

UNTOUCHABILITY AND POVERTY: A MEAGER OPPORTUNITY FOR UPLIFTMENT

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Abstract

William Henry Harrison, President of U.S.A.,"It is true democratic feeling, that all the measures of the government are directed to the purpose of making the rich richer and the poor poorer". In any country poverty is the phenomena and the consequence of the previous government, is an allegation by present government, whatever allegations, the measures taken by any government in eradicating the poverty are at the larger end in Uplifting poor or bringing down differences between haves and have-nots. Poverty elevation Programs are at the poor stage of formulation, implementation and Evaluation. Politicians are large in making out an opportunity in consuming and diverting the funds out of poverty elevation Schemes, civil servants are least bothered about the program implementation, businessmen are eager to make out business out of it, they want the existence of poor for cheap labor, Middle men even exploit the poor in every area. In the name of religion and cast conservative, elites distance poor as untouchables. Out of 260 million untouchable people in South Asia, 200 million are in India; we would find poor from the degraded communities like Sudhras (untouchables) in India, Baruku in Japan, Rodias in Sri Lanka, Massalis in Pakistan, etc. Do these people get an opportunity to come out? My thinking and paper discussion would be on moral and ethical education, generation shift, Transparent Bureaucracy; Dismantling of Cast system can bring a change from one angle.

Keywords: Untouchability, democratic, poverty, haves and have not's, sudhras.

INTRODUCTION

Archeologist and historians identified, Indian subcontinent as one of the oldest civilization evolved in world. Civilizations are much talked about the evolution and settlement of human beings at defined boundaries and the customs they had learned and understood in period of time. As part of learning of life they came across good and bad. Good is, India is a vast country with rich mineral resources, it has been constructed by many rulers and many wars had been fought on this soil, India is such a place where it has welcome the foreign rulers and accepted their suzerainty, belong to any religion. India having a huge demographic structure had various languages and practices. This has been united by many rulers many times and divided by others many times. Whenever there was integration in the country they used to learn practices and the language for communication, whenever there was foreign invasion new practices and languages came up, further

bifurcation took in the country. At the time of wars the situation was bit confusing that if the ordinary public were captured they were treated as slaves even though they belong to any profession. My explanation here is the process of Integration; disintegration has brought much indifference in the people's lifestyle and behavior. This had taught them new behavior, with in the human beings. Some people started accepting the new practices and others restricting to the old passion. This has made distinction in the work style and practices. In return this has restricted certain section or lifestyle people to one workfare and others to other kind of work. This has been continued for long time and they fixed to that jobs as profession. The profession taken up as hereditary has pushed them into large scale bifurcation saying as working class, slave class, soldier class, education class, ruler class, etc. this class bifurcation had fixed them to certain practices, clothing and food practices. In mean time India has been invaded by kings and empires from central Asia, middle East, Far East and

so on they brought many customs and religions into India, unfortunately in our country also many religions took birth but they could not survive in this country, this mixture had covered with a blanket of religions practicing various practices. Islam and Christianity were borrowed from foreign rulers and remaining evolved from Indian subcontinent. Religions had again subdivided classes individually. This had increased sections. Ultimately some people practicing certain habits had followed certain activity in life it became their profession. For example, Sikh community basically grows up as protecting and fighting community so they choose the profession of soldiers still today. This bifurcation had attached the professions to the people, labor class took up the profession of slipper making, scavenger, rag picking, laborious work like pulling and lifting of royal carts. Etc. earning capacities were decided on these parameters, apart from this proximity with elite people like ruling and think-tank has further widened the gap between the professions, which are of high class jobs and which are of low class jobs. This divide has further continued and exploited in the British period. A clear administrative setup was made in bifurcating people and they adopted the policy cast division for records and employment segregation. This had worked out for them in further strengthening this stand in India. They encouraged the Zamindari and subedari system. Ultimate powers were given to small section of people (Elites) and British's controlled vast section of people with their help. This had eased their job in controlling and administering India. They had introduced communal electorate system and tried to introduce community electorate system. This divide India policy was understood by grate leaders like Gandhiji and went on indefinite strike and stopped in further bifurcating India. at the early stage of independence we were facing many problems like many independent state, bifurcation of Pakistan, poverty, hunger, population, superstitious believes, no infrastructure, many religions, casts, creed, rich and poor divide, extremists, various languages, imprints of British rule, etc. this had totally given a different look of India. This had basically raised the question how long India will continue as union of states. It is a mysterious question till today. Because India is surrounded internally and externally by various threats which are aggressive and poisonous in nature

