Late Jawaharlal Nehru in his message to a seminar on untouchability in 1955 at Delhi said that "Untouchability is an extreme form of castism", (Kadethotad 1977: 117). Thus caste and untouchability are two crucial components of the religious system of the Hindus. Untouchability is a subject that cannot be isolated from caste, and it cannot be said to have originated independently of caste. Thus, caste and untouchability are integral parts of Hinduism. Unless you remove caste you cannot remove untouchability and vice-versa. They both have their roots buried in the depth of Hinduism. The first lesson that the Hindu learns from his mother in his cradle is regarding the superior and the inferior position of his caste due to his Karma or Dharma. As he grows up, the child and tries faithfully to follow this lesson till his last day on this earth. The philosophy which the Hindu religion takes as its base is rooted in caste, and, to a Hindu, caste means religion and religion means caste. Caste is the outcome of religious beliefs which have the sanctity of the shastras, and are believed to contain the commands of divinely inspired sages. Therefore, to disobey them means committing sin or attaining hell after death. The ideological system of Hinduism
supports fully the caste system. Whether it is *pap* (sin) *punya* (merit) *Dharma* (religion), *Karma* (action) or *moksha* (salvation), all these concepts support the caste system.

In this chapter caste and untouchability have been identified as interconnected in their genesis, mechanism and development since they both take their bearing from Hindu philosophy. According to C. Parvathamma (1968:20(5)), "Untouchability is part and parcel of Hindu religion. The philosophy of karma and transmigration of soul denied the individual the freedom to attempt betterment. On the contrary Dharma consisted in confirming to karma supposed to be the sequence of one's past acts." The *karma* theory, however, has its roots in the philosophy of *Gesta* which states that man attains spiritual perfection by worshipping God through performance of one's duties as decided by religious scripture. "Consequently all Hindus including touchables and untouchables strongly believed that there is no salvation except by complying with the rules of caste system as propounded and interpreted by Brahmins who have the right to that effect" (Kshirsagar:1986-205).

To understand caste and untouchability, therefore, here an attempt has been made to analyse Hindu religious philosophy as the philosophy of caste. The chapter is divided into two
parts: 'the theory' and 'the practice'. In the 'theory' part, an attempt is made to review the evolution of caste philosophy, in addition to tracing the views of two important scholars (Nesfield and Ambedkar) on the essence of caste. And in the 'Practice' part, the practice of such philosophy in the units of this study is examined.

The Theory:

Caste as the basic phenomenon of the Indian Hindu social structure has drawn the attention of most social scientists dealing with Hindu society. In fact, many scholars have come up with different theories about the caste system in India. They have also explained in their studies, the causes of inequalities in Indian society in terms of Indian caste system. But no one has to date produced a wholly satisfactory theory about caste, tracing its origin and identifying its definite characteristics. Some of the works of these scholars, however lengthy, have proved to be so inadequate that they are not worth great scientific attention. There have been no good scholarly accounts of the essential nature of caste. In fact the scholars have produced which have studies added further contradictions to the already existing ones.

Since our concern here is to explore the philosophy behind
 caste system, such a venture must precede same discussion of
 the essence of caste itself. Further the essence of caste can
 be grasped only if we undertake a careful examination of the
 philosophy underlying caste inequality. This can be best
 achieved by examining the practical operation of caste in the
 units of this study. Even in the changed environment we have
 today in Hindu India, every Hindu or for that matter every
 Indian anchors himself to the caste system, because caste
 membership can be exploited for selfish purposes. In Belgaum,
 Bedkihal and Halasi, the units of this study, people stick to
 their caste status so strongly that, if a man is a Lingayat by
 caste, he feels very happy to declare that he is superior to
 a Maratha, Kuruba, Beda and Talwar and the same happiness is
 expressed by members of every caste in relation to those below
 in the scale of caste hierarchy. Thus it is clear that people
 in our samples are not yet free from caste bonds. What makes
 people cling to caste is a problem, we hope to try to solve.
 About the root cause of caste inequality, or the nature of the
 essence of caste, there is continuous controversy and great
 confusion among scholars. But this researcher has felt this
 has happened only because the students of caste have failed to
 link their understanding of the operation of caste as an insti-
 tution with the philosophy of caste. In the units of this
 study, our observation has established that the essence of
 caste as manifested was quite different from the one accepted
by different scholars.

The main objective of this chapter is to raise some questions about the Hindu social structure and to seek answers to these questions, on the basis of the field work data. The questions we raise in this chapter are -

1. What is the essence of caste?
2. Are Hindu caste and religion identical or are they two different things?
3. Why do many Hindus or nearly all of them not intermarry, interdine or have free inter-caste relations?
4. Do the principles ingrained in the essence of caste or caste philosophy still remain strong or are they proving to be practically of less use?

While discussing the essence of caste these questions are of core importance and they shall be our central concern here.

Now before we venture upon a theoretical analysis of our field data, it is useful to analyse some of the major theories of the caste system so that our own view will be clearer. Among various theories over the caste system, only two theories appear to be worthy of serious attention. One
theory regards caste as an "occupational unit" and the other regards caste as an "endogamous unit". Only these two theories have been frequently used in important studies of caste. Because they refer to important characteristics of caste, some scholars have held that without these two characteristics there can be no caste at all. They reduce its essence to these characteristics. In our analysis, too, these two theories provide the framework for discussion of our field data. Let us then analyse these two theories and question their validity.

(i) The Occupational Theory of Caste

Mr. Nesfield advocated the occupational theory of caste and believed that that function alone explains the origin of caste (Dongre 1974: 8). For him, occupation was the exclusive basis of caste distinctions as he saw it and he emphasised the fact that the artisans working in metals rank higher than the basket-makers. But while analysing this caste characteristic he does not consider the other characteristics of caste such as food, dress and style of life, including the belief patterns of various castes. He ignores the view that, "consumption of a thing or a commodity, by the traditional society under caste system, is also local and limited to the particular caste inasmuch as the people of that caste consume it". In Bedkhal
and Halasi, the Brahmins claim that they are strict vegetarians and have abstained strictly from any type of non-vegetarian items of food. Similarly, Marathas claim that, though they are non-vegetarians, they only eat chicken, goat and fish which are a little defiling and the Kurubas and Bedas claim to eat what the Marathas etc. eat. But they complain that the untouchables eat beef, the most tabooed of all meats and permanently defiling and beyond purification. A.R. Desai (1950: 39) even has gone to the extent of saying that the food and dress habits of caste groups affect the production system to a considerable degree. He observes "caste appreciably fixes the food and dress habits or the choice of utensils and other articles of its members. This caste determined mode of consumption reacts and influences the production. The pure economic theory of consumption would be misleading and result into incorrect conclusions unless its modification due to the intervention of caste is taken into account". Further, Nesfield's assumption of occupation as the only basis of caste fails to convince in the face of the fact that a man who changes his occupation does not change his caste. This is the case at least in the present day circumstances. The educated Mahars have completely abandoned their traditional fielthy occupations in all the units of study (Belgaum, Bedkihal and Halasi) but still they suffer the pangs of untouchability owing to their
casts. Thus, it is not occupation which is responsible for the origin of caste system but on the contrary it is the caste system which is responsible not only for assigning specific duties to the four varnas and eventually to four thousand castes in India, but also for division of society and gradation of labourers". (Dongre: 1975-2). Mr. Nesfield did not stop at his claim of occupational basis of caste, but he went for in totally neglecting the part that religion played in the creation of caste. He said "caste is the natural product of society in the creation of which religion played no part at all" (Hutton 1948: 220). But Mr. Nesfield failed to explain why each caste clings to its own caste duty, and it is a striking fact that every caste adheres to its own duty. Therefore, his theory needs to be questioned as to the validity of the assumption that occupation is the essence of caste. The continuing frame of thinking that a man born in low caste, however high or valuable his service remains low and inferior and is always at work, and it underlies the attitude of members of every caste.

Mr. Nesfield’s attempt to identify caste with occupation proves to be incorrect when set against the fact that the duties assigned to caste are fast disappearing but caste itself, is persisting. If the occupation were the root cause of caste, then with the disappearance of the occupational base, caste should have gone. That this has not happened weakens significantly the occupational theory of caste.
(ii) The Endogamous Theory of Caste:

Some scholars have identified endogamy with caste and have regarded only that as the sole basis of caste. They have argued that 'caste is nothing if it is not an endogamy'. This was the view of one who is known to have fought the caste system and who has been hailed as the emancipator of the depressed classes of India, namely Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. Of course, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar saw later what exactly was the root of caste, but he did not regard this newly identified features as the exclusive basis of caste. He only saw it as a political means to destroy caste, but let his theory of endogamy as the basic attribute of caste, stand. Dr. Ambedkar propounded his theory of endogamy in his brochure "castes in India", their Mechanism, Genisis and Development" (A paper read by him in the Anthropology seminar of Dr. A.A. Goldenweizer at Columbia University, New York on 9th May 1916). We shall present below a broad outline of Dr. Ambedkar's theory of endogamy. (See Dr. Ambedkar 1977: 15 to 30).

(1) At the outset the Hindu Society in common with other societies, was composed of classes and the earliest known were -

i) Brahmin or priestly class.
ii) Kshatriya or the military class.

iii) Vaishya or the merchant class.

iv) Sudra or the artisan or menial class.

(2) Particular attention has to be paid to the fact that this was essentially a class system, in which individuals when qualified could change their class and therefore classes did change their personnel.

