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Editor-in-Chief: Prem Kumar Chumber

Contact: 001-916-947-8920

Fax: 916-238-1393

E-mail: chumbermedia@yahoo.com, editor@ambedkartimes.com

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Why Scheduled Castes in Punjab Failed to Harvest Electoral Gains Corresponding to their Numerical Strength?

ABSTRACT

Punjab houses highest number of Scheduled Castes (SCs) in comparison to all other states in India and much higher than national average SCs population. However, despite being clubbed within a common nomenclature—SCs, they are sharply divided into thirty-nine castes scattered over varied religions and Deras.

This paper intends to explore how caste heterogeneity among them impacts their electoral success.

The Scheduled Castes (SCs) in Punjab constitute 31.94 percent of the total population of the State, which is not only largest in comparison to their counterparts in all other States of India but also much higher than the overall share of SC population (16.6 percent) in the entire country. In many of the districts in Punjab, the share of the SC population is one third or more. It varies from as high as 42.51 to 32.07 percent in many of districts in the State. Moreover, in the rural Punjab, 57 villages have 100 percent SC population and in other 4,799 villages (39.44 percent), the share of the SC population is 40 percent or more. The SC population in Punjab is predominantly rural 73.33 percent. Given their high concentration, Punjab has 25 percent SC share in reservation against 15 percent SC reservation at



the national level. However, despite the extraordinary numerical strength of the SCs in the State, their own political parties: Labour Party of India

(LPI), Scheduled Castes Federation (SCF), Republican Party of India (RPI) and Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) have never been able to match the numer-

ical strength of SCs in the electoral contests at the legislative and parliamentary constituencies. One of the reasons of the dismal electoral performance of the SC

political parties could be the division of SCs into numerous castes (39) scattered across varied religions (Hinduism, Sikhism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Ravidassia Dharm) and a large number of Deras/sects within the State. Another possible reason could be the weak Brahminical
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Ronki Ram

Shaheed Bhagat Singh Chair
Professor of Political Science
Panjab University, Chandigarh 160014, India
E-mail: ronkiram@yahoo.co.in
Visiting Professor, Centre for Sikh
and Panjabi Studies
University of Wolverhampton (UK)

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. An-

other 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 the great freedom fighter and founder of the Ad Dharm Mandal Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia 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.

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influence in Punjab, due to the visible and intangible role of the transformative character of Islam and Sikh faiths, which unlike the Hindi belt (BSP in Uttar Pradesh), precluded SC leadership to build their own exclusive political party. Yet another, could be the accommodation of various popular SC leaders in prominent places within the mainstream political parties that might have failed them to realise the urgency of having their own party. Charanjit Singh Channi, the 17th Chief Minister of Punjab, is the latest case in point. He hailed from Ramdassia Sikh SC community. He is also a sitting Congress party Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) from the Chamkaur Sahib SC reserved assembly constituency.

SCs of Punjab are not a homogeneous category. They are divided into varied castes by the same logic of graded caste hierarchy that separated them from the various categories of upper castes as per the Brahminical social order epitomised by the Varna system. In the Varna hierarchy, Shudras, the last Varna, are considered to be lowest in social status. However, SCs are placed even further down the line, lower than the Shudras (artisan castes). In fact, SCs are not included at all within the Varna system. They were/are contemptuously called *Avarnas* (beyond Varna) or *Ati-Shudras/Achhut* (Untouchables). *Ati* (literary extreme) *Shudras/Achhuts* means extremely discriminated people. This term was coined by 19th century social activist Mahatma Jyotirao Phule. Though in general parlance SCs are called Shudras, the former differed from the latter in that they were not considered Untouchables.

Though Shudras and *Ati-Shudras* were traditionally engaged in manual labour jobs, they were distinguished from each other in terms of the degree of filth/pollution allegedly emanating from the manual labour/occupation they undertook. Since the *Ati-Shudras* were/are engaged in unclean/dirty/polluting manual labour and their physical proximity was historically considered to be causing pollution, they were accordingly termed as Untouchables. However, within in broader Varna social order both the Shudras and *Ati-Shudras* face discrimination from the upper three Varanas. SCs are highly segmented along endogamous multi-castes layers with distinct social identities and varied economic levels. Inter-caste marriages among varied castes within the *Ati-Shudra* category is still a taboo. Moreover, they also observe hierarchy of high-low social status. Almost everyone locates herself/himself above someone else. The caste divisions and the practice of high-low status among the SCs in the State has led to formation of various caste-based social cleavages, which in turn has not only made the process of consolidation among them a herculean task but also pushed them fur-

ther into the whirlpool of various protracted social conflicts. Not much scholarly work has been done to explore how caste-based cleavages led to the dilemma of dalit consolidation among the SCs in contemporary Punjab.

Castes within Caste

SCs in Punjab have been categorized into thirty nine castes of varying numerical strength, geographical expanse, religious and political affiliations, social mobility/status/identity, economic conditions and cultural outlook. Among them Ramdassias, Mazhabis, Rai Sikhs, and Sansis follow Sikh religion. Balmikis are primarily Hindus. Ravidassias and Ad Dharmis have recently founded their separate Dalit religion – Ravidassia Dharm. However, an internal contestation is going on globally within the Ravidassia community wherein one section is arguing for a separate religious identity while the other is strongly advocating in keeping intact the centuries old affiliations with Sikh religion guided by Guru Granth Sahib which carries the sacred scriptures of Guru Ravidass. Even though a section of Ad Dharmi and Ravidassias have established their separate religion, many of them still practice Sikh rituals and follow the social-spiritual philosophy of various Deras/sects along with their Ravidassia identity. They are mostly concentrated in the Doaba region of Punjab. Their percentage is very low in the Majha region. Mazhabis are mainly settled in Majha and Malwa regions. Ramdassias and Rai Sikhs are largely concentrated in Malwa, and Balmikis in both the Doaba and Malwa regions.

In terms of political affiliations, SCs in Punjab are also highly heterogeneous. Chamars and Balmikis are generally considered to be closer to Congress whereas Mazhabis, Ramdassias, Rai Sikhs and Sansis to the Akali Dal. However, political affiliations remain mercurial. They kept on shifting sides in accordance with the grammar of electoral politics. But what remains stable with the SCs in Punjab over the last many decades is their being highly divided on account of social and political considerations. Before articulating SC caste cleavages in terms of social and political context, let me focus on some broad layers of caste clusters among them.

