

# Babasaheb Dr. B. R Ambedkar and His Relevance in Anthropology: Caste and Untouchability Specific Analysis

DEBASHIS DEBNATH<sup>†</sup>

*School of Ambedkar's Thoughts and Philosophy,  
Dr. B.R. Ambedkar University of Social Sciences,  
Dr. Ambedkar Nagar (Mhow), Indore 453441, Madhya Pradesh  
E-mail: ddebnathster@gmail.com*

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**ABSTRACT:** Coming of an untouchable community, Babasaheb Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, well known as icon of human rights movement, initiated several social reformative movements to bring about social change. He highlighted social inequality, in Hindu social order and caste system from historical and anthropological point of view and produced an excellent anthropological chronicle. Ambedkar's unique analysis of untouchability comes from his years of experience as a student at Columbia University. His famous research paper presented in the conference at the university in 1916 inspired several anthropologists for further study on caste system in India, in which he found out the origin of the caste system and rigid endogamy is major cause of *jati* formation as a closed system. Due to imposition of Brahminical administration like endogamy, child marriage, restriction on widows and liberalization of widower, the caste formation took place. Attempt has been made in this paper showing contribution and directions of Dr. Ambedkar in conformity with anthropology, with special emphasis on his novel thoughts on untouchability, caste system and on the Sudra.

## INTRODUCTION

Bharat Ratna Babasaheb Dr. B.R. Ambedkar (1891-1956) is a great thinker, academician, philosopher, lawyer and renowned intellectual who is the Chief Architect of Indian Constitution and served India taking up leadership for the upliftment of the depressed, under-privileged and marginalized classes in society. He hails from a poor family of the Mahar community of Maharashtra, who were groveling under inhuman conditions. There were poverty and injustice, illiteracy and exploitation, tyranny and oppression. He himself suffered terribly at the hands of the social evils like caste and untouchability. He was denied respect and human rights in social relationship.

<sup>†</sup> Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Chair Professor and Dean

Inevitably, such social environment led him to uphold the right of human dignity, liberty and equality. His chief aim of life was to meet the challenge of wrongly idealized social relations, which threatened the whole of human existence and shook the foundations of a moral and just social order. He saw clearly that the prevailing ethical and political drawbacks sprang from a total misconception of human relationship. It was in this conviction and with an optimistic faith in human goodness, love and truth, that he entered upon his sacred mission. The aim of his mission was to arouse in men and women the passion for right relations. His purpose was practical rather than speculative and his philosophy of life was essentially a development and evolution under certain conditions and events prevailed in Indian society (Jatava, 1965: 42-43). He

spent many years studying a range of subjects from economics and anthropology to politics, law and religion. He led a number of social movements to secure human rights to the oppressed and depressed sections of the society. Major contribution of Babasaheb is social justice and analysis of untouchability and caste system. The modern idea of social justice is concerned with ushering in a new social order without any border which could secure rights and advantages for the different sections of society in general and for the vulnerable and underprivileged sections of society in particular. As a whole, it is correctly said that any genuine democratization process can be started in India only through social justice. In the modern social science Social justice is a very key concept in theories and practices.

Ambedkar's unique analysis of untouchability comes from his student years spent at Columbia University, from 1913-1916, living in an exciting intellectual milieu. Columbia University was in its golden age when important figures such as James Shotwell, Edwin Seligman, John Dewey and Franz Boas were at that time working at Columbia and were on the way to leaving a permanent mark in American academia. The most prominent of these intellectuals were Dewey and Boas whose influence was expanding. Boas became widely known as the father of modern anthropology and set a trend in the way communities across the globe were to be studied. While there have been numerous works focusing on Ambedkar and Dewey, not much has been said about the intellectual relationship between Boas and Ambedkar. His main object of study was economics, but Ambedkar did not limit himself to this discipline. Ambedkar's student records at Columbia show that he took courses in sociology, politics, philosophy, history and even two courses on anthropology that lasted a whole academic year. From 1915 to 1916, Ambedkar attended the course on 'General Ethnology: Primitive Man and Physical Environment' and 'General Ethnology: Primitive Religion, Mythology and Social Organisation'. Alexander Goldenweiser led these courses and it is here where we can establish a connection between Ambedkar and Boas (Chairez-Garza, 2018: 5).

Coming of an untouchable community, Babasaheb, well known as icon of human rights

movement, initiated several social reformative movements to bring about social change. He showed his all kinds of sufferings, hatred and negligence of an individual in a society, living at the bottom or lowest rung of the social stratigraphy, by the upper sections of the society is a good life sketch or real-life situation in his 20-page autobiographical life history entitled "Waiting for a Visa", written in the period of 1935-36, as an excellent anthropological chronicle to express interactions and interpersonal relations within and outside the community for getting opportunities for up-bringing in the wider world. This might be comparable with Durkheimian Social system and Redcliffe-Brownian Social Structure. This consists of reminiscences related to his experiences with untouchability as well as it reveals a picture of clear ethnic boundary of that time in regional ethnic identities, which is a key factor for social dynamism or an important aspect of civilizational continuum (a parallel analysis in Redfieldian thoughts). Due to such anthropological iconography of an individual, it is better to recognize him an epitome of anthropology.

To the outer world Indian society is viewed as society constituted by caste institution with social hierarchy. Dr. Abhijit Guha mentioned in his papers (2018, 2022) that Ambedkar dealt with the works of four famous scholars – Emile Senart (1847-1928), John Nesfield (1836-1919), S. V. Ketkar (1884-1937) and H. H. Risley (1851-1911) – in his study of Indian Caste System and without being biased, pointed out the shortcomings in their understanding of the essential feature of the caste system in his famous paper, pure and academic discourse, 'Castes in India: Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development', presented at an Anthropology Seminar, organized by Dr. A. A. Goldenweiser, Columbia University, on 9th May, 1916 (later published in *Indian Antiquary*, vol. XLVI, May 1917). However, even while criticizing these authorities on the subject, Ambedkar did not fail to observe the positive aspects of their contributions (Guha, 2022: 131). But it is a great irony that Ambedkar's views on caste were also neglected and overlooked in the anthropology and sociology curricula in the Indian universities and colleges. Ambedkar is still a nobody in the syllabi of anthropology in India. Dr. Guha also mentioned that G. S. Ghurye in his famous book '*Caste and Class in India*' (1957) referred the name of