(3) At some time in the history of the Hindus, the priestly class socially detached itself from the rest of the body of the people and through a closed door policy became a caste by itself. The other classes, being subject to the law of social division of labour, underwent differentiation, some into large and others into very small groups.

(4) The sub-division of the society was quite natural. But the unnatural thing about these sub-divisions was that they lost the open door character of the class system and became self-enclosed units called castes.

(5) The question whether were they were compelled to close their doors to become endogamous or which they closed their doors of own accord can be answered only with a
complex formulation; i.e., some closed the door; and others found it closed against them.

(6) Why did these sub-divisions or classes - industrial, religious or otherwise, become self-enclosed units or endogamous? Dr. Ambedkar's answer was that because Brahmins had evolved a closed-door model, which became a reference model for others.

(7) Endogamy or the closed door system became a reference model in Hindu society and as it had originated from Brahmin caste, it was whole heartedly imitated by all non-Brahmin sub-divisions who, in their turn, became endogamous castes.

(8) Thus it was the "infection of imitation" that caught all these sub-divisions on their onward march of differentiation and turned them into castes.

(9) Thus castes became enclosed units and acquired their deep conspiracy complex with clear conscience that compiled the excommunicated to make themselves into a caste. The logic of this abdurate
circumstance was merciless and it was in obedience to its force that some unfortunate groups found themselves enclosed, because others in enclosing themselves closed them out, with the result that new groups emerged and by a mechanical law were constantly converted into castes to a bewildering multiplicity.

These are the main points in Dr. Ambedkar's theory of the Genesis of the caste system in India. Now turning to his mechanism of caste (i.e., How does caste enclose itself), we find in his brochure the following points (Ambedkar 1977: 11 & 12).

(1) There is generally parity between the marriageable units of two sexes within a normal group and more or less both the sexes are evenly distributed even agewise.

(2) For the group desirous of making itself into a caste (endogamous group) it is absolutely necessary for it to maintain a numerical equality between marriageable units of the two sexes.

(3) But the parity between marriageable units in a group can be maintained only when the couple diece simultaneously.
(4) But this is a rare contingency and quite often either the husband dies first or it is wife that dies first, thus creating within the group a "surplus woman" or a "surplus man" or the disproportionality between the two sexes within the group.

(5) But this "surplus woman" or a "surplus man" is a menace to the preservation of endogamy if the conjugal rights from within are not provided, for otherwise, this "surplus woman" or "surplus man" may take care of herself or himself in any way they can, by going out of the circle or endogamous group (i.e., by marrying outside the group).

(6) Therefore if endogamy is to be maintained this difficulty has to be solved or else it is sure to break the endogamous circle.

(7) The problem of caste, thus, ultimately resolves itself into one of responding the balance between marriageable units of the two sexes within it.

Now how can the disproportionality between marriageable units be eliminated according to Dr. Ambedkar?
1) **Elimination imbalance created by woman:**

After the death of the husband, the widow becomes "surplus woman" constituting a menace to the caste if not taken care of, or for not finding suitable partner within her own circle. Thus somehow she has to be disposed of. Otherwise the imbalance created by her breaks the circle of endogamy. The way she can be disposed of, according to Dr. Ambedkar (1977:15) is:

i) Burning the widow with her deceased husband OR (SATT)

ii) Imposing compulsory widowhood - a milder form of burning, through a provision of re-marriage.

By these means the problem of surplus women can be settled.

2) **Elimination of imbalance created by man:**

After the death of the wife, the widower becomes "surplus man creating" menace to the maintenance of caste circle. Therefore he has to be disposed of at any rate. But according to Dr. Ambedkar the project of burning him with his wife is hazardous in two ways- first of all it cannot be done simply...
because he is a man. Secondly, if done, manpower is lost to the caste. Important as he is to the group, endogamy is still more important and a solution must promote both these ends. Under such circumstances he can only be disposed of by adopting following means, (Dr. Ambedkar 1977:15).

i) Imposing celibacy on the widower.

ii) Wedding him to a girl not yet marriageable.

By this way a man and woman can be kept within the caste and endogamy can be perpetuated. Therefore sati, enforced widowhood and girl marriage are customs that were primarily intended to solve the problems of the surplus man and a surplus woman in a caste and to maintain its endogamy. These customs were honoured greatly because they were practised strongly. The very fact that these customs were so highly valued proves that they needed such stated for their prevalence. Regarding the question as to why they arose, Dr. Ambedkar says, they were needed to create the structure of caste and philosophies supporting them were developed to popularise them. They must have been so abominable and shocking to the unsophisticated that they needed a great deal of philosophical sugar-coating. Thus these customs were essentially a means to create and maintain the caste, though they were represented as high ideals,
ends in themselves. This means the use of the mechanism of these customs amounted to the creation and preservation of caste in India. Thus according to Dr. Ambedkar "the origin of caste means the origin of mechanism for endogamy".

Justification of Endogamous Theory of Caste:

The whole theory of Dr. Ambedkar is built upon just three important points.

i) To begin with, the Hindu society was flexible and comprised only classes, and not castes.

ii) The Brahmin caste first enclosed itself into a caste and thereafter all other classes enclosed themselves.

iii) The origin of caste means the origin of mechanism for endogamy.

Now to take into consideration the first point of the theory, namely the flexible nature of Hindu society. The theory fails to sustain its claim in as much as it fails to explain the nature of Chaturvarna system itself. If the Chaturvarna system was a class system then the divisions it articulated would not have been so fixed and necessarily fourfold. The divisions are not only fourfold but they are also
graded one above another and all the divisions display a hierarchal relationship of each to the other. Dr. Ambedkar himself was not sure of the flexibility of Chaturvarna system, as is clear from his own words:

"Chaturvarna would not have been a very innocent principle, if it meant no more than mere divisions of society into four classes. Unfortunately more than this is involved in the theory of Chaturvarna. Besides dividing society into four orders, the theory goes further and makes the principle of graded inequality the basis for determining the terms of associated life as between the four varnas. Again the graded inequality is not merely notional. It is legal and penal. Under the system of Chaturvarna the shudra was not only placed at the bottom of the gradation but he is subjected to innumerable ignominies and disabilities so as to prevent him from rising above the condition fixed for him by law". (Ambedkar, 1946: 11) Dr. Ambedkar admits that the chaturvarna was not only notional but was legal and penal and under such a system the shudra who was placed at the bottom was subjected to innumerable ignominies and disabilities that prevented him from rising above the rank fixed for him. It means that Dr. Ambedkar himself has prepared the anti-thesis to his thesis of the flexible nature society during the time of varna system in the history of India.
But easy as it may seem to negate Dr. Ambedkar's assumption of the flexible nature of Hindu society, it may really not be so easy to deny it when its record shows instances of the possibility of an individual changing his occupation from his original one. Howe he occupation became changeable is the theme of Emile Senart in his book "Caste in India". He says,

"Drona, although a Brahmin, is one of the chief heroes of the struggle and although the son of a shepherd, Karna is one of the most celebrated military leaders. The prestige of Yajatra and Vidhura does not suffer although they are descended from a shudra (1975:99). Emile Senart has taken this extract from the passages cited by Muir in his sanskrit texts. This extract supports Dr. Ambedkar's theory of the flexible nature of Hindu varna system. But it also brings to surface the question, why was Drona considered a Brahmin, even when he played the role of the chief hero of the struggle? Why was Karna, considered a son of a shepherd, who was one of the most celebrated military leaders? The prestige of Yajatra, Vidhura and Karna who were shudras suffers even now just because they were shudras then. Dr. Ambedkar pointed out that an individual, when qualified, could change his class and therefore classes did change their personnel. But the key question, is why Karna, Yajatra and Vidhura, did not change their shudra status?"
This question makes his theory untenable. However, the change of occupation was a subjective fact and that fact cannot be uncritically assigned an objective status. But change of occupation due to qualification could not be considered significant when viewed from the point of view of Dr. Ambedkar's theory of the flexible nature of the Chaturvarna system.

Therefore, if the society during the time of Chaturvarna system was at all flexible, then that was true only to the extent of occupational change and not to the extent of change of caste membership itself. In fact, the society and the social system then so far as the caste question is concerned, was not qualitatively much different from the society and the social system we have today. Today even if a man changes his occupation, he cannot change his caste. Therefore, the chaturvarna system in India was no real exception to this rule even in the past.

