

CHAPTER - VI

CONCLUSIONS

This research work is an attempt to highlight an important social problem of temple entry of the untouchables. Even today the problem exists in the Indian society. It should be noted here that some caste Hindus denied the religious right to the untouchables by prohibiting them from entering in the public Hindu temples and to taking *darshan* of particular deity. It has happened at many places in India as well as Maharashtra. It is a very shameful thing that such instances should take place in Indian society in the 21st century i.e. in the age of 'Globalization'.

It has been accepted by the caste Hindus that the untouchables are Hindus. Yet, they did protest against the untouchables when they came forward to assert their religious right in public Hindu temples. It is the picture of today's Indian society.

The question of temple-entry of untouchables has not been an easy one. Because, it is very harmful to the social welfare and social unity. The issue of temple entry is not the one to be solved by just speeches and resolutions, it needs an action.

It is different thing that now-a-days, some caste Hindu people have willingly opened the public Hindu temples for the untouchables. While at some places, untouchables have to tolerate injustice or to fight for getting their religious right. And in such matters, police, court cases and high expenditure are inevitable things which they have to face. Besides, due to their lower economic status, it has not been possible many times for the untouchables to record such cases in the police station or court. These cases also give a lot of trouble to the people of



both the sides. Therefore, to do away with all these things and tensions is a better way to remove the religious and social discriminations in the society. It will help create unity in the society because unity is essential for around progress of the country.

In a progressive state like Maharashtra also the problem of temple entry still exists in some form or other. In many regions of the state caste Hindus have denied right to the untouchables in the matter of temple entry. This issue emerged from the practice of 'untouchability' and untouchability sprang from the caste system. According to V. D. Savarkar, like *Brahmin* and *Kshatriya* the other two *varnas* were also equally responsible for the creation and existence of this cruel caste system. It is responsibility of not only of caste Hindus but also of the educated and civilized untouchables to eradicate it which has been deeply rooted in the Indian social system. Our state will become progressive in real sense of the term when the social, religious and economic discriminations will be removed or abolished. In this regard, the issue of temple entry of the untouchables has greater importance.

Importance of Temple Entry *Satyagrahas* :

In the beginning of the 20th century, untouchables raised a voice of protest against the caste Hindus. It is well-known that they launched series of temple entry *Satyagrahas* as well as tried to seek help and sympathy of the Government. Since 1947, legally all public Hindu temples have been opened to the untouchables, but at some places the orthodox Brahmin priests do not grant permission to the untouchables to enter the temples and perform worship there even today.

This research work is also an attempt to explain the issue of temple entry positively. Because, Dr.B.R.Ambedkar expressed humanitarian thoughts on this problem. In the light of those

humanitarian thoughts of Dr.B.R. Ambedkar the issue of temple entry has been studied.

In the beginning, Dr. Ambedkar was a strong supporter of temple entry movement. Because, he believed that the issue of temple entry was very important for the untouchables. He wanted to create a society based on liberty, equality and fraternity. Therefore, he launched a long drawn Kalaram Temple Entry *Satyagraha* at Nasik during 1930-1935, to achieve for the untouchable such religious rights which were enjoyed by the caste Hindus in the public Hindu temples. The thoughts of Dr.B.R. Ambedkar relating to this question are still very useful for today's society. His prominent goal was to get a 'right of equality' for the untouchables at all public places including the Hindu temples. He did not want them to move towards 'superstitions and old customs' through this religious right. Hence, the temple entry *Satyagrahas* has much importance in the social history of Maharashtra as well as of India.

Features of the Temple Entry *Satyagrahas* :

Since 1924 to 1947, a series of temple entry *Satyagrahas* was launched at many places of Maharashtra. Notable among those were temple entry campaign at Ratnagiri region (1924-1931), Ambadevi temple entry agitation - Amarawati (1925), Parvati temple entry *Satyagraha*, Pune (1929), Mahalaxmi and Datta temple entry, Kolhapur (1932), Kalaram temple entry *Satyagraha*, Nasik (1930-1935), Vitthal temple entry *Satyagraha* at Pandharpur (1947).

Only a few among the above *Satyagrahas* were successful.

