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BABASAHEB DR. B.R. AMBEDKAR, BUDDHISM AND DALIT EMANCIPATION

Prem K. Chumber

Editor-in-Chief: Ambedkar Times & Desh Doaba

Babasaheb Dr. B. R. Ambedkar converted to Buddhism at the historic public ceremony in Nagpur on October 14, 1956. The decision to embrace Buddhism by Dr. Ambedkar was not at all a sudden attempt. It took him more than two decades (from Yeola Conference, October 13, 1935, where he took the vow that 'even though I am a Hindu born, I will not die a Hindu', to the historic Nagpur conversion ceremony, October 14, 1956, the day he embraced Buddhism with thousands of his followers) to translate his vow for conversion into reality. He decided to embrace Buddhism after thoroughly exhausting all possible ways of reforming Hinduism from within and exploring the possibility of conversion to Christianity, Sikhism, and Islam for overcoming the oppressive structures of Brahminical social order (BSO) in India. Converting to Buddhism, in fact, was a unique and meticulously calculated move. It was a unique move in the sense that though there have been many instances of individual conversions to Buddhism, the real credit for systematically organizing collective conversion to Buddhism on a mass scale in India, beyond doubt, goes to Dr. Ambedkar. The historic conversion ceremony at Nagpur assumed further importance with the publication of *The Buddha and his Dhamma* shortly after the demise of Babasaheb on December 6, 1956.

Dr. Ambedkar discovered in conversion to Buddhism the most desired and reliable way of overcoming the centuries-old system of social exclusion. According to Babasaheb, the central thesis of the Buddhist philosophy revolves around two major problems: the first problem was that there was suffering in the world and the second was how to remove this suffering and make mankind happy. Since caste and caste based social exclusion dehumanizes the Dalits, Babasaheb underlined the urgency of caste annihilation. It is in this context that conversion to Buddhism becomes meaningful. Another aspect that underlines the importance of conversion to Buddhism encourages strategic alliance between the non-Brahminical/ Shudras/ Bahujan Samaj/ artisans and the Dalit/Ati Shudras sections of the Indian society and calls for their united front against the oppressive and hegemonic structures of Brahminical social order. Forging unity among the victims of the 'Varna order' in turn aimed at reclaiming India on the basis of the neo-Buddhist identity. The very fact that Dr. Ambedkar founded three political parties (the Independent Labour Party, All India Scheduled Castes Federation and the Republican Party of India), and the leading role that he played in drafting the Constitution of independent India, vindicated his active involvement in the polity and society of the country even after denouncing Hinduism publicly in 1935 and later on embracing Buddhism in 1956.

Babasaheb Dr. Ambedkar used to emphasize on the application of scientific approach to solve the question of caste and social exclusion. His movement also became very popular in Punjab. He visited Punjab thrice. It was during his last visit in October 27-29, 1951 that he spoke at length to his people in Punjab about his approach and ways of Dalit empowerment. He delivered speeches at Jalandhar, Ludhiana and Patiala and also addressed the students of D.A.V. College Jalandhar. Though the people of Punjab were well impressed by his great movement but they could not follow him so closely in relation to conversion to Buddhism. Late D. C. Ahir, a renowned Ambedkarite Buddhist and world reputed scholar of Buddhism, was of the opinion that due to deep faith of Scheduled Castes population of Punjab, especially of the Doaba region, in the teachings and spirituality of Saheb Shri Guru Ravidass Ji, Buddhism could not become so popular in this state. Another possible reason behind the deep popularity of the teachings of Saheb Shri Guru Ravidass in Punjab could be the concerted efforts of Babu Mangu Ram Mughwalia and the mass appeal of his famous Ad Dharm movement. The popularity of Ad Dharm can be known from the fact that some of the scholars of late started advocating that the principles of "Ad Dharm" are also followed in Buddhism.

Hon'ble Minister of Higher Education, Mr. Gurmeet Singh Meet Hayer Welcomed by PUTA at Panjab University Campus, Chandigarh



Amar Ujala
October 11, 2022



Times of India
October 11, 2022



Bhaskar Chandigarh
October 11, 2022

Chandigarh (Ambedkar Times Bureau)- Hon'ble Cabinet Minister and Minister of Higher Education, Punjab, Mr Gurmeet Singh Meet Hayer, visited Panjab University campus on a thanks giving function on October 10, 2022. The thanksgiving function was organised by PUTA at its office in the Aruna Chandra Complex, Panjab University, Campus, Chandigarh in his honour and the honour of the Government of Punjab for issuing notification for the adoption and implementation of long overdue 7th UGC Pay Scale for College and University teachers of Punjab. The state of Punjab was the only state left so far to adopt and implement the 7th UGC Pay Scales. The Hon'ble Minister was accompanied by S. Jagdeep Kamboj Goldy, MLA, Jalalabad and S. Narinder Pal Singh Sawna, MLA Fazilka. Prof. Amarjit Singh Naura, Secretary PUTA extended a warm welcome to esteemed Minister and the Members of Punjab Legislative Assembly. He particularly expressed deep gratitude on behalf of PUTA to Hon'ble Minister S. Gurmeet Singh Meet Hayer for taking out time out of his busy schedule to meet PUTA members and motivate them. Dr. Mritunjay Kumar, President PUTA expressed deep appreciation and gratitude to S. Bhagwant Mann, Hon'ble Chief Minister Punjab and S. Gurmeet Singh Meet Hayer, Hon'ble Minister, Higher Education, for accomplishing the long pending task of notifying the implementation of 7th CPC within a short period of six months of their newly formed government despite the huge financial crunch. Whereas the previous government kept the matter pending even after making many promises.

President PUTA further felicitated Hon'ble Minister, who had made the whole teaching community proud by virtue of his conviction as a leader and tall stature, rekindling an enthusiasm and commitment among teachers. He also said that this specific act of the Punjab Government in general,

and the Education Minister in particular, speaks volumes about the well-meaning administration of the present Government of Punjab. He also appreciated the Govt. of Punjab for showing a positive inclination towards the Old Pension Scheme, and hoped that teachers would get this benefit too. Hon'ble Minister, S. Gurmeet Singh Meet Hayer, while addressing PUTA members, reiterated the stand of his Government as well as his own, that teachers hold the most respectable place in the society and they deserve to get what is due to them without any hassles. His government right from the beginning has prioritized education for the progression of the State of Punjab. Speaking about the Old Pension Scheme, he confirmed that the issue was under consideration of the Government of Punjab. Hon'ble Minister was highly appreciated for holding an extremely positive disposition towards the teaching community.

Prof. Supinder Kaur, Vice President PUTA, extended thanks to Hon'ble Minister and the esteemed guests for coming all the way to meet PUTA members, which would certainly rejuvenate the energy of its members to work with greater enthusiasm and rigour.

She also thanked all the members of PUTA for always being supportive. Finally, she thanked the media friends for their consistent support. In a lively Interaction with the Hon'ble Minister during the informal refreshment session, Senior Professor, former Dean, PUTA President and Senator, Prof Ronki Ram thanked him and the present Government of Punjab for agreeing to this long pending demand of the entire teaching community of the state and wished him success in his future endeavor for the promotion of higher education in Punjab.

