round its neck. But now the practice of tying the Linga on the fifth day instead of the first day has become common.

On the fifth day after the child's birth, an initiation ceremony in the fashion of the Lingayats is observed by Chalawadis.
On that day their priest, a Jangam, is invited and soon after
his arrival to Chalawadi's house he is implored to sit on a
blanket which is spread over a place outside the house. The
place where the blanket is spread is washed and cleaned with
cow dung and adorned with banana leaves and flower frees. When
the Jangam takes his seat on the blanket his feet are washed
with drinking water in which the Jangam's feet have been rubbed
with sacred ash and are venerated. The drinking water in which
the Jangam's feet have been washed is considered as holy water
and a pinch of that is put in the month of the child. Then the
child becomes pure and fit for survival in the world. The child
is then put on the Jangam's feet and the Jangam blesses the
child with a phallus symbol which is later on tied to a cradle
until the child grows strong enough to bear it. Then the father
and mother of that child bow and thank the Jangam and give him
a gift of Rs.50/- The feast prepared by Chalawadi's on that
day will not be accepted by the Jangam, because of his being of
an a member of a touchable caste and of the Chalawadi being of
an untouchable caste. On the thirteenth day the child is named
and relations and friends are feasted. The naming of the child
is done by the paternal aunt. The other women of the locality
are also invited. The naming ceremony begins with a formal folk
song, sung by the women gathered there. Then the paternal aunt
names the child and makes a kur-kur sound in its ear. After her,
all other women do the same and when in the end of the women
depart, a mixture of grains boiled is distributed to them and all others there. This naming ceremony is the same as that of the Lingayats of Halasi.

The puberty rite is also observed by Chalawadis in the same fashion as Lingayats. When the girl comes of age for the first time, a purificatory ceremony is observed when the girl is seated isolated for 5 to 13 days. During this period the girl is supposed to be polluted and is made to observe certain taboos. On these days the women of the locality gather everyday in the evening and bathe the polluted girl, dress her with robe and bodice, put on ornaments and wave a sacred lamp at her face. On the last day of the ceremony she is presented with a new robe and bodice and ornaments. Thereafter during her monthly periods she is held impure. But she can purify by bathing in hot water.

The rites and rituals that Chalawadis follow during the marriage ceremony also resemble those of the Lingayats. When a girl becomes fourteen or fifteen years old her father seeks a husband for her, of not more than twenty to twenty two years. When he finds a suitable lad he goes to the lad's father and they talk over the matter in the company of near relations and friends. After the marriage is decided a ceremony called 'Nischya Karya' as a settlement rituals is held in the girl's house, when sugar, betelnuts and betel leaves are distributed to caste men
brought by the bridegroom's father. On this day, before the gathering of caste men, the girl who is adorned with new bodice and robe and ornaments is made to sit on a blanket and the bridegroom also sits on the right side of the girl. In the presence of elders, gifts are also given to bridegroom by the bride's party. After this is over a feast is given to caste men. On the day of marriage the bride and bridegroom are rubbed with turmeric and a ritual bath is given to them in the marriage booth—usually before the house of the bridegroom. This bath is called 'turmeric bath or 'Arasin Jalka'. When the auspicious moment on the day of marriage approaches, the boy and girl are made to sit in the middle of a square formed by pots or jers which are connected with threads. Then the Jangam utters the marriage verses and at the propitious moment asks the people to shower the coloured rice on the marrying couple. This is called Aksataropana or Akkikal Karya. As the people shower the coloured rice, the bridegroom ties the sacred string to the bride which is called Tali or Mangalasutra.

In the evening the feast is given to guests and the local people and gifts are made to the Jangams. Thus ends the marriage ceremony.

The death rites that the Chalawadis observe also resemble those of the Lingayats. When a Chalawadis is on the point of
death, he is bathed in warm water and a few drops of water in which Jahgam's feet have been washed are put into his mouth.

A Jahgam touches the dying person's head with his right foot.