In discussing the caste system, most scholars have delinked the caste system from the varna system and have supported the view that it was varna that began first and not caste. Here the question whether chaturvarna began first or the caste system began first has relevance to our analysis of class character of varna system. So far as the caste system is concerned, it is impossible to identify any fixed period in which the process of generation, development and diffusion of caste can be traced. There is no clear-cut mention of caste
categories in the vedic texts while there is a lot of narr-
ation about varnas*. But that should not be an excuse to argue for the existence of castes in the vodic days. If we accept the view that the chaturvarna began first, then its social system of four-fold division would pose complex issues for analysis. Further if the society was organised only upon the principle of the four-fold division then it can hardly be an organisation at all. This is because, if the organisation was based only on occupation then it could not have accommodated a whole range of occupations which must have been more than four in that society. Dr. Ambedkar made the organisation still simpler. To begin with he argued "there was a time when there were only three varnas in the Indo-Aryan society. The three varnas were Brahmin, Kshatriya and Vaishya." While assuming such a view he relied upon the first piece of the Rigveda itself where he finds no mention of shudra as a separate varna. Now if we look at the occupational content of these varnas, of which the texts speak repeatedly, then they only seem to have engaged only in all the highly valued occupations namely priestly occupations, warrior occupations and merchant occupation. But what about other occupations? Were they totally absent then? They cannot be absent and they were not absent. Otherwise the organisation of a society becomes incomplete. Therefore, there must have been even menial caste the shudra caste, even though there is no mention of that castes in the first piece of Rigveda
Emile Senart has gone a little ahead of Dr. Ambedkar and he notes that there were only two broad categories, the twice-born and the once-born. Of these two basic groups, one was composed of three higher varnas and the other comprised the fourth alone. Though Senart speaks of chaturvarna itself, his reduction of chaturvarna into two broad categories raises the problem of the homogenity of the twice-born and once-born categories. Even in priestly class itself was not homogenious. Dr. Rajendranath Sharma (1977:30) in his book "Brahmins through Ages" speaks of heterogeneous classes of priests in the days of the Rigveda. The different priestly classes he mentions are Hota, Pata, Nesta, Agnidhra, Prasasta, Advaryu, Brahaspati, Brahma etc. Brahaspati and Agni class of priests were superior to all other classes of priests, and they acted as superintendents during the time of sacrifice. Thus even the Brahmin varna itself was not homogeneous; it is possible then to infer that the other three varnas were also not homogenious. Dr. Rajendranath Sharma (Ibid) gives the following account of different castes of kshatriyas in ancient India. They wore Panndracas, Andras, Draviras, Kambojas, Yavanas, Sakas, Paradas, Pahlavas, etc. He also refers to the classification of vaishyas in ancient India into Rathakara, (Chariott makers) Takson (Carpenters) Kulala (Potter) Karamara (Blacksmith) Survat (Vintner) and Carmanna (leather dresser). These belonged to a common but
heterogenous community of *VIs.* (1977:37). Dr. Sharma (1977:122) gives the following divisions among shudras in ancient India—Gandhika, Tailika, Rajaka, Carmaka, Gopa and Sadgopa. There was not much difference between Vaishyas and Shudras as far as occupation was concerned. But they were sharply different as far as their "we feeling" was concerned.

Therefore Dr. Ambedkar's theory of chaturvarna as a class system fails to establish the class character of the system. The diverse castes and their disorganisation during the rigvedic period, give us some idea of the institution of caste prior even to the varna system. But these castes were not arranged properly in the hierarchical scales. They lacked ranking. So as to organise these castes the varna system came into functioning. Thus the function of the which varna system which came into existence was precisely to establish a hierarchical order. Thus chaturvarna came into being only when there came the need to organise castes into the category of varnas. Therefore our conclusion is that caste existed before varna and not that the varna existed before caste.

Now turning to Dr. Ambedkar's second point, namely that the Brahmin class enclosed itself first and the other classes enclosed thereafter, is also a view difficult to accept because it fails to explain convincingly the purpose behind the enclosing idea itself. The group wanting to enclose itself cannot enclose
in a vaccum. It must enclose either naturally and unconsciously or deliberately and consciously. If Dr. Ambedkar's case is true then the group that set an enclosure around itself must have done it consciously. But its conscious collective effort could not have produced sub-and sub-sects within the group enclosed. Thus the idea of deliberate groups vanishes automatically since it involves the conscious creation of castes. But without consciousness, caste also will not have value as a caste. Castes became valuable when they were organised under the varna system. When castes were organised into varnas and the varnas were graded one above the other, caste got its real life. Until the beginnings of the varna system, caste was existing as an unconscious structure and became converted into a conscious structure when it got organised into the varna hierarchy. Thus the idea of any one caste enclosing itself does not arise when there are enough cases to show that castes were existing even prior to varna system, in a natural form or, to begin with, in an unconscious form. At this point, it is advisable to explain brush the difference between the "conscious" and "unconscious" structure. In an "unconscious" form, the members of a group do not articulate consciously their group identity. In the "conscious" form, they do so. In this connection, a parallel can be drawn with the Maniest distinction between "class in itself" and "class for itself".
Dr. Ambedkar's third point namely that "the origin of caste means the origin of mechanism for endogamy" will also have to be discarded because when even under today's circumstance of the absence of his mechanism, caste maintains its structure undisturbed. He says that the caste structure can be maintained only if the disparity created by "surplus man" or "surplus woman" is settled. And the means of eliminating such imbalance, according to him, are burning of widows, enforced widowhood, and enforced celibacy. Now his assumptions that due to the loss of wife or husband a man or a woman becomes "surplus" presupposes a natural law of sex 'parity' in each group—whether caste, or class or any other community. In a group having sex parity, if in one part of the group a husband dies, in some other a wife may die, and they thereby may establish a sex parity or equilibrium in a group. Thus a man without wife may compensate with a woman without husband. Therefore there arises no questions of imbalance between sexes when the women without husband and a man without wife are complement each other in a particular group of a community.

Thus all the three points, advocating the case of endogamy as the essence of caste fail to provide an appropriate reason or cause for caste. Hence, his theory of endogamy has to be further delimited if want to discover the essence of caste.
Our analysis of the theory of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar has delinked his mechanism of caste from the essence of caste: the endogamy. The mechanism that Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar developed to explain the origin and perpetuation of the caste structure is no more in operation. Therefore there cannot be now any linkage between the existence of caste and the establishment of sex balance, since there will always be parity between the two sexes within the caste. The practice of sati, enforced widowhood (in case of the widow) and imposing celibacy (in case of the widower) have in fact very little to do with caste. Probably Dr. Ambedkar did not adequately understand the mechanism of caste in its complexity right in the beginning. But certainly he realised in his last days the nature of the cause behind the effect of caste, and even pleaded for the destruction of the sanctity of shastras and smritis. Now so as to demonstrate the real mechanism of caste, using the existing data in the field, let us see joint the mechanism of Hindu religion. But we cannot exhibit this mechanism unless we know the origin, nature and development of Hindu religion. Further, to understand Hindu religion, it is also necessary to see how the general concept of religion developed.
According to Sigmund Freud (1856-1936), the originator of psychoanalysis and a figure comparable in importance with Galileo, Darwin, and Einstein, "religion is a mental defence against the more threatening aspects of nature—earthquake, flood, storm, disease and inevitable death." And this mental defence involved all acts humanly possible such as, attempt to adjure them, oppose them, to bribe them and by so influencing them, try to rob them of part of their power. But religion cannot be a word with a fixed meaning. To quote Dr. Ambedkar (1951:257) himself, "It is one word with many meanings."

Dr. Ambedkar has given a good account of the concept and evolution of religion. He says:

"Because most of the phenomenon such as lightening, rain and flood, the occurrence of which the primitive man could not explain, any wild performance done to control the phenomenon was called magic. Religion came to be identified with magic. Then came the second stage in the evolution of religion. In this stage religion came to be identified with beliefs, rituals, ceremonies, prayers and sacrifices. But this conception of religion is derivative. The pivotal point in religion starts with the belief that there exists some power which causes these phenomenon which primitive man did not know and could not understand. Magic lost its place at this stage. This power was originally malevolent. But later it was felt..."
that it would also be benevolent. Beliefs, rites, ceremonies and sacrifices were necessary both to propitiate the benevolent power and also to conciliate an angry power. Later the power was called God or the creator. Then came the third stage that it is this God who created this world and also man. This was followed by the belief that man has a soul and soul is eternal and is answerable to God for man’s actions in the world. This is what religion has come to and this is what it connotes - belief in God, belief in soul, worship of God, curing of the erring soul, propitiating God by prayers, ceremonies, sacrifices etc.” (Ambedkar, 1957: 225-226).

Now to give the account of the evolution of Hindu religion is a more difficult task. M.C. Chaudhuri (1979:27) says:

“There can be no doubt that the origins of Hinduism go back to a very distant past. But nothing is known about what it was like in practice in India until the beginning of the Christian era and even for about five hundred years after that our knowledge of it is fragmentary. It has to be frankly recognised that it is not possible to give a continuous account of Hinduism from its beginnings to its present form.”
Nevertheless it is possible to give the history of Hinduism at least in a proximate order if not in an exact sequence. Writers have constructed the history of Hinduism depending on sources the texts of Hinduism, which are numerous. They have analysed the character of the dogmas, myths and rituals in the various texts and on the basis of the analysis have divided them into homogeneous blocks. These, they have arranged in a relative, chronological sequence like archaeological strata and after that they have gone forward to assign absolute dates to the stages. The result has been the erection of a conventional history of Hinduism divided no-a-days into three broad but distinct stages namely- the vedic, the ancient and the modern Hinduism.

Now it is possible to construct the general principles of Hinduism. Like the general concept of religion, to begin with, its genesis was in the form of magic. People in the early vedic period did not understand the frequent, natural occurrences. They were often troubled by such amazing occurrences and the mystery of such phenomena always left them in a state of confusion. But they were to face them and control such phenomena by inventing wild ritual performances. Such wild performances are referred to in the vedic hymns.
The following second hymn of Rigveda can be cited in this regard.

(1) Approach O Vayu (deity of air) be visible; this some juice has been prepared for thee; approach, drink; hear our invocation.

(2) Indra and Vayu; this juice has been prepared, come with benefits for us; verily libation desires you.