Read more

<http://www.ambedkartimes.com/Dr%20Ronki%20Ram.htm>

Sahib Shri Kanshi Ram: Heralding Enlightened Democracy

The formation of Bahujan Samaj Party on 14th April, 1984 on the 93rd birth anniversary of Dr. Ambedkar, the tallest of social revolutionaries India has ever produced, with Kanshi Ram at the helm of affairs, changed the body politics of the country infusing hitherto unconventional and somewhat unbelievable grammar of politics, with fresh idioms and terminology. The very selection of the venue for the occasion, the famous Boat Club at iconic India Gate, just in front of the Parliament and President House, the power house of India, speaks volume of the ambition and aspiration this social colossal was carrying and aiming at. It was so far, by all standard, the most substantial, meticulously articulated and well thought out intervention by the caste victims in India to redeem India democracy from the clutches of caste hegemony focusing on the strategy of empowering the most oppressed segments of India society namely the Bahujan Samaj consisting of scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, other backward classes along with religiously converted minorities from these oppressed groups. Bereft of power, prosperity and prestige for quite a long, this political experiment was unique and unapparelled for a giant community that has been for long languishing in slumber. **'Our ultimate aim is to rule India'** thunders Kanshi Ram who became phenomenon of far-reaching consequences within no times. His socio, cultural, economic and intellectual initiatives firmly established him as the **political genius, the cold-blooded calculator, the enigmatic maverick, rootless negotiator, the progressive pragmatist, the rational humanist and the enlightened democrat** providing social legitimacy in the form of blood and flesh to the skeleton of political democracy hegemonized by the brahminical elected tyranny. By the end of 1990s he become the real game changer of India politics representing the democratic upsurge their assertion and ascendancy of the Indian mass to Indian power center. He is credited as the harbinger of setting in the process circulation of elite replacing the ruling castes from power corridors, the requisite precondition for successful working and survival of the democracy as propounded by Babasaheb.

Hailing from Punjab and coming from the community of politically the most subjugated and indifferent lot; the untouchables, Kanshi Ram was able to put to fire the imagination of the gullible untouchables who have suddenly visualized an objective for their purposelessness wondering of a modern object on which Gandhian, Marxian or rightist brahmanics have a perpetual ownership right. The untouchables, one of the most recalcitrant of the caste victims were first and fast to own the historical responsibility of bringing justice to the

masses and legitimacy to the democracy that was highly content deficit. Soon a secret was unearthed by the educated elites and the intelligentsia that the call given by Kanshi Ram to capture the political power was nothing new and Ambedkar had already advised Dalits to write on their walls that 'they have to be the governing community of this country one day.' But Ambedkar literature largely remained inaccessible even to the educated ones, not to mention of the uneducated mass struggling to survive in hostile socio-economic condi-



tions under acute political subordination. But the uneducated ones within no time proved themselves to be the great learners and quickly capture the zest of the matter unmistakably. The rural masses of Dalits, with no food in their belly began to queue up serpentinly behind the Elephant, the election symbol of BSP which was used by Dr. Ambedkar also for political mobilization and consolidation. These supporters had great hunger in their eyes for self-respect and dignity as they were sleeping for long.

With emphasis on **'own ideology, own leadership and own organization'** Kanshi Ram was able to instill the vigor, vitality, enthusiasm, dynamism and requisite self-confidence in the community. The ever-enthusiastic new political recruits taking great moral postures on contemporary political issues, started confronting the most powerful ones i.e., VP Singh and Rajiv Gandhi. These symbolic fights were great moral boosters with unique mobilization strategies, the much-needed initiation was performed, and the neediest lot started learning and using the political means for their liberation with the permanent agenda of social transformation and economic emancipation.

Having resigned his government service from Explosive Research and Development Laboratory (ERDL) Poonain 1964 at the age of thirty, Kanshi Ram took twenty years to develop non political roots for his full-

fledged political action establishing Backwards And Minority Employees Community Federation (BAMCEF) a non-religious non-agitational and non-reactionary national campaign working as brain bank, talent bank and money bank rooted on the principle of pay back to the society by the educated employees sharing their time, talent and treasure, the Buddhist Research Centre (BRC), the intellectual and research wing, Dalit Shoshit Samaj Sangharsh Samiti (DS4) as agitational wing and finally Bahujan Samaj Party in 1984.

Through these organization initiatives and various national campaigns i.e., Jati Todo Samaj Jodo movement, Kanshi Ram known earlier as K.R. Ramdasi, revived the **Social Transformation and Economic Emancipation Movement** started by Jotiba Phule in 1848, re-establishing its historical continuity that was briefly broken after Babasaheb Demise on 6th December 1956. As an epitome of absolute determination and unflinching dedication with exemplary sacrifice he left with his family and his engagement in 1964, and resolved to dedicate his entire life to the Phule Ambedkarite Mission having no individual attachment, property and family and remained true to his vows till his last breath on 9th October 2006.

As a master strategist and master organizer, Kanshi Ram used 'Mammoth Rally' as confidence building mechanism in the community which is sparsely scattered, resource less and heavily dependent on dominant castes for his day today survival at micro level in obscure primitive village setting. Being part of those millions or more who attended these rallies provided the lonely diffident villager a great feeling of belongingness and superior strength that there are so many like him and he is not alone. It was a great empowering strategy executed with meticulous perfection and alacrity. Also, Kanshi Ram dissuaded local cadres not to contest PRI elections lest they confront the dominant power at the village level

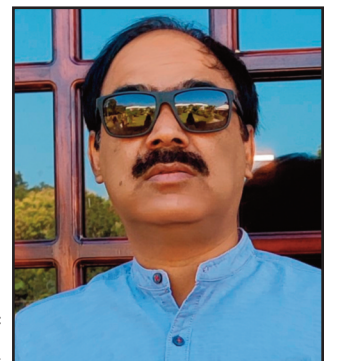
and with no weapons of confrontation i.e., education, wealth, arms and as a corollary

the local organizations may run the risk of demoralization. Also, these elections at the panchayat or local levels were used as ploy to demoralize the most powerful untouchable community by propping up political stooges from numerically insignificant untouchables group bringing the evil design of Poona Pact to the village level. In the initial years of the BSP, Kanshi Ram at the beginning of his address, used to advise 'political others, the opponent Manuwadis' to leave the rally ground for they might not like some of his observations and more so as he is interested in self-respect movement building a Bahujan Samaj with its own strength and support and therefore there is no need for outsiders' support.

It was a plain thinking and even plainer talking. Some of the people did leave the meetings and he used to complete his address for hours together audience mesmerized with pin drop silence and absolute concentration. It impacted greatly, the historically excluded community that was used to everyday abuse and humiliation, scolded and booted out from every possible position and premises of prominence. They were witnessing nothing sort of miracle happening in front of their naked eyes, at least one of them is so powerful and mighty that he can command the commanders, he can ask them to leave the hall. As a practice so far only, they were asked to leave or not to enter but now the reverse process has started, now they can make and expect better and larger thing to happen. It worked as a great moral booster in the on-going psychological warfare, as at the ground and material level conditions were otherwise utterly hostile. It was another master stroke with which Kanshiram prepared his cadre of highest conviction, unflinching commitment and stunning courage as the transformative human agency, the agent of change and civilizational development.