Poverty is significant in India and if we speak about the causes of the poverty as we speak many reasons can be highlighted as the consequences for this situation, we will discuss them below

British rule: first major cause is because the policy adopted by the imperialist towards India, the tried to drain the wealth, they utilized the land as the market place to sell the finished goods and to exploit the mineral resource of this country, This had not brought any prints of industrialization into India. This were some of the reasons I am highlighting the impact made by British'sin making the country more badly and poverty ridden. This had been exploited by the commercial class of Indians. They tried to keep the basic needs out of the reach to large section of India so that their exploitation continues after independence. This is the people who had officially segregated the cast in India and they bifurcated the society for the purpose to provide the employment opportunities only to the elite section. They placed all the other sections of the people under tribes expect kings, Brahmins, landlords and other elite section. They bifurcated the Indians by adopting the policies of communal divide and community divide.

Over Population: population explosion has boosted our poverty level still further. Basically at that time Indian mind set was, due to prevailing health conditions, frequent drought occurrence, male births, etc., our people started producing in maximum number of children so that some may survive and become an helping hand in their poverty clutches.

Illiteracy: Lack of education had further increased the larger section of public toward poverty, because they were very superstitious bound and not ready to accept the change in the society and this had kept them out of alternative employment if the crop fails.

Gender Inequality: India, at the time of evolving of the janapadas and mahajanapadas, woman played a significant role in participating in administration. But slowly their prints were disappeared and restricted to house hold and later they were seen as burden in the society. This ideology has wasted the energy of half the Indians and it invariably led as the burden on the family and later on the country.

Caste and Untouchability

The caste system in India is a system of social stratification; it consists of two different concepts, *varna* and *jati*. *Varna* may be translated as "class," and refers to the four social classes which existed in the vedic society and *Jati* is related to the birth is usually referred to occupation, and it is hereditary. The caste system has been mainly criticized for its treatment of outcastes or untouchables. This group has been termed the *panchama* (the fifth *Varna*), collectively designating all who fall outside the regular four classes. The notion of untouchability may have been present in the original *Varna* system, though it is not clear precisely how it operated. Puranic texts mention untouchables, stating that they should be well-supported, but intimate connection with them avoided. They also state that those who fell from their status within the higher "twice-born" *varnas* were called *dvija-bandhu* (friends of the twice-born) and were accommodated within the *shudra* class. In actual practice, some who abandoned key rituals or moral standards were altogether ostracized. Additionally, jobs deemed to be particularly contaminating were held only by outcastes. These include sweepers, leather workers, and crematorium attendants. They were not allowed to live within the confines of regular village life, nor to share public facilities such as wells and temples.

Who are the Untouchables

Untouchables have for many centuries occupied a deeply ambiguous place within Indian society. From the standpoint of the Great Tradition represented by the "Vedas", Untouchables have no place at all. What much later became known as Hindu Society was divided by the *vedas* into four categories associated with particular social occupations: Brahmin (Priest and Teacher), Kshatriya (ruler and warrior), Vaishya (Trader), *Sudra* (Servant). These *Varnas* are often, but quite misleadingly called 'Caste'. In everyday life, particularly in the villages, the operative conception of caste is *Jati* rather than *Varna*. These are thousands of *jat*is in India, the largest containing many millions of persons and the smallest perhaps only hundreds. *Jat*is are endogamous units with individual traditions and rules as to personal conduct. The existence of *jat*is is often reconciled with the great Tradition by asserting that