Ambedkar only once, on page 226, and that too as “the leader of the Scheduled Caste” even though the author discussed at length the importance of endogamy in characterizing India’s caste society. None of Indian or Western anthropologists or other social scientists gave academic importance to B. R. Ambedkar’s view on caste. What was most interesting is the absence of the contributions of Dr. Ambedkar in these discourses of many scholars of Western sociologists like Louis Dumont (1911-1998) in his famous book *Homo Hierarchicus* (1966), Mckim Marriott, M. N. Srinivas and Marxist scholars on caste system in India. The students of anthropology, sociology, history and political science in the Indian universities have to know a lot about Louis Dumont, H. H. Risely, J. H. Hutton, L. S. S. O’Malley, G. S. Ghurye, D. D. Kosambi, Nirmal Kumar Bose, Ramkrishna Mukherjee, M. N. Srinivas, Surajit Sinha, André Beteille, Rajni Kothari, Mckim Marriott, Ronald Inden, Bernard Cohn, Nicholas Dirks, and Romila Thapar on caste and Indian social system, but not about B. R. Ambedkar! Ambedkar was treated only as a leader of the Dalits (Depressed classes) and one of the Constitution makers, but he was not given the status of a scholar in the elite discourses by the social scientists working on India. Ironically, Ambedkar remained an ‘untouchable’ in the Brahminical and European scholarly discourses on caste in India. Ambedkar still does not figure in Indian anthropology (Guha., 2022:132).

The paper attempts to discuss his contributions on Hindu social order, the origin of untouchability, caste formation and rationality of the Sudra in anthropological sense.

#### AMBEDKAR’S THOUGHTS ON HINDU SOCIAL ORDER

The Hindu religion covers over two-thirds of the population of India with its castes and sub-castes, posed a serious problem in any effort towards unification of India socially, economically and politically. The Hindu religion itself is not homogeneous. It is a conglomeration of religious units leading to serious repercussions for political and social cohesion. A close study of the Hindu society would reveal that caste forms the inner citadel of Hinduism. It is the steel frame of Hinduism. The outstanding

features of Hindu society are: (1) Segmental division of society; (2) Hierarchy; (3) Restrictions of feeding and social intercourse; (4) Civil and religious disabilities and privileges of the different sections; (5) Lack of unrestricted choice of occupation; and (6) Restrictions on marriage (Ghurye, 1957).

Dr. Ambedkar had his own perceptions and diagnosis of the Hindu religion and its social order. Dr. Ambedkar studied the ancient social and religious literature of the Hindu scriptures like the Vedas, the Upanishada, the Gita, the Mahabharat, and the Ramayana. But he was disgusted with social evil like Caste and Untouchability in society, which led him to withdraw himself from Hinduism. He made a comprehensive enquiry about the then existing Hindu social order and argued that the ‘Hindu Social Order’ had the sanction of Hindu religion and was formed on the basis of Hindu religious norms and these were deeply rooted in the system of Hindu *Chaturvarna* (or four classes). In his works that included “Philosophy of Hinduism”, “Hindu Social Order: Its essential principles” and “Annihilation of Caste”, he attempted at explaining, interpreting and criticizing the Hindu Social Order and came up with his own normative ideas of an alternative system of society which was to be based on justice. In his essay “Hindu Social Order: Its essential principles”, analyzed that Hindu social system was constituted by the four *varnas* on the basis of the different vocations. This was the open system, so one individual can move from one *varna* to another on the basis of the quality required to achieve the status. Later in the Vth Century A.D., caste system was formed as the ascribed status. The caste system is the foundation by the religious sanction of Manusmriti. Dr. Ambedkar described Hinduism as a positive religion. The distinctive feature of positive religion is that it is not evolved like a tribal religion but is purposely formed on a certain occasion in history. It has its own rules of divine governance. It claims that its value system is also divine. It has its own codes of conduct and these codes determine the religious, ritualistic and daily practices of the individual. Dr. Ambedkar pointed out that such a religion does not make a distinction between morality and religion. This religion had its own written codes of Brahmanism in India. This shows that Hindu religion was not a *sanatana* religion but a revival of

Brahmana religion as ritualistic and a defender of *Varna vyavastha*. This religion believed that the caste system is a divine plan. (Ambedkar, 1987:25).

According to him, human rights did not find any place in the social order, that was based primarily on class or *varna* and not on individuals. He explained that originally there were four *varnas*: “Brahmins (Priest)”, “Khastriya (Warriors)”, “Vaishyas (Traders)” and “Shudras (Servants)”, later untouchables were added as the fifth class (Panchama, Ati-sudra or Achhuta). The Untouchables were treated as the ‘marginals’ of the society. The Hindu religion had imposed upon them the myth of their own natural inferiority and thereby had put them in a ‘submissive silence’ or in a ‘culture of silence’. However, he maintained that the social order was not limited to five divisions only; these got further divided into sub-class or sub-castes resulting into hundreds and thousands of them. Dr. Ambedkar says: by the Hindu social system the communities are placed in an ascending scale of reverence and a descending scale of contempt. The Hindu caste system is a pyramid like social structure in which the majority of the lowest castes are forcibly kept at the bottom of the pyramid, condemned to manual professions and forced to serve the castes above them. According to him, Brahmins were the originators of this unnatural institution founded and maintained through unnatural means. Brahmin class first raised the structure of caste while making themselves into caste, the Brahmins by virtue of this, created non-Brahmin caste. The caste system is based on the division of people into social groups in which civil, cultural and economic rights of each individual caste are pre-determined or ascribed by birth and made hereditary. The assignment of civil and economic rights is unequal and hierarchical and the most important feature is that it provides for regulatory mechanism to enforce social and economic organizations through the instruments of social ostracism and the caste system is reinforced further with justification and support from philosophical elements in the Hindu religion (Ambedkar, 1944; Ambedkar, 1979:212).