When a person dies his body is again bathed and nostrils, ears, mouth and other openings are stuffed with cotton. To enable relations and friends to attend the funeral the corpse is allowed to remain in the house for a couple of days. After the arrival of all the relations, the body is taken to the burial ground where a leader of the Chalawadis with his laddel sings verses and puts his right foot on the right thigh of corpse for five times and then the dead is buried. On the third day various items of food which were dear to the dead while alive, will be placed on his grave. On that day even his clothes are worshipped and a feast is served to caste men.

Thus the rites and rituals of Lingayats and Chalawadis in Halasi resemble each other closely.

Aparent Equalities and Real Inequalities:

After the new Constitution came into force there began a friction between the new laws and the old and long-standing tenets of the Hindus social system. The orthodox pattern of life which the caste Hindus had enjoyed for generations started
declining gradually. Thus the Hindus were forced to face a dilemma, whether to accept the newly emerging values or to continue with old customs and traditions. But the dilemma became worst when the new principles were accepted, because that began to undermine all old traditions and customs which their predecessors had set up for their own benefit. Wise Hindus have escaped this dilemma in such a way which could assure them both the benefits from new Constitution and the benefits from the old social system. This they have done by adjusting the caste tenets to the tenets that have emerged from the new Constitution. As a result a new dimension of caste has spring up, namely - the gap between apparent equality and real inequality. Let us then study this dimension of caste.

The New Dimension of Caste:

The observance of untouchability kept the untouchables in a subordinate position and the Hindus had the benefit of exploiting the untouchables - socially, economically and politically. But the new Constitution has destroyed the institution of untouchability and the legislation abolishing untouchability has come as a menace to those castes which stick to its practice. Naturally the higher castes have to accept the abolition of untouchability act, at least for the fear of legal action. But those castes which do not accept such change in the caste structure of society, try to escape the legal provision in any way they can.
They can just avoid the contact of untouchables and may strictly limit their social intercourse only to the caste to which they belong. In Belgaum 16% and 12% of Brahmin and Lingayat respondents and 13% and 8% of Jain and Maratha respondents said that they just avoided the contact of untouchables even if there was a need. If asked why, then the reason they gave was that the Bhangis are now not that obedient and that they bring their untouchability laws (in the new Constitution), even to our house doors. One of the Brahmin respondents said that his friend was suffering in an untouchability case which was filed against him by an untouchable. Learning the same he left the contact of untouchables including even the Bhangis, and he also said that he would not tolerate the claim of untouchables for equal treatment. But the untouchables also equally do not care for such caste Hindus. 23% of untouchable respondents said that they did not care for caste Hindus if they did not care for them. This kind of development has again kept the touchable and untouchable castes apart, confined to their respective groups and has increased the rigidity of castes still more.

But the limitation on the social intercourse between the castes is not possible to enforce all the time and by all the people within the castes. The services of untouchables are as important as those of the higher castes or the castes which are supposed to practice untouchability. The removal of the dead
cattle, dealing with leather goods, scavenging, street sweeping, etc are the occupations which none can carry on but the untouchables. This establishes a socio-economic linkage between untouchables and touchables. But despite the necessity of the services of untouchables, if the caste Hindus look down on them and degrade them, the untouchables who are aware of the law abolishing untouchability, resent that and start availing the law against caste Hindus. This results in caste struggle, and the struggle between high and low aggravates the social conflict. Such struggles are there everywhere and are experienced by people even at the individual level. In Belgaum city when a sweeper was scolded by a Maratha man, thus degrading the sweeper, by the use of his caste name, the sweeper caste man resented that and went in a group to the Maratha man's house with chains and knives. But on their way the angry sweepers were caught by the police and this eased the tense situation. The Maratha man was then punished by the police and a compromise was arrived at between the sweepers and Marathas. The same case happened in Bedkhal when one of the Mahar man reported that he was beaten up by a Jain caste man for having used the tap of a drinking water tank. The Mahar youths held a meeting and in an angry mood went to the fields and destroyed all the crops of the concerned caste men. Later the issue was settled by the Chairman of town panchayat and both the parties
were fined and compromised. In Halasi also one of the Chalawadi men said that, when he refused to take away the dead cattle as his forefathers were doing and tied to the same master's family to do that from generation to generation, the master scolded him bitterly taking the name of his caste. This was resented by the untouchable men in Halasi and the case was taken to the police station. The police then fined the master and the issue was settled.

