Annihilation of Caste: A Reply to Mahatma Gandhi

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"Know Truth as Truth and Untruth as Untruth"

— BUDDHA

"He that WILL NOT reason is a bigot. He that CANNOT reason is a fool. He that DARE NOT reason is a slave"

— H. DRUMMOND

I

I appreciate greatly the honour given to me by the Mahatma in taking notice of his Harijan for the speech on Caste which I had prepared for the Jat-Pat Todak Mandal. From a perusal of his review of my speech, it is clear that the Mahatma completely dissents from the views I have expressed on the subject of Caste. I am not in the habit of entering into controversy with my opponents unless there are special reasons which compel me to act otherwise. Had my opponent been some mean and obscure person I would not have pursued him. But my opponent being the Mahatma himself, I feel I must attempt to meet the case to the contrary which he has sought to put forth. While I appreciate the honour he has given me, I must confess to a sense of surprise on finding that of all the persons, the Mahatma should accuse me of a desire to seek publicity as he seems to do when he suggests that in publishing the undelivered speech my object was to see that I was not “forgotten.” Whatever the Mahatma may choose to say my object in publishing the speech was to provoke the Hindus to think and to take stock of their position. I have never hankered for publicity and if I may say so, I have more of it than I wish or need. But supposing it was out of the motive of gaining publicity that I printed the speech who could cast a stone at me? Surely not those, who like the Mahatma, live in glass houses.

II

Motive apart, what has the Mahatma to say on the question raised by me in the speech? First of all, anyone who reads my speech will realize that the Mahatma has entirely missed the issues raised by me and that the issues he has raised are not the issues that arise out of what he is pleased to call my indictment of the Hindus. The principal points which I have tried to make out in my speech may be catalogued as follows:

(1) That caste has ruined the Hindus;

(2) That the reorganization of the Hindu society on the basis of Chaturvarnya is impossible, because the Varnavyavastha is like a leaky pot or like a man running at the nose. It is incapable of sustaining itself by its own virtue and has an inherent tendency to generate into a caste system, unless there is a legal sanction behind it which can be enforced against every one transgressing his Varna;

(3) That the reorganization of the Hindu Society on the basis of Chaturvarnya is harmful, because the effect of the Varnavyavastha is to degrade the masses by denying them opportunity to acquire knowledge and to emasculate them by denying them the right to be armed;

(4) That the Hindu society must be reorganized on a religious basis which would recognise the principles of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity;
(5) That in order to achieve this object the sense of religious sanctity behind Caste and Varna must be destroyed;

(6) That the sanctity of Caste and Varna can be destroyed only by discarding the divine authority of the Shastras.

It will be noticed that the questions raised by the Mahatma are absolutely beside the point and show that the main argument of the speech was lost upon him.

III

Let me examine the substance of the points made by the Mahatma. The first point made by the Mahatma is that the texts cited by me are not authentic. I confess I am no authority on this matter, but I should like to state that the texts cited by me are all taken from the writings of the late Mr. Tilak, who was a recognised authority on the Sanskrit language and on the Hindu Shastras. His second point is that these Shastras should be interpreted, not by the learned but the saints and that, as the saints have understood them, the Shastras do not support Caste and Untouchability.

With regards to the first point, what I like to ask the Mahatma is that does it avail to any one if the texts are interpolations and if they have been differently interpreted by the saints? The masses do not make any distinction between texts which are genuine and texts which are interpolations. The masses do not know what the texts are. They are too illiterate to know the contents of the Shastras. They have believed what they have been told, and what they have been told is that the Shastras do enjoin as a religious duty, the observance of Caste and Untouchability.