According to Dr. Ambedkar, the graded social order which is advocated by Hindu philosophy is practically useless. It does not have utility value. Dr. Ambedkar tried to find out the reasons behind non-

cultivation of liberty, equality and fraternity by Hindu philosophy. He argued that Hindu religion is a worshipper of a superman i.e. Brahmana. It is a Brahmana centered religion. All rules and codes of conduct are formed to please the Brahmana caste. This religion and the Hindu social order, which is based on this religion, do not allow the individual belonging to castes other than the Brahmana to develop his qualities and skills. Besides that, this society does not create an atmosphere where an individual can develop himself.

In the same essay he analysed the position of an individual in relation to the society and stated that:— “The unit of Hindu society is not the individual Brahmin or the individual Khastriya or the individual Shudra or the individual Panchama. Even the family is not regarded by the Hindu Social Order as the unit of society except for the purpose of marriage and inheritance. The unit of Hindu society is the class or *varna*” (Ambedkar, 1987: 99).

From the above position of individual in the Hindu society, he forwarded his argument that:—” ... there is no room for individual merit and no consideration of individual justice. If the individual has a privilege it is not because it is due to him personally. The privilege goes with the class and if he is found to enjoy it, it is because he belongs to that class. Contra wise, if an individual is suffering from a wrong, it is not because by his conduct he deserves it. The disability is the disability imposed upon the class and if he is found to be laboring under it, it is because he belongs to that class” (Ambedkar, 1987: 99-106).

While summarizing the centrality of the philosophy of Hinduism, Ambedkar observed that the Hindu Social Order neither put “Society at centre’ nor it accepted ‘individual at centre’ and thus the Hindu social order failed the test of either justice or utility. He commented that:— “The centre of the ideal (of Hindu social order) is neither individual nor society, It is a class, it is a class of supermen called Brahmins .... It holds that to be right and good the act must serve the interest of a class of supermen, namely the Brahmin. Anything which serves the interest of this class is alone entitled to be called good” (Ambedkar, 1987: 72).

His writings and speeches revealed that he listed three basic principles on which the existing social

order was grounded upon. Ambedkar also examined the religious texts to understand the reason behind class division and he found that the class system was able to survive so long because of religious sanctity. According to religious texts, different classes 'were created from the different parts of the Divine body' and thus 'it must be Divine will that they should remain separate and distinct' (Ambedkar, 1987:100). He was also of the view that in such a social framework there was no distinction between legal and moral aspects of the society and thus what was treated morally as right and good, there was legal sanction for that too (Throat and Kumar, 2008).

The first principle was the 'principle of graded inequality', this principle, the fundamental one, divided the society both vertically and horizontally. As per this principle the society was made hierarchical with Brahmins occupying the top rank followed by Khasatriya, Vaishya, Shudra and Ati-Shudra or Untouchables. The principle of gradation had spiritual, moral and legal sanction and thus there was no sphere of life which was not regulated by this principle. He also observed that this principle had encompassed human life in all spheres including social, political and economic realm (Ambedkar, 1987:111). He commented that:—"Nowhere has society consecrated its occupations the ways of getting a living. Economic activity has always remained outside the sanctity of religion. Feudalism with its gradation, with its lords, villains and serfs, was purely social in character. There was nothing sacred about it. The Hindus are only people in the world whose social relations are consecrated by religion and made sacred, eternal and inviolate" (Ambedkar, 1978:129).

Graded inequality was also accompanied by hierarchical and graded entitlements to various rights to different classes. The entitlements increased in ascending order from Untouchables to Brahmins. In this hierarchical arrangement, rights and privileges of one class became disabilities or denial of rights to the lower class particularly for untouchables (Throat and Kumar, 2008: 4-5). Throat and Kumar (2008) described it as the phenomenon of 'fixation of rights' where it left no scope of individual capabilities, choices and inclinations. In other societies, economic stratifications existed but there was freedom to move from one occupation to another. Such free mobility

prevented social isolation and exclusion. Prevention of such mobility hindered establishment of a free social order (Throat and Kumar, 2008: 4).

The second principle that Ambedkar put forward in interpreting Hindu Social Order was that the varnas were based on occupations and since the varnas had Divine sanction, each class has to follow the work assigned to his or her class. Individuals had no choice to change his occupation and punishments were given for violating the principle of occupation (Ambedkar, 1987: 111-113). Thus, these three principles completely disregard individual's ability or merit and thus exhibit an 'unjust' society where mobility is severely restricted in all spheres of human life. Such a society, Ambedkar argued cannot be an 'ideal society' and thus he felt that the existing social order needs attention. He not only suggested the total annihilation of caste or caste-based society, his point of contention was to form an 'ideal or just society that would be classless or casteless'

His thoughts can be summarized as follows:

1. In his essay "*Hindu Social Order: Its Essential Principles*", his views were that 'Hindu Social Order' had the sanction of Hindu religion and structured in four varnas and later untouchables were added as the fifth class (Panchama), in the pyramid social structure, where the fewer dominating castes at the top and the larger under-privileged castes at the bottom. (Religious sanction)
2. This was class based. So this has the social mobility from one order to another with the achievement of the quality. (Social mobility)
3. Due to imposition of Brahminical administration like endogamy, child marriage, restriction on widows and liberalization of widower, the caste formation took place. (*Jati*/ caste formation)
4. In the Hindu social order, they have neither put society at the centre, nor the individual, they are concerned with the group in the ladder, which Ambedkar explained as the 'Graded inequality', that the gradation of one group is superior to other on the basis of various entitlements, which are increased in ascending order from Untouchables to

Brahmins. (Graded inequality)

5. He said the rights were not given to the individual and the individuals are same in the same group. In this hierarchical arrangement, rights and privileges of one class became disabilities or denial of rights to the lower class particularly for untouchables resulting into the discrimination with ascending order of reverence and contempt on the descending order. As per him, the contemporary Hindu social order denied three basic rights: 'physical weapon' (by denying right of military service), 'political weapon' (denial of political power to protect them) and 'moral weapon' (denial of right to get educated). (Rights denied)
6. Inter-marriage and inter-dinning are the best solutions for annihilation of caste system. (Abolition of caste).