they are simply an elaboration of the four *varnas*. But just one of the problems of this approach is that Untouchables are Organized in *jat*is just as other Hindus are. Chamar, Bhangi, Dhobi, Pulaya, Paswan, Madagi are some of the many hundreds of Untouchables *jat*is scattered through every region of India. Untouchables are permanently polluted people. Their status is said to arise from the work they perform, such as skinning animal carcasses, tanning leather and making shoes; Playing in musical bands; butchery of animals; fishing; removal of human waste ; attendance at cremation grounds; washing clothes, coconut harvesting and the brewing of toddy , to name some of the principle grounds of permanent pollution. The Untouchables are a regular part of Indian society, which has always been an aggregation of multiple compartments or statuses varying over both region or culture group and time. People from the castes called 'Untouchable' are disguised by being generally poor and of very low status ,but not so low that they should be identified as a collective grouping opposed to the remainder of higher status society.

Still in India "manual scavenging" — the collecting of excrement from latrines by hand continues. The job is done by those considered to be of the lowest birth. These Dalits, or untouchables, often face threats of violence, eviction and withheld wages if they attempt to leave the trade. People work as manual scavengers because their caste is expected to fulfill this role, and are typically unable to get any other work.

Disabilities of Untouchability

1. Social Disabilities:

From the social point of view, the untouchables suffered following disabilities.

- Lower Social Status:

Since social status was fixed for different castes, therefore, the untouchability was placed at the lowest place in the caste hierarchy and enjoys lowest status in the society. Their social status was just like a golden zero. Moreover, they were considered as the symbol of pollution by the higher caste people. Consequently, the untouchables are deprived of all kind of commercial contacts.

- Educational disabilities:

Traditionally, the untouchables were forbidden from receiving any education. They were not entitled to acquire the knowledge of Vedas. Even if they were not permitted to touch the religious books. The untouchables were not allowed to get education from the public institution. Only recently they have given educational facilities.

- Disabilities relating to Social habits:

Till recently, the untouchables are faced many problems in various social habits like food, drink and social intercourse. They are not permitted to take food or drink from the house of high caste people. They are eating only 'Kachha' foods which are prepared by the ordinary things. In the social intercourse, they are also faced the same problem.

- Prohibition in the use of public places:

In fact, the untouchables were not allowed to use village wells, ponds, public hospitals, roads and so on. They were not permitted to live in those places where the higher caste people reside. The untouchables were forced to live in the worst type of village slums. Moreover, they were leading a life just like the domestic animals.

2. Economic disabilities:

Economically, to the position of untouchable's castes was very pitiable. They were deprived from all kinds of economic privileges in the society following are the main economic disabilities of untouchables.

- No right to property:

Traditionally, the untouchables were not allowed to have any land or property of their own. They were prevented from entering in various types of enterprises. They were not permitted to acquire wealth or to buy land in village. Even if, the untouchables have no right to sell their landed property to anyone. Moreover, they were deprived from all sorts of right to property.

- No right to choose occupation:

In the past, the untouchables were not allowed to engage themselves in occupations which were reserved for the members of higher castes. They were compelled to strike to their traditional occupations. They were largely engaged in agricultural and other

associated works as wage-earners. The untouchables were traditionally associated with such lower occupations like scavenging, leather works, basket making and so on.

Though generation to generation, they lived with half-belly with no hope of getting some tasty foods. Even now their position is not very much different from what it had been. Most of them are still far below the poverty line.

- Landless laborer:

The untouchables were traditionally known as landless laborers because they have no land in the village. They were leading a landless laborer life. Before the abolition of zamindari system, their primary duty was to work for a landlord without any remuneration. Thus their position was just like a slave and in certain circumstances worst than a slave. In this context, Gandhiji has said that, "the untouchables performed the most essential service of society yet at the same time they were the lowest paid ones. Only such amount of wages is given to them that are necessary to unite, their cursed soul and their physical frames.

3. Religious disabilities:

Though, the untouchables are known as the Hindus by religion, yet they were not permitted to enter into the Hindu temple and pilgrimages nor were they allowed to use public bathing Ghats. The untouchables were not allowed to study religious books. They were also deprived from the Jajman of Brahmin priests. For example, a Brahmin never accepts to perform the religious ceremony of an untouchable. Only recently, efforts have been made by the Government for removing these religious disabilities by legislators.

