Caste Identity and Examination of Ambedkar's Methods to Annihilate Caste

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Abstract:

Caste is a peculiar problem in Indian Society. To date, social scientists have not given any clear-cut definition of it, but it has certain characteristics, for instance, hierarchy, endogamy, association with a hereditary occupation, restrictions on food and social intercourse, distinction in custom, dress, and speech, and civil and religious disabilities and privileges enjoyed by different sections of the society. It is a social system in which each caste has been assigned a specific role to play. India is undeniably the most stratified society in the world. Apart from huge income disparities, there are caste, religious, and community differences that are deeply ingrained in everyday social relations. No doubt that the nature of caste and community interactions has changed over time, but views along ascriptive lines still remain important markers in both the public and private spheres. Therefore, Ambedkar suggested some methods by which caste can be annihilated. But all the methods suggested by him are still not fully implemented in the Indian society whose observation will be done in this article for which descriptive and analytical method has been adopted. As a result, it seems that caste is a mental illness whose cure is none other than social harmony.

Keywords: *Caste, Commensality, Identity, Inter-Caste Marriages, Sanskritization, Multiculturalism.*

Introduction

Ambedkar, who is considered the messiah of Dalits, noted that the ancient Indian Society was composed of following classes or *Varnas* such as *Brahmins, Kshatriya, Vaishyas*, and *Shudra* that became self-closed units called castes through the practice of endogamy, but roped in other features such as division of labor, absence of inter-dining and the principle of birth as well (Ambedkar, 2022). These groups are arranged in a hierarchical manner one above the other which follows the *graded inequality*. In this hierarchy, *Brahmin* is in the top position, then *Kshtriyas, Vaishyas*, and *Shudra* are kept respectively. Yet, anthropologists and sociologists have included a fifth group as *Untouchables* better known as *Dalits* in the Hindu Social Order (Kumar, 2014). It is

characteristic of caste that people of different castes restrict themselves from eating food together especially higher castes do not share food or eat with lower castes because the lower castes have always been given the status of *impure*, as they were imposed a lot of dirty or menial work (Berg, 2023; Geetha, 2011). According to Senart, the idea of pollution is attached to the institution of caste, only because the caste that enjoys the highest rank is the priestly class, and priest and purity are old associates. Therefore, Senart believed that idea of pollution is a characteristic of caste only in so far as caste has a religious flavor (Ambedkar, 2022). The point of analysis of caste relations is reflected in Louis Dumont's (1970) presentation of purity and pollution as archetypal and immutable principles of a static Hindu society

(Dumont, 1980). Briggs (1920) wrote in this reference that a legend was there behind this impurity associated with untouchables or caste. According to this legend, five Brahman brothers, while out walking saw the carcass of a cow by the roadside. Four of the brother passed it by, but the fifth removed the body. Thereupon he was excommunicated by his brothers. His descendants continued to remove the carcasses of cattle and thus, the impurity of untouchables has been associated with them by Brahmins (Briggs, 1920). Due to being born from the body of Brahma – a divine *Purush* (Kumar, 2015) and because of this legend, a fact is established here that every human being in Indian society is the child of a Brahma because all *Varnas* and castes are descended from Brahma (Shivdas, 2016). It is a different thing that according to peoples' qualities, their ranking has been done in a different way, in which Brahmin is at the top. Thus, with an open mind all can be considered Brahmins but it is not so easy to say because there are some qualities and disqualities associated with all *Varnas* and castes.

Despite India's constitutional vision of empowerment and upliftment, Caste has been the evidence for thousands of years of historical oppression of lower-caste communities, especially Dalits, which have continued to be marginalized in the nation. Due to this impurity and marginalization, untouchability has been perpetual for the nation. Therefore, to annihilate caste in the nation, Ambedkar had given many suggestions, for instance, inter-dining, inter-caste marriages, rejection of holy Shastras, political representation, religious conversion, etc. but it doesn't appear that these methods are implemented correctly. Social restrictions in society are still trends in any form.

