

INTRODUCTION

Social history is an important branch of historical studies. 19th Century was a century of socio-religious reforms in India. Emancipation of women and eradication of untouchability occupied central position in the agenda of social reforms in 19th century. The problem of untouchability is born out of age old caste system which is an important feature of Indian social structure. Untouchability is described as a sin, blot and stain imposed on a group of people by another group of people. It is deeply rooted in the minds of the caste Hindus that untouchability is but a religious act. It is their misconceived belief in the pollution or defilement by the touch of untouchable that does not permit them to discard the practice of untouchability. Orthodox caste Hindus consider the untouchables of inferior social status. Such attitude of caste Hindus gave birth to many social and religious problems related to untouchability. The issue of temple entry is one of them. In India, Hindu temples have greater significance in the cultural life. Temple has been a popular centre of education in ancient and medieval periods. But in course of time the Brahmins monopolized temples. However, situation changed in 20th century. The issue of temple entry of the untouchables was raised in some parts of India.

In the 20th century, Maharashtra witnessed a series of temple entry agitations. In the history of temple entry movement in our country the first temple Satyagraha took place at Travancore in Malabar region in 1924. Reformers and social activists from different parts of India were profoundly influenced by that Satyagraha. Social reformers of

Maharashtra turned their attention to the issue of temple entry of the untouchables in the 2nd decade of the 20th century. A series of temple entry Satyagrahas were launched by the social reformers at many places in different regions of Maharashtra. Following were the important temple entry Satyagrahas in 20th century Maharashtra - temple entry agitations in Ratnagiri region (1924-1931); Ambadevi temple Satyagraha, Amaravati (1925); Parvati temple Satyagraha, Pune (1929); Mahalaxmi temple and Datta temple Satyagrahas, Kolhapur State (1932); Kalaram temple Satyagraha campaign, Nasik (1930-1935); and Vitthal temple Satyagraha, Pandharpur (1947). These temple entry Satyagrahas did produce some salutary effects on the people as well as the government. The state government was prompted to pass the Bombay Harijan Temple Entry Act of 1947 to entitle the untouchables to enter and perform worship in temples in the Province of Bombay.

Although vast amount of literature is available on temple entry Satyagrahas in Maharashtra, none has so far studied them together and brought out their significance. Therefore, an attempt has been made in this research work to make a comprehensive study of all temple entry Satyagrahas in 20th century Maharashtra with the help of contemporary sources. For the preparation of this dissertation writings of V. D. Savarkar, N. V. Gadgil, S. M. Joshi, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, Acharya Atre, Sane Guruji; Madhavrao Bagal etc. have been extensively utilized. Old files of some important newspapers like Mook Nayak, Vijayi Marathi have also been consulted. Standard general works on social history of modern Maharashtra as well as 20th century Maharashtra have also been used while preparing this work.

This dissertation has been divided into five main chapters followed by the conclusions. Select bibliography of the work appears at the end of the dissertation.

The First Chapter of this dissertation is 'Caste, Untouchability and Temple'. The origin and features of caste system and untouchability in traditional Indian society, importance of religion and temples in India, and relation between the untouchables and the temples, the issue of temple entry movement in 20th century Maharashtra have been discussed in this chapter.

The Second Chapter is 'Efforts Made for the Abolition of Untouchability and Upliftment of the Untouchables'. It includes efforts made by the social reformers, politicians and government for the abolition of untouchability and the upliftment of the untouchables in the pre-independence era and post-independence era.

The Third Chapter of this dissertation is 'Temple Entry Satyagrahas - First Phase'. It consists of temple entry Satyagrahas which were launched in the beginning of the 20th century in Maharashtra i.e. during the first phase of temple entry Satyagraha. It deals with the temple entry campaign led by V. D. Savarkar in Ratnagiri region during 1924-1931 and Ambadevi temple entry Satyagraha launched at Amaravati in 1925. It also deals with the Parvati temple entry Satyagraha of 1929 launched at Pune due to the efforts made by S. J. Kamble and P. N. Rajbhoj. Further it includes the temple entry Satyagrahas launched in Kolhapur state (Mahalaxmi and Datta temple) by Madhavrao Bagal in 1932.

Fourth Chapter is 'Temple Entry Satyagrahas - IInd Phase'. It extensively deals with the Kalaram temple entry Satyagraha launched at Nasik during 1930-1935. It relates to the leadership of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar and Kalaram temple entry issue, changing nature of this Satyagraha, clashes between the touchables and the untouchables, suspension of Nasik Satyagraha etc. Also this chapter consists of another significant temple entry Satyagraha launched at Pandharpur in 1946-1947. Declaration of Sane Guruji's fast at Pandharpur, reaction of Badves and followers of Sane Guruji, Sane Guruji's tour of Maharashtra, its impact, Sane Guruji's fast unto death (1st May to 10th May, 1947) etc. features of Satyagraha campaign have been discussed in this Chapter.

Fifth Chapter is on 'Legislative Measures and Temple Entry of Untouchables'. It examines the relations of the untouchables with public temples, important articles of the constitution which deal with the abolition of untouchability, The Bombay Harijan Temple Entry Act of 1947, Bombay Hindu Places of public worship (Entry Authorization Act, 1956) and some temple entry cases raised in 20th century Maharashtra.

Sixth Chapter of this dissertation includes brief summary of discussion contained in the earlier chapters of the research work and major research findings. In this chapter some constructive suggestions to solve the chronic social problem of temple entry of the untouchables have also been made.