*Chaturvarnya* presupposes classification of people into four definite categories. Ambedkar strongly objected to this. To him, modern science has shown that lumping together of individuals into a few sharply marked off classes is a superficial view of man not worthy of serious consideration. He points out that there is no provision in the scheme of *Chaturvarnya* to safeguard the interests of the wards from the misdeeds of the guardian. He also points out how in India upper three Varnas had agreed to beat down the Sudras. Education and means of defense are needed by everyone for his self-preservation. The *Chaturvarnya* scheme forbade both things to the Sudras. The lower classes in India have been completely disabled for direct action on account of the system of *Chaturvarnya* (Bharill, 1977: 137-138).

#### *Untouchability*

Dr. Ambedkar wrote a book on “ *The Untouchables: Who Were They and Why They Became Untouchables*” (first published in 1948, also cited in Vol. 7 of *Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches* published by the Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, 1990 ) as a sequel to his book “*The Shudras: Who They Were and How They Came to Be the Fourth Varna of the Indo-Aryan Society*”(1946), in which he claimed his theory on the origin of ‘Untouchability’ as an altogether novel

one and theorized that untouchability originated because of the deliberate policy of the upper-caste Brahmanas. At first, Ambedkar had surveyed Non-Hindus to investigate the origin of Untouchability by examining it from the Primitive society. He showed the distinctive features between primitive and modern societies as follows:

Primitive society consisted of a nomadic tribal community, based on consanguineous relationship, while modern society consisted of settled local communities based on territorial affiliation. It was the result of the fact that the earliest form of the Wealth held by primitive society was cattle. The cattle had to move always from one place to another. But when wealth discovered, namely land, primitive people became fixed in their abode. They became a settled community. Primitive society was fundamentally tribal meant two things. First, every individual in primitive society belonged to a tribe. Outside the tribe, no individual had any existence. Secondly, tribal organization, being based on common kinship an individual born in one tribe could not join another. Thus, primitive society developed in two ways – from a tribal to territorial community and from a nomadic to settled community (Ambedkar, 1948: 127). According to Ambedkar, primitive society, in its transition from nomadic life to settled community, was marked by two important features: (1) All tribes in primitive society could not settle at one place, at one time. Some of them became settled and some remained nomadic. The settled tribes of primitive society faced the problem of their defense. (2) The normal life was always disturbed by the organized raids. A tribe instead of being completely annihilated was defeated and routed and in most of the cases and a defeated tribe became broken into bits. The defeated tribes, after their wealth was snatched and other things were stolen, roamed astray in all directions in the land. Thus arose a group of people known as the Broken Men (Ambedkar, 1948: 29-30). In primitive society where tribe was fighting against tribe, a stray collection of Broken Men was always in danger of being attacked. They did not know where to go for shelter. They did not know who would attack them and to whom they could go for protection. Thus, before the Broken Men, there arose the problem of food, shelter and protection (Ambedkar, 1948: 30). This continuous tribal warfare

gave birth to broken men who were defeated. Ambedkar presumed that the broken getting no place to go lived at the periphery of the village and served the settled community by guarding them against Barbarians in exchange for food and shelter. But why broken lived outside is questioned by him. Maybe the notion that outside the tribal system without any blood relation, common kinship no one was allowed to live within the settled community was the reason for broken men settling at the edges.

Hence, there was a time in the life of primitive society, Ambedkar points out, when there existed two groups, one group consisting of 'Settled Tribes' faced with the problem of finding a body 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. Coming to the solutions for the two groups regarding their problems, Ambedkar said, 'Although we have no written text of a contract coming down to us from antiquity we can say that two struck a bargain whereby the Broken Men agreed to do the work of watch and ward for the settled Tribes and the Settled Tribes agreed to give them food and shelter. Indeed, it would have been unnatural if such an arrangement had not been made between the two, especially when the interest of the one required the operation of the other (Ambedkar, 1948: 30).

According to primitive notions only persons of the same tribe could live together. An alien could not be admitted inside the area occupied by the homesteads belonging to the tribe. The Broken Men were aliens. They could not be permitted to live in the midst of the settled tribes. From the strategic point of view also it was desirable that these Broken Men should live on the border of the village so as to meet the raids of the hostile tribes. Ambedkar concludes that in case of India, the same processes must have taken place when the Hindu society was passing from nomadic life to life of a settled village community. There must have been in Primitive Aryan Society the settled Tribes and the Broken Men. The former founded the village and formed the village community, while the latter lived in separate quarters, outside the village. Ambedkar says that the untouchables of Hindu India were originally only Broken Men and it was due

to this fact that had to live outside the settled village community (Ambedkar, 1948: 31).

Ambedkar thinks, had there not been Buddhism and had the Broken Men been stopped from beef-eating and induced to worship the cow, there would have been no Broken Men in the form of untouchables. There was as in India, there were certain difficulties. There was, as he says, not only a struggle between the Settled Tribesmen and the Broken Men; but there was also a struggle for supremacy between the Brahmanas and the Buddhists. This antipathy prevented the assimilation of the untouchables % the Broken Men, among the proper village communities. The Broken Men, instead of disappearing in the proper village community, became untouchables for the two reasons; (1) that they embraced Buddhism and (2) that they retained the habit of beef-eating (Jatava, 1965: 64-65).

The racial theory of the origin of untouchability contains two elements: (1) that the untouchables are non-Aryans, non-Dravidian aboriginals, and (2) that they were conquered and subjugated by the Dravidians. Ambedkar does not agree with this theory. According to occupational theory of untouchability, the point is to be found in the unclean and filthy occupations of the untouchables. He does not agree with this view. He finds both racial and occupational theories untenable. Just as untouchability has no racial basis, so also has it no occupational basis. He put forth two new theories regarding the origin of untouchability.

#### *Origin of Untouchability*

The new theory of the origin of untouchability may be summarized as follows: (1) There is no racial difference between the Hindus and the untouchables; (2) The distinction between the Hindus and the untouchables, in the original form, before the advent of untouchability, was the distinction between Tribesmen and Broken Men from alien tribes. It is the Broken Men who subsequently came to be treated as untouchables; (3) There are two roots from which untouchability has sprung; (a) Contempt and hatred of the Broken Men as of Buddhism by the Brahmanas, (b) Continuation of beef-eating by the Broken Men after it had given up by others (Ambedkar, 1948: 64-65).