Methodology

Ambedkar was such a global personality that he devoted his entire life to making Indian society an ideal society. According to him, an ideal society should be based on liberty, equality, and fraternity but in achieving all three goals, he considered only one obstacle that was caste and the system associated with it, due to which

peoples' caste identity runs with them in all Indian communities which also lead to the oppression of the lower castes and establish a graded inequality between various castes. That's why Ambedkar wanted the annihilation of caste. He also suggested many methods for this purpose. The objective of this paper is to know to what extent all those methods were successful or if caste identity got bogged down again in using all these methods. For observing these methods (suggested by Ambedkar) with the current lifestyle in India descriptive and analytical methods have been adopted.

Results and Discussion

Commensality (Eating-Together)

Hindus believe that food has a special significance. The method of preparing food is seen as a form of devotional practice. Hindu culture emphasizes not only on the diet should be pure or *Sattvik*, but the process of cooking should also be *Sattvik*. That's why, cooking and serving food was also considered the function of the *Brahmin* or pure upper caste (Dhillon, 2014), a proof of this is also found in ancient Indian text, a legend epic *Mahabharata* depicts that when Pandavas were in exile (*Agyatvas*), Bhima (popularly known as Bhimasena) played the role of a Brahmin cook (named *Vallabh*) at Virat's kingdom by skipping his identity of Kshatriya (Kapoor, 2002). Even in present lifestyle people adhere very strictly to purity (hygiene) and pollution. The field of cooking and food supplying is still assigned to Brahmins (Iversen & Raghavendra, 2006), it can be seen even today that the shops of confectioners and caterers are mostly of *Brahmin* or *Vashya* caste and prohibited to the Dalits because they have always been deprived of food or eaten leftovers and depended on the upper caste for their food (Bhattacharjee & Tripathi, 2019). For instance, recently a Dalit women chef has been boycotted and fired from a school of Uttarakhand because the parents of higher caste children wanted the upper caste chef to cook and serve the midday meal to their children. In this episode, it was documented that some rules were violated in the appointment process of Cook (Rajput, 2021).

Likewise, in Lucknow (Uttar Pradesh), a higher caste customer allegedly spat in the face of a Zomato delivery agent and brutally thrashed him after knowing the delivery agent's caste because he was a Dalit and refused to take his order (Rizvi, 2022). There is also an example of this even nobody wouldn't get any Dalit chef in the mainstream cooking business. The sanctity associated with food has reached such an extent that Restaurants, Dhabas and hotels are also found with upper-caste titles (Iversen, & Raghavendra, 2006). So far no one has been able to tell when untouchability started but untouchability in India emerged in the form of a practice to ban the consumption of beef. Upper caste Hindus and Brahmins 'out-casted' those people who ate beef. This alienated both the lower-caste and upper-caste Hindus (Ghosal, 2015; Ambedkar, 2008). Therefore, Ambedkar believed that to make a democratic and equal Hindu social order, we need to vigorously encourage inter-caste dining between the castes (Ambedkar, 2014).

In a globalised world, in daily life, food sharing or eating together is very common, especially, when people are eating a portion of food together with family, friends, or colleagues, namely commensality (Fischler, 2011). Food sharing between two adult people while eating together often shows the intimacy between them (Miller, Rozin, & Fiske, 1998; Erwin, Burke, & Purves, 2002). But as soon as caste is mentioned, this intimacy becomes volatile and uneasy. It can be said that in metro-cities it shows without any hindrance but in villages, it is still a taboo (Çalıkoğlu, 2005: 35). Therefore, Ambedkar believed that in the family, most people eat food together or the upper castes also do not mind eating food with other upper caste members, rather it increases friendship among them. But they have excluded the *Shudras* and the *Untouchables* from this circle. Therefore, inter-caste eating-together or inter-dining can function as an approach to facilitating social bonding and/or engaging in a happy and satisfying life. Therefore, since it is a matter of choice, inter-dining is still not fully executed in Indian society. The first plan of action for the abolition of caste is to start with inter-caste

dinners, but Ambedkar analyzed that it is an inadequate remedy or method for abolishing caste. He believed that many castes allow inter-dining but by common experience, inter-dining has not succeeded in killing the spirit of caste and the consciousness of caste.

