

CHAPTER-II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In the present chapter an attempt has been made to define attitudes, and to take a brief review of literature on changing attitudes between Dalits and Non-Dalits in the context of rural communities in India.

NATURE OF ATTITUDES:

An attitude is an organised and consistent manner of thinking, feeling and reaching with regard to people, groups, social issues, or more generally, any event in one's environment. Its essential components are thoughts and beliefs, feelings and tendencies to react. An attitude is formed when these components are so inter-related that specific feelings and reactions or tendencies become consistently associated with a particular way of thinking about certain persons or events.

Many people develop their attitudes in the process of coping with and adjusting to their social environments. And once developed, they maintain regularity in their modes of reactions facilitating social adjustment. In the early stage of the development of an attitude, its components are not so rigidly systematized that they cannot be modified by new experiences. But later on their organization becomes inflexible and stereotyped, especially for those persons who have been encouraged over long periods of time to react in standard or

acceptable ways to particular events or groups. If a person's attitude becomes firmly set, he is then ready to categorise people or events into one of his emotionally toned patterns of thoughts, so that he fails to either examine or recognize their individuality. It is in this fashion that fixed or stereotyped attitudes reduce the potential richness of a persons environment and constrict his reactions to it.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

After having fully discussed the concept of attitude in a greater detail an attempt will now be made to take a brief review of literature on the changing nature of attitudes between Dalits and Non-Dalits in India.

UNTOUCHABILITY:

N.D.Kamble in his book on 'The scheduled Castes' observes that 'After the independence of India, the Anti-untouchability Act (1955) passed by parliament of India, gave some hope to S.C.s but its implementation was left to the states who were unable to implement because of the local vested interests. Therefore no wonder if it did not serve it's purpose. Otherwise punishing SCs by the upper castes without sanction of Law, by way of beating, harassment, killing, setting their houses on fire, stripping their women naked etc., would not have taken place. These atrocities are rampant in rural areas because of the lawlessness and communal anarchy in the rural areas. It does not mean

atrocities cease to exist in the urban areas. SCs were given reservations in parliament, Assemblies and local self bodies, to redress their grievances, but thirty years of experience of parliamentary democracy in this respect is not encouraging. This is obvious because the political parties nominate only such SC candidate on reserved seat who is acceptable to non-SCs rather than to SC population. Such a candidate cannot but acts according to the whims and fancies of the political party bosses who belong to dominant caste-groups, which commit atrocities on SCs. In spite of thirty-three years of independence, most of the SCs have very low level of education, consequently they are employed only in menial jobs which are looked down upon. Even the government encourages to keep SCs in their traditional occupation, which are socially degraded occupations. Production relationship determines economic exploitation, while social relationship in India determines social oppression which breeds economic and political exploitation. Justice in India is to be bought at a very high price which SCs can hardly afford. Most of the social oppressions and economic exploitation in India are generated in the caste system. Therefore, the destruction of caste itself is of prime necessity to eradicate social and economic evils in the Indian Society.¹

M.N.Srinivas and Andre Beteille's study on 'The Untouchables of India in the scientific American (1965)' concludes that "In the state of Madras, Harijan must live in separate settlements called Cherais, which is half a mile or more away from the main village, and often lies in paddy fields. No orthodox

Brahmin will enter a Cheri, regarding it as ritually polluted. The residential segregation of Harijans is general throughout rural India, and even in the cities there tend to be Harijan ghettos. Keeping Harijans at a distance also applies to religious life. They are not admitted to the major Hindu temples, and a Brahmin priest will not perform services for a Harijan. Traditionally Harijan may not enter a temple used by the upper castes. He is forbidden to draw water from the village well".²

S.L.Sagar in his book on "Hindu Culture and Caste system in India" opines that 'The theoretical aspect of caste system as described in Hindu Culture is also found in practice in the same degree. The Sudras were treated as the most degraded beings by Hindus in every part of the Indian society. The principles of Hindu social philosophy were exactly practised in life. Consequently, the Hindu Society always remained divided into four classes. The separation was so deep rooted that even at the time of invasion from outside, the Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and the Sudras could never become a united people for their defence. The result was that they were made dasas and lived for long years under the domination of foreign powers'.³