CHAPTER - I

CASTE, UNTOUCHABILITY AND TEMPLE

It is wellknown that India is a great country and it has a great culture. India has a political, economic, cultural and social history as other countries in the world. To study the social history of India it is essential to understand the social institutions in India. Because they played a vital role in the progress and upheaval of Indian social structure. 'Caste system' is one of them. It is impossible to study the Indian social history without understanding the 'caste system' which is still existing in Indian society.

1. CASTE SYSTEM IN TRADITIONAL INDIAN SOCIETY

The caste system exists in the south Asian sub-continent and there only. While Brahmanic Hinduism strengthened it, even gave it its full 'realization', caste exists also in Muslim Pakistan and Bangladesh and among the Buddhist Sinhalese, while on the other hand the long historical influence of 'Hinduism' (Vaishnavism and Shaivism) on south-east Asian societies did nothing to create a caste system there. Thus, caste is a social system characteristic of the sub-continent.¹

At the same time, wherever we look in the traditional Indian system, hierarchy and inequality among the exploited stands out clearly. Such inequality existed among all feudal societies. But in India it was institutionalised in the caste system.²

Hindu society is divided into groups, known as castes, with varying degrees of respectability and circles of social intercourse.³ Caste system is a very important feature of Indian social structure. Caste is fundamentally a holistic, hierarchical system which views the person not as an individual but as a functioning part of an

interdependent system who helps to maintain that system by following the *dharma*, or duty, that birth has assigned to him.⁴

Identifying exactly what a caste, as a group is, has been difficult problem for social scientists. Boundaries are rarely clear and even, it may be argued, are inherently unclear. Scholars early recognized that the theoretical *varna* system- under which all groups are classified as *Brahman* (priest or intellectual), *Kshatriya* (warrior, King), *Vaishya* (businessman or farmer) and *Shudra* (servant, peasant) provided an ordering system or a model in terms of which groups defined their place in society but did not in fact identify any actual group. Attention was then turned to the *Jati*, the word now generally translated as “caste”, the named group or category which was the unit in terms of which an overall regional ranking was made.⁵

Dalits were not a homogenous group in the nineteenth century. Several case studies show considerable diversity among them, either due to differences in *jati* traditions and occupations and caste interaction.⁶

Thus the overwhelming majority of dalits lived in hopeless and helpless conditions by virtue of their *jati* membership and were placed socially, economically, culturally and politically at the very bottom of a hierarchical society.⁷

1.1 Origin of Caste System :

Social differentiation with its attendant demarcation of groups and of status of individuals is a very widespread feature of human society. The visible marks of this differentiation are special rights for some groups and disabilities on others in the matter of dress, occupation and even food. Thus it would be seen that the Hindu system is unique only in the sense that it alone classified some groups as untouchable and

unapproachable. Of the many cultures that flourished in India the literary records of the Indo-Aryan culture are not only the earliest but contain the first mention and a continuous history of the factors that make up caste.⁸

The dominant view tracks down the origin of both caste and untouchability to the Aryans themselves and the way they related to the people of India with whom they came into contact. They (Aryans) sharing a common language and religion, make hostile inroad into India from the north west around 1500 B.C. For centuries they remained involved in constant conflict with the indigenous people, whom they looked down upon as culturally inferior ritually unclean. By their superior military technology, some of these people withdrew into regions as yet unoccupied by the Aryans while others were incorporated as separate and inferior castes within what became an Aryan dominated society.⁹

The people of India according to Dr. B. R. Ambedkar composed of Aryans, Dravidians, Seythians and Mongolians, in due course of time and after some inevitable conflict settled down as peaceful neighbours. Thus there is a cultural homogeneity though ethnically the Indians are found to be heterogeneous. It is because of this fundamental cultural unity and harmony that caste becomes a difficult problem. In this regard following opinion is expressed in the 'encyclopaedia of Dalits In India Vol. III', "If the Hindu society were a mere federation of mutually exclusive units, the matter would be simple enough. But caste is the parcelling of an already homogenous unit and the explanation of the genesis of caste is an explanation of this process of parcelling."¹⁰

While emphasizing the outstanding feature of caste Dr. Ambedkar states, "Caste being a self-enclosed unit naturally limits

social intercourse including messing, etc. to members within it. Consequently this absence of messing with outsiders is not due to positive prohibitions, but is a natural result of caste, i.e. exclusiveness. No doubt this absence of messing, originally due to exclusiveness, acquired the prohibitory character of a religious injunction, but it may be regarded as a later growth.”¹¹

G. S. Ghurye observed that caste in India was a Brahmanic child of the Indo-Aryan culture, cradled in the land of the Ganges and the Jamanas and thence transferred to other parts of the country. The idea of endogamy and other elements of caste were taken by the Brahmin propagators with them. They could not disturb the physical mixture of the region where they went. They could only try to apply their scheme of occupational segregation and endogamy to various groups according to their receptive abilities. This racial origin of the principal feature of the caste system is further supported by the early ‘*Varna*’ meaning colour used to specify the orders in society.¹²

1.2 Features of Caste System :

In Dr. Ambedkar’s opinion *Chaturvarnya* got degenerated into the caste system. The caste system influenced the Hindus lives in the past and continues doing so even today. Dr. Ambedkar strongly rejects the system. He analyses and explains the features, characteristic evils and the all-round impact of the caste system on Indian society, simultaneously taking into account the injustice done to the Dalits.

