Chapter 27
AWAY FROM THE HINDUS

A large majority of Untouchables who have reached a capacity to think out their problem believe that one way to solve the problem of the Untouchables is for them to abandon Hinduism and be converted to some other religion. At a Conference of the Mahars held in Bombay on 31st May 1936 a resolution to this effect was unanimously passed. Although the Conference was a Conference of the Mahars[1], the resolution had the support of a very large body of Untouchables throughout India. No resolution had created such a stir. The Hindu community was shaken to its foundation and curses imprecations and threats were uttered against the Untouchables who were behind this move.

Four principal objections have been urged by the opponents against the conversion of the Untouchables:

(1) What can the Untouchables gain by conversion ? Conversion can make no change in the status of the Untouchables.

(2) All religions are true, all religions are good. To change religion is a futility.

(3) The conversion of the Untouchables is political in its nature.

(4) The conversion of the Untouchables is not genuine as it is not based on faith.

It cannot take much argument to demonstrate that the objections are puerile and inconsequential.

To take the last objection first. History abounds with cases where conversion has taken place without any religious motive. What was the

[1] The Conference was confined to Mahars because the intention was to test the intensity of feeling communitywise and to take soundings from each community.

The typed pages with Sr. Nos. from 279 to 342 have been found in this script which is titled as Chapter XX under the heading 'Away from the Hindus'. The whole script consists of 64 pages.—Ed.

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nature of its conversion of Clovis and his subjects to Christianity ? How did Ethelbert and his Kentish subjects become Christians ? Was there a religious motive which led them to accept the new religion ? Speaking on the nature of conversions to Christianity that had taken place during the middle ages Rev. Reichel says:[1]

> "One after another the nations of Europe are converted to the faith; their conversion is seen always to proceed from above, never from below. Clovis yields to the bishop Remigius and forthwith he is followed by the Baptism of 3,000 Franks. Ethelbert yields to the mission of Augustine and forthwith all Kent follows his example; when his son Eadbald apostatises, the men of Kent apostatise with him. Essex is finally won by the conversion of King Sigebert, who under the influence of another king, Oswy, allows himself to be baptised. Northumberland is temporarily gained by the conversion of its king, Edwin, but falls away as soon as Edwin is dead. It anew accepts the faith, when another king, Oswald, promotes its diffusion. In the conversion of Germany, a bishop, Boniface, plays a prominent part, in close connection with the princes of the country, Charles Martel and Pepin; the latter, in return for his patronage receiving at Soissons the Church's sanction to a violent act of usurpation. Denmark is gained by the conversion of its kings, Herald Krag, Herald Blastand and Canute, Sweden by that of the two Olofs; and Russian, by the conversion of its sovereign, Vladimir. Everywhere Christianity addresses itself first to kings and princes; everywhere the bishops and abbots appear as its only representatives.
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> Nor was this all, for where a king had once been gained, no obstacle by the Mediaeval missionaries to the immediate indiscriminate baptism of his subjects. Three thousand warriors of Clovis following the example of their king, were at once admitted to the sacred rite; the subjects of Ethelbert were baptised in numbers after the conversion of their prince, without preparation, and with hardly any instruction. The Germans only were less hasty in following the example of others. In Russia, so great was the number of those who crowded to be baptised after the baptism of Vladimir, that the sacrament had to be administered to hundreds at a time."

History records cases where conversion has taken place as a result of compulsion or deceit.

Today religion has become a piece of ancestral property. It passes from father to son so does inheritance. What genuineness is there in such cases of conversion ? The conversion of the Untouchables if it did take place would take after full deliberation of the value of religion

[1] The Sea of Rome, pp. 143-45.

and the virtue of the different religions. How can such a conversion be said to be not a genuine conversion ? On the other hand, it would be the first case in history of genuine conversion. It is therefore difficult to understand why the genuineness of the conversion of the Untouchables should be doubted by anybody.

The third objection is an ill-considered objection. What political gain will accrue to the Untouchables from their conversion has been defined by nobody. If there is a political gain, nobody has proved that it is a direct inducement to conversion.