Inter-Caste Marriages

According to Ambedkar, "caste in India means artificial chopping off the population into fixed and definite units, each one prevented from fusing into another through the custom of endogamy…the conclusion is inevitable 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 the mechanism of caste" (Ambedkar, 2022: 9). Caste is usually segmented into several sub-castes and each sub-caste is endogamous. The concept of purity and pollution also applies to this regarding blood purity. Not only this, but this endogamy also creates a caste identity. So, caste denotes a group the members of which are acquired by birth (Hiwrale, 2020). Consequently, marriages in India are largely endogamous. Therefore, Ambedkar suggested inter-caste marriages as one of the potential remedies to annihilate the caste. Fusion of blood may alone create the feeling of being kith and kin, and unless this feeling of kinship, of being kindred, becomes paramount, the separatist feeling—the feeling of being aliens—created by caste will not vanish." (Ambedkar, 2022). However, inter-caste marriage is considered a serious and bold step in India. In many areas, intra-caste marriages continue to be imposed, despite elders being educated and having moved out of their traditional livelihoods. Inter-caste marriages are still considered a violation of caste norms (Narzary & Ladusingh, 2019). However, there is also a difference between gender-wise inter-caste marriages. Along with this, exogamy is strictly observed and that there are more rigorous penalties for violating exogamy than there are for violating endogamy. More of the time it is arrived to honor killing. Female behavior is guided by the rules of honor and the threat of violent enforcement, and it serves as a mechanism of social control (Jafri, 2008; Mayeda

& Vijaykumar, 2016). Girls and women have to be protected under this mechanism, but only girls and women who fulfill their roles and duties in the private sphere of the household have the right to secure themselves from violence. The concept of 'honour' is also invoked and used to justify any type of perceived familial or individual transgression by women. However, it includes a range of issues, such as solving property disputes and resolving feuds between families (Lari, 2011), or/and especially preventing women from choosing a marital or life partner without the family's consent in the case of male Dalit life-partner (D'Lima, Solotaroff, & Pande, 2020). Contemporary Dalit ideology promotes inter-caste marriage to devastate caste endogamy (a central tenet of Hindu society) (Tamalapakula, 2019), but not all inter-caste marriages take place in the spirit of Ambedkar's thought, as he expressed in his text *Annihilation of Caste*. Ambedkar warned that among the Hindus, inter-caste marriage must necessarily be a factor of greater force in social life than it needs to be in the life of the non-Hindus. On the one hand, society is already well-knit by other ties; on the other hand, marriage is an ordinary incident of life, where society is cut asunder, and marriage as a binding force becomes a matter of urgent necessity. The real remedy for breaking caste is inter-caste marriage. Nothing else will serve as the solvent of caste. Nevertheless, it is also a contemporary reality that inter-caste marriage is considered a serious offence in the Hindu society. Since it is perceived that some castes are more pure than other lower castes and if this impurity joins the purity, this impurity will be transmitted from one caste to another, it will create a new caste (Bidner, & Eswaran, 2015). Therefore, about ninety percent of marriages are arranged by parents or other relatives/match makers (including online match makers) in India (Edathumparambil, 2014). However, the Central Government formed a policy in 2014-15 namely 'Dr. Ambedkar Scheme for Social Integration through inter-caste marriage' to give Rs 2.5 lakh incentive to every inter-caste marriage in which a Dalit is involved. The results show that even this policy has not been so successful. The website of India Today also accepts that sample survey-based studies indicate that caste rigidity in Indian marriages continues to be deeply entrenched (Outlook Web Bureau, 2017; India Today Web Desk, 2018).