CASTE AND CASTEISM:

A.C.Paranjape in his book on 'Caste Prejudice and the Individual', mentions that the basic principles on which the rationale of the structure of caste society is based, a majority

of the students did not believe in the doctrines of Karma and Rebirth. This disbelief is more common among the lower castes than among the higher castes. The situation is not seen as extremely serious; the struggle between the rich and the poor is regarded to be more serious than the rivalries between castes. Only a negligible number of individuals think that a prestige in society depends on caste. In spite of the traditional association between castes and occupations, there are no significant differences between castes in grading the prestige of occupations. A greater proportion of the members of the 'lower' castes tolerate the idea of intercaste marriages than those of 'upper' castes. Whereas a large majority of Brahmins and Marathas feel proud of their caste, a majority of Harijans feel indifferent or humiliated with reference to their caste membership. It is very significant to note that the choice of ideals and role models among the young men and women is very highly influenced by Caste membership. For example, Ambedkar was almost the exclusive choice of Mahars.⁴

In India, rivalries between different caste-groups add significance to the internal conflicts from the point of view of religious, linguistic and regional divisions of the nation. As such, caste and casteism deserve thorough study and analysis. Anthropologists and sociologists, both from India and abroad, have written volumes about the nature of the caste system. However, there are very few social psychological studies attempting to explore the nature of inter-caste relations, attitudes and prejudices. The investigator studied the college students and

the leaders of the next generation. It explored the opinions, attitudes, and self concepts of the individual as conditioned by his membership of the sub-caste and caste-groups. The observations are examined and interpreted in the light of social, psychological theories of prejudice, and in the context of sociological and anthropological studies of the changing structure of contemporary Hindu society.⁵

S.L.Sagar's study on 'Caste system in India, in the Hindu Culture and Caste system in India' concludes that the caste system of Hindus is a sort of a crime which has no means for its expiation. The caste system and blind beliefs gripped the minds of Hindus so much that they could not think of their down-fall. That is why Dr.Radhakrishnan said 'The cause of a society's destruction lies not so much in other things as to being gripped by genuine policies and the forms of blind beliefs what the spiritual truth is, may be permanent; all other rules change according to the requirements of an age, and even moral rules or ideals are not eternal. They are relative to the social requirements and circumstances. Whether a moral system is good or bad depends upon the fact that how far it does benefit to mankind. The rules or institutions which have lost their vitality, must be eliminated. The caste system is a similar institution and its evil consequences are not hidden to any man.'⁶

"It is evident that the Hindus' caste system did harm to each and every individual, entirely to our society and nation in social, economic, political and cultural spheres. It was, then, felt that caste and untouchability be abolished. Now caste system is doing greater harm than ever. It has become a highly controversial problem. It, therefore, needs a sound judgement. It is foolish to cling the old traditions when they are openly doing harm to all people. To believe in old customs and manners without making a distinction between What is good or What is harmful is entirely false. By forgetting the harmful traditions let people do establish an egalitarian society and at once destroy the caste and untouchability prevailing in our country".⁷

INTER-CASTE ATTITUDE:

S.S.Anant in his book on 'The changing concept of Caste in India', mentions that 'The first major socio-psychological study of inter-caste attitudes, examines intensively the changes in social stratification, as a result of the changes in the caste system and abolition of untouchability. General attitudes concerning the caste system, attitudes toward Harijan and attitudes regarding housing, voting inter-caste marriage, etc., are studied analytically in the light of the impact made by the explosive spread of technology and education, socio-economic growth, urbanization and adoption of democratic ideas. Concentrating mainly on the Psychological aspect of caste-system, the author

investigates rigorously the contemporary attitudes towards it through an attitude survey administered among rural and urban population of three localities of North India, representing a wide range of castes and educational attainment. He finds that the caste-system is breaking down in its traditional sense but regarding private life, notably marriage, conservatism it continues to retain.⁸

S.S.Anant's study on 'Attitudes toward special Privileges for Scheduled Castes in Psychological Studies,(1971)'; maintains that "the caste-Hindus tend to resolve cognitive imbalance created by conflicting castes, and legal rules though differentiation between the spheres which affect them personally more and those which so affect them less. The proportion of people favouring provision of special education as facilities to the depressed classes is the highest, while the proportion favouring the reservation of Parliamentary and legislative seats is the lowest. Still, it is an encouraging sign that a majority of our people favoured the reservation. The inter-caste differences in people to these questions follows the traditional caste lines more closely than the responses to questions dealing with other areas of interaction referred to above".⁹

Chintamani Lakshmana in his book on 'Caste Dynamics in Village India', says that "the community development programme is recognized as an effective and powerful technique for bringing about an improvement in the living patterns of the rural masses.