(3) Vayu and Indra; observe the libation, being present in the offerings; come quickly.

(4) Vayu and Indra; mighty men approach the priest of the sacrificer quickly on account of his prayers.

(5) I invoke Mitra (the sun) the source of purity; I invoke varuna able to destroy both cherishing earth with water.

(6) Mitra and Varuna, be pleased with this propitiatory offering for you, assuredly, do sacrifices owe their success as the water do their abundance.
(7) Mitra and Varuna; all wise divinities born for the benefit of multitudes and multitudinously present, give efficacy to our acts. (Wilson: 1976-50).

The above hymns are sufficient to prove our point that, to begin with, the religious system was in a magical form. But later hymns are in a transformed form. In the course of time, the nature of religious offerings became complicated. As offerings became complicated the nature of thinking of the priests also became complicated. There was a time in the history of Hinduism when sacrificial rituals was a fashion, and men, to win the favour of unknown powers and to get rid of their grievances, performed any number of sacrificial ceremonies. To perform large ceremonies well-known and learned priests were required. That was how some learned priests became professional priests and their importance was boosted. The rise in the importance of priests in the vedic age has been discussed by Dharma the arathaji Maharaj (1969:32) as follows:

"In earlier period every house holder was his own priest, but kings employed professional priests to perform the sacrifices. When prosperity increased and piece gave plenty of leisure kings and rich men took pride in frequently celebrating sacrifices with the aid of priests and later taking advantage of the variety of their patrons developed the simple
sacrificial rites into a complex system of rituals with feasting, music, drinking and other such enjoyments, lasting sometimes for many days and months and closing with ostentatious presentation of rich gifts to the priests. The Rishis who acted as palace priests of Kings, cultivated the art of singing praises of their royal benefactors who in turn rewarded them with costly presents. Vasista who sang about the achievement of king sudas was given 200 cows, 2 chariots and 4 horses with golden trappings.

In this stage of Rigveda, religion based on magic came to be transformed into ceremonies and sacrifices. But the philosophy behind such ceremonies and sacrifices was not simple. It presumed the existence of some power and that power was known as God or the creator. Though the polytheistic character of Hindu religion was an ongoing process during the vedic period, the multiple Gods were all practically identified with one supremacy. The following verses in the Rigveda can be seen as illustrating this (Talhah: 1983:68-69).

"The Tvashtar, the omniform creator is soul of all, the sustainer. Further, Begetter, of Gods, Maker and sustainer, Lord of the world, creator of creators and the great protector who made for us all this (the vast and varied form of nature). He is unnamable, unborn and the one where in abide all things
existing, the God of Gods the one beside whom there is none, the one, the only one".

Naturally, the belief that man has soul and that the soul is eternal and answerable to God for man's actions in the world evolved with the evolution of belief in God, the creator. This belief was used for the organisation of society, and ultimately the organisation of society came to be based on a belief in God soul, worship of God, curing of the erring soul, propitating God by prayers, ceremonies and sacrifices.

The vedic form of religion was derived from the Vedas. The vedic literature is usually regarded as consisting of two parts viz- Mantras and Brahmanas. The word Mantra means a hymn or a religious song. The hymn or religious songs contained in the vedas are of varying age- the oldest of them being separated from the latest by several centuries. These Mantras, especially earlier ones among them, continued a form of nature worship (as noted earlier) of the various powers of nature like Agni-(fire) Vayu (wind) and the Surya (sun) amidst which man lived and to whose influence he was constantly subject. Thus hymns may be generally described as prayers addressed to defined powers of nature which were regarded as responsible for the governance of the world. This stage can be termed as magic, the earlier form of religion.
The word Brahmin, which is derived from Brahmin (originally meaning prayer or devotion) signifies an authoritative utterance of a priest and Brahmans are so called because they are the repositories of sacerdotal tradition, unlike the mantras. They are in prose and they speak in general of ritualism, the characteristic feature of their teaching. They are complicated texts. Though their main concern was devotion and prayer, unfortunately this concern was in course of time lost. Their practice of invoking several Gods of nature to gain their favour for the success in life gave rise to some other bad practices. As the simple form of worship became more and more complicated there developed a stage when the very spirit of sacrificial offering was forgotten. Whatever good a man expected from such offerings came to be traced not so much to the Gods but to the sacrifices themselves or even to the prayers and sacrificial formulas employed in them. It was during this period of Brahmanas that the system of four castes or classes (varnas) to which we shall presently refer, assumed definite shape. There were four thesis on which the Brahminic philosophy rested. Dr. Ambedkar (1964: 63, 64, 65) has given a good account of the four thesis in the Brahmanas as follows:

According to him-

(1) The first thesis was that the Vedas are not only
sacred but that they are infallible and they are not to be questioned.

(2) The second thesis of Brahminic philosophy was that salvation of the soul—that is escape from transmigration can be had only by the due performance of vedic sacrifices and observances of religious rites and ceremonies and the offering of gifts to Brahmins.

(3) The third thesis of Brahminic philosophy is that, there should be an ideal pattern of society based on chaturvarna. Since chaturvarna is imbedded in the vedas and as vedas are infallible and as their authority cannot be questioned so also chaturvarna as a pattern of society was binding and unquestionable.

The pattern of society was based upon certain rules.

The first rule was that society should be divided into four classes -

(1) Brahmins (2) Kshatriyas (3) Vaishyas and (4) Shudras.
The second rule was that there cannot be social equality between these four classes. They must be bound together by the rule of graded inequality— even in the matter of rights and privileges. The Brahmin had all the rights and privileges which he wished to claim. But a Kshatriya could not claim the rights and privileges which a Brahmin could. He had more rights and privileges than a Vaishya. The Vaishya had more rights and privileges than a Shudra. But he could not claim rights and privileges which a Kshatriya could. And the Shudra was not entitled to any right, much less any privileges. His privilege was to subsist without offending the three superior classes.

The third rule of Chaturvarna related to the division of occupations. The occupation of the Brahmin was learning and teaching and the performance of religious observances. The occupation of the Kshatriya was fighting. Trade was assigned to the Vaishyas. The occupation of Shudras was service of the three superior classes. These occupations assigned to different classes were exclusive. One class could not trespass into the occupation of the other.

The fourth rule of Chaturvarna related to the right of education. The pattern of Chaturvarna gave the right to education to the first three classes, the Brahmins, Kshatriyas, and Vaishyas. The Shudras were denied the right to education.
This rule of chaturvarna did not deny the right to education to the shudras only. It denied the right to education to all women, including those belonging to the classes of Brahmins, Kshatriyas or Vaishyas.

There was a fifth rule according to which man's life was divided into four stages. The first stage was called Brahmacharya, the second stage was called Grahastashrama, the third stage was called Vanaprasthah and the fourth stage was called Sannyasa. The object of the first stage was study and education. The object of the second stage was to live a married life. The object of the fourth stage was to familiarise a man with the life of a hermit i.e., severing family ties, but without deserting his home. The object of the fourth stage was to enable a man to go in search of God and seek his union with him. The benefits of these stages were open only to the male members of the three superior classes. The first stage was not open to shudras and women. Equally the last stage was not open to the shudras and woman. Such was the divine pattern of an ideal society called chaturvarna. The Brahmins had idealised the rule and had perfected the ideal without any cracks or loopholes.

The fourth thesis of Brahminic philosophy was the doctrine of karma. It was part of the thesis of transmigration of the soul.
The karma of the Brahmins was an answer to the question, where did the soul land through transmigration, with his new body in a new birth? The answer of the Brahminic philosophy was that it depended on man's deeds in his past life. In other words it depended on his karma ("Buddha and his Dharma" 1974 p.63-65).

The Vedas and Brahmanas were both sacred books and Brahmanas were parts of Vedas. They both went together and were called by the common name sruti. But the Brahmanic form of religion is a little different from the vedic form of religion. The prescriptions that the Brahminic religion insisted upon while organising Hindu society on the basis of chaturvarna strengthened the position of the Brahmins over others. When the mighty force of God as displayed in the amazing natural occurrences came to form the very life-breath of man, his submission to and fear of them, always forced them to seek the help of a priest. The priest was then helpful in controlling that force for man's benefit. As the priest continued with the work of controlling and propitiating the mighty force of God his greatness increased considerably. Gradually in course of time he raised himself to the position of a God. Then there came a stage when the priest became the sole sovereign over matters relating to God and whatever concerned God. Whatever he said, sang, preached and practiced became divine work and all society became
submissive and subordinate to him. He then acclaimed himself to be the Brahmin and gave a philosophy of Brahmana to the society. As he became Brahman so also he became an object of fear to the society. This fear he exploited and gave a doctrine of chaturvarna as a divinely injected phenomenon, so as to establish his supremacy, preserve his power, prestige and privilege, and to get the hold over the ignorant masses. He not only got the hold over ignorant masses but he also got the hold over whatever that exists in this world. That is clear from the following quotation (Dharma Theerthag 1969: 36).

"A Brahman is born to fulfill Dharma. Whatever exists in the world is the property of the Brahman. On account of the excellence of his origin he is entitled to all. The Brahman eats but his own food, wears but his own clothes. All mortals subsist through the benevolence of the Brahman. When a learned Brahman has found treasure deposited in former times he may take even the whole of it for he is master of everything. When a king finds treasures of old concealed in the ground, let him give one half to Brahmins and place the other half in his treasury".