Vanishing the Belief in Sanctity of *Shastras*

Ambedkar believed that criticizing and ridiculing people for not inter-dining or inter-caste marrying, or occasionally holding inter-caste dinners and celebrating inter-caste marriages, are worthless methods of achieving the desired result. Another remedy was to destroy the belief in the sanctity of the *Shastras*. He believed that the actions of the people emerged from the religious doctrine they adhered to, and hence the root of the social evil rests in doctrine and not solely in practice. He advocated that caste is not a wall of bricks but a mental notion. In Ambedkar's view, caste is not as bad as the religious text which has inculcated this notion of caste. So the real enemy to fight is not the people who obey caste norms in practice, it is the *Shastras* that teach them this religion of caste. According to Ambedkar, not questioning the authority of the *Shastras* is permitting the people to believe in their sanctity and their sanctions. Then, blaming the people and criticizing them for their acts would be irrational and inhuman rather it would be an irrational way to carry social reform. Ambedkar believed that regarding caste or untouchability the acts of the people are merely the results of their beliefs inculcated in their minds by the *Shastras* and that people will not change their conduct until they cease to believe in the sanctity of the *Shastras* on which their conduct is based. For this reason, Ambedkar in a powerful symbolic gesture publically burnt the *Manusmriti*; for within this text was the justification for the enslavement of the *Shudras* and *Ati-Shudra* and women, this idea was suggested by Sahastrabudhey, a Chitpavan Brahman associate of Ambedkar (Moon, 2002). Rather, he demanded a new order to reshape the Hindu code providing freedom and equal rights to Dalits who were deprived of human respect and dignity (Samel, 1999) because these scriptures allow upper caste *(twice-born or dvijas)* to consider themselves as superior against the lower castes or untouchables *(once-born)* as inferior. For *dvijas*, *Shastras* are evident to

preserve their higher and religiously sanctioned status to be sacred and pure castes (Michael, 2007). Moffatt continues that untouchables themselves complete the hierarchical whole and accept their low position; thus, the most oppressed members of Indian society are the truest believers in the system (Moffatt, 2015). According to Ambedkar, to get rid of caste oppression make every people should be free from the confinement of the *Shastras*, cleanse their minds of the harmful notions founded on the *Shastras*, and then people will inter-dine and inter-marry, without telling anyone to them to do so. People should have so much courage that they can question the scriptures, can tell what is wrong in them, can question in what respect it is considered sacred (Ambedkar, 2022). But it is also a fact that *Shastras* are still a part of the culture and heritage of India which can't be denied.

Political Representation

Ambedkar had more gained from his life's experience and he suffered the brunt of caste. Therefore, he wanted that it would be difficult for the untouchables to get rid of the caste system, so why not get their civil, economic, and political rights within the Hindu society, so that they would feel safe in that society. That's why in the Southborough Commission, he raised the matter of the rights of the Dalits in front of the British Government. In this commission, along with the right to franchise, he raised the issue of the economic, social, and political rights of Dalits as citizens of India. Along with this, Ambedkar deeply realized that 'exclusion from political power is the essence of the distinction between the ruling race and a subject race' (Ambedkar, 2021). As a true supporter of social democracy, Ambedkar observed that all diverse societies in India face the important challenge of ensuring the representation of different sections of society at the level of decision-making for their well-being and he did not want that the representatives of the depressed classes were drawn from other classes (Paswan, 2017). Ambedkar said, "We hold that the problem of the Depressed Classes will never be solved unless they get political power in their own hands" (Desikachar 1983: 553). Therefore,

Ambedkar wanted that affirmative action should be taken in India to provide political representation so that lower castes may choose their representatives for their well-being. By presenting pieces of evidence before the Southborough Committee in 1919 he quested the representative character of the electoral system that was developed by the British and started arguing for arranging better opportunities for the 'untouchables'.

In 1927, when the British appointed a Statutory Commission (popularly known as Simon Commission) to frame Constituencies and franchises, Ambedkar became the champion of the Depressed Classes and brought the issue of political representation of the Depressed Classes into the mainstream discourse. He requested before the commission that, "I would submit that as a matter of demand for political protection, we claim representation on the same basis as the Mahomedan minority. We claim reserved seats if accompanied by an adult franchise." Then in 1932, with the support of the British and through the Poona Pact (after Gandhi-Ambedkar tussle), Depressed Classes got some reserved seats for provincial and central legislatures, but even after Poona Pact Ambedkar felt cheated. Since he felt that the Hindu majority had cheated the Depressed Classes by not giving them a separate electorate in which Depressed Classes would have more seats and votes (Basu, 2000). Then, the British government accepted most of the provisions of the Poona Pact in the Government of India Act, of 1935 by increasing some seats for Depressed Classes. This act formed the basis for much of independent India's safeguards for Depressed Classes in the Constitution. Finally, it was accepted that political representation would be in the form of reservations in the legislature within the Constitution. The Depressed Classes felt that political safeguards in the constitution would alter the social forces responsible for their exclusion from mainstream society (Velusamy, 2010).