Following are the features of caste system :

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Hierarchy | 5. Excommunications |
| 2. Lack of efficiency | 6. Endogamy |
| 3. Social immobility | 7. Anti-social spirit ¹³ |
| 4. Reason for disruptive tendencies. | |

These important features of caste system explained by Dr. Ambedkar are very useful to understand and to study the Indian caste system.”

2. ORIGIN OF UNTOUCHABILITY

While highlighting the origin of untouchability Dr.B.R. Ambedkar observed, “The untouchables are the most numerous of the three classes. Their existence is also the most unnatural. And yet there has so far been no investigation into their origin. The old orthodox Hindu does not think that there is anything wrong in the observance of untouchability. To him it is normal and natural thing. As such it neither calls for expiation nor explanation. The new modern Hindu realizes the wrong. But he is ashamed to discuss it in public for fear of letting the foreigner know that Hindu civilization can be guilty of such a vicious and infamous system or social code as evidenced by untouchability.”¹⁴

2.1 Old Theories of the Origin of Untouchability :

Mr. Stanley, a sociologist, propounded two theories about it. Now they are known as old theories of the origin of untouchability.

According to him, the origin of untouchability is to be found in two circumstances - Race and Occupation.

A) Racial Difference as the Origin of Untouchability -

The racial theory of Mr. Rice contains two elements :

- 1) that the untouchables are Non-Aryan, Non-Dravidian, aboriginals and
- 2) that they were conquered and subjugated by the Dravidians.¹⁵

However, Dr. Ambedkar was of the view that the racial theory of ‘the origin of untouchability’ must be abandoned.¹⁶



B) Occupational Origin of Untouchability -

According to Rice, the origin of untouchability is to be found in the unclean and filthy occupations of the untouchables.¹⁷

The theory of filthy occupations as an explanation of untouchability is, not tenable¹⁸ it is proved.

The thesis on 'the origin of untouchability' propounded by Dr. Ambedkar, comprises the following propositions :

1. There is no racial difference between the Hindus and the untouchables.
2. It is the broken men who subsequently came to be treated as untouchables.
3. Just as untouchability has no racial basis so also it has no occupational basis.
4. In searching for the origin of untouchability care must be taken to distinguish the untouchables from the impure. All orthodox Hindu writers have identified the impure with the untouchables. This is an error. Untouchables are distinct from the Impure.
5. While the Impure as a class came into existence at the time of the Dharma sutras, the untouchables came into being much later than 400 A.D.
6. There are two roots from which untouchability has sprung.
 - i) contempt and hatred of the Broken Men as of Buddhists by the Brahmins;
 - ii) continuation of beef-eating by the Broken Men after it had been given up by others.¹⁹

2.2 New theories of the Origin of Untouchability :

A) Contempt for Buddhists as the Root of Untouchability -

We have no direct evidence to prove that the Broken Men were the Buddhists. But Dr. Ambedkar has explained this theory in the following words,

“If we accept that the Broken Men were the followers of Buddhism and did not care to return to Brahmanism when it became victorious over Buddhism as easily as other did, we have an explanation for both the questions. It explains why the untouchables regard the Brahmins as inauspicious, do not employ them as their priest and do not even allow them to enter into their quarters. It also explains why the Broken Men came to be regarded as untouchables. The broken men hated the Brahmins because the Brahmins were the enemies of Buddhism and the Brahmins imposed untouchability upon the Broken Men because they would not leave Buddhism. On this reasoning, it is possible to conclude that one of the roots of untouchability lies in the hatred and contempt which the Brahmins created against those who were Buddhists. The hatred and contempt of Brahmins was not directly on the Broken Men, but in general on the Buddhists.²⁰

B) Beef-eating as the Root of Untouchability -

Dr. Ambedkar gave his own theory to explain ‘the root of untouchability in beef eating’. In his opinion, ‘The reason why Broken Men only became untouchables was because in addition to being Buddhists they retained their habit of beef-eating which gave additional ground for offence to the Brahmins to carry their newfound love and reverence to the cow to its logical conclusion.’ Therefore he concluded that the Broken Men were exposed to scorn and contempt on the ground

that they were Buddhists, the main cause of their untouchability was beef-eating.²¹

It is impossible to give an actual date of the birth of untouchability. But the above theories give us an idea about 'the origin of untouchability'.

Dr. Ambedkar expressed the view that if we could answer when cow killing became an offence and beef-eating became a sin, we could fix an approximate date for the birth of untouchability. Dr.D.R. Bhandarkar observed that, cow killing was made a capital offence by the Gupta Kings sometime in the 4th century A.D. Hence Dr. Ambedkar came to the conclusion that untouchability was born sometime about 400 A.D. It was born out of the struggle for supremacy between Buddhism and Brahmanism.²²

2.3 Why Do Untouchables Live Outside the Village?

Before going to explain the nature of untouchability, it is necessary for us to understand 'why do the untouchables live outside the village? It is very important to answer this question. Because so many people including the untouchables are ignorant about it, till now though Dr. Ambedkar has given satisfactory answer to it.