The political seeds of emancipation and empowerment started getting right manure, light and water. The journey for reclaiming fullest humane personality began in the right earnest discarding the politics of dependency and demoralization by the Dalits. Kanshi Ram emerged as the symbol of articulation, assertion and emancipation for historically despised humanity. The politics of north India was never to remain the same. The Dalit declared their arrival as conscious, capable, catalyst of change

(Contd. on next page)



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Sahib Shri Kanshi Ram: Heralding Enlightened Democracy

(Continue from page 2)
and transformation of Indian politics and consequently socio-cultural structures with democratic élan. Next two decades witnessed intense politicization of gullible masses that was determined to change, 'Vote Hamara Raj Tumahra Nahi Chalega to Vote Se Lenge CM PM, Aarakshan Se SP DM'.

By awakening the masses and inducing them for meaningful involvement in the democratic process, Kanshi Ram was able to convince the gullible Dalit, backwards and converted religious minorities whom he collectively called as Bahujans that the political power has great transformative potential and a great felicitator for destroying socio economic inequality and structures of dominance and brahminical hegemony. The right to vote is the most precious possession of the Bahujan Samaj and they must exercise it with utmost efficiency to bring the desired political change in the socio-economic system. As other resources i.e., education, wealth and power are not in their favor the Bahujans must realize the significance of vote and their numerical preponderance so decisive in majority driven democratic system.

The very name 'Bahujan Samaj Party' of the organization was a marvel of socio-cultural philosophy

and political stewardship. The idea of Bahujan explains the origin, status and objective of the party. Not only the idea of Bahujan signifies philosophy, perspective and Programme but positively set the agenda for the mission as it is widely called, in the form of 'Jati Todo Samaj Jodo'. Graded inequality with vertical and hostile castes as warring factions have remained the backbone of brahmanical supremacy as the Bahujan Samaj was divided into more than 6000 sub-groups. Kanshi Ram called them as caste victims and on the basis of collective victimhood started mobilizing them providing alternative notions of identity, history and culture of India extensively using Gautam Buddha, Jotiba Phule, Shahuji Maharaj Periyar, Narayna Guru, Ambedkar, Mangu Ram Mugowalia and many more social revolutionaries who fought for change and self-respect of the Bahujan Samaj as his references. In contrast to the brahmanical traditions of keeping the masses in dark and utter ignorance, this mobilization was primarily aimed at enabling, empowering and enlightening the Bahujans and specially the most needy and desirous of change and transformation in its initial years.

Kanshi Ram made a feverish pitch to be an honest claimant to represent the constituency of both

Chaudhry Charan Singh and Jagjivan Ram and up to some extent Abdulla Bukhari. It was nothing less than a political coup in India subcontinent and brought caste and its related debate to the central stage and changed the agenda for India politics for good. The Bahujans were unleashed from the great political slumber and hibernation and they being there for centuries together, have enormous appetite for reclaiming their lost glory positions. The great democratic principal of power to the people starting taking its toll on the hegemonic castes status quoits and the participation and representation started assuming substantial proportions. By 1996 within twelve years of its inception BSP was able to achieve national party status forming four-time government in the largest state of India Uttar Pradesh. BSP has the national presence and have won Lok Sabha and Vidhana Sabha elections in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar, Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir, Jharkhand, Chhatisgarh, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Telengana and Karnataka. Kanshi Ram's substantial contribution can be gauged from the fact that the Lok Sabha accounting for less than ten OBC members in early 80's has become democratically representative to the tune of 200 members coming

from this huge group constituting half of the India population. The masses who are masters of democracy started having sense of ownership and belongingness to the political democracy which was otherwise barren from the point of their emancipation from all wants, empowerment through strategic resource redistributing i.e., power, prestige and prosperity and enlightenment making becoming transformative agency of one person one value, everyone is to be counted as one, no one is to be counted for more than one. The great masses of India specially the caste victims, scattered on the margins of social cultural and religious hegemony, were able to visualize themselves as the enlightened citizens beyond the clutches of caste, class and patriarchy, striving and fending for themselves. Having carved out an independent path of self-respect and self-righteousness for the Bahujan Samaj, Kanshi Ram was able to instill the philosophy of 'be your own guide and master' discarding all dependencies and rightfully reclaiming the usurped human personality. The time of idea for which Kanshi Ram struggled hard all through his life, has come alive and is flourishing substantially by transforming Ignorant Democracy into an Enlightened Democracy.

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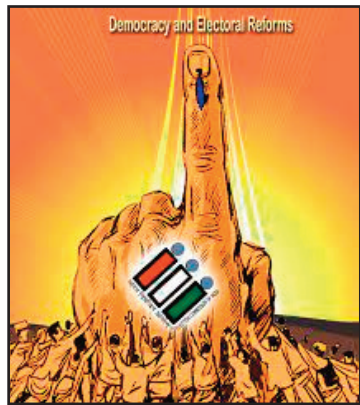
Electoral Reforms – A Layman's Take on the Issue

India that is Bharat is the largest democracy in the world with about 1400 million people and more than 900 million voters on the basis of 'universal adult franchise' and on the principle of 'one vote – one value'. It goes without saying, obviously, periodic elections is the very edifice of the democracy. Our forefathers, realizing full well the importance and value of 'free and fair elections' provided for an independent and autonomous constitutional agency, the Election Commission of India, in the Article 324 of the Constitution of India which stipulates that the power of superintendence, direction and control of elections to parliament, state legislatures, the office of the President and the office of the Vice President of India shall be vested in the EC. It does not any further reiteration that elections are the key to the health of our polity.

We have come a long way in the process. Elections of the coveted positions like President, Vice President and Parliament, State Legislative Assemblies are regularly held and the guidance and supervision of the Election Commission of India in cooperation and consultation with State Election Commissions and the administrative machinery. Local body elections – Municipal Corporations and Councils, Zila Parishads and Village Panchayats are held by the State Election Commission in consultation with the concerned state government with a streamlined and well established procedure. With this, India is a functional but a noisy democracy which needs further reform and streamlining. Over the years, many electoral reforms have been made to meet the emerging challenges and needs. But still, it is felt, we are to go a long way as we, it seems, have 'arrived but still to reach'.

My immediate motivation to write this emanated from the news item – weighing on the freebie debate, Election Commission wants cost and funding plans of all poll promises. It seems a half hearted attempt to please the political dispensations in the corridors of power. The Hindustan Times of October 6 has rightly commented in an editorial, "Freebies do pose a threat to India's fiscal health but the ECI proposal may be counterproductive. Whether the Election Commission has 'overstepped its remit'? How will it help in strengthening the 'free and fair elections, the basic mandate of the constitutional authority, are a debatable issue? I would not go into these details instead would focus on the much needed electoral reforms; particularly with regard to holding and conducting of elections with reference to the ground realities and our experience since 1952. India stands as a model for many emerging democracies around the world. Free and fair elections are the hallmark of democracy. While we are justifiably proud of our democracy, there are a number of areas which need to be strengthened for us to realize the true

potential of a well functioning democracy. Elections are the lifeline of democracy. The danger of 'fusion of capital and politics' is real as said by Siddharath Varadharajan in an article in the Economic Times some years ago, "In 1943, even before India was free, Babasaheb Ambedkar spoke of the danger posed by the fusion of capital and politics, "These days, with the Press in hand, it is easy to manufacture great men," he noted caustically – and presciently. "In establishing their supremacy", our great men "have taken the aid of big business and money magnates. For the first time in our country, money is taking the field as an organized power." Not that the authorities are oblivious of the electoral reforms needed and efforts have been made by various dispensations but it seems there is a definite deficit of 'political will and political morality' to deal with the