Thus, when the untouchables struggle to claim equality with caste Hindus and when the caste Hindus refuse it, their claim becomes apparent and the struggle between untouchable and touchable caste becomes inevitable.

**Caste-Class Dimension:**

By making use of the constitutional provisions such as assurance of educational and employment opportunity, some of the untouchables have come up and have coped with other castes. They have become economically well-to-do and socially advanced. The protective discriminatory policy, aimed at avoiding the unequal competition between unequals, has stuck to the principle of equal competition among the equals. The competition in general is an unequal competition. In view of this the government has resorted to the policy by which an untouchable candidate
aspiring for government jobs gets the opportunity to compete with his equals. An untouchable candidate, therefore, need not have to compete with Brahmins to secure government jobs. He would compete only with other untouchables and according to the reservation quota he gets into the government services. This has given the scheduled castes a favourable environment in which to acquire some positions in government offices. But at the same time some of the higher castes have lost their opportunity and have grown poorer. Their economic and cultural position is getting worse. Naturally the higher castes resent their deteriorating position. These untouchables who have become economically advanced do not have sympathy for the economically weakened higher castes, and regard them with the respect with which their forefathers used to regard them. But the poor higher castes, too, do not take the changed economic positions of untouchables as significant, since they continue in their same old style of birth-ascribed higher caste status.

When twenty well-to-do untouchables were interviewed, 14 of them answered that they did not care for economically weakened higher castes whereas the other two felt pity for them. If asked why they did not care for them, then the answer they gave was that they (poor touchables) too did not care for them. When the poor twenty touchables were interviewed about their attitude
towards advanced untouchables 17 of them opined that the untouchables were untouchables and that they could never be above touchables, no matter how forward they became and how backward the touchables grew.

Thus, the changed economic status of untouchables is neutralised by the unchanged social status. The well-to-do untouchables as a class face the problem of caste coming in their way of changing their social status. As a result, the caste-class pragmatism operates, to make the change valueless and useless.

Class-Class Dimension:

The distinction of the rich and the poor class of people is no longer confined to a particular caste in the changed socio-economic environment. The land and wealth property which was concentrated in the hands of upper castes previously, is now sliding gradually into the hands of lower castes. As a result of this, certain number of Brahmins and other upper castes (who too were rich in the recent past) have become poor and some of the untouchables (who were poor in the recent past) have become rich. Those Brahmins who have grown poor have developed hatred towards the rich and so also the poor untouchables have developed hatred towards the rich, irrespective of
the caste to which the rich belong. When 20 poor touchable respondents were interviewed as to whether they hated the rich belonging to their and other castes, they all agreed that they would hate all the rich. So also 20 respondents among the untouchables gave the same response. But when they were asked whether they loved the poor of all castes, they all gave a negative response.

Thus though all the poor class of people have shown a sense of hatred towards the rich, irrespective of caste, they never have shown a sense of community with all the poor, irrespective of caste.

Further, in the class–class frame, the rich belonging to the touchable and untouchable castes have also not shown a sense of attachment to each other. When the rich respondents from the touchable and untouchable castes were interviewed, 16 out of 20 respondents belonging to the touchable castes agreed that "the untouchable castes are below them, and that they cannot compete with them in richness." They said, that if the untouchables became rich to the extent of owning cars and R.C.C. Buildings, then they (higher castes) would be rich to the extent of owning factories and mills. This way they would go on growing and the untouchables would not compete with them and equal them. The untouchables were below them in
the scale of caste and they should also be below in the economic scale. But all the 20 untouchable respondents gave negative answers and claimed that they would be never below any body.

Thus in this way, caste-caste, caste-class and class-class dimensions of caste are operating in the units of our study, to keep the old system of caste intact. And in such a new dimension of caste, the untouchables have failed to improve their socio-economic position. In fact, the concepts of equality and inequality have come into the open in the caste conflicts over the issue of equality terms inequality.