To understand clearly the answer of this question, it is necessary to bear in mind two things. Firstly, primitive society consisted of Nomadic communities. Secondly, primitive society consisted of tribal communities based on blood relationship.²³

In the evolution of primitive society, there was a time in the life of primitive society when there existed two groups - one consisting of settled tribes faced with the problem of finding a group of men who would do the work of watch and ward against the raiders belonging to

Nomadic tribes and the other group consisting of Broken Men from defeated tribes with the problem of finding patrons who would give them food and shelter. Then from this need there was made an unnatural agreement with them. The Broken Men agreed to do the work of watch and ward for the settled tribes and settled tribes agreed to give them food and shelter.

According to primitive notion, an alien could not be admitted inside the area occupied by the homesteads belonging to the tribe. The Broken Men were aliens as they belonged to a tribe which was different from the settled tribe. So they could not be permitted to live in the midst of the settled tribe. Strategically, also it was desirable that these Broken Men should live on the border of the village to face the attacks of the hostile tribes. Both these considerations were decisive in favour of placing their quarters outside the village.²⁴

The same processes must have taken place in India when the Hindu society was passing from Nomadic life to the life of a settled village community.²⁵

2.4 Problem of Untouchability :

Indian constitution has not given any definition of untouchability though it has abolished untouchability. Before going to explain the nature of untouchability, I want to cite some definitions of untouchability. They are as given under.

According to V. R. Shinde, "A nation-wide institution indicating three features of often observing pollution, asking to live outside of village and not giving equal legal protection of law." (1933)

In M. K. Gandhi's opinion, "'Untouchability' means pollution by the touch of certain persons by reason of their birth in a particular state of family." (1933).

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar - "Untouchability is the notion of defilement, pollution, contamination and the ways and means of getting rid of that defilement. It is a case of permanent, hereditary stain which nothing can cleanse." (1948)²⁶

Untouchability is a unique Hindu social institution. The untouchables have been suffering the stigma of untouchability followed by servitude, illiteracy and grinding poverty.²⁷

The word 'Untouchables' appears for the first time in the Census Report of 1911, wherein the Hindu population was divided into three categories, i) Hindus, ii) Animists and iii) Tribals, and the depresses classes or untouchables. According to International Webster New Encyclopaedia Dictionary, Untouchable means, "A member of the lowest caste in India whose touch was formerly considered a defilement by Hindus of higher caste."²⁸

The Census of 1911 went a step ahead and actually laid down ten tests to mark off the untouchables from those who were touchables. Under these tests the census superintendents made a separate enumeration of castes and tribes who

1. denied the supremacy of the Brahmins.
2. did not receive the mantra from Brahman or other recognized Hindu Guru.
3. denied the authority of the Vedas.
4. did not worship the great Hindu Gods
5. were not served by good Brahmins.
6. have no Brahmin priests at all.
7. cause pollution.
8. bury their dead.
9. have no access to the interior of the ordinary Hindu temple.
10. eat beef and do not show reverence for the cow.²⁹

There can be no doubt that primitive society not only did believe in the notion of defilement but the belief had given rise to a live system of well-defined body of rites and rituals.³⁰ There is segregation and isolation in birth, initiation, marriage, death and in dealing with the sacred and the strange.³¹

Untouchability among Hindus is a unique phenomenon, unknown to humanity in other parts of the world. Nothing like it is to be found in any other society- Primitive, Ancient and Modern.³²

The discrimination against the untouchables is practiced by the Hindus on a scale, the extent of which it is impossible for an outsider to imagine. There is no field of life in which the untouchables and the Hindus come into competition and in which the former is not subjected to discrimination. In the matter of social relationship, it takes the form of barriers against dancing, bathing, eating, drinking, wrestling, worshipping. It puts a ban on all common cycles of participation. Even here discrimination steps in the matter of higher posts. All unclean work is done by the untouchables. But all supervisory posts which carry higher salary and which do not involve contact with filth are all filled by Hindus. In this situation rights of citizenship cannot mean the rights of the untouchables. Government of the people and for the people cannot mean Government of the untouchables; equal opportunity for all cannot mean equal opportunity for the untouchables; equal rights for all cannot mean equal rights for the untouchables. All over the country in every nook and corner the untouchable faces handicaps, suffers discriminations, injustices is meted out to the untouchables, the most unprivileged people in India. This type of discrimination has its origin in the Hindu view that the untouchables are an inferior people and

however qualified, their great men are only great among the untouchables.³³

The Hindu village is working plant of the Hindu social order. Dynasty after dynasty tumbles down, revolution succeeds to revolution; Hindu, Pathan, Moghul, Maratha, Sikh, English, all are masters in turn, but the village communities remain the same.³⁴

A large majority of the untouchables in the villages are either village servants or landless labourers. As village servants, they depend upon the Hindus for their maintenance and go from door to door everyday and collect bread or cooked food from the Hindus in return for certain customary services rendered by them to the Hindus. This is the part of their remuneration. A part also of their remuneration consists in quantities of grain given to them by the Hindus at the harvest time. Whenever there is a disagreement between the Hindus and the untouchables, the first thing the Hindus do is to stop giving bread, stop the payment of the harvest share and stop employing the untouchables on any job. The result is that the struggling hoards of the untouchables are face to face with starvation.³⁵

A member of an untouchable community must carry a message of any event in the house of a Hindu such as death or marriage to his relatives living in other villages. He must work at the house of a Hindu when a marriage is taking place, such as breaking fuel and going errands. When the whole village community is engaged in celebrating a general festivity such as Holi or Dasara, the untouchables must perform all menial acts which are preliminary to the main observance. Every Hindu in the village regards himself as a superior person above the untouchables.³⁶