The Brahman being the sole owner of everything, his supremacy could not be challenged. Even kings and great warriors did not dare do that. The treatment that the king was to give to the Brahman after his arrival to the king’s palace is described as follows (Dharma + Theerthag 1969:12).
"The purohita who is deified as Agni Vaishvanara is possessed of five destructive power, first one of them is in his speech, one in his feet, one in his skin, one in his heart and one in the organ of generation. With these powers which are burning and blazing he attacks the king, by saying "where, O master, that hast thou been residing (for so long a time); the servants bring grass to him to sit; the king propitiates the destructive power which is in his speech. When they bring water for washing the feet, then the king propitiates the destructive power which is in his feet. When they adorn him, he propitiates by it, the destructive fire which is in his skin; when they satiate him with food, then the king propitiates the destructive power which is in his organ of generation. If all the destructive powers which are in his body are propitiated and he is pleased by kings wish for sacrificing, grants him royal dignity, bravery, a kingdom and subjects over whom he might rule. But should the king not do so, he will be deprived of all these gifts."

That is how the power of the priest and the necessity of propitating him by bathing, clothing, feeding him, and also placing the women of harem at his disposal are described in the Aitreya Brahmana. During this phase of Hinduism Brahmanism reached its zenith, and became the sole sovereign and guardian
of Hinduism. With the king and his wives in their pockets it was easy for them to dictate to the people. During this period they got a permanent footing in the Varna Dharma, with the power to control all the affairs of the Hindu society.

How the Four Varnas Were Created:

The faith of the people in the priest during the magic phase of religion, due to his significant skill in controlling the mighty force of the unknown power, had sunk deep into peoples' hearts. This was but natural during that ignorant phase of human history. The word of the priest in fact then was final—whether it was based on fact or speculation was immaterial. This deep faith of people in the priest perhaps brought on them a permanent disaster which they have had to suffer all through history. When people were ignorant and were in a state of confusion, they quest for the wonderful universe its origin and development, was natural. But there was none but the priest to give them the picture of the universe. Using his authority, he naturally narrated his own story as the story of the universe, claiming that he is a Brahman and the super-soul who controls the affairs of the universe. The ignorant masses took for granted as divine word this account of the origin of the universe and the Brahman to be as described by the priest. They submitted themselves to the Brahman.
But however meaningless the idea of the universe the priest gave, it was accepted as final and true. The priest thus fooled the people by giving a false account of the origin of the universe and the origin of Brahman or ultimately the origin of chaturvarna itself. This account of how the world was created and thereby the varna system can be seen in the 10th hymn of the tenth mandala of Rigveda — a hymn known by the famous name of purusha. The hymn says.

1. Purusha has a thousand heads, a thousand eyes, a thousand feet. On every side enveloping the earth he over passed (it) by a space of ten fingers.

2. Purusha himself is this whole universe.

3. All existences are quarter to him and three-fourth of him are that which is immortal in the sky.

4. With three quarters purusha mounted upwards. A quarter of him was again produced here. He was then differed everywhere over things which eat and which donot eat.

5. From him was born viraj and from viraj purusha. When born, he extended beyond the earth both behind and before.
(6) When gods performed a sacrifice with purusha as
the oblation, the spring was its butter, the summer
its fuel, and the autumn its (accompanying) offering.

(7) This victim purusha born in the beginning, they
immolated on the sacrificial grass. With him the
God, the sadhyas, and the rishis sacrificed.

(8) From that universal sacrifice were provided curds
and butter. It formed those aerial (Creatures) and
animals both wild and tame.

(9) From that universal sacrifice spring the rik and
saman verses, the mattas and the yajus.

(10) From it spring horses and all animals with two
rows of teeth, kine sprang from it, from it goats
and sheep.

(11) When (Gods) divided purusha, into how many parts did
they cut him up? What was his mouth? What arms
(had he)? What (two objects) are (to have been)
his things and feet?
(12) The Brahman was his mouth, the Rajanya was made of his arms, the being called vaishya, he was his things; the shudra sprang from his feet.

(13) The moon sprang from his soul, (man as) the sun from the eye, Indra and Agni from his mouth and Vayu from his breath.

(14) From his naval arose the air, from his head the sky, from his feet the earth, from his ear the (four) quarters; in this manner the (Gods) formed the worlds.

(15) When the Gods performing sacrifices, bound purusha as victim, there were seven sticks (stuck up) for it around the fire) and thrice seven pieces of fuel were made.

(16) With this sacrifice the Gods performed the sacrifice. These were the earliest rites; these great powers have sought the sky, where are the former sadhyas, gods.

The description in the hymn speaks of only the wonderful image of an unknown and the unknown answerable for everything coming into existence. The description actually derives from
imagination of a priest, moved by the fervour of the unknown, trying to dazzle and fill the common people with confused feelings. It was a limitless and foolish feeling to which the priest form and authority. But it was not difficult for the priest to do this and equally it was not difficult for the priest to do this and equally it was not difficult for the ignorant mass to accept it and follow it. Naturally this scheme, in which the Brahman was born from the mouth, the Kshatriya from the arms, the Vaishya from the thighs and the shudra from the feet, came to form the organisational doctrine of society. When the society had already been percelled into bits by the natural course of history, these bits were organised under the categories of chaturvarna and were ranked into blocks of four fold divisions. And the bits became the identity of caste when they were ranked.

The Philosophy Behind the Chaturvarna System:

The system of Chaturvarna cannot be regarded as a simple and innocent principle of merely dividing the society into four varnas. If at all the principle of fourfold division of society based on graded inequality was to be sustained, it must have the mandatory injunctions of the creator. But a mandatory principle was not acceptable if it was just a mandatory principle.
It had to have the support of a theory, a set of reasons and causes. Then, what were the reasons and caused the creator might have employed in creating his scheme of chaturvarna? They were listed as follows:

(1) Man has soul (atman) and soul is eternal and answerable to God for man's actions in the world.

(2) When man takes birth with a soul in his body during his lifetime, each act he does produces an impress upon his soul.

(3) The act that man does produces two-fold results—first it affects the door and secondly it produces an impress upon his soul.

(4) When man dies and when his soul escapes, the soul is full of such impressions.

(5) It is these impressions which determine his birth and status in his future life.

(6) His present birth too has a bearing upon the acts he might have committed in his previous birth.
(7) The act that man commits in his present or previous life time is his Karma or fate.

(8) If a man is born in a poor family it is because of past bad Karma. If a man is born in a rich family it is because of his past good karma.

(9) If a man is born with a congenital defect it is because of his past bad Karma.

(10) If a man is born in a low caste it is because of his past bad karma, and if a man is born in a high caste it is because of his past good karma.

(11) The men are born in a Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya or a Shudra varna by virtue of their respective karmas.

(12) The life of a being goes on from life to life taking human or animal form and so also the soul of a being goes on transmigrating from life to life.

(13) To attain the life of a human being, a being with a soul has to take a round of 84 lakh birth and death cycles; it is the highest form of life when a being
with soul will have a lot of chance to escape transmigration.

(14) But among human beings, the being has to again go through a cycle of birth and death so as to cross each caste in the ascending order. By fulfilling the dharma of each caste each time the being can attain the life of a Brahman.

(15) By attaining the life of a Brahman, man attains Moksha or salvation or the end of the transmigration of soul.

(16) Thus the attainment of Moksha depends upon the good and bad acts committed during the course of each life.

(17) The bad and good acts are termed respectively as papa and punya.

(18) Thus the Hindu law of karma is based on the existence of a soul which is distinct from the body; when body dies soul does not die, the soul flies away.
On account of the above reasons and causes it was possible to conclude that God created the four varnas so as to bring salvation to the erring soul and help it escape transmigration. By a strict adherence to the law of religion or the rule in conformity with the aim and purpose of life, man's soul could attain salvation and escape the cycle of births and deaths. What was the aim and purpose of life? The purpose of this life was settle the account of good and bad deeds committed in the previous birth. In order to punish man's erring soul God created the unequal varna system and the birth of a man in a particular varna depended upon the number of crimes or the merits that he might have committed in the previous birth. If the number of crimes committed in previous birth were relatively fewer than merits, then the man earned a higher birth in the relational hierarchy of the varna system. Thus the varna system revolved round the religious belief in God, soul, karma, Dharma, Papa, Punya, Janma and Punarjanma and Mukti or Moksha.

Religion and untouchability:

The institution of untouchability cannot be regarded as a phenomenon quite independent of religion. As we have already seen caste and religion are part and parcel of one and the same thing. Hence the institution of untouchability and religion are part of the same process. Religion and caste
Whatever is related to the unknown, and hence to the institution of untouchability, consists of the same principles of the unknown. But untouchability should be regarded as the extra gift of the Hindu religious law givers! It had the deliberate purpose of reducing the untouchables to a state of savagery and barbarism. But the achievement of this purpose became possible only when it was sanctioned by religious principles or prescriptions. The trick that the law-givers had played to keep the lower castes from the good things of life was clever and it killed their very spirit of humanity. The iron laws, in course of time, became so powerful that no force could resist the growing tyrannies they created. No power could challenge the system which made untouchables' condition wretched, characterised by chronic poverty; Thus, the system continued perpetuating hierarchy and inequality. Their dead spirit never allowed them to react against the system. In his anxiety to get rid of the sins committed in the past birth the untouchable never thought of violating the duties ordained in the present birth, and preferred his agonies to continue for ever. The untouchable, hankering after salvation from rebirth, accepted whole heartedly all creatives perpetrated on him by his religious masters. Dr. A. M. Rajasekhariah (1978: 428) supports this view in the following words.
"Untouchability was a disability of a religious nature and not just or solely a social aberration. Religion was fully impressed to support and justify this practice. This is further clear when we view it against Dharma. Dharma was essentially a religious doctrine translated into social action. It is the social action or conduct or a way of life by which the individual works out his salvation and destiny in society."