All the SC castes can be arranged into four caste clusters. Out of the thirty-nine SC castes, four major castes of Chamar (23.45 percent), Ad-Dharmi (11.48 percent), Balmiki (9.78 percent) and Mazhabi (29.72 percent) constitute 74.44 percent of the total SC population in Punjab. These four major castes belong to two broader umbrella community-caste categories of 'Balmikis/Bhangis (sweepers) and 'Chamar' (leather workers) castes. However, before the inclusion of the Rai Sikhs community into the SC category in Punjab, the two major SC caste clusters in the State used to enjoy 83.9 percent share of the total SC population in

Punjab. As per 2001 Census figures Balmiki caste cluster had 42.8 percent and 'Chamar' caste cluster had 41.1 percent of the total SC population. These two umbrella castes are generally referred to as two distinct clusters of Chamar and Balmiki castes. Among them Mazhabis are largest in numbers followed by the Chamars, Ad Dharmis and Balmikis. The rest of the thirty-five castes putting together constitute less than one third (25.56 percent) of the total SC population in the State. They are equally heterogeneous and can be further divided into two clusters of seventeen SC castes of *Vimkut Jatis* & Depressed Caste and of eighteen SC castes, which can be termed as peripheral/invisible castes. *Vimukt Jatis* are the denotified tribal communities, which were declared Criminal Tribes by the British administration under its notorious Criminal Tribes Act 1871. Depressed castes consisted of smaller and most marginalised communities among the SCs in the State, which have been grouped together by the Punjab government for providing special assistance under the various developmental schemes. For a proper understanding of the formation and operation of caste cleavages among the SCs, a brief paraphrasing of all the four caste clusters mentioned above will be in order.

Balmiki caste cluster

The Balmiki caste cluster (39.5 percent) clubs together two major castes of Balmikis and Mazhabis. Balmikis are characterised as Hindus. They are basically sweepers/scavengers who consider Sant-poet Maharishi Valmiki their Guru. However, over the last few years, Valmiki-Ambedkarite identity has been taking roots within many sections of the Balmiki community. Maharishi Valmiki with a pen in his hand along with the inspiring slogan 'educate, agitate, organise' embossed over the picture of Dr. Ambedkar is the logo of this recently formed Valmiki-Ambedkarite identity that aimed at disseminating education and critical consciousness among Balmikis – one of the highly low educated SC castes in Punjab (Based on author's conversation with Darshan Ratan Ravan, the protagonist of 'Valmiki-Ambedkarite identity' and founder head of the *Adi Dharam Samaj*, a socio-cultural and religious organisation of the Balmiki community in Punjab, during an academic event at R.S.D. College (Ferozepur), 17 March 2015). This has led to persuade them not only to realise the potential of the agency of education for their upward social mobility, but also the futility of nurturing antagonism with their rival Chamar caste cluster.

The Balmikis who embraced Sikhism are called Mazhabis and consider Baba Jiwan Singh as their Guru. They are mostly concentrated in Majha and Malwa regions of Punjab wherein they are currently engaged in fierce violent struggle over their claim on the Panchayats' common agricultural lands for self-cultivation. At the

district level, they are largely concentrated in Ferozepur, Gurdaspur, Amritsar, Faridkot, Mansa, and Bhatinda districts of Punjab. They outnumber other SCs in Faridkot and Ferozepur districts. Despite their highest numerical strength, they are the most deprived section among the SCs with the lowest literacy rate (42.3 percent). Majority of them (52.2 percent) are still languishing in low wage agricultural farm jobs. Though the *Siris* (attached labourer) system has ceased to exist in the state, but in the Malwa region some of them still work as *Siris*. However, over the years their position has improved, particularly after the implementation of the contentious policy of reservation within reservation in Punjab.

Chamar Caste Cluster

The Chamar caste cluster (34.93 percent) consists of two castes of Chamars and Ad-Dharmis. Chamar is an umbrella caste category. It includes Chamars, Jatia Chamars, Rehgars, Raigars, Ramdassias, and Ravidassias. Though this cluster is largely confined to the Doaba region of the Punjab, Chamars are also numerous in Gurdaspur, Rupnagar, Ludhiana, Patiala and Sangrur districts. Traditionally, Chamars were condemned as polluted and impure because of their occupational contact with animal carcass and hides. But they consider themselves chandravanshi by clan and claim to enjoy highest social status among all the SC in the State. In the mid-1920s, some of them established a prosperous leather-business town (Boota Mandi) in the outskirts of Jalandhar city. They were also the main force behind the emergence of the famous Ad Dharm movement in Punjab in the mid-1920s. In the Census of 1931, many of them registered themselves under the then newly declared religion of Ad Dharm and came to be known as Ad Dharmis. However, after India's independence, Ad Dharm, the Dalit religion, was squeezed into a SC caste – Ad Dharmi.

Though Ravidassias and Ramdassias are included within the larger Chamar caste category, they have acquired their distinct identity and considered themselves socially higher than all other SCs in the State. The distinction between them is primarily traced to their diverse occupations. The leather working sections of the Chamar caste is called Ravidassias and the weavers who converted to Sikhism came to known as Ramdassias. Those weavers who did not convert to Sikhism are called Julahas. But Julahas are also called Kabirpanthis and are listed as a separate caste within the SC caste list of Punjab at Sr. no. 19. Julahas are Hindus but after their conversion to Sikhism they came to known as Ramdassias. They converted to Sikhism during the time of Guru Ram Dass, the fourth Guru of the Sikh faith, and since then called Ramdassias (based on author's

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conversations with a large number of the members of the Ramdasias community). Majority of them are Sahajdhari Sikhs. They also knew as Khalsa *biradar* (brother). Though Ramdasias are Sikhs among Chamars, they are still included within the larger Hindu caste category of Chamar in the SC list of Punjab. Ravidassias (leather worker) and Ramdasias (weavers) also consider themselves superior to all other SC communities and strictly follow endogamy. Often confused with Sikhs, as many of them keep beard and unshorn hair like the baptised Sikhs and worship *Guru Granth Sahib* (the Sikh sacred scripture), still some of them do not identify themselves as Sikhs. Though, strong links do exist between the Sikh religion and the Ravidassia sect, the latter has been declared a separate Dalit religion (Ravidassia Dharm) on 30 January 2010.