The movement of untouchables for equality:

The progress which was closed to the untouchables in Hindu India, due to this suppression under Hinduism, could be promoted to a limited extent by stray cases of anti-caste movements. Those movements were led by political leaders and religious saints, in all parts of the country. Among the religious saints, Basaveshwar of Karnataka, Tiruvellur of Tamil Nadu, Tukaram and Kabiradas of Maharashtra, Narsinh Mehta of Gujarat and Rohidas of Uttar Pradesh are notable. The work Harijan which is popularly used for the untouchables of India, in recent terms, was coined by the saint Narasimh
Mehta and it meant "men of God". But though these saints preached sermons on equality, they did not agitate against the teaching of the shastras which upheld the inequality of caste system. In fact, their pious lives and their noble sermons did not produce any real effect on the life and conduct of the masses.

However, saint Basaveshwar of Karnataka was an exceptionally revolutionary saint who tried hard to reform Hindu society, based on caste and inequality "during the twelfth century A.D. when it was very difficult to bring reforms then since the society was still very traditional" (N.K. Kadetotad, 1977, 6). At that time the attempts he made to remove untouchability went to the extent of celebrating a marriage between a Brahmin girl, daughter of Madhuvayya with an untouchable boy, son of Haralayya both of whom had accepted Veerashiva faith" (Ibid). But the traditional population, including king Bijjala of Kalayana, did not accept this reform and the king pronounced that the eyes of Haralayyaa and Madhuvayya should be removed. This is known as Kalyan Kranti or the revolution of Kalyan. Since then some of the untouchables of Karnataka have identified with Lingayat religion, though they are not so identified by the Lingayats themselves.

Among the humanitarians, Mahatma Jotiba Phooley of Mahar-
Maharashtra, Sayajirao Gaikwad of Baroda and Shashidhar Bandyopadhyaya of Bengal wore most popular. "But the most vital role was played by Mahatma Phoolay who started in Poona, in 1848, the first school in India for the untouchables. Although insulted, ridiculed and ousted by reactionaries and relatives Phoolay and his saintly wife nobly and unflinchingly served the cause of untouchables and strove for the education and emancipation of the untouchables. Shashidhar Bandyopadhyaya from Bengal too, served this cause. Among the Indian princes, it was Shri. Sayajirao Gaikwad of Baroda who started schools for the untouchables in 1883. But in those days his state had to depend upon Muslim teachers for the growth of those schools, for caste Hindu teachers would not accept the posts of teachers in those schools." (J. Kheer, 1971, p.4). Thus the work of socio-regious revival was inaugurated by these humanitarians.

This wave produced in the twentieth century revolutionary political leaders like Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, M.K. Gandhi, Periyar E.V. Ramaswamy and N.H. Kumbare. Dr. Ambedkar himself was an untouchable and had suffered all the pangs of untouchability whereas all the others were caste Hindus. To put it in the words of his biographer, "Ambedkar had played the part of destiny in the liberation of the suppressed humanity in India." (D. Kheer, 1971, IX). In fact had Dr. Ambedkar been absent at that critical moment in Indian history, the tradition bound social
structure of India would have become worse and the life of the untouchables in this country would have been still more wretched. The political freedom that came to India would have worsened their situation. If at all we witness any change in the life and condition of suppressed humanity then let us not forget that it has been because of Babasaheb B.R. Ambedkar, one of the greatest makers of modern India. It is Dr. Ambedkar who gave new life to the downtrodden. It was he who preached to them the discourse against the superstitions belief that the miseries of untouchables were predetermined and their poverty was inescapable, inborn and inescapable. Dr. Ambedkar himself attained in educational spheres higher levels than that of other political leaders of his time. He was a brilliant academician, a popular attorney, an erudite scholar, a great legal luminary, a great Constitutional pandit, and a powerful writer and journalist, and above all the champion of the rights and liberties of the dumb, downtrodden, oppressed and depressed from whose very ranks the had sprung." (Rajshekhariah A.M, 1971, 8). "Ambedkar's eternal search for knowledge his incredible industry and his unflinching aim with which he raised himself from dust to doyen, from the life of a social leper to the position of a Constitution maker and this heroic struggles for raising the downtrodden to human dignity should constitute the golden chapter in the history of this nation (India) and in the history of human freedom as well (D.Keer, 1971, 8). Indeed Dr. Ambedkar was not a lesser
leader than Mahatma Gandhi, with whom he fought incessantly over certain, most vital differences, as regards the upliftment of the untouchables in this country.