Untouchability is obligatory. Once he is born an untouchable, he is subject to all the disabilities of an untouchable. In untouchability there is no escape. Once an untouchable always an untouchable. Untouchability is an indirect form of slavery. To tell an untouchable 'You are free, you are a citizen, you have all the rights of a citizen' and to tighten the rope in such a way as to leave him no opportunity to realize the ideal is a cruel deception. It is enslavement without making the untouchables conscious of their enslavement. It is slavery though it is untouchability. It is real though it is indirect. It is enduring because it is unconscious.³⁷

Slavery is hundred times better than untouchability. In slavery there is room for education, virtue, happiness, culture or wealth. In untouchability there is none. Untouchability has none of the advantages of a free social order.³⁸

The untouchable is also dependent upon the touchables for the purchase of his necessities of life. In a village all shops belong to the touchables. Trade is, and must necessarily be, in the hands of the touchables. Now, whenever any dispute arises between them the one thing touchables never fail to do is to command the shopkeepers not to sell anything to the untouchables. The touchables constitute an organized conspiracy to bring about a cessation of all economic relationship with untouchables.

The untouchables have no way of earning a living open to them in a village. He cannot do any business such as selling milk or vegetables. Because he is an untouchable, no one will buy these things from him. He cannot take to any trade because, all trades being hereditary, no one will accept his service. His economic dependence upon the Hindu is

complete and the Hindu takes a complete advantage of it whenever the untouchables prove arrogant in the eyes of the Touchables³⁹

The untouchable, while he is a free individual, had neither fair start, nor equal opportunity nor square deal. From this point of view, untouchability is not only worse than slavery but is positively cruel as compared to slavery. The untouchable has no entry in the higher arts of civilization and no way open to a life of culture. He must only sweep. He must do nothing else. Untouchability carries no security as to livelihood. None from the Hindus is responsible for the feeding, housing and clothing of the untouchable. The health of the untouchable is the care of nobody. Indeed, the death of an untouchable is regarded as a good riddance. There is a Hindu proverb which says, 'The untouchable is dead and the fear of pollution has vanished.'⁴⁰

Untouchability is cruelty as compared to slavery because it throws upon the untouchables the responsibility for maintaining himself without opening to him fully all the ways of earning a living.⁴¹

The untouchables, on the other hand, are a disunited body, they are infested with the caste system in which they believe as much as does the caste Hindu. This caste system among the untouchables has given rise to mutual rivalry and jealousy and it has made common action impossible.⁴²

It is well known that there are variations in the forms which untouchability assumes in different parts of India. In some parts of India, untouchables are unseeable i.e. they cause pollution if they come within the sight of a Touchable Hindu. In some parts untouchables are unapproachables i.e. they cause pollution if they come within a certain distance of a Touchable Hindu. Of these unapproachables there are two classes. There is a class of unapproachables who cannot come within a



certain fixed distances of a touchable Hindu. There is another class of unapproachables who cannot come so near a Hindu as to let his shadow fall upon him. In some parts of India an untouchable is not an unseeable or unapproachable. It is only his physical contact which causes pollution. In some parts, an untouchable is one who is not allowed to touch water or food. In some parts an untouchable is one who is not allowed to enter a temple.⁴³

Untouchability which was originated initially in the contempt and hatred of Buddhism by the Brahmanic forces became a part of Hindu social habit observed only by Hindus, as such it became a part of Hindu religion. It has no doubt, intruded into other religions, but it may be by imitation.⁴⁴

Untouchability is described as a sin, blot, curse and stain imposed on a group of people by another group of people. It has sustained a number of jolts, but it is unimpaired. It is deeply rooted in the minds of the caste Hindus that untouchability is but a religious act. It is their misconceived belief in the pollution or defilement by the touch of untouchable that does not permit them to discard the "custom" of untouchability, without looking into its relationship. Now, even an orthodox Hindu also cannot lawfully defend untouchability on the ground of religion. The orthodox caste Hindus still think that it is but a 'permanent stain' on the part of the untouchables, remaining unaffected either by educational, economic or cultural development.⁴⁵

Overt and Covert forms and practices of untouchability are mainly based on caste purity, hatred, contempt, prejudice and jealousy. Overt forms include not allowing the untouchables entry in temples, while Covert forms include not allowing worship in temples which is done at the hands of Brahmin alone.⁴⁶

3. IMPORTANCE OF RELIGION IN INDIA

It is often said that the study of India is the study of religions, the two are inseparable. India is the birth place of three major religions - Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism and of many less pervasive religions, such as those of its tribal peoples. It has also provided an environment where foreign doctrines such as Islam and Christianity have been able to flourish. Orthodox Hinduism is divided into two main sects - Shaivism and Vaishnavism. Deities from the larger Hindu pantheon are worshipped more among the higher castes than the lower.⁴⁷

Three primary tenets of Hinduism are *dharma* - moral and religious duty or law, *karma* - the belief that one's actions in this life and previous lives govern the status of one's next life and *varna* - the explicit ordering of society into classes or castes.⁴⁸

The traditional priests of orthodox Hinduism are Brahmins, a social class or caste formed in about 1000 B.C. It is the duty of Brahmins to preserve the purity of traditional Hinduism. By ensuring their own absolute purity in all matters (purity being more important even than spirituality) Brahmin priests maintained the continuity of the Hindu social order.⁴⁹