With regard to the saints, one must admit that, however different and elevating their teachings may have been as compared to those of the merely learned, they have been lamentably ineffective. They have been ineffective for two reasons. Firstly, none of the saints ever attacked the Caste System. On the contrary, they were staunch believers in the System of Castes. Most of them lived and died as members of the Castes, to which they respectively belonged. So passionately attached was Jnyandeo to his status as a Brahmin, that when the Brahmins of Paithan would not admit him to their fold, he moved heaven and earth to get his status as a Brahmin recognized by the Brahmin fraternity. And even the saint Eknath who now figures in the film “Dharmatm” as a hero for having shown courage to touch the untouchables and dine with them, did so not because he was opposed to Caste and Untouchability but because he felt that the pollution caused thereby could be washed away by a bath in the sacred waters of the river Ganges. The saints have never according to my study carried on a campaign against Caste and Untouchability. They were not concerned with the struggle between men; they were concerned with the relation between man and God. They did not preach that all men were equal. They preached that all men were equal, in the eyes of God; a very different and a very innocuous proposition which nobody can find difficult to preach or dangerous to believe in. The second reason why the teachings of the saints proved ineffective was because the masses have been taught that a saint might break Caste but the common man must not. A saint therefore, never became an example to follow. He always remained a pious man to be honoured. That, the masses have remained staunch believers in Caste and Untouchability shows that the pious lives and noble sermons of the saints have had no effect on their life and conduct as against the teachings of the Shastras. Thus it can be a matter of no consolation that there were saints or that there is a mahatma who understands the Shastras differently from the learned few or ignorant many. That, the masses hold different view of the Shastras is a fact, which should and must be reckoned with. How is that to be dealt with except by denouncing the authority of the Shastras, which continue to govern their conduct, is a question, which the Mahatma has not considered. But whatever plan the Mahatma puts forth as an effective means to free the masses from the teachings of the Shastras,
he must accept that the pious life led by one good Samaritan may be very elevating to himself. However, in India, with the attitude, the common man has to saints and to Mahatmas—to honour but not to follow—one cannot make much out of it.

IV

The third point made by the Mahatma is that a religion professed by Chaitanya, Jnyandeo, Tukaram, Thiruvalluvar, Ramkrishna Paramahamsa etc. cannot be devoid of merit as is made out by me. And that a religion has to be judged not by its worst specimens but by the best it might have produced. I agree with every word of this statement. But I do not quite understand what the Mahatma wishes to prove hereby, that religion should be judged not by its worst specimens but by its best is true enough, but does it pose of the matter? I say it does not. The question remains—why the worst number is so many, and the best so few? To my mind, there are two conceivable answers to this question: (1) that the worst by reason of some original perversity of theirs, are morally uneducable and are therefore incapable of making the remotest approach to the religious ideal. Or (2) that the religious ideal is a wholly wrong ideal which has given a wrong moral twist to the lives of the many and that the best have become best in spite of the wrong ideal—in fact by giving to the wrong twist a turn in the right direction. Of these two explanations I am not prepared to accept the first and I am sure that even the Mahatma will not insist upon the contrary. To my mind, the second is the only logical and reasonable explanation unless the Mahatma has a third alternative to explain why the worst are so many and the best so few. If the second is the only explanation then obviously the argument of the Mahatma that a religion should be judged by its best followers carries us nowhere except to pity the lot of the many who have gone wrong because they have been made to worship wrong ideals.

V

The argument of the Mahatma, that Hinduism would be tolerable if only many were to follow the example of the saints is fallacious for another reason. By citing the names of such illustrious persons such as Chaitanya etc. what the Mahatma seems to me to suggest in its broadest and simplest form, is that the Hindu society can be made tolerable and even happy without any fundamental change in its structure if all the high caste Hindus can be persuaded to follow a high standard of morality in their dealings with the low caste Hindus. I am totally opposed to this kind of ideology. I can respect those men of the caste Hindus who try to realize a high social ideal in their life. Without such men India would be an uglier and a less happy place to live in than it is. Nonetheless, anyone who relies on an attempt to turn the members of the caste Hindus into better men by improving their personal character is in my judgment wasting his energy and bugging an illusion. Can personal character make the maker of armaments a good man, i.e. a man who will sell shells that will not burst and gas that will not poison? If it cannot, how can you accept personal character to make a man loaded with the consciousness of Caste, a good man, i.e. a man who would treat his fellows as his friends and equals? To be true to himself he must deal with his fellows either as a superior or inferior according as the case may be; at any rate, differently from his own caste fellows. He can never be expected to deal with his fellows as his kinsmen and equals.

As a matter of fact, a Hindu treats all those who are not of his caste as though they were aliens, who could be discriminated against with impunity and against whom any fraud or trick may be practiced without shame. This is to say that there can be a better or a worse Hindu. However, a good Hindu, there cannot be. This is so not because there is anything wrong with his personal character. In fact, what is wrong is the entire basis of his relationship to his fellows. The best of men cannot be moral if the basis of relationship between them and their fellows is fundamentally a wrong relationship. To a slave his master may be better or worse. But there cannot be a good master. A good man cannot be a master and a master cannot be a good man. The same applies to
the relationship between high caste and low caste. To a low caste man a high caste man can be better or worse as compared to other high caste men. A high caste man cannot be a good man in so far as he must have a low caste man to distinguish him as high caste man. It cannot be good to a low caste man to be conscious that there is a high caste man above him. I have argued in my speech that a society based on Varna or Caste is a society which is based on a wrong relationship. I had hoped that the Mahatma would attempt to demolish my argument. But instead of doing that he has merely reiterated his belief in Chaturvarnya without disclosing the ground on which it is based.