In Maharashtra Savarkar was the first person who launched a campaign of temple entry of the untouchables during 1924-1931. It was an inspiring and admirable step in the field of social work. But, after the

overall study of his temple entry campaign, we can conclude that his work relating to the temple entry of untouchables appears to be showy. Because, though he worked for the welfare of the untouchables, he did not want to hurt the caste Hindus at the same time. Besides, he gave much importance to the customs, rules and regulations of the temple institution rather than the natural rights of the untouchables.

The campaign of temple entry of the untouchables itself reflects his favourable attitude towards the caste Hindus. He was a Hindu nationalist. So he used the nationalistic attitude to solve this problem. And also he had kept "the concept of Hindu Nation" at the centre of his thoughts. Hence he insisted on the ideal of Hinduism i.e. "We are all Hindus". As a result of it, he had not entered directly in the nave of temple with the untouchables nor did he take any action against the caste Hindus during his campaign. He thought that consensus between the caste Hindus and the untouchables was the better way to attain the goal of temple entry campaign.

In his temple entry campaign a notable thing was that he inspired to build new separate temples for the untouchables i.e. '*Akhil Hindu Devalaye*'. Also he did not enter directly at the nave of the old temples. He entered step by step i.e. firstly at the Namdeva stair, secondly at the main stair of the temple, then in the *Sabha Mandap* and lastly in the nave of the temple. He used the *Ganapati Mala*, *Mishrahindu Mela* and *Akhil Hindu Mela* as vehicle to achieve his goal.

As a matter of fact he has done a wonderful job as he was the first social reformer of Maharashtra who launched a temple entry campaign for the religious rights of the untouchables. But Savarkar was a strong supporter of Hinduism and Nationalism. Therefore, he made efforts to issue of temple entry as an instrument to create a strong Hindu nation.

In 1925 Shri Madhoram Govind Meshram led Ambadevi temple entry *Satyagraha* at Amaravati. Since 1925 he tried to persuade the trustees and caste Hindus to allow the untouchables' temple entry by sending applications one after another. But for long time trustees did not give any response to those applications.

The agitation was supported by many non-Brahmin leaders. But the trustees opposed the untouchables by passing resolutions from 1926 to August 1927.

Hence Dr. Panjabrao Deshmukh took initiative in holding a conference on 13th November, 1927 to discuss this issue and invited Dr. B.R. Ambedkar to preside over it.

Though the *Satyagraha* was launched on 15th February, 1928 as decided previously, there was lack of continuous efforts on the part of leaders. Also full co-operation and support of depressed classes was lacking. The *Matang Samaj* of Amaravati protested against the movement of the untouchables as they believed that *Mahars* had deceived them as they took their signatures by showing the reason of 'caste development'.

'Protest from the untouchables to the untouchables movement' was one of the features of that *Satyagraha*. Another feature of it was that the leaders of *Satyagraha* made efforts only through the resolutions and *Sabhas* for about two years. They did not undertake any firm and direct action to achieve their target. Though the campaign was initiated by the non-Brahmin leaders, their work had not been enthusiastic.

After the Ambadevi temple entry agitation at Amaravati, Parvati temple entry *Satyagraha* was launched by S. J. Kamble and P. N. Rajbhoj on 13th October, 1929 at Pune to achieve the goal of equality.

But trustees closed the doors of all temples on the Parvati hill, on 12th October, 1929 to resist the *Satyagrahis*. In that *Satyagraha* the untouchable *Satyagrahis* were in majority. They were disciplined. But the caste Hindus purposefully created violence in it. Some leaders and *Satyagrahis* were injured because the caste Hindus hurled stones on them. And as the doors were closed the *Satyagrahis* returned without entering that temple. Also the efforts of S. M. Mate and L. B. Bhopatkar to persuade the trustees were unsuccessful. Therefore, the *Satyagraha* was given up. It was realised that there was no hope of change in the attitude of trustees and orthodox caste Hindus.

In 1932 Madhavrao Bagal succeeded in entering the Mahalaxmi temple, Kolhapur and Datta temple, Nrusinhwadi with the untouchables. These *Satyagrahas* have much importance because they took place in Kolhapur state of Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaja after his death. He had made herculean efforts for the eradication of untouchability.

Next to the temple entry agitation in Kolhapur state, Kalaram temple entry *Satyagraha*, Nasik (1930-35) and the Vitthal temple entry *Satyagraha* at Pandharpur (1947) have greater significance in the history of temple entry movement in 20th century Maharashtra.