In India, religion admits of the widest diversity of interpretation. This could be possible because of the importance attached to the entirely personal nature of experience of the followers. Hinduism, being interpreted in broad sense as a way of life, rather than a religion, could embrace even dissenting concepts like atheism within its fold. This unique variety is not restricted only to the religious concepts. Places of worship consecrated to various religions, their sects and sub-sects in different parts of the country exhibit a variety, which is again a highly typical feature of this land. Very much the same way the religious

thoughts could evolve with permutations and combinations of old concepts and the fresh ones - so was there a discernible line of evolution in the temple structures, which, while adopting certain basic traits also started incorporating several new features, thanks to the possibility of synthesis of cultural and regional diversities among the shifting populations which alone could bring about an enlargement of scope for innovations, within the bounds of traditions which are no doubt, powerful and greatly influential.⁵⁰

Human thoughts and actions are governed equally by sentiments, emotions and beliefs.⁵¹ Once faith or belief comes to occupy the central place in a man's personality, the materialization or the sensuous expression of such conceptions in the form of temples, monasteries, icons, images, symbols, *shlokas*, *mantras*, *yantras* etc. takes place as a natural consequence. It is in this context that the Indian sub-continent still remains a source of attraction, where the religious tradition is preserved, almost in its pristine forms, providing adequate ground materials and resources which fortunately have not undergone much distortions all these years.⁵²

Temples which constitute the most significant architectural forms in India are found almost everywhere upon mountains and hill-tops, in the plains, by the riversides, in the deep ravines and inside the dark and uninhabited caves, amidst thick jungles, on the beaches, in the deserts, on the frontiers as well as in the centre of the villages and towns. They are tiny or huge, ordinary or magnificent, simple or gorgeous, insignificant or attractive.⁵³ In the southern India, almost every village has a temple to the God or Goddess of epidemics.⁵⁴

"The attitude of caste Hindus which is mentioned above, gave birth to many social and religious problems related to untouchables.

‘Deny the entry into Hindu temples to the untouchables’ is one of them. Temple entry movements which were initiated at the beginning of the 20th century, was the considerable result of such an attitude of the caste Hindus.” But before discussing on this problem I would like to throw light on the temple institution in India.

4. MEANING OF TEMPLE

Madras Temple Entry Authorization Act, 1947 [S. 2(i)] provides the following definition of temple.

“‘Temple’ means a place by whatever name known, which is dedicated to, or for the benefit of, used as of right by (the Hindu community or any section) thereof as a place of public religious worship, and includes subsidiary shrines and mandapams attached to such place.”⁵⁵

4.1 Origin of Temples :

“Due to lack of historical and archaeological data, it is quite difficult to ascertain the antiquity of temple worship although it is common belief that temple like structures have been in existence over several millennia.”⁵⁷

The intervening period in the ancient Indian history between the Aryan conquest, C. 1500 B.C. and the advent of the historical Buddha (566 B.C. - 486 B.C.) does not give any archaeological evidence on the existence of temples. This does not mean that there were no temples in India during this period. The main reason was that perishable and less durable media such as bamboo, wood, brick, cloth and clay only were employed for constructions. Another reason as to why durable temples were not constructed before the Mauryan era was that people preferred temporary sheds of worships rather than long-lasting monuments. Even

idols built by them in clay, cloths and wood were used only for a temporary period and then removed and probably immersed in water as being done even today during Durga Puja and Ganesh Chaturthi in several parts of the country.⁵⁸

Building permanent temples came into vogue only during the Mauryan period and mainly due to influence of Buddhism. Buddhist stone reliefs of the first century B.C. fortunately make an attempt to depict the more ancient forms of buildings which had existed. The sculptural reliefs at Sanchi, Bharhut, Bhaja etc. portray the copies of wooden buildings which were common in ancient times. From their foundations, these early structures were largely of wood.⁵⁹

According to Dr. Ambedkar Buddhism was at one time the religion of the majority of the people of India. It continued to be the religion of the masses for centuries. It attacked Brahminism on all sides as no religion had done before. Brahminism was put on the defensive. As a result of the spread of Buddhism, the Brahminism had lost all power and prestige at the royal court and among the people. They were smarting under the defeat they had suffered at the hands of Buddhism and were trying all means to regain their lost power and prestige. Buddhism had made so deep impression on the minds of the masses and had taken such a hold of them that it was absolutely not possible for the Brahmins to fight the Buddhists except by accepting their ways and means and practising the Buddhist creed in its extreme form. After the death of Buddha his followers began setting up the images of the Buddha and building stupas. The Brahmins in retaliation, built temples and installed in them images of Shiva, Vishnu, Krishna and Ram all with the object of drawing away the crowd that was attracted by the

image worship of Buddha. That is how temples and images which earlier had no place in Brahmanism came into Hinduism.⁶⁰

4.2 Classification of Temples :

A very common way by which the temple structures are classified is often based on the nature of the superstructures constructed over the cella. The North Indian temple which is often characterised by a spire which is conical, curvilinear and convex in form and is usually crowned by a vase-shaped member Kalasha is referred to as Nagara. The spire in South India, which exhibits a tower ascending in a series of horizontal terraces and is thus markedly different from Nagara, is called Dravida. Vesara, the third type of temple building, is characterised by its barrel roof and is largely restricted to western India and Deccan. The Brahmanical forms of temples could accordingly be classified into two major groups : the cave and the structural temples. The structural temples could be further subdivided into six categories. They are the four Northern styles, the 'Indo-Aryan' of Fergusson, the Gupta, the Kashmiri and the Nepalese and the two southern styles, the Dravidian and the 'Chalukyan' of Fergusson, better designated as Deccani.⁶¹