4. Political disabilities:

In the past, the untouchables were also deprived from all kinds of political privileges. They were not allowed to participate in political administration and general election of the traditional India. They were also not permitted to hold any public post. Only during the British rule, they for the first time got the right to vote.

But, now-a-days, they have enjoy maximum political rights on the ground that some seats in Parliament and State Assemblies are reserved constitutionally for them, but it is doubtful, whether they can properly utilize this political rights without their economic development. It means without their economic improvement, they cannot utilize the political rights which they have got.

Measures Taken by Government

The 1950 national constitution of India legally abolished the practice of untouchability and provided measures for positive discrimination in both educational institutions and public services for Dalits and other social groups who lie within the caste system. These are supplemented by official bodies such as the National commission for SC and ST.

1. Constitutional Safeguards:

The Constitution of India provides protection and safeguards for the untouchables by way of general rights of citizenship with the object of promoting their socio-economic interests and of removing certain disabilities from which they suffer. The following Constitutional safeguards are provided to the untouchables.

- **Article 15:** The state shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, caste, race, sex, and place of birth or any of them.
- **Article 16:** There shall be equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State.
- **Article 17:** Untouchability is abolished and its practice in any form is forbidden. The enforcement of any disability arising out of untouchability shall be an offence punishable in accordance with the law.
- **Article 25:** The throwing open of Hindu religious institutions of a public character to all classes and sections of Hindus.
- **Article 29:** The forbidding or any denial of admission to educational institutions maintained by the State or receiving aid out of the State funds.

- **Article 46:** The State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people and in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.
- **Article 330 and 332:** Seats shall be reserved in the Lok Sabha and Legislative Assembly of every State for the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes
- **Article 338:** There shall be a special officer for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes to be appointed by the President. It shall be the duty of the special officer to investigate all matters relating to safeguards for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes under this constitution and report to the President
- **Article 340:** There shall be a Commission to be appointed by the President in order to investigate the condition of socially and educationally backward classes.

2. The Untouchability Offences Act, 1955:

For the eradication of untouchability, the Untouchability Offences Act was passed by the Parliament in 1955. It came into force on June 1, 1955. This Act provides penalties for the following offences:

- Preventing a person on the ground of untouchability from entering a place of public worship, offering prayers therein or taking water from a sacred tank, well or spring.
- Enforcing all kinds of social disabilities such as denying access to any shop, public restaurant public hospital or educational institution, hotel or any other place of public entertainment,
- Enforcing occupational, professional or trade disabilities or disabilities in the matter of enjoyment of any benefit
- Refusing to sell goods or render services to a Harijan because he is a Harijan,

The untouchability Offence Act, 1955 has been replaced by the Protection of the Civil Rights Act after amendment on 1976. The Act prescribes punishment for compelling any person to scavenge, sweep, remove carcasses, fly animals or remove umbilical cords. All untouchability offences have become non-compoundable and in case where the punishments given are less than three months, they can be tried summarily.

3. Harijan Welfare Departments:

For the all-round development of untouchables the Government of India has established a Harijan Welfare Department and also appointed a Commissioner for Harijan welfare. Some Regional Assistant Commissioners have been appointed in each region to assist the Commissioner. Besides, the Advisory Boards are formed in all States to suggest the ways and means for the welfare of Harijans.

4. Educational Facilities:

For the upliftment of the untouchables, both Central and State Governments provide many educational facilities to them. Seats are reserved in all educational institutions for the untouchables. Free education, free distributions of books and stationery, stipends, scholarships and so on are some of the educational facilities provided by the Government to them.

5. Job Facilities:

A fixed percentage of jobs has been reserved for the untouchables in the administrative services of both Central and State Governments. To make Harijan students skilled in various crafts, proper arrangements have been made by the Government for their training.