Kalaram temple entry *Satyagraha* has much importance because it was led by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and it was carried on for a long time i.e. five years. This *Satyagraha* was also unsuccessful though Dr. B. R. Ambedkar and all *Satyagrahis* attempted for it positively during 1930-35. But orthodox caste Hindus didnot agree to change their attitude in favour of the untouchables. Like the Parvati temple entry *Satyagraha*, caste Hindus created violence in Nasik *Satyagraha* also. Police and Governor did not give enough co-operation to the *Satyagrahis* because majority among them were caste Hindus. Hence after five years' efforts,

this *Satyagraha* was called off. Hence on 13th October, 1935, in the Conference of Yeola Dr. Ambedkar announced his decision about conversion and sent a message to Bhaurao Gaikwad about the suspension of that *Satyagraha*. But it was this *Satyagraha* as a result of which the government turned their attention towards this issue.

In 1947 Sane Guruji launched a temple entry *Satyagraha* at Pandharpur. He decided to go on fast unto death for it. It was the special feature of that *Satyagraha*. And he succeeded in his attempts because his was an emotional appeal to the trustees, which forced them to give entry to the untouchables in that temple. And only after this *Satyagraha* government made temple entry Act and protected the untouchables religious rights. It was a great achievement of that *Satyagraha*.

But what are the consequences of those *Satyagrahas* and those temple entry Acts. Even today some cases of temple entry are raised at many places in Maharashtra. Shri Machindra Sakate made such attempt to enter in the temple at Hitani (Tal. Gadhinglaj) in Kolhapur district. But caste Hindus did not give permission to the untouchables to enter in that temple and so clash occurred between the caste Hindus and the untouchables. This issue certainly affects the people of the rural areas. Because they are very sensitive to religious matters and also in case of untouchability even today. But Shri Sakate did not consider this point during his action. And it resulted in violence.

The people of many parts of rural areas of Maharashtra do not have adequate knowledge of the legal aids relating to the practice of untouchability and the temple entry Acts. The orthodox people do not want to change their traditional attitude towards this issue.

Notable thing is that it is hardly impossible to resolve this issue as well as to abolish it totally. But it is possible for us to create social stability through due implementation of the solutions regarding this issue. Some suggestions on this issue are given below :

Before going to discuss about the suggestions, it is necessary to throw light on the findings on this issue. These are :

1. Less co-operation from the Police, Government and Lawyers.
2. Orthodox attitude of caste Hindus towards this issue.
3. Traditional attitude of some untouchables about their old customs. They do not want to give up old customs.
4. Due to the lower economic status of the untouchable, they do not want to record their cases in the police station. Also at many backward areas untouchables do not raise their voice against caste Hindus in such matters due to the fear of boycott though they have little knowledge of the legal aids.
5. In some areas untouchables do not have knowledge of the legislative measures regarding this issue. Hence they tolerate injustice of the caste Hindus.
6. Now-a-days some educated untouchables have rejected this religious right willingly.

SUGGESTIONS

1. There is need for full co-operation of police, lawyers and Government in giving religious equality to the untouchables. There has been less co-operation from them in Maharashtra as well as in many other parts of India.

2. It is necessary that the caste Hindus by themselves change their orthodox attitude religious matters. And they should willingly open all public Hindu temples to the untouchables considering it as matter of right of equality.
3. There is no need for the untouchables to continue old traditions, norms and taboos related to untouchability which were initiated by the Brahmins. They will never progress well if they do not give up all such things. And their condition will remain as it is.
4. Majority of the untouchables as well as the caste Hindus do not possess adequate knowledge of the legislative measures about this issue and this gives rise to the cases of temple entry struggle of the untouchables even today. Therefore, Government should give due publicity to all such measures instead of keeping them only on paper. This will enable the untouchables to enjoy equal religious right without any hindrance.
5. It has been observed that recently some untouchables refused to enter the temples though some caste Hindus willingly opened the public Hindu temples. In fact they should accept it as right of equality.
6. Another important thing which should be emphasized is that, though caste Hindus willingly granted religious rights to the untouchables and entry in the Hindu temples, the untouchables should not turn towards the superstitions. Superstitions will obstruct their progress.

One temple entry *Satyagrahas* form an important Chapter in social history of modern Maharashtra.