Its success, however, depends upon the spontaneous co-operation and participation of the people. It is evident from his study that considerably large percentage of rural people are aware of the existence of community development programmes. The small number of people who have no knowledge of these programmes is, however, drawn from the lower strata of the society like the Harijan castes. But about large percentage of the people, uniformly from all the caste groups, think that community development programmes are helping to improve community life in the villages. The majority of the upper castes think that the community development programme is tackling the problem of untouchability well, a fact which is confessed by the Harijan castes. Upper castes in general, and the twice-born castes in particular, feel that the community development programmes have gone a long way in improving the existing relations between different castes. Lower castes, on the other hand, do not wholly subscribe to this view."¹⁰

STATUS OF DALITS:

B.R. Ambedkar in his book on 'who were the shudras', studied only two questions namely : 1) who were the shudras? and 2) How they came to be the fourth varna of the Indo-Aryan society? His findings are given as follows:

- 1) The shudras were one of the Aryan Communities of the solar race.

- 2) There was a time when the Aryan society recognised only three varnas, namely, Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas.
- 3) The shudras did not form a separate Varna. They formed a part of the Kshatriya Varna in the Indo-Aryan Society.
- 4) There was a continuous feyd between the Shudra Kings and the Brahmins in which the Brahmins were subjected to many tyrannies and indignities.
- 5) As a result of the hatred towards the Shudras generated by their tyrannies and oppressions, the Brahmins refused to perform the Upanayana Ceremonies of the Shudras.
- 6) Owing to the denial of Upanayana, the Shudras who were Kshatriyas became socially degraded, fell below the rank of the Vaishyas, and thus came to form the fourth varna".¹¹

Sharad Mahatekar's study on Exploitation of Dalits in 'Dainik sandhya' (1971) : says that "In Yerengaon village in Nagpur District of Maharashtra a scheduled caste youth was offered as a sacrifice to propitiate the Gods".¹² "A scheduled caste boy in Kanchi-Kacherla village in Krishna District of Andhra Pradesh was burnt alive by higher castes on grounds of suspicion. The very conservative statistics of the ministry of Home Affairs shows that as many as one thousand scheduled caste people were murdered by higher castes people during 1967-69 alone".¹³ "similarly, in

the M.G.Polytechnic near Agra in Uttar Pradesh scheduled caste students were forced by the higher caste students to leave the institution. Those who remained in spite of the harassment were severely beaten resulting in loss of life. In the same place scheduled caste students were forced to polish the shoes of higher castes. On the annual day when a scheduled caste student helped himself from a plate of refreshments laid on a table, he was severely beaten up by higher caste students".¹⁴

A.C.Paranjape's study on 'Conversions to Buddhism in Caste Prejudices and Individuals (1970)' shows that "the opinions of Hindus and the Nava-Buddhis about the relation between Hinduism and Buddhism would be of great important in view of the relations between the two groups. If the Nava-Buddhas also regard Buddhism as a part of Hinduism, there would be smaller chances of hostility between these groups. On the other hand, if the two groups would assert a separate identity, the relations are more likely to be strained. In view of this an attempt was made to explore the opinions of the students as to whether they regard Buddhism to be a part of Hinduism or not. Brahmins are most favourable to the view that Buddhism is a part of Hinduism and that the Harijans are less favourable to this view as compared to both Brahmins and Harijans".¹⁵

These are some of the studies which have thrown some light on the nature of intricate relationship between Dalit and Non-Dalit communities in Maharashtra in particular and in India in general.

On the basis of the nature of the problem of the present study spelled out in the first chapter, and a brief review of literature taken in the second chapter, an attempt will now be made in the third chapter to present the methodology of the present study.

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