In fact if an untouchable was prevented from seeing the injustice of untouchability, it was because of this religious belief in salvation as preached by his religious masters. Thus it is clear that the Hindu society emphasised as its supreme aim, salvation. Says O.P. Sharma (1963: ).

"Hindu society is organised around its basic goal of ordaining Moksha by performing Dharma and any action which generates P.A.P (Sin) would simply not find social approval as it vitiates the chief goal. Apart from being dirty, the Harijan is viewed as one whose present state is due to his karma in previous life and as such would pollute by touch."

Thus on the question of the origin of caste the following conclusions can be arrived at:

(1) To begin with the Hindu society was an unorganised society and comprised many small sects and sub-
sects with different religious beliefs and practices.

(2) These sects were endogamous groups but lacked caste character because they lacked ranking. But the endogamous character of these groups was natural and was not as rigid as it became with the passage of time.

(3) These sects came to acquire caste character when they were gradually organised under the varna system of religious order.

(4) Each varna consisted of many thousands of castes and sub-castes and each caste and sub-caste get absorbed into the varna scheme according to its ability and the opportunity that it may get.

(5) Therefore the fourfold division of society was not a class society but it was a caste society.

(6) The varna system came into being when it came under the command of divinely inspired priests and when the divinely inspired priests wanted to evolve a common society and in the name of religion, when
they wanted to establish their own supremacy.

(7) The commands of priests in course of time acquired the character of religious laws and customs and were followed strictly by all people in society.

(8) Thus it is not endogamy that is the essence of caste but the essence of caste is the system of ranking of the endogamous groups in the order of hierarchy. And this essence was rooted in the religious order itself.

(9) Hence religion and caste are structurally integrated. They are the two sides of the same coin.

The Practices

There are five pillars on which the Hindu religious edifice of caste stands. The five pillars are:

(1) Paramatma and Atma (God and Soul)
(2) Karma = Papa/Punya and Bhoga
(3) Janma and Punarjanma (Birth and Rebirth)
(4) Svarga and Naraka (Heaven or Hell)
(5) Mukti or Moksha (Cessation or Salvation)
How these pillars help to support the Hindu religious edifice and, thereafter, its steel frame, the caste, can be seen by observing the outlook of Hindus on their life. The beliefs of Hindus differ from caste to caste. But these beliefs are interdependent and intertwined. Both these aspects are essential to sustain and perpetuate the system as a whole. If a high caste Hindu believes that he is high born because of his good deeds, the low caste Hindu believes that he is low born because of his bad deeds. Both are supposed to have committed their respective good and bad deeds in their previous birth. It is the combination of bad and good deeds that shapes the destiny of all Hindus to attain higher or lower positions in the scale of caste hierarchy. Their respective beliefs keep them in their respective positions. If a Hindu born in a higher caste is questioned as to why he is high-born the immediate answer that comes from him is that it is due to his punya in the past birth. A similar view can be heard from a low-caste man when he says that his papa is the reason for his low-born status. Such were generally the feelings expressed by the respondents in Belgaum, Bedkhihal and Halasi— the units of this study. In these units of study, especially Halasi and Bedkhihal, the high caste Hindu feels happy to treat the low caste as low because both accept the common notion that the deeds performed in a previous birth determines one’s caste. So also the low
caste feels that it is right to receive bad treatment, the worse, the better for him. Both high and low caste Hindus feel it is their caste ordained duty to treat or receive treatment whether good or bad in their daily dealings. They share the common motivation of getting liberation from the total human condition and to reach God. Sir Harcourt Butler wrote "that Indians are essentially religious and religion is still the alpha and omega of Indian life" (O'Malley 1935:45). An Anthropologist, Morris Opler (1950 : 314) wrote "The highest goal of Hindu is to eliminate earthly concerns, desires and personal existence and introduce a large element of asceticism, intellectualism, detachment and withdrawal into Hindu religious philosophy."

Now let us study the various pillars of the Hindu religious edifice and their functions in the units of study.

Paramatma and Atma (God and Soul):

When confronted with the mysterious creation of the world and its diversities it is but natural for man to believe in some unknown power, which he calls the omnipresent God. This omnipresent God according to the common man's feeling has his relation to man's soul which a man is supposed to possess when he takes his birth on this earth. The omnipresent is believed to have his existence in an unknown place that is there beyond
the universe. This omnipresent, according to the Hindus in the units of this study, can also be called Brahman. They say that this Brahman is a reality although he is unseen and unheard. But he can be seen and heard by the devoted disciples who sacrifice their entire life for the sake of this omnipresent. Some of the respondents in the units of study opined that, God is Just, Kind and all loving towards his devotees, and comes to their rescue at any moment when they suffer from disgrace or danger. Those who criticize, abuse and insult this God are supposed to meet with disgrace and disasters in the near future. The omnipresent is powerful, he fills the whole universe and pervades everywhere and therefore he is called Omnipresent. He also knows everything and therefore he is also called Omniscient. In fact man has to be careful in view of this omnipresence. God can be in any form. He can be in the form of a dog and a cat and even in the form of stone and wood. It is according to his will that every thing in the universe moves and every occurrence in any form—good or bad—has its bearing on God. God created this world and whatever there is in the world. For every cause and effect it is God that is responsible. Thus God must be honoured and respected.

The Atma or the individual soul is the same as Brahman.
But Brahman becomes Mahabrahman when Atma becomes Brahman. Man's liberation lies in making Atman fuse with Brahman. But Atman can become one with Brahman only when the Brahman is persuaded to be kind towards Atman. Brahman can be kind when the Atman is pure from evil elements. And Brahman can be persuaded towards Atman by fulfilling Dharma. There are numerous ways in which Dharma can be fulfilled, the compulsory and highest way being the fulfilment of Jati Dharma. (Religion of Caste). In honouring God, man, apart from fulfilling caste dharma, has to adhere to all values that make up the whole Hindu social system.

The samples of views about God and Atman, from the units of study (Belgaum Bed kihal and Halasi) are given below:

Untouchables' views about God and Caste:

i) Case No.1 - Belgaum:

Q : Do you have belief in God? How do you experience his existence?

Ans : I do not have belief in God. Nor do I experience his existence.
Q: Do you feel God created the world and caste system?

Ans: When I do not believe God, how should I believe in the conception of creation of world by God. World has evolved and was not created. The caste system is a natural course of human history and it is the deliberate work of man. Brahmins have created the caste for their self benefit and to supress the lower castes.

Q: And what about Atman - Do you believe that?

Ans: Atman is not there. Man exists by food and everything within it.

Case No. 2: Bedkiali:

Q: Do you have belief in God? If so how do you experience his existence?

Ans: Yes, I have belief in God because God is a fact. Everything in the world contains God and his spirit. There is nothing in the world which can exist on its own without the existence of God within it. It is
God that governs our affairs in the world. We are all under his control and care.

Q: Do you feel there is Atman?

Ans: Atman itself is part of God. And after death Atman becomes one with God.

iii) Case No.3: Halasi:

Q: Do you have belief in God? If so how do you experience God and his existence?

Ans: I have belief in God because he comes to my rescue all the time whenever I am in difficulty and danger—and I just remember and pray to him. I feel his existence in everything I see. Therefore, I do not mind even praying to the stone and wood images of God.

Q: Do you feel that God created the world and the caste?

Ans: Yes, God created the world and when God has created this world, maybe he has created even caste.
Q: Do you have belief in Atman? How do you experience his existence?

Ans: I have belief in Atman. It will not die though the body of man dies. It exists even after death. It can take rebirth and can take rebirth on earth again in any form. It has its connection with a God who is called super-Atman or Paramatma.

Q: Do you believe in Atman? How do you experience his existence?

Ans: Atman is same as God. It is part and parcel of God and after death it becomes one with God. It can again come to earth if it has to suffer punishment as wished by God.

Touchables view about God and Atman

Case No.1: Belgium

Q: Do you have belief in God? If so how do you experience God and his existence?

God is a pervading phenomenon which spreads over everything on the earth. There will be no existence at all of any being on earth if there is no God. It is due to the care of God that every being on earth leads its life. Not only that, whether it is good or bad, the occurrence has its bearing with God. Therefore God has to be propitiated by the beings on earth so that he will not be unkind to the beings and make them suffer. Because there is no Shakti, the people in the present world are suffering from the crisis of everything.

Q: Do you feel God has created the world and caste system?

Ans: God has created the world as well as the caste system. The system of caste has been created by God so as to punish the people for their crimes. The low castes suffer the status of lowliness due to the sins they might have committed in their preceding lives. God makes man suffer not only by forcing him into a particular caste but by bringing him other sufferings such as, acute poverty, deafness, dumdness, lameness and blindness. Thus there is no doubt that God has created the world and the caste.
Q: Do you have belief in Atman? How do you experience it?

Ans: Without Atman you cannot survive. Without Atman you will be dead matter. Atman is part of Brahman and Brahman means God.