Dr. Ambedkar inquired on the untouchable's pre-existence as broken men and proclaimed, "the totems of the untouchables of a particular village differ from the totems of the Hindus of the village" (Ambedkar, 1948:278). There are two sets of facts to show that the untouchables were really the Broken Men. One set of facts consists of the names *Antya*, *Antayaja*, *Antyavasin*. The terms 'Antya', 'Antyaga', 'Antyavasin' derived from the Hindu *Shastras* which were presumed to have derived from the term 'Anta' by Hindus. 'Anta' meant to Hindus who was created at last. So the untouchables according to the Hindus were created at last by the divine. According to Ambedkar, the word *Antya* means not the end of the Divine Creation, but the end of the Hindu village system. The second set of facts belongs to the Mahars of Maharashtra. The two sets facts, although meager, do furnish some evidence in support of the theory that the Untouchables lived outside the Hindu village from the beginning, because they were Broken Men and belonged to a different tribe and different blood. But according to *Shastra*, it was "Sudra", the last of the *Chaturvarna* whom divine created last. Hence taking the account of *Shastra* Ambedkar proved that Sudras are 'Savarna' but the untouchables are outside the *Varna* system as no account of them is found in the *Shastras*.

Following this, in his next chapter, he researched on the Hindus and surprisingly discovered that the notion of pollution among Hindus was not different from ancient or primitive society. Following *Manu Smriti* (*Dharmasastra*, ancient text regarding the social moral conduct of a man, written after the fall of the Maurya Empire) Hindus understood physical and national pollution, communal and territorial defilement like Ancient Rome. Manu prescribed that the king being abstracted of eight deities was pure (like primitive times) and the king's desired people ex-Kinsmen, Cow, Brahmin, Noble were exempted from impurity. Ambedkar discovered that Brahmins were pure by the statements of Manu but suffered from sullyng like birth, death, and many other fields that non-Brahmins did not. The family members of the dead were addressed as "Sapindas", 'Samanodakas', and the defilement due to expiry was extended to remote relatives, king, and those who bore the corpse. Anyone associated with the person was a part of impurity.

The time period of defilement for various persons unlike primitive times was mentioned too. After the ravine period, a purificatory ritual was performed to end it like an annual 'Jatra' where villagers buying a he-buffalo moved it around the village and immolated it. The blood was sprinkled around the village and the meat was given away among the villagers and vegetarian Brahmin was bound to accept his share of beef. In this context, Ambedkar dragged 1935's "The Order in Council's issued list of 429 (50-60 million approximately) 'Untouchable communities' whose mere touch polluted the upper classed Hindus. Performing certain rites the upper caste Hindus released themselves from impurity. "But there is nothing which can make the Untouchables pure. They are born impure, they are impure while they live, they die the death of the impure, and they give birth to children who are born with the stigma of Untouchability affixed to them. It is a case of permanent, hereditary stain which nothing can cleanse" (Ambedkar, 1948: 266). The Hindus isolated them in a certain territory outside of the village like 'ghetto'. Comparing ancient and primitive societies with Hindu society he stated that hereditary untouchability was followed by Hindus differentiating them from non-Hindus.

Moving on he addressed his question of untouchables' residence on the outskirts of the village in the previous part of the book. He explored that *Shastra* destined the 'Antyaja' to live outside the village. Manu instructed the Chandals and the Shavakars to reside outside the village by following certain rules being 'Apapatras': 1) Dogs and donkeys are their only wealth; 2) Attire must be the garments of dead and criminals; 3) Have food in a broken dish given by Aryans; 4) Religious men must avoid them; 5) Their marriage, transactions should be within their caste, etc. Four types of assumptions on *Shastras'* standpoint regarding the untouchable's 'ghetto' at the edge of the village are made by Ambedkar. But Ambedkar questioned who the power of attorney was to declare a section as "Untouchable".

In this context, Dr. Ambedkar criticized Manu saying that: 'Manu is the only divine law giver who has denied the common man the right to knowledge'. Thus, these three principles completely disregard individual's ability or merit and thus exhibit an 'unjust'

society where mobility is severely restricted in all spheres of human life. Such a society, Ambedkar argued cannot be an 'ideal society' and thus he felt that the existing social order needs attention. He not only suggested the total annihilation of caste or caste based society, his point of contention was to form an 'ideal or just society that would be classless or casteless

Here one can find the paradigm shift in his vision of an ideal society. Whereas in the prevailing society, there was no place of individual's merit, Ambedkar advocated for a society where individual was the prime concern. Moreover, there was a marked deviation in the concept of relationship among individuals. Whereas, in the existing society, the relationships were fixed or pre-determined and based on class, in his 'ideal society' he argued that these relationships ought to be based on liberty, equality and fraternity.

#### *Caste System*

During his doctoral studies at Columbia University, Ambedkar also participated in an Anthropology seminar conducted by the anthropologist Alexander Goldenweiser. The theme of this Seminar was "Primitive versus Modern Society". In this seminar on the 9 May, 1916 he presented to the fellow students the research paper on the topic "Castes in India: Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development". While explaining the genesis and mechanism of Castes in India, Dr. Ambedkar deals with from the anthropological point of view. He observes that the population of India is a mixture of Ayrans, Dravidians, Mongolians and Schytians, who came to India from various directions with various cultures, centuries ago, when they were in tribal state. Ethnically all people are heterogeneous. They intended to settle down in this country after fighting with their predecessors and stomachful of it as peaceful neighbours. According to him, through constant contact and mutual intercourse they evolved a common culture that superseded their distinctive cultures; it is the unity of culture that binds the people of Indian Peninsula from one end to the other. Though there has been not a thorough amalgamation and that never be a sole criterion of homogeneity. It is the unity that is the basis of homogeneity. After analyzing

the theories of various leading scholars- Stuart Nesfield and Ketkar on Caste. In this respect Dr. Ambedkar mentioned the definition — "A social group having two characteristics: (1) membership is confined to those who are born of members and includes all persons so born; (2) the members are forbidden by an inexorable social law to marry outside the group". In this definition Dr. Ambedkar identifies two characteristics: *Prohibition of Inter-marriage* and *Membership by Autogeny*, and according to him two aspects are of one and the same thing. He analyzed his paper in two stages: (1) Origin and Mechanisms of Castes, and (2) Development of Castes.