The more recent versions of temples found all over India cannot be strictly classified in the above manner since there are several possibilities of overlapping of certain characteristics due to interaction between different cultures and intermingling of people belonging to different regions.⁶²

4.5 Importance of Temples :

The Hindu temple is believed to represent a human body. This reflects the old and almost universal doctrine of basic correspondence between man and cosmos - man as microcosmos and cosmos as

macroanthropos which was also found expressed both in theoretical expression and practical application in Tantric Yoga. A popular Sanskrit saying क्षेत्रम् सरीरा प्रस्तारम् (*kshetram sarira prastaram*) also conveys that temples were made in the form of human body.⁶³

The temple originally conceived as an embodiment of faith to serve the religious and spiritual needs of the community came to be associated with various social, cultural and economic activities as well. Mundane economic functions such as providing employment for workers, masons, artisans, artists, engineers, priests, scholars, teachers etc. for constructing and maintaining these institutions, achieving redistribution by receiving huge donations from the *zamindars* and landlords, functioning as the money-lending institutions at the hours of crises such as drought, inundations etc., organising trade fairs and shandies could be cited as the most common examples of its economic and financial functions. They had also provided inspirations to a number of poets, composers and artists who have richly contributed to the *bhakti* literature, music and dance.⁶⁴

A temple festival was an occasion of great social rejoice. The rich and the poor alike had the benefit of these entertainments. During the festivities, pilgrims were given free food and lodging in the rest houses and in the chouttries attached to the temples. Marriages are even today performed in temples. They were also the meeting grounds for the learned and the Vedic scholars. Important religious texts, treatises and epics covering various aspects of human life and mythology ranging from education and art to renunciation and God realization were discussed here by the specialists in the fields.⁶⁵

As a cultural centre, the temple witnessed the evolution of different schools of arts, architecture, sculptures, painting, music and

dance in different parts of the country which brought out a variety of systems in plastic and performing arts, although all of them stemmed from the same spiritual stock.⁶⁶

5. UNTOUCHABILITY IN THE 20TH CENTURY

No doubt untouchability was in existence since sixth century, but its forms were not so rigorous as the forms of modern origin were. These forms may rightly be called as aggravated forms of untouchability as they were more injurious, humiliating and inhuman in nature. In sum, untouchability has not come into existence all of a sudden with all its forms and practices present in recent period, but they were growing steadily and coming into existence in some part of the country and spreading to other parts in a more or less degree.⁶⁷

Untouchability is ordinarily expected to prevail extensively in rural areas due to the traditional outlook, the people have developed. However, untouchability is also expected to loose its rigidity because of the influence of urban life. The category of villages has no impact on the observance of untouchability in matters which relate to temple, procession, wells, house entry and inter-caste dining. A major portion of the defendants in all the villages is subjected to the stigma of untouchability.⁶⁸

Scheduled Castes were subjected to several forms of social disabilities. In all the areas of social interactions with the caste Hindus, social distance was extensively observed. The caste Hindus who were influenced by the narrow interpretation of the Hindu religion had no option but to treat the scheduled castes as low in status. The scheduled castes were prohibited from the entry into temples and schools. Drawing water from public wells and tanks, participation in religious procession, entry into caste Hindu streets and mixing with caste Hindus

in public places, etc. were denied to them on the grounds that they were not pure resulting from their unclean habits and occupations. In other words, untouchability was observed in every field of social interactions by the caste Hindus. Untouchability continued unabated so long as the idea of purity and impurity continued to work in the minds of the caste Hindus.

This attitude continued to be so till the middle of the twentieth century. In urban areas, the position improved to a great extent. But in the rural areas where the traditional outlook was very strong there was no marked improvement. Besides, the traditional areas of social distance, the practice of untouchability was extended to many new areas which were of public importance such as public parks, hotels, Panchayats etc.

As soon as independence was declared, the popular government, inspired by the Gandhian philosophy and principles, decided to put an end to this evil, particularly, in the rural society.⁶⁹

So the government undertook several steps. The Constitution of India has several provisions to tear up the stigma of untouchability, exploitation and social injustice by roots. Untouchability has been abolished. The scheduled castes have been made equal to the rest of the population in the eyes of law.⁷⁰

6. UNTOUCHABILITY AND RELIGIOUS PROCESSION

By the above discussion about the temples and its importance someone cannot denied that temples has a much importance in the human life. It had been popular as a centre of education and unity in ancient and medieval period (But this picture is changed in modern period. because Brahmins have made a monopoly to the temples). Then

on what reasons the question of entry in temples to the untouchables is arisen in the beginning of the 20th century. It is the important question in the social history of India, which has a need of keen research. because it is believed that India is a country of temples. So it is very strange and unbelievable that such a question has been arisen in this country. Hence, I want to give an explanation of this question in detail as given below :

In the past, the untouchables were completely prohibited to enter the Hindu temples. This traditional religious sanction was implicitly obeyed by these untouchables. No attempt was made either to enter the temples or to allow them inside the temples.⁷¹

