

THE CASTE SYSTEM – A MONOGRAPH

TO THE READER

If the Hindu Caste System is an anathema to some, it is positively like a red rag to a bull, to a few others. All the same, it is very doubtful if these persons have stopped practising it in their own lives!

This monograph is an honest attempt to present the subject in all its aspects, without pride or prejudice. After weighing the pros and cons of the question, the reader is free to draw his own conclusions.

If this brochure helps the beleaguered Hindu society to get a few more rays of light, may be, through the very chinks it is supposed to have, the writer feels immensely rewarded.

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Introduction

Though human beings come all alone into this world and return to the Abode of their Father in Heaven, also alone, they cannot live alone here! It is in their very nature to create a family or a group, to live with. However, when their gregarious instinct makes their herds grow into crowds, divisions into smaller groups become inevitable. Various factors may contribute to this division: professions, racial features, beliefs and customs carried over from the ancient generations, status consciousness brought about by economic wellbeing or higher levels of education and culture, and so on.

People all over the world have been subjected to this phenomenon.

Nor have such groups, clans and tribes remained static and unaffected by the vicissitudes of time and life. Terrific changes brought about by variegated experiences, the impact of the different ways and values of life of other groups, growth or deterioration of civilization and culture or even unexpected upheavals from inside their own groups have often wrought permanent transformations in them. Such groups as were incapable of withstanding the shocks of changes, have either been decimated or have been devoured and digested by the more aggressive ones.

The one social system that has successfully withstood all the onslaughts from without and within, over several millennia, is the caste system of the Hindus. If similar systems that existed in Greece, Rome, Persia or Japan have quietly disappeared into oblivion and only the Hindu system has survived, it speaks volumes for not only its resilience and tenacity, but also for its having fulfilled a great need and purpose of the Hindu peoples. This point will be dealt with later.

It may not be irrelevant to mention here a notion that we normally have-that the Semitic religions are monolithic and do not have any social system that is comparable to the Hindu caste system. It is true that-unlike the Hindu religion-they have only one founder and one Book. But one will be surprised to know that there are numerous varieties or schools of Christianity and that, in India at least, there are several castes even among the Muslims! *

Varṇ a, the Basis of the Caste System

The division of the Hindu society into four broad groups, known as varṇ as is now a well-recognized fact.

Though the word `varṇ a' has been used in the sense of `colour' of the skin, in the earlier sections of the *Ṛ gveda* wherein the Ā ryans (fair in colour) and the Dasyus (of dark skin) have been divided into two eternally warring groups, it soon lost this sense.

The fourfold varṇ a system goes back to the *Ṛ gveda Saṁ hitā* itself (vide 8.35.16.7; 1.10.8.7). To make a living by choosing a profession as per one's desire and aptitude is a common phenomenon seen in all civilized societies. It is the duty of the society to provide suitable opportunities for its members to choose and pursue those vocations that agree with their nature. This is the philosophy behind the varṇ a system. The Vedas, including the *Puruṣ asū kta* (wherein this fourfold division of the society has been enunciated very clearly) have only recognized its existence and not created it.

As a society grows in size and civilization, there has got to be a division of labour since all persons cannot do all things. In the early Vedic period, this division of labour might have taken place on a voluntary basis even as the members of a family do so on any important occasion affecting the whole family. Some chose the occupation of accumulating knowledge, wisdom and culture, and training the younger generation in them. They became the brā hmaṇ as. Those who were physically sturdy and strong, took to arms to protect the society from external aggression as also maintain internal law and order. They were the kṣ attriyas. A great majority of the rest devoted themselves to the production and distribution of wealth and goods through agriculture, dairy-farming, trade and commerce. They were called the vaiś yas. The others who could not fit into any of these vocations made a living by supplying manual labour and serving others. They became the ś ū dras. In course of time, each of these varṇ as- from the brā hmaṇ as to the ś ū dras-acquired hierarchical superiority over the succeeding ones.

Though this was a natural process based on guṇ a (aptitude) and karma (vocation chosen as per that aptitude), it was more a general rule and an ideal one at that. It was almost impossible to estimate the guṇ a of every individual and assign an

appropriate karma to him. (What about a baby that is just born?!) Hence birth in a varṇa became an easier and a more practicable principle to fix up the varṇa of that individual. This was the beginning of the jāti system-now called the 'caste system'-wherein the varṇa got automatically fixed by birth (jāti = birth).