#### *Origin and Mechanism of the Castes*

If the Hindu society were a mere federation of mutually exclusive units, the matter would be simple enough. But Caste is a parceling of an already homogeneous unit and the explanation of the genesis of the Caste is the explanation of the process of parceling. He observes that endogamy is the foreign to the people of India. That is strictly observed and there are more rigorous penalties for violating exogamy than there are for violating endogamy. Caste for exogamy means fusion. Castes so far as India is concerned mean prohibition or rather absence of inter-marriage – endogamy- to be concise is the only main cause of formation of Caste Groups. Caste in India means an artificial chopping off the population into fixed and definite units, each one prevented from fusing into another through the custom of endogamy. Regarding endogamy he states that endogamy is the only characteristic that is peculiar to caste and if we succeed in showing how endogamy is maintained, we shall practically have proved the genesis and also the mechanism of caste. He also argues that superimposition of endogamy over exogamy is the essence of caste formation and customs of *Sati* enforced widowhood for life and child-marriage is the outcome of endogamy. To Dr. Ambedkar, subdivision of a society is a natural phenomenon and these groups become castes through ex-communication and imitation. It is the consideration of the means utilized for the preservation of endogamy against exogamy that we may hope to find the solution of the problem of the mechanism of the caste.

The desirous of maintenance of equality between

the sexes becomes the ultimate goal, for without it endogamy can no longer subsist. If endogamy is to be preserved conjugal rights from within have to be provided, for otherwise members of the group will be driven out of the circle to take care of themselves in any way they can. But in order that the conjugal rights be provided for from within, it is absolutely necessary to maintain a numerical equality between the marriageable units of the two sexes within the group. The problem of caste, then, ultimately resolves itself into one of repairing the disparity between marriageable units of the two sexes within it. Thus, numerical disparity between the two sexes is conveniently maintained and the problems of the surplus man and surplus women are met by the following norms: (1) *Sati* or burning of widow on the funeral pyre of the deceased husband, (2) Enforced widowhood, by which a widow is not allowed to remarry, (3) Imposing celibacy on the widower, and (4) Girl marriage or wedding him to a girl not yet marriageable. Strict endogamy could not be preserved without these customs. He explains the origin of caste in terms of 'Origin of the Mechanism' for endogamy. He explains class is a next-door neighbours to the caste and caste is an enclosed class.

The caste system provided the mechanism to maintain the order of the society through social and economic penalties. The instruments of social and economic boycott were the main forms of penalties laid down against violating the codes of the system (Throat and Kumar, 2008: 09). Since, a Shudra could not undertake jobs other than serving higher castes; the upward mobility in social and economic realm was severely restricted. Finally, he observed that the assignment of class was not based on individual merit, it was decided by birth (Ambedkar, 1987: 113-115).

On "Development of Castes", he explains: The strict observance of those customs and social hierarchy are arrogated by the priestly class in all ancient civilizations are sufficient to prove that they were the originators of this 'unnatural institutions' founded and maintained through these unnatural means.

There is a strong belief in the mind of orthodox Hindus that the Hindu society was somehow molded into the framework of the caste system and that is an organization consciously created by the *Shastras*.

Not only does the belief exist, but it is being justified on the ground that it cannot be good, because it is ordained by the *Shastras* cannot be wrong.

"The Hindu society in common with other societies was composed of classes, and the earliest known are the (1) Brahmins or the Priestly Class, (2) the Kshatriya or the Military Class, (3) the Vaishyas or the Merchant Class, and (4) the Shudra or the artisan and menial class. Particular attention has to be paid to the fact this was essentially class system. At sometime in the history of the Hindus, the priestly class socially detached itself from the rest of the body of people and through a closed-door policy became a caste by itself. The subdivision of a society is quite natural. But the unnatural thing about these subdivisions is that they have lost the open-door character of the class system and become self-enclosed units called castes. The question is where they compelled to close their doors and become endogamous or did they close them on their own accord?" (Jadhav, 2014: 31). According to Dr. Ambedkar there is a double line of answer some closed the door: Others found it closed against them.

At the end, to sum up: "Endogamy or the closed-door system was a fashion in the Hindu society and as it originated from Brahmin Caste, it was wholeheartedly imitated. By all the non-Brahmin subdivisions or Classes, who in their turn became endogamous Castes. Brahmins idolized the scriptures and venerated by the priest-ridden multitude were believed to be the very end of creation. Such a creation is worthy of more than mere imitation. In a way, but only in a way, the status of a Caste in the Hindu Society varies directly with the extent of the observance of the customs of *Sati* enforced widowhood and girl marriage. But the observance of these customs varies directly with the distance...that separates the Caste. Those Castes those are nearest to the Brahmins have imitated all the three customs and insist on the strict observance there off. Those that are less near have imitated enforced widowhood and girl marriage; others, a little further off have only girl marriage and have farthest off have imitated only the belief in the Caste principle. This leaves no doubt that the whole process of Caste formation in India is a process of imitation of the higher by the lower...Some unfortunate groups find themselves enclosed

because others in enclosing themselves have closed them out, with the result that new groups by a mechanical law are constantly being converted into Castes in a bewildering multiplicity” (Jadhav, 2014: 32).

Denial of equal access to education is another core feature of the caste system. In Ambedkar’s view, the concept of formal education in Hindu social order was quite narrow. Formal education was confined to the study of religious scriptures like Veda in schools which were established for this purpose. The state never held itself responsible for opening establishments for study of arts and sciences that concerns life of merchants and artisan. In the absence of a formal educational system, each class managed to transmit its progeny the ways of doing things it was traditionally engaged in doing. Thus, illiteracy became an inherent part of the class or caste system. Fixation of rights within a class and graded inequality resulted in denial of rights to education and opportunities to develop human capabilities (Throat and Kumar, 2008: 06). In this context, Ambedkar criticised Manu saying that: ‘Manu is the only divine law giver who has denied the common man the right to knowledge’ (Ambedkar, 1987: 43). Thus, these three principles completely disregard individual’s ability or merit and thus exhibit an ‘unjust’ society where mobility is severely restricted in all spheres of human life. Such a society, Ambedkar argued cannot be an ‘ideal society’ and thus he felt that the existing social order needs attention. He not only suggested the total annihilation of caste or caste based society, his point of contention was to form an ‘ideal or just society that would be classless or casteless’ (Massey, 2005 :158).