VI
Does the Mahatma practice what he preaches? One does not like to make personal reference in an argument which is general in its application. However, when one preaches a decline and holds it as a dogma, there is a curiosity to know how far he practices what he preaches. It may be that his failure to practice is due to the ideal being too high to be attainable; it may be that his failure to practice is due to the innate hypocrisy of the man. In any case, he exposes his conduct to examination and I must not be blamed if I asked how far the Mahatma has attempted to realize his ideal in his own case. The Mahatma is a Bania by birth. His ancestors had abandoned trading in favour of ministership which is a calling of the Brahmins. In his own life, before he became a Mahatma, when occasion came for him to choose his career he preferred law to scales. On abandoning law he became half saint and half politician. He has never touched trading which is his ancestral calling. His youngest son—I take one who is a faithful follower of his father—born a Vaishya has married a Brahmin's daughter and has chosen to serve a newspaper magnate. The Mahatma is not known to have condemned him for not following his ancestral calling. It may be wrong and uncharitable to judge an ideal by its worst specimens. Surely the Mahatma as a specimen has no better and if he even fails to realize the ideal then the ideal must be an impossible ideal, quite opposed to the practical instincts of man. Students of Carlyle know that he often spoke on a subject before he thought about it. I wonder whether such has not been the case with the Mahatma in regard to the subject matter of Caste. Otherwise certain questions which occur to me would not have escaped him. When can a calling be deemed to have become an ancestral calling so as to make it binding on a man? Must man follow his ancestral calling even if it does not suit his capacities, even when it has ceased to be profitable? Must a man live by his ancestral calling even if he finds it to be immoral? If everyone must pursue his ancestral calling then it must follow that a man must continue to be a pimp because his grandfather was a pimp and a woman must continue to be a prostitute because her grandmother was a prostitute. Is the Mahatma prepared to accept the logical conclusion of his doctrine? To me this ideal of following one's ancestral calling is not only an impossible and impractical ideal, but it is also morally an indefensible ideal.

VII
The Mahatma sees great virtue in a Brahmin remaining a Brahmin all his life. Leaving aside the fact, there are many Brahmins who do not like to remain Brahmins all their lives. What can we say about those Brahmins who have clung to their ancestral calling of priesthood? Do they do so from any faith in the virtue of the principle of ancestral calling or do they do so from motives of filthy lucre? The Mahatma does not seem to concern himself with such queries. He is satisfied that these are “real Brahmins who are living on alms freely given to them and giving freely what they have of spiritual treasures”. This is how a hereditary Brahmin priest appears to the Mahatma—a carrier of spiritual treasures. But another portrait of the hereditary Brahmin can also be drawn. A Brahmin can be a priest to Vishnu—the God of Love. He can be a priest to Shankar—the God of Destruction. He can be a priest at Buddha Gaya shipping Buddha—the greatest teacher of mankind who taught the noblest doctrine of Love. He also can be a priest to Kali, the Goddess, who must have a daily sacrifice of an animal to satisfy her thirst for blood.
He will be a priest of the temple of Rama—the Kshatriya God! He will also be a priest of the temple of Parshuram, the God who took Avatar to destroy the Kshatriyas! He can be a priest to Brahma, the Creator of the world. He can be a priest to a Pir whose God Allah will not brook the claim of Brahma to share his spiritual dominion over the world! No one can say that this is a picture which is not true to life. If this is a true picture one does not know what to say of his capacity to bear rivalries and Godesses whose attributes are so antagonistic that no honest man can be a devotee to all of them. The Hindus rely upon this extraordinary phenomenon as evidence of the greatest virtue of their religion—namely its catholicity, its spirit of toleration. As against this facile view, it can be urged that what is toleration and catholicity may be really nothing more creditable than indifference. This attitude is hard to distinguish in their outer seeming, but so vitally unlike in its real quality that a man is ready to render homage to many Gods and Goddesses may be cited as evidence of his tolerant spirit. But can it not also be evidence of insincerity born of a desire to serve the times? I am sure that this toleration is merely insincerity. If this view is well founded, one may ask what spiritual treasure can there be with a person who is ready to be a priest and a devotee to any deity which it serves his purpose to worship and to adore? Not only must such a person be deemed to be bankrupt of all spiritual treasures but for him to practice so elevating a profession as that of a priest simply because it is ancestral, without faith, without belief, merely as a mechanical process handed down from father to son, is not a conservation of virtue; it is really the prostitution of a noble profession which is no other than the service of religion.