issue. The Representation of the People Act (RPA) of 1951 provided the first set of rules for the conduct of elections to the Houses of Parliament and State Legislatures. Over the years the RPA has been amended to reflect changing needs. The ruling dispensations, over the years, did appoint various committees to reform and transform our election process to streamline and strengthen our democratic system. But problem remained. If we are serious to make our democratic polity really dynamic and fully representative, we need to address the issue with added impetus. Our forefathers were men of vision. Anjali Chauhan, a political analyst, has recently wrote in an article – Ambedkar's Vision of Democracy and while narrating the meaning of democracy wrote, "He (Babasaheb Ambedkar) moved a step forward from Walter Bagehot, for whom democracy was a government by discussion and from Abraham Lincoln, for whom democracy was a government of the people, by the people and for the people. Ambedkar defined democracy as "a form and a method of government whereby revolutionary changes in the economic and social life of the people are brought about without bloodshed". Here lies the importance of free and fair election as the American President Thomas Jefferson said, "The government you elect is the government you deserve."

Broadly, the issues inflicting the electoral process in India are – Money power, Muscle power, Criminalization of politics, Misuse of government machinery, Caste bias,

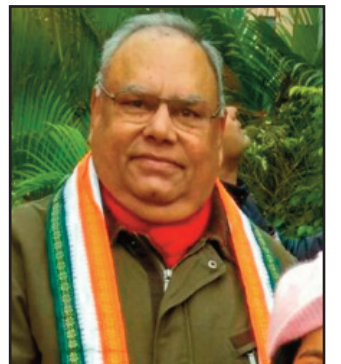
Communalism, Lack of moral values, Lack of political polarization on the basis of ideology, inter alia, and above all 'constitutional morality' of Babasaheb Ambedkar's vision as explained by Anjali Chauhan "For him, the constitution contains only the legal skeleton, but the flesh is what he calls constitutional morality. Noted academic Pratap Bhanu Mehta sums up Babasaheb's idea of constitutional morality as a state marked by self-restraint, respect for plurality." Many of these aspects of our electoral process may be addressed straightway, if we consider and make the election drill more easy and affordable; some suggestions as a layman and a common citizen of Bharat may be:-

Monetary cap on expenditure to be incurred by the parties and candidates should be enforced strictly. The upper limit of expenditure for an MP may be Rs.50 lakh by the Party and Rs. 50 lakh by the candidate and for MLA – Rs. 25 lakh by the Party and 25 lakh by the candidate. Only a fixed number of vehicles may be deployed with the approval of election authorities. No expenditure on hospitality – lunches/dinners/tea/coffee/snacks etc may be admitted. No expenditure on mass transport may be admitted. It is expected that the party workers and the supporters of a candidate should offer their services voluntarily without any monetary involvement and compensation. All donations of Rs.10 thousand and more to political parties and candidates should be made public and accounted for by the donors and the recipients. Muscle power should be controlled and dealt with by the local law and order authorities under the guidance and advice of the ECI. The senior IAS/IPS/State Police officers should be held responsible for this aspect of the elections.

Election campaign should be a regulated and controlled affair. Only a limited and fixed number of large public rallies at pre-fixed venues in the constituency for limited hours should be permitted. Only a fixed number of corner meetings at fixed venues for fixed hours should be al-

lowed. No road shows and use of loudspeakers on the road for canvassing should be permitted.

There should be more emphasis on canvassing campaign through the print and electronic media including social media. There should be no paid news/paid advertisements in the media by the candidates, it could be resorted to only by the parties. No fixed bills (Ishtihars), other than hoardings at fixed sites, should be permitted. The election campaign may be limited to only 15 days from the date of withdrawal of nominations. ECI may undertake a special drive to generate awareness among the public about the moral values and constitutional morality, two much needed ingredients in the election process in a democracy. One may observe that the listed suggestions are just simple and basic. These may not require any big change or amendment in the existing laws and legal framework. Most of these cursory steps could be done by executive orders and decisions either by the ECI or the administration. But these small steps would a long way in transforming our electoral; process to further strengthen our democratic polity – from a noisy and dust-raising one to a functional and productive one. With this, kindly allow me to invoke Babasaheb Ambedkar again. While speaking on the qualifications of MPs/ MLAs, he said, "If I may use the words of Buddha, he said that man requires two things – one is 'Gyan' and the other is 'Sheel'. Gyan without Sheel is very dangerous. It must be accompanied by Sheel by which I mean character, moral courage and ability to be independent of any kind of temptations and truthful to ones ideals. I am keen to see that no member enters this august assembly who does not possess Sheel in an adequate degree". We are to go a long way to transform our political democracy into social and economic democracy. Free and fair elections are the first step towards that destination. We need to be on rails.



Ramesh Chander
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Heartfelt condolences to the bereaved Dheri Family



"Ambedkar Times" & "Desh Doaba" Forum send its heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family, relatives and friends of our Punjabi Dheri Family brutally killed in California. We pray to Almighty for the eternal peace of the departed noble souls in his celestial abode.

Prem K. Chumber
Editor-in-Chief
Ambedkar Times / Desh Doaba

ARE NOT THE UNTOUCHABLES A SEPARATE ELEMENT?

WHAT is the fundamental issue in the controversy between the Congress and the Untouchables? As I understand the matter, the fundamental issue is: Are the Untouchables a separate element in the national life of India or are they not?

BY DR. B. R. AMBEDKAR

This is the real issue in the controversy and it is on this issue that the Congress and the Untouchables have taken opposite sides. The answer of the Untouchables' is yes. They say they are distinct and separate from the Hindus; The Congress on the other hand says 'No' and asserts that the Untouchables are a chip of the Hindu block... This is the attitude of the parties to the issue. The attitude of the British Government was made clear by Lord Linlithgow in his statements as Viceroy and Governor-General of India in which he declared in quite explicit terms that the Untouchables were a separate element in the national life of India. Many people who regard the issue of constitutional safeguards as the fundamental issue will feel surprised that I should regard as fundamental an issue so apparently different from what they regard as fundamental. Really speaking there is no difference. It all depends upon what one regards as the proximate and what as ultimate. Others regard the question of constitutional safeguards as ultimate. I regard as proximate. What I have stated as fundamental I regard as ultimate from which the proximate follows, as the conclusion does from the premise in a logical syllogism. It may be as well for me to state why I have thought it necessary to make this difference. The evolution of the Indian Constellation appears to me to have established a sort of 'a logical syllogism. The major premise in the syllogism is that where there exists an element in the national life of India, which is definable as a separate and distinct element it is entitled to constitutional safeguards. An element, making a claim for constitutional safeguards, must show' that it is definable as separate and distinct from the rest. If it shows that it is separate and distinct, its right to constitutional safeguards is held admissible.