"In 1925 the British government held a series of three round table conferences to discuss the problems of a new constitution and a new system of government for India. Ambedkar was nominated as a representative of the depressed classes and attended all the three conferences. But it was in the second round table conference the bitter and life-long enmity grew between Gandhi and Ambedkar (Lynch, 1969, 132).

In this conference, as a true leader of the down-trodden masses, Ambedkar demanded a separate electorate for the depressed classes so that they could have the true representatives in the legislatures to protect their interests. Since Ambedkar's leadership of depressed classes was supported by the depressed classes themselves and since it was observed by the Prime Minister McDonald himself, he granted separate electorates to the depressed classes. But Gandhi (who too had claimed to lead the depressed classes of India but was not supported by them) who had a belief in Varnashrama Dharma and who had launched a movement to raise the untouchables to the level of touchables by giving them the status of the shudras, opposed the separate elections since he believed that it would divide the Hindus.
He rejected the award and began what is known as his "Epic Fast" against it. By so doing Gandhi who claimed to be the true representative of the depressed classes, put his life in the hands of the man (Ambedkar) whose actual leadership of those classes he had not recognised. Ambedkar wryly noted "Surprising fact is that my position as the leader of the untouchables of India was not only not questioned by Congress men but it was accepted as a fact. All eyes naturally turned to me as the man of the moment or rather as the villain of the piece." (Ambedkar 1946, 88) With Gandhi's near death, a solution was finally reached in what is known as the "Poona Pact". According to this pact the depressed classes were to be allowed a separate electorate in the primaries but they were to vote in a common election itself. However, 18 per cent of the seats in the central and the provincial legislatures were to be reserved for the depressed class members (See Ambedkar, 1946, 88-89). The Congress was three upon morally; politically committed to this pact, although it neither accepted nor rejected it publicly" (Dushkin 1957, 76) (Lynch 1969, 135).

That is how Dr. Ambedkar, with his great mission of uplifting the untouchables by securing them the socio-economic and political rights, liberties and equality in all the walks of life, fought incessantly, sometimes facing great hurdles created by his bitter opponents. Dr. Ambedkar dedicated the whole of his life to his people and their cause. The story of the life
of Dr. Ambedkar was thus the story of a struggle for human rights. Condolence meetings were held all over the country when he passed away from his people in December, 1956, leaving them orphanised, but showing them a path, the path that could assure them liberty, equality and fraternity. He had embraced Buddhism a couple of months back on October 14, 1956, along with several lakhs of his followers who went along with him in the path that the great Buddha had showed. "Depicting the conversion as the most significant development during the present century the Hitwad Nagpur said 'Paradoxically enough, Dr. Ambedkar a highly rationalist and scientific thinker stands in line with emperor Ashoka and others of historic memory on the Highest prophet of Budhist forth." (D. Keer, 1971, 503).

Thus ended the life of Dr. Ambedkar and Ambedkar became the symbol of revolt for the depressed classes of India. The depressed classes started organising themselves for the cause of their liberation and there have sprung, after Ambedkar, in almost all parts of the country many bodies like the Dalit Panthers of Maharashtra, Karnataka Dalita Sangharsha Samiti, All India Depressed Classes Association, Dalita Shoshit Samaj Sangharsh Samiti etc., protesting against the oppressive features of Hindu society. "Two gatherings were held in Bombay recently on November 23 and Dec., 6, 1987, where "20 lakhs" of people gathered to show a protest against the Maharashtra government's decision to delete some parts of the book..."
written by Dr. Ambedkar, "The Riddles in Hinduism' which is supposed to have hurt the feelings of Hindus of India."