Case No. 2: Sankhara:

Q: Do you have belief in God? How do you experience God?

Ans: I have belief in God because God is a reality and without God there can be nothing at all on earth. God controls us and takes care of us. For every being it is God that is responsible and without God no being can survive. It is God directly or indirectly who is responsible for a being to come into existence and lead a life good or bad.

Q: Do you believe that God created world and caste system?

Ans: God no doubt created the world. But God had two fold motivation when he created caste. First to allow man...
to suffer when he committed evils and secondly to allow the society to function smoothly. The division of labour is a must if the society is to function smoothly. So God created divisions in society on the basis of occupations.

Q: Do you believe Atman? How do you experience it?

Ans: Atman has its relation with God and after death it becomes one with God. Or if it has to suffer for sins, takes rebirth on earth — again after death.

Case No.3: Malasi:

Q: Do you believe in God? How do you experience his existence?

Ans: There arises no question of belief in God, when God is a reality. God is everywhere — whether he is in some form or without any form, seen or unseen, heard or unheard, he is a reality. It is with whose grace, love and hate towards us we run our affairs in the world.

Q: Do you believe that God created the world and caste system?
Ans : God not only created world but every little affair that man has to experience in his life. Naturally caste is also an affair of God. God has created caste so as to view smooth functioning of society and so as to make man undergo a course of suffering or fruition of bad or good acts he might have committed in previous birth.

Q : Would you believe in Atman and its existence ?

Ans : Human Atman is a part of Godly spirit and after death tries to be one with God. But due to its evil acts if man again has to come back to earth to take rebirth and undergo a course of punishment.

Case No.4 : Belgaum:

Q : Do you believe God ? How do you experience ?

Ans : Whether we see God or experience him, it is an immaterial thing - God is there is existence all the time-just as gravitational force or the force in magnet. Those who dont believe God are fools.
Q: Do you believe that God created earth and so also the system of caste?

Ans: God created the world, human and animal and it is God who feeds, punishes and destroys the world—human or animal. He is responsible not only for caste but everything around and within it.

Q: Do you believe Atma and its existence?

Ans: Atman is the sub-structure of God’s spirit and seeks its place within the spirit of God himself after the death of man.

On the basis of the above responses, we can say that the belief in God and Atman is strong in the units of study. The respondents hold that everything on earth is to be attributed to God and Atman, including the creation of the social system of caste. For every creature it is God who directly or indirectly feeds and punishes. This belief still persists in the units of study. In Bodkhal and Haleli the untouchables sing the following song of “Kanakadas” in honour of God’s greatness.
"Kollolago putti Kooguva Koppomaligala Allali Ahervittavaran. Puttisida swamyta Honzernagiralu Kottu Rakshapanidosko Sandhebada."

"The frogs which take their birth
In rocks,
Who feeds them? 
God, who has given us birth, being responsible to us
will feed and protect us, do not doubt it.

The song says it is God that nourishes every surviving
being and even the worms and insects are fed by him. Man is
just a puppet in his hands.

Karma-Papa/Punya and Bhoga (Deeds Sin & Merit Respectives):

The Karma theory of Hinduism has deeply influenced the
sin and merit concepts of untouchables also. Papa means sin
and punya means merit. According to the Oxford Dictionary sin
means an act which is regarded as a transgression of the
divine law and an offence against God, a violation especially
wilful or deliberate of some religious and moral principle.
(Radototad 1977, p2). This shows that there is a relationship
between religious and social action. The Hindu concept of
papa means the same as sin. But since the religious principles
of different religions differ from one another, the sin and merit concepts of those religions also differ. The Oxford Dictionary's meaning, therefore, does not fully apply to different religious principles of sin. We need to modify its meaning. But even then, irrespective of the religion to which he belongs, if at all he has to take any social action, he does it so only if he feels that it does not violate the religious order.

For Hindus, sin means breach of religious custom. Custom, says the code of Manu, is a transcendent law and this law should be respected by every one since it is ordained by God himself. To perform one's own caste duty and regularly to abide by rules of caste status and roles, to treat or receive treatment as accorded by caste dharma, is a religious custom and to deviate from it is a sin. Abusing or harming the feeling of a Brahmin, was in the past considered as a mortal sin. According to Manu there was no sin in the world worse than this. That was considered as Mahapatak. On the other hand killing women, shudras, vaishyas and even kshatriyas came under the category of minor offences. Such offences were considered as Upapatakas. All these evidence from Manu Dharma shastra clearly show that the inequality was maintained throughout the history of Hindu society. But such
a notion is present even in the present day. In the field of our study, when we observed the working of the sin concept we found the following kind of acts were regarded as very sinful.

1. Deviating from caste duty.
2. Killing.
3. Adultery.
4. Misbehaviour.
5. Lying.

(1) Deviating from caste duty:

The particular caste duty assigned to a caste is based on the dogma of predetermination. The Holy Gita of Hinduism teaches that, "one's own duty (i.e., Dharma or caste rule) though defective is better than another's duty well performed" (Dongre, 1974). Accordingly the people in the field of our study have the notion that if they deviate from their caste duties, they will be committing sin and that they will be in hell after their death. This being the fact, the untouchables in Belgaum city are still engaged in their hereditary occupations. The Dhor men have not given up the occupation of tanning the
leather. So also men belonging to Madiga community have not
given up the occupation of rope-making. Most of the Bhangis
think it as their destiny ordained by God himself to engage
in the toilet cleaning occupation. The Mahars also think
that their work of scavenging is predestined by divinity
itself. The majority of Dhora, Chambars and Mangs in
Badkihol are engaged in their traditional caste occupations.
The Dhora do leather tanning occupation, the Chambars prepare
foot wear and the Mangs do the occupation of rope making. The
Mahars do scavenging and skin the dead cattle for caste Hindus.
The Chelawadis in HALASI do the work of scavenging and while
Halewars skin the dead cattle for caste Hindus, the Madigas do
the occupation of leather. If asked why they have not given
up their occupations, they say it is their caste duty ordained
by God which they must not give up even if they are well to do.
Those who give up their caste occupation, they believe, will
suffer the blow of sin after their death. They argue that it
looks very nice now to give up the traditional work but it
becomes a bitter pill afterwards when a man meets with death.

(2) Killing

Killing is called Hatya. Hatya is of various kinds.
Brahma Hatya, (Killing of Brahmins) Sroo Hatya, (Killing of
women) Shisha Hatya, (Killing of Child). Jeeva Hatya (Killing of innocent dumb, and other scared creatures) (Kadetotad, 1977-78). Committing any Hatya is committing sin in itself. However Brahma Hatya and Go Hatya (i.e., Killing of Brahmin and Cow) are held to be great sins. Hence, they are called Mahapapa. One of the Madiga respondents in Bedkhal narrated the story of his uncle who was constantly killing the cows and was selling its meat. During his youth nothing happened to him, but as days went on his health became poor and soon he fell ill. He suffered for a long time. He was barking like a mad dog and was mooing like a dying cow. At last he could not bear the pain any longer. He hanged himself and died. Because he was forced by God to suffer those mortal sins - and therefore he died a very tragic death. The respondent continued and said, because he was a sinner, his sins were also suffered by his wife and children. His wife is suffering from many diseases and the children are begging near the bus-stand. Thus ends the story of a cow killer in Bedkhal. In Halasi one of the respondents among Chalawadi's reported that one of their relatives had used bad language to a Brahmin Guru who attended to the deity at the village for worship. But because of Brahmin Guru's curse on him, he died within a month and his wife and children are suffering from starvation even now. Let alone killing, he said, but even the scolding of a Brahmin is a
mortal sin. The same sense of sin is there even in Belgaun city, where people do have reverence for Gurus and swamijies (preceptors/Saints). But, in general, we can say, in all the units of study, we find the belief that killing is a mortal sin and man who kills suffers seriously after death or even before death.

(3) Adultery:

Adultery involves illegal sexual relations and one who commits adultery is held to have committed sin. Men and women are supposed to maintain chastity not only after marriage but even before marriage. The man or woman who deserts his or her trusted partner is alleged to have committed a grave sin and he or she is definite of going to one of the hells after his or her death. Thus man or woman must be faithful to his or her partner. Thus the sexual relation established by the institution of marriage is a holy relation. Its breach is not approved by the moral and religious code of Hinduism.

This moral and religious code of Hinduism is observed by every man and woman in all the units of our study. The woman or man who breaks the religious code, the respondents observed, will meet a bad fate even in the this birth and they will not die an easy or happy death. One of the respondents in Belkiha...
said, the woman who deceived her husband by committing adultery died a tragic death. Her sex organ was afflicted with vermin and she died miserably. The same sense of sin dominated the people in Balgaun and Halasi. Some of the men we questioned as to what they would do if their wives committed the sin of adultery, gave the reply that they would kill their wives. But when asked whether killing too would be a sin, the reply they gave was that killing in such cases would be no sin. But all firmly believe that adultery is a sin.