Ambedkar formed three political parties in his entire life such as Independent Labour Party" (ILP) established in 1936 (Mhaskar, 2020), All India Schedule Caste Federation (AISCF)', in

1942 (Jaiswal, 2014), and finally, in 1956, months before his demise, Ambedkar reorganized the All India Scheduled Caste Federation as the Republican Party of India (RPI) (Nainar, 2018). Observing RPI fortunately many political parties have been formed for Dalits but these parties have also flopped. Even the SC and the ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989 has also not shown any charisma against the Dalits' atrocities. Dalits still face harassment and atrocities despite legal provisions.

Religious Conversion

After signed the Poona Pact and the demise of his wife named Ramabai, in May 1935, Ambedkar began to understand that the upper castes that do not allow untouchables to even enter the temples on religious ground, even do not permit them to drink clean water from public ponds on purity basis, upper castes show unity by restricting the same, and for the destruction of the caste they will never contribute. Therefore, he started disliking Hindu religion. That's why, on October 13, 1935, Yeola conference at Nasik district, he announced that he was born a Hindu but he will not die a Hindu (Bhat, 2022). It meant that he had not a way to annihilate caste and even it was not possible in Hindu religion. Ambedkar realized that no reformation is possible in the Hindu religion because historically many movements and campaigns were started earlier also for the reformation of the Hindu religion, but despite some achievements, problems like caste remained. That's why he also did not see any scope for reform in Hinduism (Stroud, 2016). Therefore, Ambedkar appealed to the untouchables to abandon the Hindu religion. He observed the history and found that the untouchables were the "Broken Men" who were broken from their tribes and living as "stray people." They were historically Buddhists by religion. Ambedkar wanted to re-establish the earlier religious paradigm in untouchables. Ambedkar concluded that untouchability was the byproduct of the struggle for supremacy between Buddhism and Brahminism (Audi, 1989). That's why he considered Buddhism an ideal religion for the outcastes or Dalits. Eleanor Zelliot comments that the declaration of Ambedkar portrayed the anguish of a Dalit who suffered due to casteism and was a stab at the religion which denied him equality and self-respect (Zelliot, 1969).

Along with this, he decided to adopt such a religion in which there is no deadly disease named caste. Ambedkar argued that for Buddhists, the dharma is "universal morality which protects the weak from the strong, which provides common models, standards, and rules, and which safeguard the growth of the individual. It is what makes liberty and equality effective" (Parthasarathy, 2008). For Ambedkar, fraternity" is nothing but another name for the brotherhood of men which is also another name for morality. This is why the Buddha preached that Dhamma is morality and as Dhamma is sacred so is morality" (Skaria, 2015). He aspired for morality and humanity where all human beings have the right to live with dignity and to be free. He showed Dalits the path of *Navyana* which was different from the *Hinayana*, the *Mahayana* and the *Vajrayana* Buddhism. Ambedkar believed that there cannot be classes in Buddhism, so he rejected the *Hinayana*, the *Mahayana* and the *Vajrayana* and laid the foundation of *Navyana* on a moral ground so that untouchables can become moral and rational because Ambedkar believed that people would like to adopt that religion which is moral and rational (Verma, 2022). The first mass conversion was organized by Ambedkar himself on 14 October 1956, in Maharashtra (Chandrapur) when he made five lakh followers convert to Buddhism (Tilhon, F. (2012). In fact, Ambedkar tried to endow the untouchables with a Buddhist identity, a separate and prestigious culture (Jaffrelot, 2000), but it is the misfortune of the country that the Dalits who adopt Buddhism are undoubtedly called *Neo-Buddhists*, but they also belong to the lower castes and are recognized by upper castes only as lower rang. Franco et al. (2004) asserted that 'conversion had led to a conflicted identity; a new religious identity, competing with an older caste identity, and not recognized as new by the other communities' (Franco, Ramanathan & Macwan, 2004; Nadkarni, 2005).