Though the varṇa of a person had been assigned to him by virtue of his birth into it, there is enough evidence to surmise that one had enough freedom to choose one's calling. Viśvāmitra and Vīratavya who were kṣatriya kings chose to become brāhmaṇa sages by their Vedic learning and austerity. Paraśurāma and Droṇācārya, on the other hand, took to arms and fighting as their profession and became-for all practical purposes-kṣatriyas, retaining their brāhmaṇa hood only in name. However, these conversions seem to be rather an exception.

Growth of the Caste System

Human nature being prone to sense attraction and sex desire, the general rule of endogamy among the varṇas was often violated. Hence anuloma marriages-marriages of the men of the higher varṇas with the women of the lower ones-became common and had to be accorded legal sanction. On the other hand, pratiloma marriages-the reverse of the anuloma ones-could not be prevented, though frowned upon. This led to what is technically known as 'varṇasaṅkara' (mixing up of the varṇas or the castes) ultimately giving rise to a plethora of mixed castes.

Even by the time of the great epic, the *Mahābhārata* (circa 3000 B.C.), the problem of varṇasaṅkara had become stupendous. Incessant invasions from outside, by people of other races and cultures like the Greeks, the Hūṇas, the Śakas, the Scythians, the Persians and others who often settled down in India and got integrated into the Hindu society, also contributed to the multiplication of the castes.

While the law-givers, the authors of the smṛtis and dharmāśāstras (secondary scriptural works) were struggling to invent new names for those innumerable castes, and even subcastes, the natural flow of time and human history came to their rescue, at least in one way. Increase of population and development of civilization necessitated the manufacture of many new implements, instruments and devices for greater comforts and smoother living. This led to a multiplication of new professions, automatically

absorbing more and more number of persons into them. They became the new castes. That the nomenclatures of many castes and subcastes contain a direct or indirect reference to their professions is proof enough, of this development. Over the decades or even centuries, a very high degree of specialization took place in these skills and professions.

Positive Aspects of the Caste System

It has become a fashionable pastime for anyone who considers himself as modern, to rail against the caste system. People are not wanting who 'discover' in it, the 'sinister machinations' of the 'clever and crooked' brāhmaṇas as to keep a whole nation under slavish subjugation. How a handful of people, who had neither military might nor the power of wealth to back them up, could keep millions under their thumb for millennia, except by the sheer power of their noble character and a life dedicated to the welfare of all, does not seem to penetrate their prejudiced brains. Impartial savants, whether from the West or from the East, have showered encomiums on this system which has survived many a brutal onslaught over the centuries. Sidney Low in his *Vision of India* (2nd edn., 1907, pp. 262-263) eloquently praises it thus:

There is no doubt that it is the main cause of the fundamental stability and contentment by which Indian society has been braced up for centuries against the shocks of politics and the cataclysms of Nature. It provides every man with his place, his career, his occupation, his circle of friends. It makes him at the outset a member of a corporate body, it protects him through life from the canker of social jealousy and unfulfilled aspirations; it ensures him companionship and a sense of community with others in like case with himself. The caste organization is to the Hindu his club, his trade union, his benefit society, his philanthropic society. There are no workhouses in India and none are as yet needed.

This is what Abbe Dubois, a Christian missionary from France, who lived in close touch with the Indians of all castes for over fifteen years, has to say on the same subject:

I consider the institution of castes among the Hindu nations as the happiest effort of their legislation; and I am well convinced that, if the people of India never sunk into a

state of barbarism, and if, when almost all Europe was plunged in that dreary gulf, India kept up her head, preserved and extended the sciences, the arts and civilization, it is wholly to the distinction of castes that she is indebted for that high celebrity. *

Here is another quotation from Swami Vivekananda, the great prophet of Modern India:

We believe in Indian caste as one of the greatest social institutions that the Lord gave to man. We also believe that though the unavoidable defects, foreign persecutions, and above all, the monumental ignorance and pride of many brāhmaṇas who do not deserve the name, have thwarted in many ways, the legitimate fructification of this most glorious Indian institution, it has already worked wonders for the land of Bharata and is destined to lead Indian humanity to its goal.**

**Quoted from: P. V. Kane, History of Dharmasāstra, Vol. II, pt. 1, Edn. 1941, Poona, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, p. 20.*

*** India and Her problems, Edn. 1992, Mayavati, Advaita Ashrama, p. 63.*

An unbiased study of the reasons for the survival of the caste system can easily reveal its positive and constructive aspects thus:

- (a) It has given social security to every member of the caste by instilling a sense of belonging even from his early childhood days.
- (b) It has, in an easy and natural way, given excellent training in the particular trade or profession, since the whole family is engaged in it. Most often, since people of the same caste, practising a particular profession, lived in colonies of their own, the very atmosphere was congenial to this training. This has automatically eliminated the problem of unemployment which has assumed alarming proportions now.
- (c) It has abolished unhealthy and cut-throat competition in the trade due to the cooperative efforts of the entire community.
- (d) Endogamous marriages within the community have further strengthened the social bonds among the various members, thus safeguarding the interest of the individual even in emergencies.
- (e) A clear demarcation of the duties and obligations of each caste group towards the society in general and a recognition of the rights and privileges of each group

by the others in particular, conduced to peaceful coexistence over several centuries.

Gradual Decadence of the Caste System

There is no gainsaying the fact that during the last 150 years, there has been a gradual decline of the true spirit behind the caste system. It has been much more pronounced during the 50 years after our political independence. These may be listed as follows:

(a) Men decay where wealth accumulates. Concentration of power leads to corruption. The brāhmaṇas and the kṣatriyas, developed vested interests in their position, status and power, which had helped them to better their worldly prospects. Instead of striving to serve the society through these, they tried to subjugate it for selfish ends. It naturally produced reactions and caste conflicts. In fact, these conflicts have spread even to the so-called lower castes, each of which trying to establish its 'superiority' over the others.

(b) Forgetting their duties and obligations to the society as a whole, people have started asserting their rights and privileges and fighting for them. This has led to the disturbance of the equilibrium and peace of the social structure.

(c) The import of science and technology from the West, with its concomitants of less work, more leisure and greater material comforts, has had a devastating effect on the Indian society. The need-based pattern of life has yielded its place to a greed-based one, thus sowing unrest in all fields of life.

(d) As a result, all sections of the society including the brāhmaṇas-the original custodians of religion, ethical and spiritual values-have forsaken their great and time-tested ideals and have fallen a prey to the sensate culture of the machine-made civilization, of the West.

Before taking up a study of the remedial measures, it is better to turn our attention to the original Brāhmaṇa Ideal, to which everybody in the society was expected to be raised, in course of time.

The Brāhmaṇa Ideal

The strength and stamina of any society depends not so much on its physical vigour and vitality or its economic power as on the general personal character of the individuals it comprises. People who are endowed with a will that inspires them, 'to strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield,' are the real wealth of a nation. Such a high degree of evolution cannot be achieved in a day. It may take decades, nay, even centuries to do so. And, this needs highly evolved, ideal, persons who become the models for others to emulate. Not only that, they should actively train and guide the rest of the society by their work, example and precept.

It is exactly this that the ancient sages of India, the founding fathers of Vedic religion and philosophy, did, when they gave us the varṇa system with the brāhmaṇa ideal as its pinnacle of glory.

A brāhmaṇa was, first of all, to be a 'brahmaṇid,' a knower of Brahman, a knower of God. Since 'Brahman' or the Vedas (which taught the science of the Spirit), was the means to it, a brāhmaṇa was commanded to master it and then spread its wisdom to the worthy disciples that may approach him for the same.

A life of the spirit leads to the life in the Spirit, called Brahman. This means, maximizing the intellectual, moral and spiritual (or soul) powers through tapas or austerity, enabling one to ultimately reach that goal. Since the physical body, the sense-organs and an unripe mind as also a wild ego are capable of knocking down even highly evolved spiritual aspirants, the brāhmaṇa is urged to spare no efforts in chastising and subjugating them. Thus a brāhmaṇa has to wage a relentless war on two fronts simultaneously-to control the physical instincts and to raise the mind to higher levels.

In every country, a soldier who is prepared to lay down his life in defending it, is given certain prerogatives and privileges; and, rightly so. Then, why not accord the same to these noble souls who have willingly forsaken their personal comforts and luxuries for the sake of an ideal that ultimately helps the entire society? Recognizing this, the smṛtis and the dharma-śāstras (scriptures considered as next in importance to the Vedas and guiding the lives of people in all its aspects) have given some rights and privileges to the brāhmaṇa.

A brāhmaṇa is primarily expected to study the Vedas, teach it to others competent to acquire its knowledge and lead a contemplative life. He may be an expert in several branches of sciences and arts and train others in them without expecting any fee for the same. He may, if he chooses, act as a priest in sacrifices conducted by others or perform them himself. On such occasions he is free to accept gifts and also bestow them on others.