(Dalit Voice, Fortnightly January 1988, Bangalore, See "Dalits win war on Riddles"). When upper castes burnt the book 'Riddles in Hinduism' in Maharashtra, the untouchables in Bangalore burnt the Ramayan (the epic) and the Manusmriti (the Law book) of Hindus at a public rally before the Vidhan Soudha, the legislature. The rally was inaugurated by Prakash Ambedkar, and was organised by Dalit Sangharsh Samiti, which is an organisation meant to fight against the agonies of untouchables in Karnataka and aims to improve their socio-economic conditions. But its central aim is to awaken and arouse the people by way of cultural education or by moving them actually towards struggle. Like Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's "Bahishkrit Hitakarni Sabha" it wants to devote itself to the cause of raising the depressed classes from their downtrodden condition to a status of social and political equality. With such a mission it has spread its branches all over Karnataka.

In Belgaum and Belkhal also there are the branches of Dalit Sangaarsha Samiti and its workers are very active. They protest with force as soon as they find anywhere the Hindus troubling or doing injustice to untouchables in the district. They also celebrate Dr. Ambedkar's birth-day all over the district and preach what he wrote, spoke and stood
They attend to all the problems of untouchables, and oppose with patriotic spirit any wrong that is hurled at the untouchables. But despite their opposition, the ignorant untouchable masses in the countryside are always subjected to indignities, inhuman treatments and humiliations showered upon them frequently by caste Hindus. In view of their dependent and subordinate position, even if they are treated very badly, they dare not speak against the Hindus. In fact their silence reinforces their miserable life and tends to conceal their suppression. If such cold war fortunately or unfortunately bursts out accidently, then that will be picked up by Dalit Sangarsh Samiti, which fights through demonstration, protests and satyagraha movements. Belgaum Dalit Sangharsh Samiti has played a very vital role in two important incidents, and settled them. These had occurred recently in the district, demonstrating the inhuman history of caste Hindus, and the dismal picture of untouchables in it. The two incidents were:

1. The incident of Maheshwadi - A village in Athani Taluka of Belgaum District where the untouchables were boycotted socially by the caste Hindus and,

2. The incident of Ambedkar Garden of Belgaum City - when the Belgaum city corporation took a decision to demolish Dr. Ambedkar Garden and build a water tank there.
The Maheshwadi incident is a terrible incident. It hurt the untouchables of that village crudely, putting them to great humiliation and hardship due to the crimes of the blackest dye committed caste Hindus. The cause of this incident was the rise of the untouchables, which the Hindus religious mind did not tolerate. When the "Rural Development Bank" came forward some years ago to help the untouchables financially to purchase and own cattle and such other livestock, the untouchables of that village made use of it successfully. This gave them the happiness of bettering their life at least at a certain level. As time went on, the untouchables doubled the livestock which the bank had helped them buy some years ago and some of the untouchables grew economically to such an extent that they lost the feeling of fear and dependency upon the Hindus. Naturally the untouchables rejected the dominance of higher caste Hindus over them and tried to fight their inhuman treatment. This provoked the superior Hindus and hatred started growing in the heart of their hearts against untouchables. Further some of the untouchable youths of that village who were already graduates and who had reformed their way of living, dwelling and dressing in the manner of higher caste Hindu youths and who were attempting to develop attitudes of equality, enraged the caste Hindus still more by their very presence. This added fuel to the fire of higher caste wrath. They only wanted a pretext which could give them the opportunity to burn the
untouchables with their anger. At last, to their try and to the misfortune of untouchables, there came a day (on April, 26
1933) on which untouchable huts, houses, and cattle were burnt
and two precious lives were consumed by the fire set ablaze.