#### *Dr. Ambedkar’s Thoughts on the Sudras*

Regarding the origin of the Sudras, Ambedkar contests the view of the *Purusa Sukta* that from the beginning, there have been four *Varnas*. According to him, there were at first only three *Varnas* – Brahmana, Kshatriya and Vaishya, and the Sudras were really Kshatriyas, who lost their social status in the struggle for supremacy against the Brahmanas. It is the *Purusa Sukta*, which refers to and justified the existence of the fourth *Varna*.

According to Dr. Ambedkar, *Purusa Sukta* is full

of riddles. The most important riddle is the separation of Sudras from the first three *Varnas*. The origin of Sudras may be traced back to the well-known struggle for supremacy that took place in the ancient past, between the Brahmanas and the Kshatriyas. “There is direct evidence of a violent conflict between the Sudra King Sudas Paijavana, an Indo-Aryan Tribal King and Vashistha, the Brahmin Rishi (Ambedkar, 1946: 156-157). The Sudra king Sudas was a strong supporter of Vishwamitra. However, in the conflict between the two of the Brahmin Rishi Vashistha emerged victorious. They celebrated their victory by degrading the progeny of Sudas to menial ranks, making them occupying the lowest rung of the social ladder. They were so degraded that they became the lowest class “ the Sudras, the degraded people, in the Indo-Aryan Society.

The technique used by the Brahmanas for the degradation of the Sudras was that of prohibiting them from performing the ‘Upanayana’ ceremony. ‘The technique employed by the Brahmins for this purpose was to refuse to perform the Upanayana of the Sudras’ (Kane, 1968: 281-283). A boy through this process was initiated into the class of the twice-born and was made eligible for the study of the Vedas. Such an important rite was, completely denied to the descendants of King Sudas.

Dr. Ambedkar holds that there was a time when Sudras had a right to Upanayana. He argues that if Sudas was a Sudra king and if his coronation ceremony was performed by Brahmana priest, and if he performed Rajasuya Yajna, then there can be no doubt that the Sudras did at one time wear the sacred thread (Ambedkar, 1946: 195). The stoppage of Upanayana was a most deadly weapon discovered by the Brahmanas to avenge themselves against the Sudras; it had the effect of an atomic bomb and made the Sudras, the most degraded people (Ambedkar, 1946:199).

According to Dr. Ambedkar there were two groups of Kshatriya Varna” one of the lunar lineage and other of the solar lineage. He says that the Kshatriyas of the solar race were more intelligent than that of the lunar race. The former were marked off by their learning, pride and martial spirit from the latter (Ambedkar, 1946: 221-222). They were the equals to the Brahmanas in learning. In matters of rights and

privileges, they came into conflicts with the Brahmanas (Ambedkar, 1946: 224). The Brahmanas made a social code to thwart any possible revolt on the part of the Sudras. He says that it was the task of Manu, in the latter ancient period, to realize the ideal, he invested the social code of Chaturvarnya contained in the Purusa Sakta, with a degree of divinity and infallibility, which it did not have before (Ambedkar, 1946: 6).

According to Dr. Ambedkar when Upanayana was open to everyone, Aryan or non-Aryan, it was not a matter of social significance. Once it was denied to the Sudras, its possession became a matter of honour and its denial a badge of servility. The right to property is dependent upon the capacity to sacrifice, which depends upon Upanayana. Thus, those who are not entitled for Upanayana do not have a right to property. The Sudras as well as women of Indo-Aryan Society cannot hold property not because they are women and Sudras, but because they debarred from performing sacrifices (*ibid.*, 189). The sacrifice must be accompanied by Ved mantras. Since the study or Vedas is open only to persons who have undergone the Upanayana ceremony, the right and road to knowledge were closed to all else. Thus, without Upanayana the Sudras were doomed to degradation, ignorance and poverty.

Dr. Ambedkar's theory of the origin of the Sudras may be summarised as follows: (1) The Sudras were not of the Aryan communities of the solar race and ranked as the Kshatriya *varna* in the Indo-Aryan Society. (2) There was a time, when the Aryan society recognized only three varnas, namely, the Brahmanas, the Kshatriyas and the Vaishyas. The Sudras were not a separate *varna*, but part of Kshatriya *varna*. (3) There was a continuous feud between the Sudra kings and the Brahmanas, in which the Brahmanas were subjected to many tyrannies and indignities. (4) As a result of the hatred towards the Sudras generated by their tyrannies and oppressions, the Brahmanas refused to perform the Upanayana of the Sudras. (5) Owing to the denial of Upanayana, the Sudras became socially degraded, fell below the rank of the Vaishyas and thus, came to form the fourth *varna* (Jatava, 1965: 52).

#### *Interpretation of Ambedkar in Anthropology*

Looking at caste as a system in which each *jati* is part of the whole was definitely a step forward in

social and cultural anthropology as early as 1917 and Ambedkar was not ready to accept caste system as a system of 'division of labour' which minimised competition among occupational groups. For him caste system is a division among the labouring classes rather than division of labour. A closer reading of this article reveals that although in the milieu of Boasians at Columbia Ambedkar used the Morganian social evolutionary methodology to approach the basic principle behind the caste system. He observed that marriage outside one's own immediate kin-group represented through clan exogamy was the fundamental and universal feature of human society and in India the state of 'tribal exogamy' survived even in the stages of civilisation whereas in the modern world this is no more the rule. Let me quote from the original: "With the growth of history, however, exogamy has lost its efficacy, and excepting the nearest blood-kins, there is usually no social bar restricting the field of marriage. But regarding the peoples of India the law of exogamy is a positive injunction even today. Indian society still savours of the clan system, even though there are no clans; and this can be easily seen from the law of matrimony which centres round the principle of exogamy, for it is not that Sapindas (blood-kins) cannot marry, but a marriage even between Sagotras (of the same class) is regarded as a sacrilege" [Ambedkar (1917): 1979:9, *cf.* Guha, 2018, 2022].