VIII
Why does the Mahatma cling to the theory of every one following his or her ancestral calling? He gives his reasons nowhere. But there must be some reason although he does not cars to avow it. Years ago writing on “Caste versus Class” in his Young India he argued that Caste System was better than Class System on the ground that caste was the best possible adjustment of social stability. If that be the reason why the Mahatma clings to the theory of every one following his or her ancestral calling, then he is clinging to a false view of social life. Everybody wants social stability and some adjustment must be made in the relationship between individuals and classes in order that stability may be established. But two things, I am sure nobody wants. One thing nobody wants is static relationship, something that is unalterable, something that is fixed for all times. Stability is wanted but not at the cost of change when change is imperative. Second thing nobody wants is mere adjustment. Adjustment is wanted but not at the sacrifice of social justice. Can it be said that the adjustment of social relationship on the basis of caste i.e. on the basis of each to his hereditary calling avoids these two evils? I am convinced that it does not. Far from being the best possible adjustment I have no doubt that it is of the worst possible kind as much as it offends against both the canons of social adjustment—namely fluidity and equity.

IX
Some might think that the Mahatma has made much progress inasmuch as he now only believes in Varna and does not believe in Caste. It is true that there was a time when the Mahatma was a full-blooded and a blue-blooded Sanatani Hindu. He believed in the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Puranas and all that goes by the name of Hindu scriptures and therefore in avatars and rebirth. He believed in Caste and defended it with the vigour of an orthodox. He condemned the cry for inter-dining, inter-drinking and inter-marrying and argued that restraints about inter-dining to a great extent” helped the cultivation of will-power and the conservation of certain social virtue”. It is good that he has repudiated this sanctimonious nonsense and admitted that caste” is harmful both to spiritual and national growth,” and may be, his son's marriage outside his caste has had something to do with this change of view. But has the Mahatma really progressed? What is the nature of the Varna for which the Mahatma stands? Is it the Vedic conception as commonly understood and preached by Swami Dayanaad Saraswati and his followers, the Arya Samajists?
The essence of the Vedic conception of Varna is the pursuit of a calling which is appropriate to one's natural aptitude. The essence of the Mahatma's conception of Varna is the pursuit of ancestral calling irrespective of natural aptitude.

What is the difference between Caste and Varna, as understood by the Mahatma? I find none. As defined by the Mahatma, Varna becomes merely a different name for Caste for the simple reason that it is the same in essence—namely pursuit of ancestral calling. Far from making progress the Mahatma has offered retrogression. By putting this interpretation upon the Vedic conception of Varna he has really made ridiculous what was sublime. While I reject the Vedic Varnavyavastha for reasons given in the speech I must admit that the Vedic theory of Varna as interpreted by Swami Dayanand and some others is a sensible and an inoffensive thing. It did not admit birth as a determining factor in fixing the place of an individual in society. It only recognized worth.

The Mahatma's view of Varna not only makes nonsense of the Vedic Varna, but it makes it an abominable thing. Varna and Caste are two very different concepts. Varna is based on the principle of each according to his worth-while Caste is based on the principle of each according to his birth. The two are as distinct as chalk is from cheese. In fact, there is an antithesis between the two. If the Mahatma believes as he does in every one following his or her ancestral calling, then most certainly he is advocating the Caste System and that in calling it the Varna System he is not only guilty of terminologicale inexactitude, but he is causing confusion worse, confounded. I am sure that all his confusion is due to the fact that the Mahatma has no definite and clear conception as to what is Varna and what is Caste and as to the necessity of either for the conservation of Hinduism. He has said and one hopes that he will not find some mystic reason to change his view that caste is not the essence of Hinduism. Does he regard Varna as the essence of Hinduism?