This was preceded by a previous incident. A couple of
days earlier when one of the caste Hindus wanted the untouchables
to take away the dead cattle and an untouchable whose family was
tied to this caste Hindu family to do this work for generations,
refused to do that, a meeting was held in public to decide and judge the issue collectively by the touchables and untouchables.
Untouchables in that meeting collectively refused to do that
degrading occupations henceforth. This enlarged the caste
Hindus very much and their anger burst into an expression of
such a heinous crime which not only took some of the precious lives away but also destroyed and disturbed the peaceful and happy life of the untouchables. The caste Hindus did not stop
at this. They went to the extent of boycotting the untouchables socially and economically, and untouchables were debarred from socio-economic interaction with the touchables. Untouchables then realised the advantage and importance of the silence which they used to maintain because of their dependent position in the socio-economic structure of the Hindus society. But this time they had broken the silence which they had kept for generations, They were burning already in the embittered hearts of the Hindus.
Hence they wanted help from anybody who could come to their aid and take them out of the blazing site. The police, the government and petty politicians all came and went, but it was useless. Hence the untouchables who had enjoyed earlier political and governmental now felt insecure and helpless. They wanted a place when they could be safe and happy.

It was the Dalit Sangarsh Samiti that came at this critical moment to help the untouchables of Maheshwadi and secured them a safe life. It pleaded with the government for a new settlement for Maheshwadi untouchables through demonstrations, strikes and hunger strikes, and at last got it sanctioned from the government. The untouchables of Maheshwadi themselves joined the movement, aspiring to liberate them from social oppression in Maheshwadi. Then, according to the wish of the Dalit Sangarsh Samiti, the untouchables of Maheshwadi were shifted to a new place, in the Khanapur Taluka of Belgaum District. New houses were constructed there for them with facilities such as light and water. Each family was allowed to own there five acre of land for its livelihood. The new settlement is being named after the then Deputy Commissioner of Belgaum District who had helped the Sangarsh Samiti workers with his best efforts. He was Mr. Coutinho and now the settlement is called Coutinho Nagar. The untouchables live there now are happy and secure.
In Belgaum city in the northern part of it there is a beautiful garden named after Dr. Ambedkar, which was built and managed by the Belgaum city corporation. There is also a grand statue of Dr. Ambedkar in that garden of the man who is adored by the untouchables of Belgaum city as the uncrowned king of the depressed classes of India. Abreast, adjoining the garden there is a water tank meant to supply drinking water to the citizens of Belgaum city. The increasing need and growing scarcity of water had forced the city corporation to think of an additional water tank, to be constructed in a suitable place which can supply water to any part of the city. Since the garden was found suitable for the new water tank, it was decided in the meeting of the corporation that the Ambedkar garden should be demolished for the said purpose. But the untouchables in Belgaum city had strong emotional attachment to that garden since they loved their leader more than their lives. They celebrated Dr. Ambedkar's arranged meetings, in the same garden. In fact, Dr. Ambedkar garden in Belgaum city to the untouchable, had become a sacred place which they treated as their Babasaheb's (as they use to address Ambedkar with respect) abode. Naturally the only place which the untouchables owned in the city had grown as important for them as for the city corporation, then for different means. In such circumstances, if the garden was demolished then to the untouchables it was as
Dalits Turning Militant

Researcher among Dalit leaders.
good as demolishing their temple itself, the temple of their saviour, supporter and protector. A respondent to the question "What they would have done had the garden been destroyed by corporation?" Answered with bitter emotion, his eyes blazing and hands shaking, "that they would have burnt the Belgaum city corporation and would have thrown into blee the corporation."

But without considering the emotions of the untouchables, their sentiments regarding the garden, the Belgaum city corporation hastily took a decision to start the work of demolishing the garden. As soon as the news reached them the "Dalit Sangarsh Samiti workers gathered untouchable people and attached the city Mayor very aggressively. The attack was so wild that the people who highly existed went to the extent of beating the Mayor and other corporators around. One of the workers, throw a heavy stone at the Mayor, which he escaped very narrowly or otherwise he would have died. The attack was sudden. There was no way for the Mayor and others to escape it, and the police came there too late, when the situation had already grown grim. But the intervention by the police again averted a tragedy. At the behest of the police officer, the lathi charge was started. The untouchable youth again became wild and started throwing stones at the police. The situation went out of control and some of them were arrested by the police while others escaped
running and abusing their aggressors bitterly. Some were injured seriously and others got minor injuries. The District Commissioner ordered for the time being the stoppage of the work to demolish Dr. Ambedkar garden, so as to bring the situation under control.