Vimukt Jatis and Depressed Castes Cluster

The Vimukt Jatis & Depressed Castes cluster includes thirteen Depressed Schedules Castes of Punjab (hereafter DSCs) and seven Denotified Tribes/Vimukt Jatis. DSCs include Bazigars (2.72 percent), Dumnas/Mahasha/Doom (2.29 percent), Meghs (1.59 percent), Baurias/Bawarias (1.41 percent), Sansi/ Bhedkut/ Manesh (1.38 percent), Pasi (0.44 percent), Od (0.36 percent), Kori, Koli (0.28 percent), Sarera (0.16 percent), Khatik (0.16 percent), Sikligar (0.13 percent), Barar/Burar/Berar/Barad (0.10 percent), Bangali/Bangala (0.05 percent), and Banjra (0.04 percent). Out of these thirteen Vimukt Jatis four (Bangala, Bauria, Bazigar Bhanjra, and Sansi (1.38 percent) are also clubbed with the Denotified Tribes/Vimukt Jatis). However within the DSC category Bazigar and Bhanjra are listed as separate castes. The seven Denotified Tribes/Vimukt Jatis consisted of *Bangala* (0.05 percent), Barad (0.10 percent), Bauria (1.41 percent), Bazigar Bhanjra (2.76 percent), Gandhila/Gandil Gondola (0.04 percent), Nat (0.04 percent) and Sansi (1.38 percent). Three Vimukt Jatis, which were not included in the DSCs category are of Nat (0.04 percent), Gandhila (0.04 percent) and Barad (0.10 percent). Rai Sikhs (5.83 percent) are also included in this cluster. They are one of the Criminal Tribes declared under the Criminal Tribes Act 1871. Recently declared as a SC caste, they were not included within the categories of Denotified Tribes/Vimukt Jatis and DSCs. This cluster constitutes 16.53 percent of the total SC population in the State. Rai Sikhs, the erstwhile Mahatam, are the fifth largest SC community (5.83 percent) in Punjab after the four major castes of Chamar, Ad Dharmi, Balmiki and Mazhabi. In terms of social hierarchy, they were considered almost at par with formerly untouchable castes. Though they were denotified in 1952, but the scar of the stigma of the criminal tribe continued to harass them even after almost

seven decades of India's independence. They are strictly endogamous and practice clan exogamy. They are mainly concentrated in the Ferozepur, Kapurthala, and Jalandhar and Ludhiana districts of Punjab. They have good presence in 35 Assembly and seven Lok Sabha segments of Punjab and have been pressing for reserve seats in the state legislative assembly and in the parliament.

Peripheral/invisible Castes Cluster

This caste cluster consists of eighteen most peripheral and almost invisible SC castes (Batwal/Barwala, Chanal, Dagi, Darain, Deha/ Dhaya/ Dhea, Dhanak, Dhogri/ Dhangri/ Saggi, Gagra, Kabirpanthi/ Julaha, Marija/Marecha, Perna, Pherera, Sanhai, Sanhal, Sansoi, Sapela, Sikriband and Mochi) consisting of less than 10 percent of the total SC population in the State. The numerical strength of some of them like Chanal, Perna and Pherera castes is less than 100 persons. Except the Dhanak caste (1.01 percent), the numerical strength of all other castes in this cluster is less than one percent. Many of them have moved to cities and got engaged in informal private sector as manual labourer. Given their miniscule strength and outmodedness of their traditional hereditary occupations, all these castes not only became invisible but have also ceased to figure within the popular caste discourse in the State.

Caste Cleavages: SCs vs SCs

Along with various castes and caste clusters, some sharp cleavages have also emerged among the SCs of Punjab over the years. The prevalence of cleavages may not only reflect on the presence of steep heterogeneity among them but also unravel some of the causes behind their failure to emerge as a unified political force to guard their interests. Another equally important dimension of the Dalit question in Punjab is that the rise of the cleavages among the SCs, in addition to the factor of caste heterogeneity, emanates from the meshing of religion and politics, and the divisive politics of SC reservation policy in the State. The two major SC clusters of Balmiki and Chamar caste categories are sharply divided in terms of their affiliation to different sects and benefits/disadvantages they drew from the SC reservation policy of the State. Though these two clusters constitute almost three fourth of the total SC population in the State, their divergent cultural and religious outlooks and highly differentiated educational and economic backgrounds pitted them against each other.

Ad Dharmis and Chamars are ahead of all the other SC castes. They are the main beneficiary of the State reservation policies in education, government jobs and legislature. Some of them have established their strong hold over the leather business, surgical industry, and sports goods. Many of them have also migrated to Europe, North America, and the Middle Eastern countries that further contributed tremendously towards

their upward social mobility. They have not only excelled in business and multiple skilled labour professions, but also established their separate caste identity through a strong networking of social organizations, religious bodies, international Dalit conferences, Ravidass Sabhas and Deras/Gurdwaras. They take pride in publicly flaunt their distinct social identity markers and keen interests to promote their community cultural heritage.

Another equally populous, rather slightly more numerous, SC castes cluster is of Balmiki caste group. In comparison to Chamar caste cluster, it is highly backward in terms of educational, governmental jobs and ventures abroad. It often blames Chamar caste cluster for its obvious backwardness and neglect while cornering a major share in the reservation policy. Though this cluster is sharply divided within its own purview between Balmiki (Hindu) and Mazhabi (Sikh) castes, it has been able to forge a common front against the Chamar caste cluster and secured special reservation within reservation. The 25 per cent Scheduled Caste reservation quota in Punjab government services was divided into two sub-quotas of 12.5 percent in 1975 by Punjab Government Circular No. 1818SW75/10451 during the tenure of chief-Ministership of Giani Zail Singh. One sub-quota was assigned to just the Balmiki and Mazhabis castes and the remaining 37 SC castes shared the other sub-quota. Later on the Punjab government turned the Circular of 1975 into Punjab Act – The Punjab Scheduled Castes and Backward Classes (Reservation in Services) Act, 2006 – which was notified on October 5, 2006. The Punjab Act made similar provision as were made in the Circular. Section 4(5) of the Act states: "Fifty per cent of the vacancies of the quota reserved for Scheduled Castes in direct recruitment, shall be offered to Balmikis and Mazhabi Sikhs, if available, as a first preference from amongst the Scheduled castes." The cleavage of reservation within reservation thus does not only further reinforce the religious, social and cultural divide between the Balmiki and Chamar caste clusters, but also forge unity between Balmiki (Hindu) and Mazhabi (Sikh) SC castes.