He is not normally expected to practise remunerative professions except in times of great distress. Hence it is the duty of the society-especially the kṣatriya kings and the well-to-do vaiśyas-to maintain him, as also his family and disciples, if he is running a gurukula (forest academy). The king should not collect taxes from him and should exempt him from the general laws of the land. Punishment for transgressions, if any, must be very mild. On all occasions in general and during religious festivals in particular, the brāhmaṇa should get precedence over others and a place of honour and veneration.

The Brāhmaṇa in Actual Life

From the foregoing description it should not be surmised that the brāhmaṇa was above the laws of the land and hence a law unto himself! His own pure conscience being the best judge, the brāhmaṇa often applied the rules to himself even more ruthlessly than he wished for the others. The story of Śaṅkha and Likhita (vide *Mahābhārata*, *Śānti* parva, ch. 23), is a case to the point.

Human nature being rather fragile, easily subject to the weaknesses of the flesh and lucre-not all the brāhmaṇas could keep to the superhuman ideals expected of them. As they gradually slid down from the lofty ideals, they took to other means of living as were prescribed for the kṣatriyas and vaiśyas, like fighting, agriculture, trade and commerce. As long as they sincerely struggled to keep up the Vedic studies and also lead a simple and austere life, the smṛtis and dharmasāstras (of later periods) permitted them to do so.

During further periods of decline of their brāhmaṇahood, they advocated the theory of the superiority of a brāhmaṇa just by birth and started claiming the privileges as of old, as a matter of right.

This had a twofold deleterious effect: They contributed to their own spiritual damnation. They also generated unhealthy reactions from the other members of the society. Gradually they lost their privileges. They were forced to obey the general laws of the land as others.

Since the brāhmaṇas were the trend-setters for the society-it being universally conceded that they represented the Ideal Man-their forsaking the spiritual ideals of human excellence, had a catastrophic effect on the whole society. If today the Hindu society in general is sunk in the quagmire of corruption, nepotism and immorality, much of the blame should be apportioned to the brāhmaṇas themselves.

The Śūdra Problem

If in the original varṇa system, the brāhmaṇas stood at the top of the ladder of social hierarchy, the śūdras occupied the bottom rung.

Who exactly the śūdras were, has been a point of discussion and debate among scholars, especially the sociologists and the anthropologists. As per the original varṇa system, the śūdras were very much a part and parcel of the Āryan society. Though they earned their livelihood by physical labour and service to the other three varṇas they did enjoy social status and honour. In the early Vedic society rules about inter-dining and inter-marriage do not seem to have been very stringent. The brāhmaṇas could employ the śūdras as cooks (*vide Āpastamba Dharmasūtras*, 2.2.3.4) and could accept their invitation for dinner if they were their own servants or tillers of their land or even their family friends (*vide Gautama Dharmasūtras* 17.1 and 6). Some authorities like Bādarī even allowed them to establish Vedic fires or have the saṁskāras (religious sacraments) performed.

From all these we can perhaps conclude that except for keeping the Vedic fires and studying or teaching the Vedas, they were allowed to live a decent life like any other member of the Āryan society. And, they were certainly entitled to the acquisition of spiritual knowledge and wisdom, though not through the Vedas, but through the secondary works like the itihāsas and the purāṇas.

However, things did change for the worse, for the ś ū dras as time rolled by. Their freedom got gradually curtailed. Their social disabilities were multiplied. Their honour and dignity were lowered. Some sections from among them were even branded as untouchables, segregated from the general society and forced to live outside the towns and villages. Punishments for transgressions against the higher varṇ as became more and more severe. Legal protection became less effective.

The gradual decline of the ś ū dras in the hierarchy of the Ā ryan society might have been due to several causes:

As the general population increased, that of the ś ū dras also naturally swelled. An unconscious fear of their numerical strength might have induced the upper classes of the society to impose greater restrictions on them.

Offsprings of the anuloma and pratiloma marriages along with those of clandestine unions as also the parents of the latter, were relegated to the ś ū dra class. Persons of the upper varṇ as guilty of heinous sins, were also pushed down into the ś ū dra class. They being renegades, the brā hmaṇ as were perhaps unwilling to give them the facilities that the ś ū dras enjoyed earlier.