This is not the end of the battle for Ambedkar garden. Soon after this, the Dalit Sangharsh Samiti workers organised a silent satyagraha, protesting against the idea of demolishing Dr. Ambedkar garden. In a pandal near District Commissioner's Office, they started their 'Dharani Satyagrah', a long standing, non-violent and constitutional struggle to retain their garden as it was. They submitted a memorandum to the government of Karnataka its Chief Minister and an opposition leader. The satyagraha lasted for about 28 days. The Satyagraha was supported by many party leaders of the Karnataka state and the local scheduled caste leaders. It included even children and women. During the satyagraha movement, when Ram Bhavo Potadar of Belgaum City, who was a speaker in Legislative Assembly Karnataka, came to Belgaum, was attacked by Dalit Sangharsh Samiti workers urged to support their agitation. Potadar agreed to do so. But he did not. At last when the Chief Minister came to Belgaum the decision was made and untouchables won the battle.

Thus ended the battle of the untouchables for Dr. Ambedkar garden. These two movements launched by the Belgaum city Dalit Sangarsh Samiti people show that the downtrodden, dehumanized
Organised struggle, a strong determination to secure justice.
people are trying to shape their life, assert their civic rights, and thereby get a better life for themselves. They face many hurdles, which are mostly casteist in nature. The water tank could have been constructed somewhere near the garden where open space was available without causing any damage to the garden. But the city corporators, who are mostly caste Hindus, did not like that idea. This shows their caste mentality. A corporator belonging to untouchable caste, when interviewed, said, "the concerned party members manage to give us ticket only on the condition that we should sign the resignation letter, right at the outset. This binds our feelings and restricts our voice," This is also the case with B. Shankaranand, a Minister at the Centre, and K.D. Karale, a working secretary of the Congress (I), Belgurm unit, who say that, "It is not your blessings which count much but the blessings of caste Hindus that count much for our survival." It means they are scared of the caste Hindus for their survival and dare not speak for the people whom they represent. Thus it was ultimately upon people and not the unfavourable leaders that the responsibility of settling the issue of Ambedkar garden and Maheshwadi social boycott fell. In fact, the attempts of the untouchables to redress the wrongs are not recognised by the Hindus and so appear to be in vain.
Conclusion

But the two cases briefly analysed clearly show that the untouchables are no longer content to suffer silently as they have seen doing for centuries. There are now signs of anger and the readiness to wage a war on injustices and humiliations oppressing them for centuries. But our study also show that basically the position of the untouchables has not changed. That is precisely why there is need for struggle.

Finally the over all situation in India may be characterised as transitional. It is transitional in the sense that, on the one hand we find changes taking place, which under mine both objectivity and subjectivity the existing order of inequality, hierarchy, dominance and exploitation and on the other hand, a remarkable capacity on the part of the old order to persist. The paradox of apparent equality and real inequality existing side by side, can be explained by the idea of transitional situation. When a social system such as the Hindu caste system, is in a stable state, then it can visibly and openly exhibit the operation of its principle of hierarchy. But when it is in the transitional situation, it cannot wholly operate on the old lines, since the essence of a transitional situation is the conflict or confusion between two systems one trying to emerge and another trying to persist. The whole of Indian society.
upper caste Hindus and untouchables included - is now caught up in this situation. Whether the new system will be allowed to emerge depends on the political and organised struggle by those benefitting from it. As our study shows, the forces supporting the traditional order should not be under estimated. In fact, both in terms of numbers and material resources, the untouchables are no match against the touchables. Yet with proper organisation, good leadership and appropriate programmatic and political strategies, they may succeed in overthrowing the old order and in establishing a new order. In the new order, the touchable and untouchable distinction would be no longer relevant and operative. In short, it would be a revolution.