Both these clusters have their distinct sects, gurus, pilgrimage centers, shrines, iconography and sacred scriptures. If Dera Sachkhand Ballan at Jalandhar and Sri Guru Ravidass Janam Asthan Temple at Seer Goverdhanpur at Varanasi have become the most sought after pilgrimage centers for the Chamars and Ad-Dharmis, the Valmiki Tirath Dham at Amritsar carries the same spiritual value for the Balmikis and Mazhabis. What sacred scripture 'Amritbani Sri Guru Ravidass Ji Maharaj' is to Ravidassias; 'Yog Vashisht' is to Balmikis. If Guru Ravidass is Shiromani (patron) Sant (preceptor) of Ravidassias; Maharishi Valmiki is the Adi-Guru for the

Balmikis and Baba Jiwan Singh for the Mazhabis. The shrines of Ravidassias are called 'Deras,' whereas Balmikis called their religious places 'Anant' (Adi Dharm Temple). Ravidassias accost each other with 'Jai Santan Di' and summarise their religious ceremonies while uttering 'Jo Bole So Nirbhay, Sri Guru Ravidass Maharaj Ki Jai'; the Balmikis' prototype of the same is 'Jai Valmiki' and 'Jo Bole So Nirbhay, Srishtikarta Valmiki Dayavaan Ki Jai'.

The mainstream political parties to supplement their political capital often exploit the above-mentioned cleavages between the Chamar and Balmiki clusters. Both the Indian National Congress (INC) and the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) supported the Balmikis and Mazhabis against the Chamars and Ad-Dharmis on the contentious cleavage of reservation within reservation.

The political support extended to a particular cluster often sharpens the inter-cluster division among the SCs in Punjab with serious implications for an overall Dalit solidarity for the larger community interests. Chamars/Ad-Dharmis' failure to get the support of the Balmikis and Mazhabis during the struggle of the historic Ad Dharm movement and the latter's indifference towards the Talhan, Meham and Vienna skirmishes are a few instances of open division between Balmiki and Chamar caste clusters. A heated verbal duel between the Balmiki-Mazhabi and Ad-Dharmi-Chamar factions of the INC during its Chandigarh conclave recently over the allotment of a Rajya Sabha (Upper House) seat to Shamsher Singh Dullo (an Ad Dharmi) against Hans Raj Hans (a Balmiki) is a current case of sharp heterogeneity among the SCs of Punjab. Dalit solidarity in Punjab is also often threatened by the cleavages of the denotified tribes who vehemently contest their inclusion in the Schedules Castes list of Punjab (Singh 2010: XIX). They proudly consider themselves the descendants of Rajputs who took to vagrant life styles as a strategy of their fight against the Mogul and British rulers.

Conclusion

My key argument is that though the numerical strength of SCs in Punjab is largest in comparison to all other states in India and much higher than the national average of SC population, they could not become a force to reckon with due to caste heterogeneity and sharp cleavages among them. SCs in Punjab do not constitute a homogeneous group at all and suffer from similar caste-based discriminatory social structures that they strive to fight against the upper/dominant castes in their struggle for upward social mobility in the State.

Clarification

Caste names are used in the article for academic analysis. Any offence caused by such an exercise is deeply regretted.

UNPUBLISHED PREFACE THE BUDDHA AND HIS DHAMMA

Source Courtesy: Columbia University
www.columbia.edu

April 6, 1956

[Text provided by Eleanor Zelliott,
as prepared by Vasant Moon]

A question is always asked to me: how I happen[ed] to take such [a] high degree of education. Another question is being asked: why I am inclined towards Buddhism. These questions are asked because I was born in a community known in India as the "Untouchables." This preface is not the place for answering the first question. But this preface may be the place for answering the second question.

The direct answer to this question is that I regard the Buddha's Dhamma to be the best. No religion can be compared to it. If a modern man who knows science must have a religion, the only religion he can have is the Religion of the Buddha. This conviction has grown in me after thirty-five years of close study of all religions.

How I was led to study Buddhism is another story. It may be interesting for the reader to know. This is how it happened.

My father was a military officer, but at the same time a very religious person. He brought me up under a strict discipline. From my early age I found certain contradictions in my father's religious way of life. He was a Kabirpanthi, though his father was Ramanandi. As such, he did not believe in Murti Puja (Idol Worship), and yet he performed Ganapati Puja--of course for our sake, but I did not like it. He read the books of his Panth. At the same time, he compelled me and my elder brother to read every day before going to bed a portion of [the] Mahabharata and Ramayana to my sisters and other persons who assembled at my father's house to hear the Katha. This went on for a long number of years.

The year I passed the English Fourth Standard Examination, my community people wanted to celebrate the occasion by holding a public meeting to congratulate me. Compared to the state of education in other communities, this was hardly an occasion for celebration. But it was felt by the organisers that I was the first boy in my community to reach this stage; they thought that I had reached a great height. They went to my father to ask for his permission. My father flatly refused, saying that such a thing would inflate the boy's head; after all, he has only passed an examination and done nothing more. Those who wanted to celebrate the event were greatly disappointed. They, however, did not give way. They went to Dada Keluskar, a personal friend of my father, and asked him to intervene. He agreed. After a little argumentation, my father yielded, and the meeting was held. Dada Keluskar presided. He was a literary person of his time. At the end of his address he gave me as a gift a copy of his book on the life of the Buddha, which he had written for the Baroda Sayajirao Oriental Series. I read the book with great interest, and was greatly impressed and moved by it.