That is how the provisions for constitutional safeguards for Muslims, Indian Christians, Anglo-Indians, Europeans and Sikhs have come into being. It is true that the constitution of India has not been framed in the light of principles. It has grown in an haphazard manner, more in answer to exigencies than in accordance with principles. Nevertheless, this silent postulate, if not a principle to which I have referred, seems to be working throughout. The right of a group to constitutional safeguards has come to be treated as consequential. It is deemed to follow automatically when the fundamental condition is satisfied, namely that they do constitute a separate and a distinct element in the national life of India. In dealing

with this controversy, one must deal with it as one is required to do with a syllogism. In a syllogism both are fundamental, the conclusion as well as the premise and to close the argument it is not enough to deal with the conclusion and omit to examine the premise. Looking at the question from this angle I think I ought not to close the case of the Untouchables with no more than a discussion of the consti-



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tutional safeguards. I feel that I ought to deal also with the premise, the ultimate, or the fundamental proposition, from which the constitutional safeguards seem to follow, if not as a matter of course at least as a matter of precedent.

It will thus be seen that the decision I have taken to give a separate treatment to the ultimate as distinguished from the proximate proposition is not without 'justification. It also seems to be necessary to deal with it separately and substantially, because the Congress seems to be fully aware of the 'fact that this is the fundamental issue and knows that once it concedes that the Untouchables are a separate element it cannot prevent them from succeeding in their claim for constitutional safeguards. If the Congress has come forward to contest this proposition it is because it thinks that it is the first trench and if it fails to maintain it, it cannot save the situation.

II

It must be a matter of considerable surprise to those who know the conditions in India that the Congress should come forward to controvert what is incontrovertible, namely, that

the Untouchables are separate from the Hindus. But since the Congress has chosen to do so, I must deal with them issue as best as I can.

The grounds advanced by the Untouchables that they are separate from the Hindus are not difficult to comprehend. Nor do they require a long and an elaborate statement. The statement of their case can be fully covered by a simple question. In what

sense are they Hindus? In the first place, the word 'Hindu' is used in various senses and one must know in what sense it is used before one can give a proper answer to the question. It is used in a territorial sense. Everyone who is an inhabitant of Hindustan is a Hindu. In that sense it can certainly be claimed that the Untouchables are Hindus. But so are the Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Jews, Parsis, etc. The second sense in which the word 'Hindu' is used is

in a religious sense. Before one can draw any conclusion, it is necessary to separate the dogmas of Hinduism from the cults of Hinduism. Whether the Untouchables are Hindus in the religious sense of the word depends upon whether one adopts as his tests the dogmas or the cults. If the tests of Hinduism are the dogmas of Caste and Untouchability then every Untouchable would repudiate Hinduism and the assertion that he is a Hindu. If the test applied is the acceptance of a cult such as the worship of Rama, Krishna, Vishnu and Shiva and other Gods and Goddesses recognized by Hinduism the Untouchables may be claimed to be Hindus. The Congress as usual maintains a body of agents from among the Untouchables to shout when need be that the Untouchables are Hindus and that they will die as Hindus. 'But even these paid agents will not agree to be counted as Hindus if they are asked to proclaim themselves as Hindus, if Hinduism means belief in caste and Untouchability.

One more point must be stressed. On the foregoing analysis the Untouchable may be classed as a Hindu if the word Hindu is used in the religious but in the limited sense of a

follower of a recognized cult. Even here, there is a necessity for giving a warning against concluding that the Hindu and the Untouchable have a common religion. The fact is that even as followers of recognized cults they cannot be said to have a common religion. The exact and appropriate expression would be to say that they have a similar religion. A common, religion means a common cycle of participation. Now, in the observances of the cults there is no such common cycle of participation. The Hindus and the Untouchables practice their cults in segregation so that notwithstanding the similarity of tiller cults they remain as separate as two agents do. Neither of these two senses of the word 'Hindu' can yield any result which can be of help in determining the political question, which alone can justify the discussion.

The only test which can be of use is its social sense as indicating a member of the Hindu Society. Can an Untouchable be held to be part of the Hindu Society? Is there any human tie that 'hinds them to the rest of the Hindus? There is none. There is no coenobium. There is no commensalism. There is not even the right to touch, much less to associate. Instead, the more touch is enough to cause pollution, to a Hindu. The whole tradition of the Hindu is to recognize the Untouchable as a separate element and insist upon it as a fact. The traditional terminology of the Hindus to distinguish Hindus and Untouchables furnishes the best evidence in favour of the contention of the Untouchables. According to this traditional terminology, Hindus are called Savannas and the Untouchables are called Avarnas. It speaks of the Hindu as chaturvarnikas and of the Untouchables as Panchamas. Such a terminology could not have come into existence if separation had not become. So prominent and its observance so necessary as to require coining of special terms to give expression to the fact.

There is thus hardly any substance ill, the Congress argument that the Untouchables are Hindus and that they cannot therefore demand the same political rights as the Muslims and others can. While the argument from tradition is a good and valid argument to prove that the Untouchables are not Hindus, it may appear to some to be a weak One. I do not wish to leave the field without directly meeting the Congress argument. For this purpose, I will grant that the Untouchables are Hindus by religion. But the question is: Does it matter if they are Hindus? Can it

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come in the way of their being recognized as a separate element in the national life of India? It is difficult to understand how the mere fact that they might be called Hindus by religion in such limited senses call, be the basis of an argument that they are an integral part of the Hindu society.

Admitting for the sake of argument that they are Hindus by religion, can it mean anything more than what I have said—namely that they worship the same Gods and Goddesses as the rest of the Hindus, they go to the same places of pilgrimage, hold the same supernatural beliefs and regard the same stones, trees, mountains as sacred as the rest of the Hindus do? Is this enough to conclude that the Untouchables and the Hindus are parts of one single community? If that be the logic behind the contention or the Congress then, what about the Belgians, Dutch, Norwegians, Swedes, Germans, French, Italians, Slavs, etc.? Are they not all Christians? Do they not all worship the same God? Do they not all accept Jesus as their Savior? Have they not the same religious beliefs? Obviously, there is a complete religious unity between all of them in thought, worship and beliefs. Yet, who can dispute that the French, Germans and Italians and the rest are not a single community? Take another case, that of the Whites and the Negroes in the U.S.A. They too have a common religion. Both are Christians. Can anyone say me that account form a single community? Take a third case, that of the Indian Christians, Europeans and Anglo Indians. They profess and follow the same religion. Yet it is admitted that they do not form one single Christian community. Take the ease of the Sikhs. There are Sikhs, Mazbi Sikhs and Ramdassia Sikhs. All profess Sikhism. But it is accepted that they do not form one community. In the light of these illustrations it is obvious that the argument of the Congress is full of fallacies.

The first fallacy of the Congress lies in big failure to realize that the fundamental issue is settling the question whether to grant or not to grant constitutional safeguards is union versus separation, of a social group in the population. Religion is only a circumstance from which unity or separation may be inferred. The Congress does not seem to have understood that the Musalmans and the Indian Christians have been given separate political recognition not because they are Musalmans Christians but fundamentally because they form in fact separate elements from the Hindus.

The second fallacy of the Congress lies in its attempt to prove that where there is a common religion' social union must be presumed. It is on the basis of this reasoning that the Congress hopes to win. Un-

fortunately for the Congress, it cannot. The facts are strongly against making a conclusive inference. If religion was a circumstance from which social union was made the only permissible inference then the fact that the Italians, French, Germans and Slavs in Europe, the Negroes and the Whites in the U.S.A. and the Indian Christians, Europeans, Anglo-Indians in India do not form a single community although they all profess the same. Religion is enough to negate such a contention. The pity of the matter is that the Congress is so completely enamored of its argument based on religion as a unifying factor, that it has failed to realize that there is no concomitance between the two and that there are cases where there is no separation although religions are separate, that there are cases where separation exists in spite of a common religion and what is worst, separation exists because religion prescribes it.