One cannot as yet give any categorical answer. Readers of his article on ‘Dr. Ambedkar's Indictment’ will answer “No”. In that article he does not say that the dogma of Varna is an essential part of the creed of Hinduism. Far from making Varna the essence of Hinduism he says” the essence of Hinduism is contained in its enunciation of one and only God as Truth and its bold acceptance of Ahimsa as the law of the human family” But the readers of his article in reply to Mr. Sant Ram will say “Yes”. In that article he says “How can a Muslim remain one if he rejects the Quran, or a Christian remain as Christian if he rejects the Bible? If Caste and Varna are convertible terms and if Varna is an integral part of the Shastras which define Hinduism I do not know how a person who rejects Caste, i.e. Varna can call himself a Hindu?” Why this prevarication? Why does the Mahatma hedge? Whom does he want to please? Has the saint failed to sense the truth? Or does the politician stand in the way of the Saint?

The real reason why the Mahatma is suffering from this confusion is probably to be traced to two sources. The first is the temperament of the Mahatma. He has almost in everything the simplicity of the child with the child's capacity for self-deception. Like a child he can believe in anything he wants to believe. We must therefore, wait till such time as it pleases the Mahatma to abandon his faith in Varna as it has pleased him to abandon his faith in Caste. The second source of confusion is the double role which the Mahatma wants to play—of a Mahatma and a politician. As a Mahatma he may be trying to spiritualise Politics. Whether he has succeeded in it or not, Politics have certainly commercialised him. A politician must know that Society cannot bear the whole truth and that he must not speak the whole truth; if he is speaking the whole truth, it is bad for his politics. The reason why the Mahatma is always supporting Caste and Varna is because he is afraid that if he opposed them he will lose his place in politics. Whatever may be the source of this confusion the Mahatma must be old that he is deceiving himself and also deceiving the people by preaching Caste under the name of Varna.
The Mahatma says that the standards I have applied to test Hindus and Hinduism are too severe and that judged by those standards every known living faith will probably fail. The complaint that my standards are high may be true. But the question is not whether they are high or whether they are low. The question is whether they are the right standards to apply. People and their Religion must be judged by social standards based on social ethics. No other standard would have any meaning if religion is held to be a necessary good for the well-being of the people. Now I maintain that the standards I have applied to test Hindus and Hinduism are the most appropriate standards and that I know of none that are better.

The conclusion that every known religion would fail if tested by my standards may be true. But this fact should not give the Mahatma as the champion of Hindus and Hinduism a ground for comfort any more than the existence of one madman should give comfort to another madman or the existence of one criminal should give comfort to another criminal. I like to assure the Mahatma that it is not the mere failure of the Hindus and Hinduism which has produced in me the feelings of disgust and contempt with which I am charged. I realize that the world is a very imperfect world and anyone who wants to live in it must bear with its imperfections. But, while I am prepared to bear with the imperfections and shortcomings of the society in which I may be destined to labour, I feel, I should not consent to live in a society which cherishes wrong ideals or a society which having right ideals will not consent to bring its social life in conformity with those ideals. If I am disgusted with Hindus and Hinduism it is because I am convinced that they cherish wrong ideals and live a wrong social life. My quarrel with Hindus and Hinduism is not over the imperfections of their social conduct. It is much more fundamental. It is over their ideals.

Hindu society seems to me, to stand in need of a moral regeneration that is dangerous to postpone. And the question is who can determine and control this moral regeneration? Obviously, only those who have undergone an intellectual regeneration and those who are honest enough to have the courage of their convictions born out of intellectual emancipation. Judged by this standard, the Hindu leaders who count in my opinion are quite unfit for the task. It is impossible to say that they have undergone the preliminary intellectual regeneration. If they had undergone an intellectual regeneration they would neither delude themselves in the simple way of the untaught multitude nor would they take advantage of the primitive ignorance of others as one sees them doing. Notwithstanding, the crumbling state of Hindu society these leaders will nevertheless unblushingly appeal to ideals of the past which have in every way ceased to have any connection with the present; which however suitable they might have been in the days of their origin have now become a warning rather than a guide. They still have a mystic respect for the earlier forms which make them disinclined—nay opposed to any examination of the foundations of their society. The Hindu masses are of course incredibly heedless in the formation of their beliefs. But so are the Hindu leaders. And what is worse is that. These Hindu leaders become filled with an illicit passion for their beliefs when any one proposes to rob them of their companionship.