I began to ask why my father did not introduce us to the Buddhist lit-

erature. After this, I was determined to ask my father this question. One day I did. I asked my father why he insisted upon our reading the Mahabharata and Ramayana, which recounted the greatness of the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas and repeated the stories of the degradation of the Shudras and the Untouchables. My father did not like the question. He merely said, "You must not ask such silly questions. You are only boys; you must do as you are told." My father was a Roman Patri-



arch, and exercised most extensive Patria Pretestas over his children. I alone could take a little liberty with him, and that was because my mother had died in my childhood, leaving me to the care of my auntie.

So after some time, I asked again the same question. This time my father had evidently prepared himself for a reply. He said, "The reason why I ask you to read the Mahabharata and Ramayana is this: we belong to the Untouchables, and you are likely to develop an inferiority complex, which is natural. The value of [the] Mahabharata and Ramayana lies in removing this inferiority complex. See Drona and Karna--they were small men, but to what heights they rose! Look at Valmiki--he was a Koli, but he became the author of [the] Ramayana. It is for removing this inferiority complex that I

ask you to read the Mahabharata and Ramayana."

I could see that there was some force in my father's argument. But I was not satisfied. I told my father that I did not like any of the figures in [the] Mahabharata. I said, "I do not like Bhishma and Drona, nor Krishna. Bhishma and Drona were hypocrites. They said one thing and did quite the opposite. Krishna believed in fraud. His life is nothing but a series of frauds. Equal dislike I have for Rama. Examine

was the only religion which a society awakened by science could accept, and without which it would perish. I also pointed out that for the modern world Buddhism was the only religion which it must have to save itself. That Buddhism makes [a] slow advance is due to the fact that its literature is so vast that no one can read the whole of it. That it has no such thing as a bible, as the Christians have, is its greatest handicap. On the publication of this article, I received many calls, written and oral, to write such a book. It is in response to these calls that I have undertaken the task.

To disarm all criticism I would like to make it clear that I claim no originality for the book. It is a compilation and assembly plant. The material has been gathered from various books. I would particularly like to mention Ashvaghosha's Buddhavita [= Buddhacharita], whose poetry no one can excel. In the narrative of certain events I have even borrowed his language.

The only originality that I can claim in [= is] the order of presentation of the topics, in which I have tried to introduce simplicity and clarity. There are certain matters which give headache[s] to the student of Buddhism. I have dealt with them in the Introduction.

It remains for me to express my gratitude to those who have been helpful to me. I am very grateful to Mr. Nanak Chand Rattua of Village Sakrulli and Mr. Parkash Chand of Village Nangal Khurd in the district of Hoshiarpur (Punjab) for the burden they have taken upon themselves to type out the manuscript. They have done it several times. Shri Nanak Chand Rattu took special pains and put in very hard labour in accomplishing this great task. He did the whole work of typing etc. very willingly and without caring for his health and [= or] any sort of remuneration. Both Mr. Nanak Chand Rattu and Mr. Parkash Chand did their job as a token of their greatest love and affection towards me. Their labours can hardly be repaid. I am very much grateful to them.

When I took up the task of composing the book I was ill, and [I] am still ill. During these five years there were many ups and downs in my health. At some stages my condition had become so critical that doctors talked of me as a dying flame. The successful rekindling of this dying flame is due to the medical skill of my wife and Dr. Malvankar.

They alone have helped me to complete the work. I am also thankful to Mr. M. B. Chitnis, who took [a] special interest in correcting [the] proof and to go [= in going] through the whole book.

I may mention that this is one of the three books which will form a set for the proper understanding of Buddhism. The other books are: (i) Buddha and Karl Marx; and (ii) Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Ancient India. They are written out in parts. I hope to publish them soon.

B. R. Ambedkar
26 Alipur Road, Delhi
6-4-56

his conduct in the Sarupnakha [= Shurpanakha] episode [and] in the Vali Sugriva episode, and his beastly behaviour towards Sita." My father was silent, and made no reply. He knew that there was a revolt.

This is how I turned to the Buddha, with the help of the book given to me by Dada Keluskar. It was not with an empty mind that I went to the Buddha at that early age.

I had a background, and in reading the Buddhist Lore I could always compare and contrast. This is the origin of my interest in the Buddha and His Dhamma.

The urge to write this book has a different origin. In 1951 the Editor of the Mahabodhi Society's Journal of Calcutta asked me to write an article for the Vaishak Number. In that article I argued that the Buddha's Religion



D. C. Ahir

The Ad Dharm Movement and Dr. Ambedkar

When in 1915 Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was giving final touches to his Ph.D. thesis at Columbia University in New York, a

Punjabi youth, who had gone to America a few years earlier, was involved in a dangerous mission of smuggling guns from California to the Punjab for inciting mutiny in India. This Punjabi youth later became famous as Babu Mangu Ram, the founder of the Ad Dharm Movement. Mangu Ram was born in a small village Mugowal in district Hoshiarpur, Punjab on 14 January, 1886 in an untouchable family; his father was a leather merchant. As by then the doors of education had been opened to all by the British rulers, Mangu Ram was sent to the school in the nearby village, Mahilpur, but the treatment meted out to him by the Hindu teacher was far from human. Like Bhim Rao in Satara, Mangu Ram too was made to sit outside the classroom. Not only that, even the teacher would not teach him directly; he was invariably given lesson through a Muslim student. Somehow, Mangu Ram passed his middle examination and joined high school at Bajwara, a nearby town. Here too. He was subjected to the same humiliation, and was made to sit outside the classroom. One day, it rained so heavily that in spite of taking shelter under a tree, Mangu Ram was completely drenched. And when the snow-balls, accompanied by high velocity winds, fell like missiles on him, he was unable to bear it any longer. So, he ran to take shelter inside the classroom. As soon as he had entered the room, the teacher saw him, and instead of showing any sympathy, he started beating him with a stick for having come inside. Weeping and crying, Mangu Ram went out, and somehow reached his home.

Unmindful of the insult and beating, Mangu Ram again went to the school next day. As soon as he reached there, he was surprised to see the teacher in the process of purifying the classroom by sprinkling water on the wooden table, chair and the mats on which the students used to sit. On seeing him, Brahmin teacher cried out, "Oh Chandal, you have come again".