(4) Lying, Deceiving and Stealing:

Some people have the habit of lying, deceiving, and stealing. But according to our respondents, if a man harms another by doing such things then he is sure to commit a sin. When a man lies or deceives for his own betterment then that is considered as a sin, but when man lies or deceives for the betterment of others then that is not considered as a sin. In fact the latter adds to his merits. When a man commits robbery or steals the property of others, then that also is a sin, because he causes grief to others thereby. Thus lying, deceiving and stealing are bad habits which cause disturbance in society and those who commit them commit sins.
(5) **Misbehaviour**

The term *misbehaviour* is a very comprehensive term that includes every breach of norm as prescribed by the Hindu religious code. Showing disrespect, treating others ill or talking to ill, others hurts the feelings of others. Hurting the feelings of parents, elderly persons, or in case of untouchables; hurting the feelings of high caste Hindus are acts of sin. This is described as Misbehaviour. The man who hurts the feelings of Swamijes, Saints, Mahagurus, Great preceptors and Sadgurus. (Good preceptors) is supposed to receive punishment, as cursed by them, in the days to come or punishment in hell after his death or in the next birth. So also misbehaving with animals etc., will bring sin to a man who does it. The punishment by God is thought to be proportionate to the sin and it may be in hell or in this life itself. Misbehaviours on the whole is a breach of the religious code.

A man who commits the above sins or such others sins has to undergo a course of punishment as wished by God. The sin and merit concepts, therefore, control the social behaviour of the people. The Hindus feel that if at all they are low born or high born, it is because of their bad or good action committed in the past life and if at all they have to attain a higher position in the next life then they have to suffer
this life without questioning or violating caste Dharma. Further the concepts of sin and merit differ from caste to caste. It may not be a sin for a caste Hindu to treat low caste as low, since he is supposed to have been born in the high caste only to treat the low caste as low. Thus treating the low caste as low will not be a sin. The low caste man in Hindu society feels that if at all he is suffering needlessly in his life, it is because of the bad kama he might have committed in his past life. The people in Halesi village sing a Shajan which displays how karma is responsible for their griefs in this world. It runs as follows:

"Tana Madide Kamakke Tane Bhogisagabeku,
Bhogisagabeku Amale Tane Yogisagbeku."

This means that the karmas that the man commits become responsible for his suffering in his life. That is why a man should prepare to undergo those sufferings so that the bad karmas may be reduced.

If at all a man has to overcome the sins that he might have committed then he has to do many good acts. According to our respondent, the good acts that a man should observe in his daily course of life are as follows:
(1) Revering, Serving, and respecting the Brahmins.

(2) Revering, serving and respecting the swamijies, Gurus, and Sadgurus (Religious personalities).

(3) Suffering for the sake of other's benefit and betterment.

(4) Respecting and Revering the elderly persons, by touching their feet, imploring them and entreating them.

(5) Strictly abiding by the rules of conduct or moral or religious code of conduct.

(6) Giving Alms to the most needy, sadhus, sants, beggars, orphans and strangers.

(7) Praying to Gods, the Almighty, and such other supernatural powers.

(8) Listening to puranas, shastras, and smritis us discoursed by Gurujias swamijies, and sadgurus.

(9) Taking to vratas, Tapas, Japas and Denas. (Meditation).

(10) Taking to sanyasa Dharma (ascetic life) and renouncing the worldly affairs.

(11) Treating animals, worms and insects kindly and respectfully.
By performing those acts a man can overcome all the sins committed by him. Those can add merit to the record of his life and those are called good deeds. Thus a man attempts to gain punyas by doing good deeds.

(3) Janma and Punarjanma (birth and rebirth).

The Hindu theory of karma says that the soul is immortal and takes its birth as long as the account of good and bad deeds continues to imbalance in each birth. Man’s soul goes on to take birth as many times as it has to pass through 84 crores of lives on earth, that includes even worms, insects, and other wild animals. The crores of lives that take birth on earth are hierarchically arranged. The worm that takes its birth in water. The birth in superior form of life depends upon the degree of imbalance between good and bad karmas. It is the combination of bad and good deeds that shapes the soul’s destiny helps the soul take a human form through which can be settled the accounts of both bad and good deeds. In the units of our study, almost all people think that there is rebirth and a man committing sin is likely to take his birth in low forms of life. The strict adherence to religious codes of conduct secures a man a better caste position in his next birth. Therefore securing or losing a better caste position depends on how obedient a man is to religion and its laws.
(4) Svarga and Naraka (Heaven and Hell):

Svarga means heaven and Naraka means hell. In heaven man will be enjoying the happiness of a paradise for ever after his death. According to our respondents, after death a man's soul will go to heaven only if his soul has a record of only good deeds, i.e., the deeds leading punyas. If a man's soul, on the other hand, has only a record of bad deeds i.e., the papas, then it will go to hell where it will suffer severe punishments of various kinds. This kind of belief is rooted in the people very considerably, and people in our units of study if disobey it. Therefore the concepts of svarga and Naraka are always there to control the social actions of people in every aspect of their lives.

(5) Salvation (Moksha):

The highest aim of the Hindu is to attain salvation or Moksha. Moksha means getting liberated from the cycle of birth and death once and forever. This can be attained only after balancing the account of good and bad deeds. If a man has good deeds to his credit he will be attaining Moksha but he will have to suffer the cycle of birth and death if he has bad deeds only to his credit.
As discussed above, a man, after death, passes into two kinds of unseen worlds, namely heaven and hell. Heaven means paradise where Gods and Goddesses live. And hell means a jail, whose different kinds of punishments are meted out to different people who had committed different types of sins. The concept of mokti or moksha for the people in the units of this study, means the same as attaining swarga. Sometimes Mokti can also be interpreted as becoming one with the unknown or unseen power which controls the affairs of the world of man and animals.

The pillars of Hindu religion discussed above maintain the caste system with the futile promise of salvation for the common man. The primary goal of acknowledging these pillars is to propitiate the supernatural or to accord religion the highest status in the daily course of life. In view of this fact a man practises many religious observances, the observance of caste being the most important. Therefore caste involves religious observance by a caste person. Taya Zinkin (1971:301) in her "Caste Today," wrote,

"The Hindu who observes caste does so because his religion wants him to".
Thus actually speaking caste has its basis in the spiritual life of religion itself, and the Hindu varna Dharma is the one which assigns the place of a person in the society tying him down to a particular caste and allowing him to feel practically superior or inferior to other castes in public life. Hence the roots of caste lie buried in the bosom of Hindu Dharma itself. Caste pattern has embraced every community but has distributed rights and duties in the name of God, karma, birth, salvation and rebirth. Therefore caste cannot be separated from religion. There is no religion in India without its caste dimension. If a man clings to his traditional occupation then he does so, only because his religion wants him to. Viewed in the light of Dharma an occupation becomes a mere effect its real cause being Dharma itself. If occupation is the essence of caste, as Mr. Osfield held, then that is true with the qualification that it is the result of Dharma.

This Dharma is the main principle around which everything revolves. Whatever comes into existence has a purpose behind it and that purpose is achieved through the means of a religious code or Dharma. Violating the code is equal to violating the duty that is ordained by divinity itself. Dr. Ambedkar said that the origin of caste is the same as origin of the mechanism of endogamy. But when we interpret our empirical data gathered
in the field we have to conclude that caste endogamy originates in the mechanism for establishing and maintaining religion itself. It is true that endogamy is a basic feature of caste in India but at the same time it should be realized that the institutions of caste is founded on the solid rock of religious law itself. If understood correctly, each caste has its own Dharma. That is called Jati Dharma or caste religion. Each caste has its own peculiar rules, regulations, customs and traditions. Sometimes the beliefs of castes differ. Yet castes in common have general rules, but particular castes have particular rules. This means that each caste is a sub-system of Hindu society as a whole, including untouchables. If the rules thus formed are violated by any one then that person will be deprived of the common life itself. He will not be allowed to have either social intercourse or social relationship in any way. Thus caste is nothing but a sub-Dharma of a particular group or sub-group within the system of group forming the whole Dharma. Each group embodies in itself certain general and particular rules. e.g., if endogamy is the general rule, occupation is the particular rule. The particular rules allow the members to form particular communities, whereas general rules allow the members to form a general community i.e., the Hindu community. The general and particular rules both allow the members to claim superior and inferior status in public life. So Dharma is the essence of caste and endogamy, though
crucial is derived for Dharma.

The varna Dharma or religion based on varna system was not cut in the beginning with an intention behind it. In promoting that intention it was the Indian hierophants who played a game of exploitation displaying philosophical cleverness and social power. The result was to reduce some to a state of moral and mental slavery, i.e., untouchables. That Brahmans and the Brahmin law-givers had the intention of promoting their own interest at the cost of non-Brahmins, as can be seen in their mystifying texts, filled with mythological tales and supernatural characters. The Brahmans, while preaching their complex philosophies, religious beliefs and practices already to liberate the common people from rebirth to attain then so called salvation, almost destroyed scientific thinking among the people perpetuated their ignorance in such a way that they could never get out of it. The Brahminical philosophy even today works on the minds of the common people, though they also experience all modern ideology and material culture. Therefore the fragmentation that was created through caste in society shows the Brahman law gives cunningness in evolving a policy of divide and rule. This fragmentation was institutionalised through the mechanics of endogamy. The main motivation of caste system in India has been well described by a well-known writer, Professor A.H. Dharma Lingam (1961) as follows:
"The purpose of caste was inequality and endogamy, to shower the best of life on the top few and to keep the vast mass of people, described as shudras, in ignorance, illiteracy and poverty so as to ensure their occupation as hewers of wood and drawers of water to the exclusive benefit and comfort of upper castes."

But Dhamoillingam also admits that "this they did all in the name of God, religion, karma and tradition". Therefore caste and religion cannot be regarded as two separate phenomena in India. They must be seen as parts of a single ability.