Invading tribes of foreign origin when they decided to stay on in India and get domiciled, could neither be ignored nor assimilated completely. Hence they might have grudgingly been given a place among the ś ū dras. Since they were totally alien to the local religion and culture, restrictions had to be placed on them to protect the íryan way of life from being adversely affected.

Untouchability

Along with the decline of the ś ū dras there appeared in the Hindu society, an evil practice worse than the ones known so far-that of aspr̥ ś yatā or untouchability. Neither during the Vedic period, nor during the period of the early dharmas̥ ā stras, was untouchability mentioned, much less practised. Even the cā ṇ ḍ ā las, considered the lowest in the social rank, were counted only among the ś ū dras.

How and when exactly the practice began, it is difficult to say. Ceremonial impurity as on the birth or death in a family was fairly well-known. Contact with unclean objects or persons made a person `aspr̥ ś ya' or untouchable, but a bath could remedy

the defect.

Gradually, the notion must have gained ground that certain persons constantly engaged in very unclean occupations like cleaning human ordure, butchery and sale of meat, tanning and so on-which were a health hazard for others-had to be segregated and treated as untouchables in the best interest of the society as a whole. Hence they were made to live outside the towns and villages and their entry and movements were restricted.* What might have begun thus was, unfortunately, extended to all the persons of those castes later on, even though they might have been engaged in more decent occupations.

That untouchability is a blot on the Hindu society has been conceded by one and all. Vigorous efforts have been made by the teachers of the Bhakti Schools like Ś rī Kṛ ṣ ṇ a Caitanya (A.D. 1485-1533) earlier and by Nā rā yaṇ a Guru (A.D. 1854-1928) and Mahā tmā Gā ndhī (A.D. 1869-1948) in recent history, to eliminate it and restore a place of dignity to these unfortunate persons.

Solution to the Caste Problem in Modern India

In spite of all the encomiums heaped upon the Caste System by a few far-sighted savants of the East and the West, it is an undeniable fact that serious situations are, off and on, arising out of it (as it obtains now), sometimes creating law and order problems too! The caste consciousness has become so deep-rooted in the psyche of our people that even among the so-called untouchable classes, some sections are claiming `superiority' over other sections! The problem has further been compounded by selfish and narrow-minded political and social leaders, ever eager to fish in troubled waters. Various laws enacted by the governments-whether at the Centre or in the States-though done with the best of intentions, have not had the desired impact on the society.

One of the solutions that is often `graciously' given by many a leader in social life is that the system itself should be scrapped. It is akin to advising the abolition of all the political systems since none has really helped humanity perfectly. (Or, why not cut off the head, to get rid of headaches?!)

In fact some of the religious leaders of the medieval ages (of India) who tried this method, not only failed in their efforts, but ultimately ended up in adding one more caste

along with many subcastes to the already existing ones!

Even in countries that have no caste system as we have in India, social tensions and violent conflicts have not disappeared. Racial riots, sectarian violence and even religious conflicts among people professing the same religion are the order of the day.

Hence the solution of abolishing the caste system itself is worse than the problem it is supposed to solve.

Wisdom lies in a reappraisal of the entire system over the centuries, discover the various loopholes and plug them, and also improve the system itself in other ways so that we can get the best out of it. Let us not forget that it has successfully worked for over five millennia or even more!

The causes of all conflicts among the human beings, including those rooted in caste-consciousness, are basically two: selfishness and egoism. If and when one caste group succeeds in getting better off in life, both economically and culturally, it also succeeds in rousing the wrath of other caste groups that may be lagging behind. False pride and hurt-feelings roused by the progress of other castes may also be responsible for initiating friction, tensions and conflicts.

The best and the only remedy for this is good education for *a//* the people of our country. Education can be the panacea for many an evil in our society. However, this education, apart from giving general knowledge and proficiency in some calling, should also give a person refinement and culture through the imparting of moral, ethical and spiritual values. In other words dharma, in its true sense, must become an integral part of an education system. If and when such an education makes all the people feel that they are one people belonging to a great country and are endowed with tremendous potentialities to raise themselves from the brute level to the human level, and ultimately to the divine level, they will become an invaluable asset to the whole of humanity. In fact, it was exactly this ideal that our ancient sages envisaged when they attempted to raise everyone ultimately to the level of the ideal *brāhmaṇa*, through their propagation of the *varṇa* system and eulogy of the true *brāhmaṇa*. And, many of these great ones like Vyāsa, Vālmīki or Vasiṣṭha, were themselves *not* *brāhmaṇas* by birth!