As Western sociologists and anthropologists translated caste in biological idiom, Dr Jesús F. Cháirez-Garza (Lecturer in the History of Race and Ethnicity, The University of Manchester), in his paper (2022) attempts to analyse the complex nature of untouchability by examining its connections to space and racialization in Ambedkar's political writings, including his experiences of using movement through space as a counter hegemonic strategy, though Ambedkar opposed Boasian racial theory. Cháirez-Garza discussed on three components *viz.* space, racialization and threat of violence. Space is socially constructed and intrinsically related to the experience of subjects, and the relationship between space and experience as a binary inhabited by a tormentor and a victim. Space is reconfigured by tormentors to establish their central position as a way to produce violent and paralysing experiences to victims. Such

production of space and experiences regulates victims and place them within the symbolic universe of the tormentor. Here, 'Racialization' can be defined here as "a continuous process of ascription whereby humans are grouped (and self-grouped) according to assigned qualities that are assumed to be natural, but are in fact deeply shaped by the unequal distribution of power, resources and knowledge". He also commented that for Ambedkar, untouchability rested on a perpetual threat of violence which pushed Dalits to "self-racialize" or adopt bodily markers which gave away their caste status in specific places. Ambedkar became aware that places like the village facilitated the racialization of certain bodies as touchable or untouchable. Yet, the connections between space and racialization were not fixed. Ambedkar's memories of untouchability were linked to "in-between spaces", such as train stations or hotels, where the racialization of Dalits could not be assumed a priori. Such spatial indeterminacy allowed Ambedkar to challenge the behaviour Dalits were supposed to conform to in dominant caste spaces.

In his another article (2021) the same author raised a question as to 'What can Ambedkar's experience of untouchability tell us about the history of anthropology or sociology in India? In what way does caste and untouchability affect the production of anthropological knowledge? In the corpus of work analysing Ambedkar's life and ideas, these are rarely explored questions. To shed some light on this often overlooked issue, he explored Ambedkar's involvement in the Depressed Classes and Aboriginal Tribes (Starte, the name under the Chairman's name O.H. B. Starte) Committee set up by the Government of Bombay in 1928. After two years touring the presidency and gathering evidence about the social condition of Dalits and Adivasis, the committee published a report with recommendations on how to bring these communities into the mainstream of Indian society. As we shall see, Ambedkar encountered both practical and ideological obstacles from the members of the Upper Caste, while carrying research for the committee. On a practical level, and despite being one of the most educated people in India at the time, with a Ph.D. from Columbia University and a D.Sc. from London School of Economics, Ambedkar had to organize his research trips to conform to caste

practices which restricted not only his movement but also limited the access he had to particular communities. In 1929, as part of his work for the Committee, Ambedkar travelled to the village of Chalisgaon 'to investigate a case of social boycott which had been declared by the caste Hindus against the untouchables of that village'. On an ideological level, even though the report reflects a strong influence of his thought, Ambedkar's findings on the question of untouchability were challenged and opposed by other members of the committee. The opposition against Ambedkar's findings was so strong the report had to be published alongside a note of dissent. While today the report is largely forgotten, taking a fresh look and pairing it with Ambedkar's private papers, reveals some of the difficulties of carrying out fieldwork and producing anthropological or sociological knowledge as a member of a marginalized community in India.

Dr. Ambedkar was the first Indian economist to examine with anthropological outlook the problem of sub-division and fragmentation of agricultural land holdings. The marginalization of land is marginalizing the landholders on large scale. His thoughts on agriculture are found in his article *Small Holdings in India and Their Remedies* (1918) and also in *Status and Minorities* (1947). In his first thesis Dr. Ambedkar gave a clear overview of the Indian agricultural system focusing on agriculture problem namely "small holding and their remedies", in which, he opined that small size of land holding is one of the causes of production, mentioning that holdings of lands by few people is an acute problem of Indian agriculture which has various disadvantages, like difficulties in cultivation and utilization of resources, increasing cost, low productivity, inadequate income and low standard of living. He argues that poverty of the depressed backward classes in India is 'Contingent Poverty', which is due to the unjustified unequal distribution of natural resources and their denial to the poor. Dr. Ambedkar though not in agreement with Marxism for many other reasons, but favored Nationalization of land as a remedy for many ills of agriculture

#### CONCLUSION

Dr. Ambedkar's was an erudite thinker and did

voracious studies in Hindu Social Order and Caste System from historical and anthropological points of view. His thoughts and philosophy have come out of his personal life experiences and wisdom. Due to his experiences, knowledge, studies and field works in this field, it is better to recognize him an epitome of anthropology. In his contributions we find reminiscences related to his memories with untouchability as well as reveal a picture of clear ethnic boundary of that time in regional ethnic identities.

At first, Ambedkar had surveyed non-Hindus to investigate the origin of untouchability by examining it from the primitive society. He explained how continuous tribal warfare gave birth to 'Broken Men' from primitive society in danger of being attacked and in search of food and shelter. Dr. Ambedkar presumed that the Broken Men were getting no place to go lived at the periphery of the village and served the settled community by guarding them against Barbarians in exchange for food and shelter. He concludes that in case of India, the same processes must have taken place when the Hindu society was passing from nomadic life to life of a settled village community. Ambedkar thinks, had there not been Buddhism and had the Broken Men been stopped from beef-eating and induced to worship the cow, there would have been no Broken Men in the form of Untouchables. He enunciated the new theory of the origin of untouchability as discussed above. This is quite valuable and worth full in anthropology.

Dr. Ambedkar may not be recognized as a professional-cum-practitioner in the field of anthropology, but he is well-known as icon of liberation of Dalit or depressed section and Indian Constitutional maker. Social scientists working on India did not give him the status of a scholar in their elite discourses. None of Indian or Western anthropologists or other social scientists valued B. R. Ambedkar's views on caste. But his outlook as visionary and erudite leader he has been always inspiring the Indian anthropologists and sociologists to investigate the Indian social organization in Hindu Social Order and Caste System and economies of backward and downtrodden. The above discussions reveal scopes and implications of Babasaheb's principles and ideologies as followed up in social anthropology. Time has come for the social

anthropologists to rethink over Babasaheb's thoughts, philosophies, ideologies, decisions to enrich the subject and move forward for nation-building.

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