

CHAPTER-V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

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In the foregoing pages we have made an attempt to study the changing practices of untouchability. The phenomenon of untouchability cannot be properly understood unless we saw the nature of the caste-system and untouchability during the various periods of Indian History. In the first chapter we saw the practice of untouchability was definitely known to India during the period of the Dharmasutras. There were sections in the society which were treated as untouchables and were found to be residing outside the main localities.

Ever since the appearance of inequalities in India we find a parallel tradition, though not very influential, opposing the system of inequality. There were a number of revolts on individual and organizational basis, socio-religious reforms and other external and internal sources of changes, but their impact was almost negligible and the practice of untouchability persisted and even assumed a very deplorable state in course of time. It is only during British or modern period that new values of individual liberty, equality before law and democracy brought about new awakening among different sections of Indian society. The upper

caste social reformers worked to remove the disabilities of the untouchables. The untouchables also awakened and followed their leaders in the struggle for achieving the fundamental human rights. It is only after independence that the rate of change accelerated and the practice of untouchability atleast in public was abolished. The process of change is rapid in some respects and slow in other and it is always fascinating for sociologists to study the phenomenon of change.

With the above background in mind, we tried to study the reality in a village peculiar in many respects, such as the composition of the population, numerical strength of untouchables, economic conditions, degree of modernization and social consciousness created among Dalits after Mangaon Parishad. The village Mangaon is a representative of such villages having considerable impact of urbanization, industrialization, social and political developments. Therefore, it was very interesting to study such a village in the context of changing untouchability.

The findings of our investigation can be summarized very briefly as under :

- 1) Economic independence creates a self-respect and the so-called lower caste get themselves freed from the dominance of the upper caste.
- 2) Conversion to Buddhism helps in boosting-up the morale of the people. The self image of such people enable them to be conscious of their strength, unity, identity, cultural status etc.
- 3) Politicization, atleast temporarily, makes the people forget their caste differences and creates vertical divisions crossing the caste boundaries.
- 4) Legal measures wipe out the outward practices of untouchability.
- 5) Education reservation of seats in legislation and services and such other facilities or special treatment helps in enhancing a social and cultural status of the untouchability.
- 6) Inspite of all these outward changes the consciousness of caste seems to be a great obstacle to turn the caste society into a

class society. Somehow the caste consciousness persist and this is problem area as far as modernization of Indian society is concerned.

In conclusion, we can say that the educational progress, economic independence, change of occupation, employment on respectable jobs and such other material conditions will change the social status of the former untouchables. However, we are pessimistic after close observation of the realities in the community, regarding the complete abolition of the caste system as a whole or the rate of fundamental change in the outlook of various caste groups towards each other and of course the 'spirit' of untouchability.