The opponents of conversion do not even seem to know that a distinction has to be made between a gain being a direct inducement to conversion and its being only an incidental advantage. This distinction cannot be said to be a distinction without a difference. Conversion may result in a political gain to the Untouchables. It is only where a gain is a direct inducement that conversion could be condemned as immoral or criminal. Unless therefore the opponents of conversion prove that the conversion desired by the Untouchables is for political gain and for nothing else their accusation is baseless. If political gain is only an incidental gain then there is nothing criminal in conversion. The fact, however, is that conversion can bring no new political gain to the Untouchables. Under the constitutional law of India every religious community has got the right to separate political safeguards. The Untouchables in their present condition enjoy political rights similar to those which are enjoyed by the Muslims and the Christians. If they change their faith the change is not to bring into existence political rights which did not exist before. If they do not change they will retain the political rights which they have. Political gain has no connection with conversion. The charge is a wild charge made without understanding.

The second objection rests on the premise that all religions teach the same thing. It is from the premise that a conclusion is drawn that since all religions teach the same thing there is no reason to prefer one religion to other. It may be conceded that all religions agree in holding that the meaning of life is to be found in the pursuit of 'good'. Up to this point the validity of the premise may be conceded. But when the premise goes beyond and asserts that because of this there is no reason to prefer one religion to another it becomes a false premise.

Religions may be alike in that they all teach that the meaning of life is to be found in the pursuit of 'good'. But religions are not alike in their answers to the question 'What is good ?' In this they certainly differ. One religion holds that brotherhood is good, another caste and untouchability is good.

There is another respect in which all religions are not alike. Besides being an authority which defines what is good, religion is a motive force for the promotion and spread of the 'good'. Are all religions agreed in the means and methods they advocate for the promotion and spread of good ? As pointed out by Prof. Tiele[1], religion is:

> "One of the mightiest motors in the history of mankind, which formed as well as tore asunder nations, united as well as divided empires, which sanctioned the most atrocious and barbarous deeds, the most libinous customs, inspired the most admirable acts of heroism, self renunciation, and devotion, which occasioned the most sanguinary wars, rebellions and persecutions, as well as brought about the freedom, happiness and peace of nations—at one time a partisan of tyranny, at another breaking its chains, now calling into existence and fostering a new and brilliant civilization, then the deadly foe to progress, science and art."

Apart from these oscillations there are permanent differences in the methods of promoting good as they conceive it. Are there not religions which advocate violence ? Are there not religions which advocate nonviolence ? Given these facts how can it be said that all religions are the same and there is no reason to prefer one to the other.

In raising the second objection the Hindu is merely trying to avoid an examination of Hinduism on its merits. It is an extraordinary thing that in the controversy over conversion not a single Hindu has had the courage to challenge the Untouchables to say what is wrong with Hinduism. The Hindu is merely taking shelter under the attitude generated by the science of comparative religion. The science of comparative religion has broken down the arrogant claims of all revealed religions that they alone are true and all others which are not the results of revelation are false. That revelation was too arbitrary, too capricious test to be accepted for distinguishing a true religion from a false was undoubtedly a great service which the science of comparative religion has rendered to the cause of religion. But it must be said to the discredit of that science that it has created the general impression that all religions are good and there is no use and purpose in discriminating them.

The first objection is the only objection which is worthy of serious consideration. The objection proceeds on the assumption that religion is a purely personal matter between man and God. It is supernatural. It has nothing to do with social. The argument is no doubt sensible. But its foundations are quite false. At any rate, it is a one-sided view of religion and that too based on aspects of religion which are purely historical and not fundamental.

[1] Quoted by Crowley, 'Tree of life', p. 5.

To understand the function and purposes of religion it is necessary to separate religion from theology. The primary things in religion are the usages, practices and observances, rites and rituals. Theology is secondary. Its object is merely to nationalize them. As stated by Prof. Robertson Smith:[1]

> "Ritual and practical usages were, strictly speaking the sum total of ancient religions. Religion in primitive times was not a system of belief with practical applications; it was a body of fixed traditional practices, to which every member of society conformed as a matter of courage, Men would not be men if they agreed to do certain things without having a reason for their action; but in ancient religion the reason was not first formulated as a doctrine and then expressed in practice, but conversely, practice preceded doctrinal theory."