To give a quietus to the Congress argument, it may be desirable to give one illustration of each of these cases of the first case the best and the easiest illustration I can think of is that of the Sikhs and the Hindus. They differ in religion. But they are not socially separate. They dine together; they marry together; they live together. In a Hindu family one son may be a Sikh, another Hindu. Religious difference does not break the social nexus. Of the second, the case of the Italians, French, Germans in Europe and Whites and Negroes in America are as good illustrations as one would want. This happens where religion is a binding force but is not powerful enough to withstand other forces tending to divide such as the sentiment of race. Hindus and Hinduism are the best and perhaps the only illustrations of the third case, where separation is the effect of religion itself. That there can be such a case, Hindus at any rate need not require to be told. For, it is well known that Hinduism preaches separation instead of union. To be a Hindu means not to mix, to be separate in everything. The language commonly used that Hinduism upholds Caste and Untouchability (unsociability) perhaps disguises and conceals its genius. The real genius of Hinduism is to divide. This is beyond dispute. For, what do Caste and Untouchability (unsociability) stand for? Obviously for separation. For Caste is another name for separation and Untouchability (unsociability) typifies the extremist form of separation of community from community. It is also beyond dispute that Caste and Untouchability (Unsociability) are not innocuous dogmas to be compared with other dogmas relating to the condition of the soul after death. They are parts of the code of conduct which every Hindu is bound to observe during his life on earth. Caste and Untouchability (Unsociability) far from being mere

dogmas are among the foremost observances prescribed by Hinduism. It is not enough for a Hindu to believe in the dogmas of Caste and Untouchability (Unsociability). He must also observe Caste, and Untouchability (Unsociability), in the conduct of his daily life.

The separation, which Hinduism has brought about, between the Hindus and the Untouchables by its dogma of Untouchability (Unsociability) is not a mere imaginary line of separation, such as the one which the Pope once drew in a quarrel between the Portuguese and their rivals for Colonial possessions; it is not like the colour line which has length but no breadth and which one may observe or one may not observe; it is not like the race line, which involves distinction but no discrimination. It has both depth and width. Factually the Hindus and the Untouchables are divided by a fence made of barbed wire. Notionally it is cordon sanitaire which the Untouchables have never been allowed to cross and can never hope to cross.

To put the matter in general terms, Hinduism and social union are incompatible. By its very genius Hinduism believes in social separation which is another name for social disunity and even creates social separation. If Hindus wish to be one they will have to discard Hinduism. They cannot be one without violating Hinduism. Hinduism is the greatest obstacle to Hindu Unity. Hinduism cannot create that longing to belong which is the basis of all social unity. On the contrary Hinduism creates an eagerness to separate!

The Congress does not seem to realize that the argument it is using goes against itself. Far from supporting the Congress contention, it is the best and the most effective argument that can be advanced to prove the contention of the Untouchables. For, if any conclusion is to be drawn from the hypothesis that the Untouchables are Hindus it is that Hinduism has always insisted both in principle and in practice that the Untouchables are not to be recognized a chip of the Hindu block but are to be treated as a separate element and segregated from the Hindus.

If therefore the Untouchables say that they are a separate element, nobody can accuse them of having invented a new theory for the sake of political advantages. They are merely pointing out what the facts are and how these facts are the heritage of Hinduism itself. The Congress cannot honestly and convincingly use Hinduism as an argument for refusing to recognise the Untouchables as a separate element. If it does, it is only because it is actuated by selfish motives. It knows that the recognition of the Untouchables as an element in the national life of India, as distinct and separate from the Hindus, must result in the apportionment of places

in the Executive, the Legislature, and in the Public Services between the Untouchables and the Hindus and thus limit the share of the Hindus. The Congress does not like that the Hindus should be deprived of the share of the Untouchables which the Hindus are in the habit of appropriating to themselves. That is the real reason why the Congress refuses to recognize that the Untouchables are a separate element in the national life of India.

The second argument of the Congress is that the political recognition of the Untouchables as a separate element in the national life of India should not be permitted on the ground that it will perpetuate the separation between the Untouchables and the Hindus.

This is hardly an argument worth consideration. It is the weakest of its kind and shows that the Congress has nothing better to advance. Besides contradicting its previous argument, it is entirely misconceived.

If there is a real separation between the Hindus and the Untouchables and if there is the danger of discrimination being practiced by the Hindus against the Untouchables then the Untouchables must receive political recognition and must be given political safeguards to protect themselves against the tyranny of the Hindus. The possibility of a better future cannot be used as an argument to prevent the Untouchables from securing the means of protecting themselves against the tyranny of the present.

In the second place, this argument can be used only by those who believe in the social fusion of the Hindus and the Untouchables and are actively engaged in pursuing means and methods which will bring about such a fusion. Congressmen have often been heard to say that the problem of the Untouchables is social and political. But the point is, are Congressmen sincere when they say that it is a social question? Or do they use it as an excuse with a view to avoid the consequences of having to share political power with the Untouchables? And, if they are sincere in holding that it is a social question, what proof is there of their sincerity in this matter? Have Congressmen sponsored social Reform among Hindus? Have they carried on a crusade in favour of inter-dining and intermarriages? What is the record of Congressmen in the field of Social Reform?

III

It might be well to state what view the Untouchables took of the problem of Untouchables. Until the advent of the British, the Untouchables were content to remain Untouchables. It was a destiny preordained by the Hindu God and enforced by the Hindu State. As such there was no escape from it. Fortunately or unfortunately, the East India

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Company needed soldiers for their army in India and it could find none but the Untouchables. The East India Company's army consisted, at any rate in the early part of its history, of the Untouchables and although the Untouchables are now included among the non-martial classes and are therefore excluded from the Army, it is with the help of an army composed of Untouchables that the British conquered India. In the army of the East India Company there prevailed the system of compulsory education for Indian soldiers and their children both male and female. The education received by the Untouchables in the army while it was open to them gave them one advantage which they never had before. It gave them a new vision and a new value. They became conscious that the low esteem in which they had been held was not an inescapable destiny but was a stigma imposed on their personality by the cunning contrivances of the priest. They felt the shame of it as they had never done before and were determined to get rid of it. They too in the beginning thought their problem was social and struggled along the social lines for its solution. This was quite natural. For they saw that the outward marks of their social inferiority were prohibition of interlining and intermarriage between the Untouchables and the Hindus. They naturally concluded that for the removal of their stigma what was necessary was to establish social intercourse with the Hindus on terms of equality which in its turn meant the abolition of rules against interlining and intermarriage. In other words, first programme of action which the Untouchables launched out for their salvation after they became aware of their servile position was to bring about Social Equality among all those, who come within the fold, of Hinduism by insisting upon the abolition of the Caste System.