Backing-up to the *Sanskritization*

Ambedkar termed Depressed Classes as broken people who later known as Dalits, at the same time, he also accepted that Dalits are not a separate race; they also belong to the Aryan race. And because restrictions were imposed on Dalits like being unhygienic, not having property, staying away from villages, and not having good food and drink, that's why their plight happened. For Ambedkar, Dalithood is a kind of life condition that characterizes the suppression, exploitation, and marginalization of Dalits by the social, economic, cultural, and political domination of the upper castes against the Brahminical ideology (Rao, 2017; Satyanarayana, 2004). That's why Ambedkar inspired Dalits to stay clean, wear clean clothes, eat good food, live in pucca houses, and celebrate their festivals, adopt their rituals at weddings so that they appear like upper-caste people, (even he called Dalits as Suryavanshi in his text *Who were Sudras*) and upper-caste people do not hate them, and Dalits should live with their self-respect. Therefore, for Ambedkar, improving the condition of Dalits was a question of self-respect. Ambedkar perceived that caste is largely a mindset and a belief system that was necessary to change. Therefore, he advocated adopting the same culture which was of the upper castes in India rather he also recommended adopting the Western culture because the upper castes were also adopting Western culture at that time (he also adopted Western culture as a foreign return). As a result and efforts by Ambedkar, even many lower castes started calling them Kshatriya, or the Kshatriya tribe of ancient time but upper caste Kshatriyas did not accept their claim (John, 2001).

This culture adoption was called *Sanskritization* coined by M.N. Srinivas. In fact, Sanskritisation is a process by which a 'low' Hindu caste, or tribals, or other groups, change their customs, rituals, even ideology, and way of life in the direction of a high frequency "twice-born" castes (John, 2001), but *Sanskritization* was/is no longer affecting the mentality of the higher castes. Even in the contemporary time, if Dalits start behaving like upper castes, they still have to face humiliation by them because of their recognized and glorified identity. As Dalits are very easily told that "You do not look like a Dalit or Schedule Caste" or "You do not speak, behave or dress like a Dalit or lower caste" or "You cannot be Dalit as You have scored well in the examinations", "You are the smartest Dalit I have ever known!", "We all are being discriminated against, not only Dalits", and "Why must You write on Dalit issues when you can write on anything else?" (Attri, 2019). Apart from this, Dalits are still prohibited from wearing clean clothes and even sandals (HT correspondent, 2013). Even in places where clothes were allowed, the rules prohibit them from dressing well. The turban could not be worn in a certain color, and, in some places, certain colors are prohibited (Kumar, 2017). In many places, they cannot ride a mare as a ritual to a wedding due to their identity. They can't have a special kind of mustache on their faces. Even they cannot wear shoes in higher caste streets, they must drink from separate receptacles, they often still cannot cycle through high-caste areas, spit in the streets, use the drinking water wells frequented by higher castes, or sit on benches in the common areas of the village (Gorringe & Rafanell, 2007). This seems that Sanskritisation seems to have worked only in the realm of culture and did not work out in the matter of caste or it works only in urban areas where people have adopted modernization and metro-culture or where identity is difficult to ascertain.

Education as a Medium of Social Change

Ambedkar observed that all the means mentioned above can also fail in a rigid society. That's why in Indian society, whether it is a high caste society or a low caste society, both will need rational education. As he said that, "Caste is a notion; it is a state of the mind. The destruction of Caste does not, therefore, mean the destruction of a physical barrier. It means a notional change" (Ambedkar, 2014). This notional change only can come from rational thinking and it only can be done through adopting modern education because all inhuman activities are not done by the wrong-headed mentality rather it is done because of irrational thinking. Education is not only a ladder for

social mobility but also opens the doors for their modernization and for their rational thinking. Education was the only mean of getting rid of their mental sluggishness and satisfaction with their prevalent pathetic conditions. According to Ambedkar, any social transformation is incomplete till we wipe out caste discrimination in society. And this is possible only through appropriate education. Only education would enlighten the downtrodden as well as the upper strata and this will bridge the gap between an oppressed and an oppressor. He recognized the importance of education in shaping the future of Indian society. He said that "It is education which is the right weapon to cut the chains of social slavery (caste compulsion) and it is the education which will enlighten the downtrodden masses to come up and gain social status, economic betterment, and political freedom". Ambedkar felt that because of education, higher castes sent a big section of lower caste society to miserable conditions and education is the only logical thing that can come out them of this hell. Educated and agitated minds will certainly organize for a common mission. The agitated minds for a universal mission would help like-minded people to unite, strive & struggle for a common goal—advancing humanity. Therefore he believed in the idea that "*Educate, Agitate and Organize*" (Sharma, 2015).