6. Economic Facilities:

For the improvement of economic conditions of untouchables, both Central and State Governments are spending considerable amount of money. The nationalised banks are also extending their helping hand by lending loans to them for starting small scale and cottage industries. Apart from these, for the betterment of the untouchables, the Government has also provided loans to them through various schemes such as Integrated Rural Development Programme, Jawahar Rozgar Yojna etc.

7. Housing Facilities:

The housing condition of the untouchables is very miserable. They mostly live in the worst type of slums. Therefore, the Government provides housing facilities to them. New Harijan colonies are being constructed where accommodation is cheap. Through Indira Awas Yojna, the Government provides new houses to the Harijans. Special efforts are being made towards cleanliness of old Harijan residential areas.

Continuation of Untouchability

Unfortunately the Indian government, made up of the upper castes, has successfully convinced the international community that caste discrimination is an internal, cultural issue. Despite various measures to improve the socioeconomic conditions of untouchable communities, they remain in danger. They are deprived of civil rights; they are subjected to various offences, indignities, humiliations and harassment. They have, in several vicious incidents, been deprived of their life and property. Grave atrocities are committed against them for various, social, cultural and economic reasons. Approximately 33,000 cases are being registered as atrocities against Scheduled Castes in one year. What makes it even more disturbing is that while so many cases are registered, the conviction rate hovers around 30%.

CASE STUDY

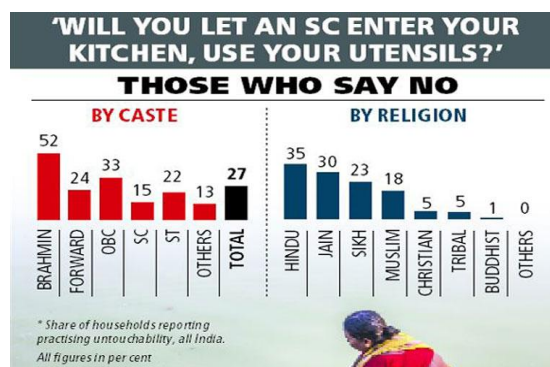


Figure 1

Going by respondents' admissions, untouchability is the most widespread among Brahmins, followed by OBCs. Among religious communities, it is the most widespread among Hindus, Sikhs and Jains, shows

the survey, which was conducted in over 42,000 households across India by the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) and the University of Maryland, US.

Source: The India Human Development Survey (IHDS-2)

NCAER, established in 1956, is India's oldest and largest independent, non-profit economic policy research institute. The results are part of the India Human Development Survey (IHDS-2) — the largest pan-Indian non-government household survey — carried out in 2011-12 for economic and social variables across multiple categories. The full results of the survey will be available in 2015. Surveyors asked respondents, "Does anyone in your family practise untouchability?" and, in case the answer was "No", asked a second question: "Would it be okay for a Scheduled Caste person to enter your kitchen or use your utensils?" Across India, 27 per cent respondents agreed that they did practise untouchability in some form. The practice was most prevalent among Brahmin respondents (52 per cent). 24 per cent of non-Brahmin forward caste respondents admitted to it — lower, interestingly, than OBC respondents, 33 per cent of whom confirmed its prevalence in their homes. 15 per cent of Scheduled Caste and 22 per cent of Scheduled Tribe respondents admitted to the practice. Broken up by religious groups, data from the survey shows almost every third Hindu (30 per cent) admitted to the practice, followed by Sikhs (23 per cent), Muslims (18 per cent) and Christians (5 per cent). Jains topped the list, with 35 per cent respondents accepting that they practised untouchability. The survey has, however, warned that the result for Jains is "not conclusive" because of the small size of the sample.