Though the untouchables were unhappy over temple prohibition, they had not attempted to gain forcible entry even in places where they were numerically strong. They could not gain anything out of their determination to take part in religious functions.⁷²

Untouchables did not enjoy freedom and equality in the Hindu temples, on the ground that they were unclean and polluted people. Caste Hindus never agreed to do away with the prohibition of temple entry to the Untouchables though they accepted that the untouchables were also the Hindus and the temples were the place of public worship. The untouchables whether illiterate or educated, living in interior or roadside village were not permitted to enter the temples. Hence, some social reformers tried to give the entry in the Hindu temples for the untouchables. They launched the temple entry Satyagrahas for it. It took place initially in Vaikom in 1924. Then it spread to other states of India. "No mass agitation in Kerala acquired so much all India attention and significance in the first quarter of the 20th century as the Vaikom Satyagraha. The Vaikom Satyagraha was launched to extirpate the roots

of religious orthodoxy to establish the inherent rights of every human being to live as equals.”⁷³

7. THE SPREAD OF TEMPLE ENTRY MOVEMENT IN MAHARASHTRA

19th century is regarded very important in Indian history. Because as a matter of fact all political, social, cultural and economic reforms were initiated from the first half of the 19th century. Reform was the base of society in the 19th century and it is an important feature of this century. Agenda of reform movements consisted of problems such as poverty alleviation, religious factors, women's rights and their problems, spread of education etc. However, the problem of untouchability was neglected by the reformers in the first half of the 19th century. But in latter half of the 19th century, many reformers turned attention to this problem and tried to find out solutions for removal of untouchability. They attempted to introduce and implement the great principles of French revolution of 1789 - i.e. liberty, equality and fraternity, to the Indian society.

In Maharashtra, some reformers accepted the challenge of orthodox sections of society. They realised the harmful effects of social fragmentations based on caste distinctions in our society. They all struggled for abolition of untouchability. Temple entry movement in the 20th century was one of the important steps towards it.

“If one peeps into the history of temple entry movement, one finds that the decision of favouring temple entry was originally taken at the 32nd Bharat Mahasabha meeting held in Calcutta in 1917 under the auspices of Dr. Annie Beasant. In 1918 at the annual conference of the All India Anti-Untouchability Committee in Bombay under the Presidentship of Maharaja Sayajirao Gaikwad of Baroda, a resolution

was passed in support of it. It was C. Raman Thampu, a retired High Court Judge, who declared in this conference that there was no need for any separate temples for Ezhavas and they were to be allowed to enter all public temples in Travancore (1917).⁷⁴

Probably this had inspired T. K. Madhavan (an Ezhava), who incorporated the idea in his editorial and published in 'Deshabhimani', and underlined the need for throwing open temples to all classes of people.⁷⁵

In Maharashtra Mr. G. R. Hinganekar (Co-editor, *Dyanprakash*) was the first person who shed light on this question in the beginning of the 20th century. He had arranged a meeting of leaders of all castes in the hall of *Sarvajanik Sabha* in Pune. Their topic of discussion was 'abolition of untouchability and entry in the public temples.' Mr. N. C. Kelkar and L. C. Bhopatkar expressed their views and supported the proposal.⁷⁶

After 1922 awareness related to entry in public temples increased gradually among the social reformers and scholars. They made efforts to awaken the untouchables on this issue. So the movement of temple entry to the untouchables spread rapidly all over Maharashtra. At many places *Satyagrahas* were organized. These *Satyagrahas* had two objectives :

- 1) To obtain the right to social equality for the untouchables, as it was enjoyed by the people of upper castes.
- 2) To prove that by temple entry of the untouchables importance of temple or God will not be diminished in any way. There won't be any defilement.

Following were the *Satyagrahas* launched in the 20th century in Maharashtra :

1. Shirgaon (Ratnagiri) - Hanuman Temple (9th April, 1925, V.D. Savarkar).
2. Amarawati - Ambadevi Temple (1925, Panjabrao Deshmukh).
3. Ratnagiri - Patit Pavan Temple (1928 to 1931, V. D. Savarkar).
4. Pune- Mahadev Temple, Parvati (1929, S. J. Kamble, P. N. Rajbhoj).
5. Kolhapur - Mahalakshmi Temple (1932, Madhavrao Bagal).
6. Nrusinhawadi (Kolhapur)-Datta temple (1932, Madhavrao Bagal).
7. Nasik - Kalaram Temple (1930-1935, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar).
8. Pandharpur - Vitthal Temple (1946-1947, Sane Guruji).

Of the above *Satyagrahas* some were successful and some were not.

However, it should be noted here that since 1930, several attempts have been made by the Government as well as the enlightened Hindus to allow the untouchables to enter the temples.⁷⁷

Yet, neither educated and cultured people in the society had changed their set values nor the untouchables had a long-lasting psychology or aptitude towards this problem. Unfortunately, at many places the untouchables have to face this problem, even today. Hence I have undertaken research on 'Temple entry movements in 20th century Maharashtra.'

When Mahatma Gandhi realised the importance of temple entry movements, he said, "Temple entry is the one spiritual act that would constitute the message of freedom to the untouchables and assure them that they are not out castes before God."⁷⁸

It was the temple entry movement through which the reformers attracted attention of the untouchables as well as the caste Hindus towards natural human rights of the untouchables. Therefore, the study this movement has a great importance.

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