In this, the Untouchables found an ally in a section of the Hindus. Like the Untouchables, the Hindus also by the contact with the British had come to realize that their social system was very defective and was the parent of many social evils. They too desired to launch forth a movement of social Reform. It began with Raja Ram Mohan Roy in Bengal and from there had spread all over India and ultimately culminated in the formation of the Indian Social Reform Conference with its slogan of Social Reform before Political Reform. The Untouchables followed the Social Reform Conference and stood behind it as a body and gave it their full support. As everyone knows the Social Reform Conference is dead and buried and forgotten. Who killed it? The Congress with its slogans "Politics First, Politics Last," "Politics by Each, Politics by All" regarded the Social Reform Conference as its rival. It

denied the validity of the creed of the Conference that social reform was a necessary precursor of political reform. Under a Constant and steady fire from the Congress platform and from individual Congress elders, the Social Reform Conference was burnt down and reduced to ashes. When the Untouchables lost all hope of their salvation through social reform, they were forced to seek political means for protecting themselves. Now for Congressmen to turn round and say that the problem is social is nothing but hypocrisy.

It is wrong to say that the problem of the Untouchables is a social problem. For, it is quite unlike the problems of dowry, widow remarriage, age of consent, etc., which are illustrations of what are properly called social problems. Essentially, it is a problem of quite a different nature in as much as it is a problem of securing to a minority liberty and equality of opportunity at the hands of a hostile majority which believes in the denial of liberty and equal opportunity to the minority and conspires to enforce its policy on the minority. Viewed in this light, the problem of the Untouchables abides is fundamentally a political problem. Granting however for the sake of argument that it is a social problem, it is difficult to understand why political recognition of and political safeguards for the security of the Untouchables should retard their social unification with the Hindus if there is a genuine desire to set in motion processes which will bring about such a result. Congressmen appear to be arguing with no definite conception in their mind. They don't seem to have a clear idea of the inter-relation between political and social factors. This is well illustrated by its opposition to separate electorates and its preference to joint electorates. The process of reasoning is worth attention. In a joint electorate the Hindu votes for an Untouchable and the Untouchable votes for the Hindu. This builds up social solidarity. In a separate electorate the Hindu votes for a Hindu and an Untouchable votes for an Untouchable. This prevents social solidarity. This is not the point of view from which the Untouchables look at the question of electorates. Their point of view is which of the two will enable the Untouchables to get an Untouchable of their choice elected. But I am interested in scrutinizing the Congress argument. I do not wish to enlarge upon and complicate the argument. The reasoning of the Congress appears to be correct. But it is only a superficial view of the matter. These elections take place once in five years. It may well be asked how can social solidarity between the Hindus and the Untouchables be advanced by one day devoted to joint voting if for the rest of the five years they are leading severely separate lives. Similarly, it may

well be asked how can one day devoted to separate voting in the course of five years make greater separation than what already exists or contrariwise how can one day in five years devoted to separate voting prevent those who wish to work for union from carrying out their purposes. To make it concrete how can separate electorate for the Untouchables prevent intermarriage or interlining being introduced between them and the Hindus? Only a congenital idiot will say that they can. It is therefore puerile to say that the political recognition of the Untouchables abides as a separate element and granting them constitutional safeguards will perpetuate separation between them and the Hindus if the Hindus desire to put an end to it.

IV

There are other floating arguments against the claim of the Untouchables for political safeguards which must also be examined. One such argument is that there are social divisions everywhere, not merely in India but also in Europe; but they are not taken into account by the people of Europe in framing their constitutions. Why should they be taken into account in India? The thesis is general. But it may be extended to such a length that even the claim of the Untouchables' may be enveloped by it. As such I prefer to state why I think it is unsound.

In making my comments I propose to make a distillation between the 'statement and title argument founded on it and deal with them separately. The statement is good up to a point. In so far as it alleges that every society consists of groups it cannot be challenged. For even in European or American society there are groups associated together in various ways and for various purposes. Some are like the kindred closely bound together by blood or language. Some are of the nature of social classes differentiated on the basis of rank and status. Others are religious associations upholding particular dogmas, not to mention, political parties and industrial corporations, criminal gangs and so on in an endless variety with differing aims and bound together some loosely some closely by differing degrees of affinity. But when the statement goes beyond and says that the castes in India are not different from group and classes in Europe and America it is nothing but a nonsense. The groups and classes of Europe may be the "a me as the caste in India to look at. But fundamentally two are quite different. The chief distinguishing feature is the isolation and exclusiveness which are the hallmarks of the castes in India and which are maintained as matter not of routine but of faith none of which characteristics is to be found in the group or the class system of Europe

or America.

Turning to the thesis the social organization of India being different from, what it is in Europe and America it follows that while Europe and America need not take into account the facts and circumstances of their social organization in framing their constitution, India cannot omit to take account of her Caste and Untouchability (Unsociability). For a fuller understanding of the matter I may explain why Europe need not and why India must. The danger to a society organized in groups is that each group develops what are called "its own interests" and the question of forging constitutional safeguards arises from the necessity of counteracting the mischief that such interest might cause to others outside it. Where there is a possibility of counteracting the mischief by non-political means there is no necessity for forging constitutional safeguards. If, on the other hand, non-political means of counteracting it do not exist then constitutional means must be forged. In Europe the possibility of counteracting mischief arising from a 'group seeking to maintain its own interest' does exist. It exists because of the absence of isolation and exclusiveness among the various groups which allows free scope for interaction with the result that the dominant purpose of a group to stand out for its own interests and always seek to protect them as something violate and sacred gives way to a broadening and socialization of its - aims and purposes. This endosmosis between groups in Europe affects dispositions and produces a society which can be depended upon for community of thought, harmony of purposes and unity of action. But the case of India; is totally different. The caste in India is exclusive and isolated. There is no interaction and no modification of aims and objects. What a caste or a combination of castes regard "as their own interest" as against other castes remains as sacred and inviolate as ever. The fact that they mingle and co-operate does not alter their character. These acts of co-operation are mechanical and not social. Individuals use one another so as to get desired results, without reference to the emotional and intellectual disposition. The fact that they give and take orders modify actions and results. But it does not affect their dispositions. That being the case, the Indian constitution must provide safeguards to prevent castes with "their own interests" from doing mischief to other helpless castes.

There is another distinguishing feature of the Indian caste system which justifies why the Indian Constitution must take account of it and provide against mischief arising from it. Every society consists of groups. But it must be recognized, that the mutual relations if the groups are not

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the same everywhere. In one society groups may be only non-social in their attitude towards one another. But in another they may be anti-social. Where the spirit which actuates the various social groups is only non-social their existence may not be taken into account in framing a constitution. There is cause for danger in a group which is only non-social. But where a group is actuated by an anti-social spirit towards another and to which alien is synonymous with enemy the fact must be taken into account in framing the constitution and the class which has been the victim of anti-social spirit must be given protection by proper safeguards -md1a the castes are not merely ~ ~ socig; l. Often they 'are' Shti-social. This is particularly we of the Hindus towards the Untouchables. A few facts will suffice to show how anti-social the Hindus are towards the Untouchables. For instance, the Hindus will not allow the Untouchables to" take water from a well. The Hindus will ~tallow the Untouchables entry in schools. The Hindus will not allow the Untouchables to travel in. buses. The Hindus will not allow the Untouchables to travel in the same railway compartment. The Hindus will not allow Untouched ablest to wear clean clothes. The Hindus will not allow Untouchables to wear jewellery. The Hindus will not allow Untouchables to put tiles on the roofs of their houses. The Hindus will not tolerate Untouchables to own land. The Hindus will not allow Untouchables to keep cattle. The Hindus will not allow an Untouchable to sit when Hindu is standing. They are not isolated acts of a few bad men among the Hindus. They are the emanations of the permanent anti-social attitude of the Hindu community against the Untouchables.