Fearing another beating, Mangu Ram hastened back, never to go again to the school. And that was the end of his education.

With his education coming to an abrupt end, Mangu Ram became unemployed, and bit frustrated too. In 1909, he, along with some other young men from the village, went to California, U.S.A. in order to earn some money by working in the Peach Orchards of Fresno and elsewhere in the San Joaquin valley of central California. Instead of earning money, he,

however, became involved in the activities of the Ghadar Party, an international network of militant Punjabi nationalists led by Lala Hardayal. By his sheer devotion and sincerity to the cause of India's freedom, he came to be regarded as the most dependable and reliable member of the organization. In 1915, Mangu Ram volunteered to be one of the five Ghadarites accompanying a shipload of guns and propaganda material headed for India. This ship was unfortunately intercepted by the British at Batavia, and was sealed. It remained sealed for nearly a year, with the five Ghadarites as prisoners inside. In the meanwhile, they were prosecuted in absentia, and sentenced to death for



taking out the weapons illegally on the ship. On hearing the capital punishment, some patriot Indians in Germany decided to help the imprisoned Ghadarites. Somehow, they managed to smuggle the prisoners out from the sealed ship, and sent them in different directions. Mangu Ram was put in a ship going to Manila. By mistake, however, the ship reached Singapore. Unfortunately for Mangu Ram, here he was recognized by some traitor Indians who had earlier worked for the Ghadar Party. They informed the Police. By now, for running away from Batavia, death warrants had been issued by the British Government to be executed wherever any one of them was found. Accordingly, the Singapore Police began preparing for his execution. Then a miracle happened. Just half an hour before his execution, a gentleman named Barde, whom Mangu Ram had never seen or met, came, caught him by the arm, took him out of the Thana, and putting him on the same ship in which Mangu Ram had come, he asked the Captain of the ship to sail for Manila. By the time the Police swung into action, the ship had crossed the Singapore Port Limits. Having failed to intercept the ship, the police caught hold of some drunkard; executed him to cover up their lapse, and announced that Mangu Ram had been executed. This news was later published in the Indian Newspapers.

For the next 7-8 years, Mangu Ram hid in the Philippines, and during this period he had no contact with his

family as no letters could be written for fear of being intercepted. Taking him, therefore, as dead, his wife married Mangu Ram's elder brother, who was a widower.

The validity of the death warrant issued by the British Government lapsed in 1924. Then Mangu Ram thought of returning to India. Accordingly, he came back to Punjab in 1925. Soon thereafter, Mangu Ram became involved in another kind of freedom struggle, the liberation of the untouchables, the people among whom he was born, and the people who were meekly suffering the atrocities of the Hindus. Babu Mangu Ram's association with the Ghadar Party had broadened his outlook, and



sharpened his skills as an organizer. Soon he found a band of like-minded young men involved in the social work, and began organizing them in order to liberate the downtrodden from the clutches of the Hindu social slavery.

Encouraged by the response to his ideas, Babu Mangu Ram convened a Conference at his village Mugowal in district Hoshiarpur on 11-12 June, 1926. Addressing the largely attended Conference, Babu Mangu Ram proclaimed that the Untouchables constituted a separate Qaum, a religious community like the Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus, and those they were the original inhabitants of this country. Hence, the movement was named as Ad Dharm; and its leaders devised distinctive costume, bright red turbans and shashes; coined a new sacred mantra or symbol, "So-hang" and exhorted the people to call themselves as Ad Dharmis.

The primary object of the Ad Dharm was to give the untouchables an alternative religion. Its another object was to reform the society from within. As social movement, the Ad Dharm exhorted the people to abstain from immoral practices; to lead a life of purity and piety; to discard the use of alcohol, drugs, give education to boys and girls, and to treat all men and women equal in the society. On the whole, the movement was aimed at giving the untouchables a sense of pride and dignity as members of the Ad Dharm.

The headquarters of Ad

Dharm Mandal were established in Jalandhar city from where the movement was organized in a systematic manner, and the devoted missionaries spread the message far and wide in the Punjab, and even beyond. Since the Mandal had accepted Sahib Shri Guru Ravidass Ji as its spiritual leader, the movement became primarily popular amongst the Chamars, and they readily adopted the nomenclature of Ad Dharmi.

At the time, Babu Mangu Ram was organizing the untouchables of the Punjab under the banner of Ad Dharm; Dr. Ambedkar was fighting a similar battle in another part of the country. Though they were thousands of miles apart, yet their ideas and methods of struggle were almost identical. Both believed that the present day Scheduled Castes are not Hindus, and that their salvation lies only in being independent of the Hindu religion.

Both believed in self-help and advocated peaceful means to achieve their goal. Both laid the greatest emphasis on 'education'. Babasaheb considered "education" the key to all progress, and Mangu Ram says that only "education can lead us to Sachkhand (the realm of truth)." Again, Babasaheb exhorted the people to follow the Three Commandments of 'Education, Agitation and Organization' to gain power. According to Mangu Ram, the poor have three kinds of power: "Qaumiat (collective solidarity), Mazhab (spirituality) and Majlis (organization)".

Within a year of its founding, the Ad Dharm movement created quite a stir in the Punjab by constant rallies and conferences, if forced the Government of the day to take notice of the problems of the untouchables. One of the reasons of the poverty and exploitation of the untouchables was the pernicious system of beggar, the system under which they were forced to live at the beck and call of others and were obliged to do a great deal of work without any remuneration whatsoever.

The Ad Dharm Mandal agitated against the system of beggar, and demanded its abolition. The Mandal also agitated for repealing the Punjab Land Alienation Act which prohibited the untouchables from buying even a small piece of land. The Ad Dharm movement reached its peak at the time of 1931 Census. As a result of their sustained propaganda, more than half a million untouchables declared themselves as Ad Dharmis.

This showed the organizational skill of its leaders. "The massive support", as says Mark Juergensmeyer, "created political capital, and Mangu Ram used that capital in political ways. Ad Dharmi candidates stood for public offices and an alliance was created with the Unionist Party. In both instances, scheduled caste leaders supported by the Ad Dharm organization achieved public positions".