Most unfortunately, during the last few decades, a virulent and systematic propaganda has been mounted by certain non-*brāhmaṇa* leaders against the

brā hmaṇ as, blaming them for all the ills that have afflicted their own societies. It is best to quote in reply, Swami Vivekananda (who himself was *not* a brā hmaṇ a by caste) here:

Therefore, it is no use fighting among the castes...It will divide us all the more, weaken us all the more, degrade us all the more. The solution is not by bringing down the higher, but by raising the lower upto the level of the higher. And that is the line of work found in all our books...The ideal at one end is the brā hmaṇ a and the ideal at the other end is the cā ṇ ḍ ā la, and the whole work is to raise the cā ṇ ḍ ā la upto the brā hmaṇ a. Slowly and slowly you find more and more privileges granted to them.

It is true that he (the brā hmaṇ a) was the earliest preacher to the Indian races, he was the first to renounce everything in order to attain the higher realization of life, before others could reach to the idea. It was not his fault that he marched ahead of the other castes. Why did not the other castes so understand and do as they did? Why did they sit down and be lazy, and let the brā hmaṇ as win the race?

To the non-brā hmaṇ a castes I say, wait, be not in a hurry. Do not seize every opportunity of fighting the brā hmaṇ a, because as I have shown, you are suffering from your own fault. Who told you to neglect spirituality and Sanskrit learning? What have you been doing all this time?...Why do you not spend millions to bring Sanskrit education to all the castes of India? ...The moment you do these things you are equal to the brā hmaṇ a. That is the secret power of India.*

Vivekananda, during his days, vigorously advocated the study of Sanskrit by all, because according to him, Sanskrit education brought with it refinement and culture, by opening up the entire treasure for our ancient religio-cultural literature.

Another problem which is intimately connected with caste conflicts is that of inter-dining and inter-marriage among the castes. Though inter-dining in urban India seems to have become common, it is still a taboo in the rural areas. As for inter-caste marriages it is not at all common even in the urban areas.

In the rural areas it is not only frowned upon even now but has often led to violent conflicts. With all the propaganda in favour of inter-caste marriages by the government media, people in general are yet to accept the concept. Attitudes among the common people have hardened to such an extent that inter-marriages even among the sub-

groups of the same caste are not favoured. It being a rather sensitive issue, one has to tread very slowly and carefully. As Vivekananda avers*, the unity moves should begin at the levels of subcastes and subgroups, gradually integrating them into the main varṇa system, thus restoring the original four varṇa system. At the same time the notion of privileges should be given the go-by and the duties of everyone towards the society as a whole must be stressed. Of course, the right type of education imparted from the young age can achieve this in course of time.

If the brāhmaṇas show the way, by returning to a life of 'simple living and high thinking,' by producing from among themselves great persons of sterling character, the balance in the society also can be restored more easily and quickly.

Epilogue

To sum up:

(1) The Hindu caste system is a natural growth and evolution from within the varṇa system, from the Vedic culture and the Āryan society.

(2) It has imparted stability to the Hindu society and has successfully survived for over five or six millennia in spite of the repeated invasions against India.

(3) Its decadence started first by the forsaking of the spiritual ideal by the brāhmaṇas for pelf and power; and later by the impact of Western civilization and culture centred round heavy machines and emphasis on greater physical comforts.

(4) The caste system as such need not be and should not be given up. Right attitudes must be created in the minds of people by imparting proper education and culture to eliminate mutual suspicions and animosities and cultivate a sense of social responsibility towards *all* sections of the society.

An example can make this point clear. Suppose in a family, the last child has been handicapped; will its elder brothers and sisters throw it into the well thinking it is a useless child and a burden upon them? On the other hand, they will lavish extra love and affection on it, to bring it up and make it happy. In exactly the same way, if the

forward sections of the society-those who are economically, educationally and culturally forward-take some extra trouble for the upliftment of the weaker sections, not only will the latter be happy but the former too will be happy by the joy of fulfilment of their efforts. And, all social tensions will automatically disappear into the thin air.

Did not Lord Buddha declare 2500 years ago that hatred begets hatred and only LOVE can conquer hatred? Why not give a fair trial to such an eternal truth that has stood the test of time?

Once the people wake up to these simple truths and practise them seriously, the social equilibrium and peace will easily be restored. And caste, instead of being a problem, will become an asset that may be coveted by other nations too!