Lead researcher Dr Amit Thorat, an associate fellow at NCAER, said, "These findings indicate that conversion has not led to a change in mindsets. Caste identity is sticky baggage, difficult to dislodge in social settings." Currently, as per a government order of 1950, the SC quota in government jobs applies only to Hindu, Sikh and Buddhist Dalits, not Christian and Muslim Dalit caste groups. Spatially, untouchability is most widespread in the Hindi heartland, according to the survey. Madhya Pradesh is on top (53 per cent), followed by Himachal Pradesh

(50 per cent), Chhattisgarh (48 per cent), Rajasthan and Bihar (47 per cent), Uttar Pradesh (43 per cent), and Uttarakhand (40 per cent). West Bengal appears to be the most 'progressive' — with only 1 per cent of respondents confirming they practised untouchability. Kerala comes next in the survey, with 2 per cent, followed by Maharashtra (4 per cent), the Northeast (7 per cent), and Andhra Pradesh (10 per cent). Survey results suggest that high incomes do not dent the practice, but education, especially among Brahmins and OBCs, makes a difference.

Source: <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/one-in-four-indians-admit-to-practising-untouchability-biggest-caste-survey/#sthash.Ekn2fMfD.dpuf>

Measures to be taken

Moral Education: Education is a strong weapon in the hands of human beings to gain knowledge. Knowledge should be utilized in maintaining equilibrium in society, for learning Human value system, ethics and social responsibility. Its should be taught to the students from their earlier studies. Human relationship and culture of living and helping and sharing should be inculcated in lifestyle from their childhood by their parents. This will help in dismantling the empathy and indifferences in human society.

Stringent Law: laws has been amended and incorporated to remove the indifferences between the human beings, uplift the venerable sections of people and bring them on the same platform. Government and Media should play a major role in advertising this laws. Conviction percentage should increase. Only 30% of the cases are put to conviction, in the cases related to the caste atrocities. Many of them are not registered. Surveillance should increase in atrocity prone areas. Concentration on Rural education and development can change the situation, because mostly, caste affected are from rural areas. But the rigid cultural and social beliefs are taking longer time in accepting the change. This has many hurdles, as the laws are prepared by the elite class of the society and the law implementing authorities do belong to the same section.

Abolishing of Reservation Policies: Reservation on the lines of cast, religion, region, etc is certainly in

wrong direction and it is going to discourage the intellectuality. Reservation policy was introduced to uplift the underprivileged for a period of 10 years, but due to political unwillingness it was untouched till today and advantage is taken out of it. It should be modified on the lines of social and economic backwardness with a certain time period and restrictions.

Generation Shift: Shift in the generation of human beings will bring a change in the cultural, social and economic practices. This morfrage is directly affecting the human behaviors and relationships. Performance based segregation will dominate over caste based divisions. Intermix of culture will drastically bring down the indifferences.

Woman Empowerment: As you all know that mother is first teacher for any child in the world. If she is good enough to distinguish between good and bad than that impact would be shown on the rowing child. So her education is prerequisite for growth of the family in return it would develop the society. Countries like India should concentrate more on ending inequalities and encourage and utilize the human resource (woman), which we are having in plenty.

Abolish of political reservation: Politics play a major role in developing societies and building nation. The concept of dividing on the grounds of cast to accommodate in politics is further engulfing the divide and heartedness between the different sections of the society. So this nature of political accommodation on the cast basis should be abolished and focus more on the personality who can handle the task and the qualification

CONCLUSION

Any country development depends up on the proper utilizing of Man, Material and Money. In this man defiantly plays a major role because other two are natural or manmade and utilized by them. So the proper utilization of human resources is a huge task in front of India. Because on the names of segregation this human beings has created differences in a large scale and this creation has developed and restricted the development to certain pockets and sections of people. This huge divide of haves and have-nots will

lead to chaos in the nation. When any crisis broke out in the country this large are going to destabilize the peace and sovereignty of nation which leads to total collapse. As i had discussed in my paper many reasons are contributing to poverty and untouchability in India. So many measures had been taken to abolish and bring them into main stream of society. But still India is facing a wide variety of differences in the socio cultural and economic growth of individuals. This divide is not in any way helping to achieve the development of the country; in return this will further make a concentrated growth. This will make the poor still poorer. So the government should concentrate on education as major tool to bring change in the society and measure to be taken for an equal distribution of wealth. When the work and wealth is distributed than the indifference would be removed over a period of time. Law should be more stringent towards those who practice caste, creed, and religion and sex discrimination.

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