Courtesy: Dr. Ambedkar and Punjab by D. C. Ahir

My Fellow Bootan Mandian – IAS Babita Kler

I have been writing in my blogs about such mundane matters like my fellow BootanMandians not that they know me very well or like me or dislike me in my social or civic day to day conduct. Nevertheless, I must confess frankly that whenever some fellow BootanMandian (a non-descript locality on Nakodar Road now Ambedkar Marg in Jalandhar which is informally said to be the nerve centre of dalits in Doaba and beyond) excels in life, I feel like sharing my joy and wishing he/she all the best in the days to come. There is no other motivation whatsoever. It is a voluntary activity just to keep myself engaged with the community for my own personal satisfaction.

My immediate provocation to write this is the appointment of Babita Kler, my fellow BootanMandian, as the Deputy Commissioner of Fazilka district of Punjab, of course a coveted position. I have not met Babita in person till today. Some years ago when I came back to my roots in Jalandhar, I spoke to her on phone with regard to the renewal of my driving license. She was the RTA at Jalandhar. Since then I have been greeting her or sharing my blogs with her, off and on. But this contact mostly remained one sided though her husband Steven Kler, an estab-

lished businessman and his elder brother former Chief Parliamentary Secretary and MLA Avinash Chander showed some inclination to keep and nurture the connection on social media and otherwise. Babita may also not know that I knew his late father IPS Govind Ram as a passing acquin-



tenance through common friends and his professional colleagues like IPS Joginder Birdi and IPS Sital Ram among others. My friendly concern and interest to felicitate Babita, as a fellow BootanMandian, also emanates from my reverence to Late Seth Kishan Dass, grandfather of Steven and Babita and his family, a pioneer and elite family not only of BootanMandi but also of the community at large. It is a matter of great pride for BootanMandians that one of the greatest sons of India, Babasaheb Ambedkar visited the home, the historic Chubara of Seth Kishan Dass in 1951, and relished Sarson Ka Saag

and Makki Ki Roti, the traditional delicacy of Punjab. With this little backdrop, I take this opportunity to wish Babita Kler, an IAS of 2009 batch, all the very best in her new responsibilities as the DC of Fazilka. It is a matter of satisfaction that earlier Babita adorned many high offices; inter alia,

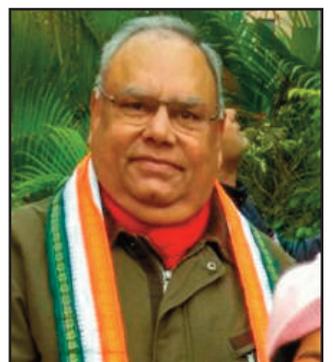
Chief Administrator of PUDA, Joint Commissioner of Jalandhar Municipal Corporation, and Secretary to various government departments in Chandigarh. I am confident that she will go much high in the hierarchy in the years to come as she has many more years to serve in the elite IAS.

The honour to be the first IFS from Bootan Mandi fell on your humble friend Ramesh Chander. Babita is the first IAS to hold the flag along with my other fellow BootanMandians; Sushil Sheemar ITS as the first Allied services officer and his wife Jaswinder Sheemar as the Additional Session Judge.

Yet other two daughters of Seth Kishan Dass's immediate and extended family, P C S Anupam Kler daughter of Seth Mool Raj and

Judge Pushpa daughter of Ram Nath Kler also two young PCS Allied officers, Pawan and Sunil sons of yet another Kler, Keshava Nand. Many more among my fellow BootanMandians excelled in different professions like Jagdish Mahey and Manohar Mahey in Banking, Sat Paul Mahey and Vinod Kaul in Insurance, Amar Nath Ram in PSU (Coal India), Devender Kumar in PSU (ONGC), Harmesh Jassal PSU (Air India) among others.

As I said earlier not that all of them know me very well or I have any in-depth interaction with them but still I feel proud that they are the worthy sons and daughters of my native place, Bootan Mandi.



Ramesh Chander
Ambassador - I.F.S. (Retired)
91-99885-10940

Sahib Kanshi Ram and Dalit Emancipation

Prem K. Chumber
Editor-In-Chief:

www.ambedkartimes.com & www.deshdoaba.com

Sahib Kanshi Ram devoted his life for the eradication of caste from the domestic structures of Indian socio-religious realm. The sole aim his life-long struggle was to facilitate the Bahujan Samaj to acquire power through the medium of ballot. He was a firm believer in the nonviolent power of democracy that he inherited from the teachings of Babasaheb Dr B.R Ambedkar. A chance reading of one of the numerous valuable writings of Dr. Ambedkar transformed his vision and he did not only prefer to live unmarried but also renounced his family life once for all. After he plunged into social struggle for the acquisition of political power for his people he did not look back at all toward his home in village Khauspur in Rupnagar district of Punjab. He did all this for helping his people to stand on their own feet to get rid of centuries' old slavery and blind faith in



the chaturvarna system of social hierarchy, which deny them their bare minimum human rights. He ingrained among his people that the political

power is the only key to Dalit emancipation and empowerment in the real sense of the term.

Sahib Kanshi Ram Ji was an innovative thinker and a charismatic mass leader who coined new political vocabulary for the mobilization of downtrodden. The slogans he chiseled adroitly caught the imagination of all and sundry throughout the length and breadth of India. He told his people unless and until they formed their own social and political organizations, no upper caste political party will allow them to come to rule India. And he was confident that given the 85 percent strength of Bahujan, if the latter joined hands no one in the world can stop them reach Delhi. His untiring efforts and firm faith in his people brought success though in some parts of the country. But as far as awareness among the Bahujan is concerned his was a great success. Ambedkar Times and Desh Doaba weekly newspaper pays sincere tributes to Sahib Shri Kanshi Ram Ji on his 15th death anniversary and solemnly resolve to continue struggling following into his footsteps.



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Ishwar Das Pawar
District and Sessions Judge (Retd.)

My Struggle in Life

Perseverance Pays

It is a golden principle to try again and again in the pursuit of the object, provided the aim is good and there are reasonably fair chances of success. Sometimes it needs hammering to bring home to the person on the other end to understand the justification and rightfulness of the cause. The point made should be precise and concise so that there be no confusing of the real and crucial issue. My own experience is that perseverance pays though it may take some time.