The Mahatma is no exception and appears not to believe in thinking but prefers to follow the saints. Like a conservative with his reverence for consecrated notions, he is afraid that if he once starts thinking, many ideals and institutions to which life clings will be doomed. One must sympathize with him. For every act of independent thinking puts some portion of apparently stable world in peril. But it is equally true that dependence on saints cannot lead us to know the truth. The saints are after all only human beings and as Lord Balfour said, “the human mind is no more a truth finding apparatus than the snout of a pig.” In so far as he does think, to me he really appears to be prostituting his intelligence to find reasons for supporting this archaic social structure of the Hindus. He is the most influential apologist of it and therefore the worst enemy of
the Hindus. Unlike the Mahatma there are Hindu leaders who are not content merely to believe and follow. They dare to think, and act, in accordance with the result of their thinking. But unfortunately, they are either a dishonorable lot or an indifferent lot when it comes to the question of giving right guidance to the mass of the people.

Almost every Brahmin has transgressed the rule of Caste. The number of Brahmins who sell shoes is far greater than those who practice priesthood. Not only have the Brahmins given up their ancestral calling of priesthood for trading but they have entered trades which, are prohibited to them by the Shastras. Yet how many Brahmins who break Caste every day will preach against Caste and against the Shastras? For one honest Brahmin preaching against Caste and Shastras because his practical instinct and moral conscience cannot support a conviction in them, there are hundreds who break Caste and trample upon the Shastras every day but who are the most fanatic upholders of the theory of Caste and the sanctity of the Shastras. Why this duplicity? Because they feel that if the masses are anticipated from the yoke of Caste they would be a menace to the power and prestige of the Brahmins as a class.

The dishonesty of this intellectual class who would deny the masses the fruits of their thinking is a most disgraceful phenomenon. The Hindus in the words of Mathew Arnold are “wandering between two worlds, one dead, and the other powerless to be born”. What are they to do? The Mahatma to whom they appeal for guidance does not believe in thinking and therefore, can give no guidance which can be said to stand the test of experience. The intellectual classes to whom the masses look for guidance are either too dishonest or too indifferent to educate them in the right direction. We are indeed witnesses to a great tragedy. In the face of this tragedy all one can do is to lament and say—such be thy Leaders, O! Hindus.

**Explanation of Hindi/Sanskrit terms**

**Jat-Pat Todak Mandal** - The Jat-Pat-Todak Mandal was founded in Lahore in 1922, as an offshoot of the more militantly anti-caste wing of the Arya Samaj. Members pledged themselves to a program of anti-caste propaganda, coupled with interdining and intermarriage. Except for their more radical opposition to caste, they did not differ greatly from the Arya Samaj's position on most issues. However, in 1924, their activities brought them into conflict with the Arya Samaj, and the Mandal eventually broke from the Arya Samaj.

**Harijan** - Gandhi coined the word Harijan, translated roughly as “Children of God”, to identify the Untouchables. The terms “Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes” (SC/ST) are the official terms used in Indian government documents to identify “Untouchables” and Tribes.

**Mahatma** - Great Soul, Saint.

**Untouchability** - It is the social practice of ostracizing a minority group by segregating them from the mainstream by social custom or legal mandate. The excluded group could be one that did not accept the norms of the excluding group. A member of the excluded group is known as an untouchable.

**Chaturvarnya** - In Sanskrit language it means the ‘State of Four Varnas.’ This name was given by the Arya Samaj on Swami Dayanand's insistence that the four Varnas should be retained, but should be based on merit rather than on birth. The Swami never explained in much detail how this classification of individuals should be performed; his most systematic statement on the subject appeared in the Satyarth Prakash. Dr. Ambedkar uses the name ‘Chaturvarnya’ mostly for the Arya Samaj theory, but in a few places he uses it to mean the Caste System as well.

**Varna** - In the Hindu religion, Varna refers to the categorization of the Hindu society by four castes. The four varnas, or Chatur Varna, are mentioned in ancient texts in the following (stratified) order, from top to
The Brahmins: Scholars, Teachers, Priests and Sages; 2) The Kshatriya: Kings, Soldiers, and Rulers; 3) The Vaishyas: Merchants, Cattle Herders and Agriculturists; 4) The Shudras: Laborers, Craftsmen and Artisans. The first three Varna are considered Arya, and thus were allowed to participate in Vedic rituals, whereas the non-Arya Varna - the Shudra was not allowed to participate in Vedic rituals.