Identity that can't be Changed

It is a dilemma of Indian history that starts from Brahmin Mythological texts which have divided the unity of society (Muir, 1872). Due to this, every person in the society has got an identity (as social and economic roles) that divides mankind into *Varnas*, castes, and classes (Gandhi, 1982). The concept of identity builds the social, cultural, political, and ontological significance of a person. In India, a person or community is perceived through their identity, either a higher caste or a lower caste. Due to historical impressions identity cannot be an autonomous notion; it is rather an idea of representing the community in different ways. As a Philosophical interpretation, the identity that a person contains is the distinct quality that makes a person different from other persons. However, the distinctiveness of a person is determined by the

interest, quality, and passion that he develops over a while and is not necessarily a part of the general constructive identity. The distinctiveness of a person has a metaphysical importance, and thus it also becomes an idea in an epistemic sense. One thing should be questioned here that is whether identity can be free from social and cultural positioning that exclusively defines certain distinct values that are unique to each free human. Identity is provided to each person by the coincidence of birth; it is not by one's free will that a person strives to choose for themselves rather it is socially constructed. Is it even possible to create one's identity? This becomes confusing in a society where identity is predetermined, politicized, and perceived as an idea of ideology. However, the distinctiveness of identity has multiple meanings: one may interpret a person to be distinct from the other by arbitrarily ascertaining themselves to have a special quality that only they possess. Making distinction from the other is important to identify one's distinctiveness which is inevitable to recognize oneself. This becomes problematic when identity is culturally imposed or carries a cultural privilege that perpetuates inequality. But if this identity is based on qualities, then it would not be wrong to say that Dalits have developed the same qualities and habits as upper castes after being educated, and due to the impact of *multiculturalism* on their character building they are having more. But still, they are identified as Dalits, and there has been almost no difference in anti-Dalits atrocities. It seems that there is no way to annihilate caste in India because in defining the identity of a person the caste or surname plays a significant role that fosters a sense of superiority and inferiority (Gupta, 2023).

Conclusion

'A New Identity of Dalits'

In conclusion we can analyze that Ambedkar's methods have been successful to some extent in caste annihilation because caste identity cannot be erased. That's why Dalits have no option but to promote their Dalit identity that's why scholars like Kancha Ilaiah have taken out a new

way of this, by which Dalits can have proud of themselves. As he believes that Dalits have their own culture which is very old, they have contributed a lot to Indian culture, so they should look at that culture in a respectful manner, he also manifested that the Dalits' culture is completely different from the Hindu culture. Thus, he draws a line between Dalit culture and Hindu culture. Apart from this, he emphasizes the need for Dalitization of Indian society which makes Dalits aware of a new identity (Ilaiah, 2009).

Today's Dalits want a casteless society, but they are also proud of their caste (TT Bureau, 2010) on the contrary, upper strata do not even think in this regard. Some theorists believe that prohibiting the inclusion of caste/surname in the name will ensure the principle of 'One Man One Value'. It will be naïve to assume that dispensing with the use of caste/surnames in the public domain will lead to a 'Casteless Society' but it will certainly make Indian caste invisible and lead to a 'Caste Invisible Society' (Gupta, 2023). But the way the current central government of India has taken an initiative is commendable because it has taken care of social harmony. As the Allahabad court said that if any person wants to change his/her surname, to not be identified with any particular caste that may be a cause of prejudice to them in any kind, the same is permissible, because this fact cannot be denied that the "Right to Life includes within its ambit, the Right to Live with Dignity," which includes "not to be tied down by any casteism" faced by a person because of the caste to which he/she belongs (Khan and Jain, 2023). While a few years back the Bombay High Court ruled that if the surname is changed, that does not change the caste of a person (India Today Correspondent, 2016). It means that caste identity is not substantial and stable, but a 'frame or context' dependent on its effects (MOSSE, 2020). However, social harmony and constitutionalism can be a solution to the caste problem where no one can decide in which family or caste he/she will be born.

Acknowledgement

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