It is unnecessary to carry the matter further. It is enough to say that the thesis is full of fallacies and it would be a most shameful piece of chicanery if it was used as a ground for opposing the demand of the Untouchables for constitutional safeguards.

V

There is another floating argument one sometimes comes across. The basis of the argument is that Untouchability (Unsociability) is a vanishing thing and therefore there is no use recognizing the Untouchables as a separate element in the national life of India. Everything is vanishing and there is nothing that is permanent in human history. The point may be considered when Untouchability (Unsociability) has gone root and branch. Until that state arrives, it is unnecessary to pay any regard to it. We must all hope for the disappearance of Untouchability (Unsociability). But we must be careful not to be misled by

people who boast of being incorrigible optimists. . An optimist is a good companion, to cheer up when one is in a state of depression. But he is not always a truthful witness of facts.

This argument is no argument at all. But since some people may be allured by it I wish to expose it and to show how futile it is. Those who raise this point do not seem to make a distinction between Untouchability as a touch-me-not-ism and Untouchability as a mental attitude manifesting itself in social discrimination. The two are quite different. It may be that Untouchability as a touch-me-not-ism may be gradually vanishing in towns, although I am doubtful if this is happening in any appreciable degree. But I am quite certain Untouchability as a propensity on the part of the Hindus to discriminate against the Untouchables will not vanish either in towns or in villages within an imaginable distance of time. Not only Untouchability as a discriminating propensity will not disappear but Untouchability as touch-me-not-ism will not disappear within a measurable distance of time in the vast number of villages in which the vast number of Hindus live and will continue to live. You cannot untwist a two-thousand-year twist of the human mind and turn it in the opposite direction.

I am quite aware that there are some protagonists of Hinduism who say that Hinduism is a very adaptable religion, that it can adjust itself to everything and absorb anything. I do not think many people would regard such a capacity in a religion as a virtue to be proud of just as no one would think highly of a child because it has developed the capacity to eat dung, and digest it. But that is another matter. It is quite true that Hinduism can adjust itself. The best example of it's adjust ability is the literary production called Allahupanishad which the Brahmins of the time of Akbar produced to give a place to his Dine-Ilahi within Hinduism and. to recognize it as the 'Seventh system of Hindu philosophy. It is true that Hinduism an absorb many things. The beef-eating Hinduism (or strictly specking Brahmanism which is the proper name of Hinduism in its earlier stage) absorbed the non-violence theory of Buddhism and became a religion of vegetarianism. But there is one thing which Hinduism has never been able to do-namely to adjust itself to absorb the Untouchables or to remove the bar of Untouchability. There have been many reformers who, long before Mr. Gandhi came on the scene, tried to remove the stain of Untouchability. But they have all failed. The reason for their failure appears to me to be very simple. Hindus have nothing to fear from the Untouchables, nor have they anything to gain by the abolition of Untouchability. Hindus gave up beef-eating because they

were afraid that otherwise Buddhism would overpower Hinduism. Hindu wrote Allah Upanishad because they had everything to gain by helping Akbar to estal;>lish a new religion. The author gaited money by pleasing the Emperor and by lending aid to establish a religion which prolouised less tyranny and oppression to the Hindus than Islam held out. Neither of these considerations exists for the most sanguine among the Untouchables to expect that the Hindus will readily put all ends to this curse of Untouchability.

Not only have the Hindus nothing to fear and "nothing to gain, they have in fact much to lose by the abolition of Untouchability. The system of Untouchability is gold l11ine to the Hindus. In it the 240 millions of Hindus have 60 rtiillions of Untouchables to serve as their retinue to enable the' Hindus to maintain pomp and ceremony and to cultivate a feeling of pride and dignity befitting a master class which cannot be fostered and sustained unless there is beneath it a servile class to look down upon. In it the 240 millions of Hindus have 60 millions of Untouchables to be used as forced labour and because of their state of complete destitution and helplessness can be compelled to work on a mere pittance and sometimes on nothing at all. In it the 240 millions of Hindus have 60 millions of Untouchables to do the dirty work of scavengers and sweepers which the Hindu is debarred by his religion to do and which must be done for the Hindus by non-Hindus who could be no others than Untouchables. In it the 240 millions of Hindus have 60 millions of Untouchables who can be kept to lower jobs and prevented from entering into competition for higher jobs which are preserved for the Hindus. In it the 240 millions of Hindus have 60 millions of Untouchables who can be used as shock-absorbers in slumps and deadweights in booms, for in slumps it is the Untouchable who is fired first and the Hindu is. fired last and in booms the Hindu is employed first and the Untouchable is employed last.

Most people believe that Untouchability is a religious system. That is true. But it is a mistake to suppose that it is only a religious system. Untouchability is more than a religious system. It is also an economic system which is worse than slavery. In slavery the master at any rate had the responsibility to feed, clothe and house the slave and keep him in good. condition lest the market value of the slave should decrease. But in the system of Untouchability the Hindu takes no responsibility for the maintenance of the Untouchable. As an economic system it permits exploitation without obligation. Untouchability is not only a system of unmitigated economic exploitation,

but it is also a system of uncontrolled economic exploitation. That is because there is no independent public opinion to condemn it and there is no impartial machinery of administration to restrain it. There is no appeal to, public opinion, 'for whatever public opinion there is it is the opinion of the Hindus who belong to the exploiting class and as such favour exploitation. There is no check from the police or the judiciary for the simple reason that they are all drawn from the Hindus, and take the side of the Exploiters.

Those who believe that Untouchability will soon vanish do not seem to have paid attention to the economic advantages which it gives to the Hindus. U\touchable cannot do anything to get rid of his untouchability. It does not arise out of any personal fault on his part. Untouchability is an attitude of the Hindu. For Untouchability to vanish, it is the Hindu who must change. Will he change?

Has a Hindu any conscience? Is he ever known to have been fired with a righteous indignation against a moral wrong? Assuming he does change so much as to regard Untouchability a moral wrong, assuming he is awakened to the sense of putting himself right with God and Man, will agree to give up the economic and social advantages which Untouchability gives? History, I am afraid, will not justify the conclusion that a Hindu has a quick conscience or if he has it i& so active as to charge him with moral indignation and drive him to undertake a crusade to eradioate the wrong. History shows that where ethics and economics come in conflict victory is always with economics. Vested interests have never been known to have willingly divested themselves unless there was sufficient force to compel them. The Untouchables cannot hope to generate any compelling force. They are poor and they are scattered. They can be easily suppressed should they raise their head.

On this analysis, Swaraj would make Hindus more powerful and Untouchables more helpless and it is quite possible that havil1g regard to the economic advantages which it gives to the Hindus, Swaraj, instead of putting an end to Untouchability, may extend its life. That Untouchability is vanishing is therefore only wishful thinking and a calculated untruth. It would be most stupid--if not criminal--to take it into account in -considering the demands of the Untouchables for constitutional safeguards and ignore the hard facts of the present and their certainty to continue in the indefinite future. (WHAT CONGRESS AND GANDHI HAVE DONE TO THE UNTOUCHABLES VOL. 9?)

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