The following instances will show the correctness of this principle. While as under secretary, I was in receipt of Rs 200 per month as special pay, but on my appointment as a member of the Subordinate Services Selection Board, the special pay was reduced to Rs 100. I represented that, in the matter of emoluments, I should not be put to disadvantage on my being shifted on to the board. The chief secretary recommended the case strongly, but the Chief Minister Bhim Sen Sachar did not agree, and my request was turned down. The case was explained to him, and he promised to reconsider it if I made an application for the review of the decision. Consequently, I submitted the necessary application, but that too was rejected. I made another attempt to remind the chief minister of his promise. The same procedure was gone through, but this time also, the request met with no better fate. I then abandoned the idea of making any other attempt. The case stayed closed.

After some time, a circular letter was issued by the government, inviting representations to the governor from those who had any genuine grievance. The conditions for making representations were detailed in the letter. I consulted my colleagues and the office experts about my case, and I was advised firmly that it was outside the scope of the circular letter. The matter was therefore dropped. After a few days, the thought flashed across my mind that there was no harm in making a representation even though the case was a weak one. Consequently, I wrote out a representation of a few lines and annexed to it copies of the previous representations I had made to the chief minister regarding refixing my special pay. Many officials made representations against orders which they considered not justified. The officers

appointed to process the representations opposed my request with all the vehemence they could command. I already knew my case was quite weak.

In due course, the case went up to the governor C. P. N. Singh, who very graciously allowed my representation with the observation that it was a very fit case where a special pay of Rs 200 should have been allowed. The concerned officers were sore at this order and talked of sending the case back to the governor for reconsideration. I was advised by friends to see the said officers. I told them that it was a matter between the said officers and the governor. Wiser counsel however prevailed. And I got about Rs 5,000 as arrears of special pay. A lost case was won.

I was appointed as Additional District and Sessions Judge but the appointment was made effective from the date about six months after I was due for the promotion. I represented on this point to the High Court. The judges of the High Court recommended my case to the government who however did not agree to the recommendation, and my request was turned down. I again represented, and the case was again recommended by the High Court, but it yielded no better results. A third representation recommended as before by the High Court was also rejected by the government. My efforts thus ended up in smoke.

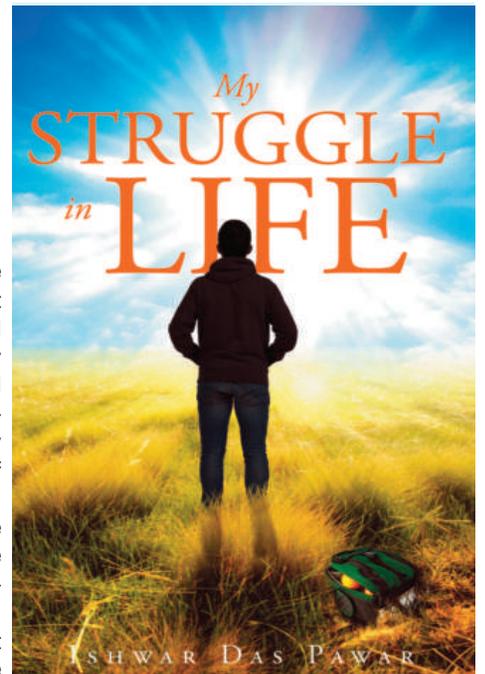
Therefore, I saw the Chief Minister Partap Singh Kairon, who directed me to see the Home Minister Mohan Lal. Both of them appeared indifferent, and I realized that I was simply put off. One day, Master Gurbanta Singh, who was then a minister, came to see me. Incidentally, during our talk, I told him about my representation and requested him to go through the case to find out for himself why my request was not acceded to and to get justice done if he found that it was a case of highhandedness. He sent for the file, went through it, and found that in fact it was a case of great injustice. He inquired from the officers concerned about the justification of the government decision rejecting my case even though strongly recommended by the High Court not once but three times.

The concerned officers kept mum. I was informed by the minister about all this when I came to Chandigarh from Ambala on a weekend. I went back on Monday morning, and to my pleasant surprise, a revised salary slip issued by the accountant general at the in-

stance of the government was found lying on my table. And thus I got arrears of pay and benefit of service.

The third instance is no less interesting. While I was at Ambala, the pay scales of officers were revised. The local judicial officers got their revised salary slips from the accountant general, Simla while I received no such communication. I was advised by friends to write to the accountant general, which I did. The accountant general wrote me to say that my case was not covered by the government instructions regarding revision of pay. I again wrote back with some additional facts, making out that I was also entitled to the benefit of the revision of pay orders of the government, and I received a reply from the accountant general similar to the previous one. Then for the third time, a detailed letter was written to the accountant general. A few days thereafter, I received a revised salary slip. At last the accountant general saw the correctness and justification of my case. It is always welcome if wisdom dawns even though belatedly. I got about Rs 3,300 as arrears of pay.

The question why people are denied or delayed justice inordinately even in very clear and strong cases is not very relevant. This is the normal way of working in government offices. The only relevant and important point is that one should pursue his aim with unabated perseverance in search of justice. In many a case, persistent efforts are bound to be crowned with success in spite of the whims and idiosyncrasies of officialdom. This is the lesson I have learnt in my life. Generally speaking, justice is not conceded easily and promptly. It often needs constant hammering and a patient long wait. Such a wayward and capricious official behavior does not confront only a few. Mine is not an isolated or a solitary case. Still we can say all is well that ends well.



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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-



DR. B. R. AMBEDKAR

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 Hindus 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 case 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 negative 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 theist 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 recognize 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 (Contd. on next page)

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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 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-llahi 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,

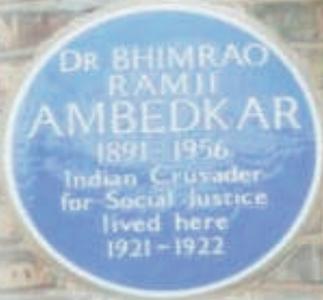
but it is also a system of uncontrolled economic exploitation. That is because there is no independent public opinion to condemn it and there is no impartial machinery of administration to restrain it. There is no appeal to, public opinion, 'for whatever public opinion there is it is the opinion of the 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\ouchable 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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