Equally necessary it is not to think of religion as though it was super-natural. To overlook the fact that the primary content of religion is social is to make nonsense of religion. The Savage society was concerned with life and the preservation of life and it is these life processes which constitute the substance and source of the religion of the Savage society. So great was the concern of the Savage society for life and the preservation of life that it made them the basis of its religion. So central were the life processes in the religion of the Savage society that every thing which affected them became part of its religion. The ceremonies of the Savage society were not only concerned with the events of birth, attaining of manhood, puberty, marriage, sickness, death and war but they were also concerned with food. Among the pastoral peoples the flocks and herds are sacred. Among agricultural peoples seedtime and harvest are marked by ceremonies performed with some reference to the growth and the preservation of the crops. Likewise drought, pestilence, and other strange irregular phenomena of nature occasion the performance of ceremonials. As pointed out by Prof. Crawley, the religion of the savage begins and ends with the affirmation and consecration of life.

In life and preservation of life therefore consists the religion of the savage. What is true of the religion of the savage is true of all religions wherever they are found for the simple reason that constitutes the essence of religion. It is true that in the present day society with its theological refinements this essence of religion has become hidden from view and is even forgotten. But that life and the preservation of life constitute the essence of religion even in the present day society is beyond question. This is well illustrated by Prof. Crawley, when

[1] The Religion of the Semites, p.

speaking of the religious life of man in the present day society he says how:

> "man's religion does not enter into his professional or social hours, his scientific or artistic moments; practically its chief claims are settled on one day in the week from which ordinary worldly concerns are excluded. In fact, his life is in two parts; but the moiety with which religion is concerned is the elemental. Serious thinking on ultimate questions of life and death is, roughly speaking, the essence of his Sabbath; add to this the habit of prayer, the giving of thanks at meals, and the subconscious feeling that birth and death, continuation and marriage are rightly solemnized by religion, while business and pleasure may possibly be consecrated, but only metaphorically or by an overflow of religious feeling."

Students of the origin and history of religion when they began their study of the Savage society became so much absorbed in the magic, the tabu and totem and the rites and ceremonies connected therewith they found in the Savage society that they not only overlooked the social processes of the savage as the primary content of religion but they failed even to appreciate the proper function of magic and other supernatural processes. This was a great mistake and has cost all concerned in religion very dearly. For it is responsible for the grave misconception about religion* which prevails today among most people. Nothing can be a greater error than to explain religion as having arisen in magic or being concerned only in magic for magic sake. It is true that Savage society practises magic, believes in tabu and worships the totem. But it is wrong to suppose that these constitute the religion or form the source of religion. To take such a view is to elevate what is incidental to the position of the principal. The principal thing in the religion of the savage are the elemental facts of human existence such as life, death, birth, marriage, etc., magic, tabu and totem are not the ends. They are only the means. The end is life and the preservation of life. Magic, tabu, etc. are resorted to by the Savage society not for their own sake but to conserve life and to exercise evil influence from doing harm to life. Why should such occasions as harvest and famine be accompanied by religious ceremonies ? Why are magic, tabu and totem of such importance to the savage ? The only answer is that they all affect the preservation of life. The process of life and its preservation form the main purpose. Life and preservation of life is the core and centre of the religion of the Savage society. That today God has taken the place of magic, does not alter the fact that God's place in religion is only as a means for the

* *The word 'religion' inserted here is not in the original MS.*—Ed.

conservation of life and that the end of religion is the conservation and consecration of social life.

The point to which it is necessary to draw particular attention and to which the foregoing discussion lends full support is that it is an error to look upon religion as a matter which is individual, private and personal. Indeed as will be seen from what follows, religion becomes a source of positive mischief if not danger when it remains individual, private and personal. Equally mistaken is the view that religion is the flowering of special religious instinct inherent in the nature of the individual. The correct view is that religion like language is social for the reason that either is essential for social life and the individual has to have it because without it he cannot participate in the life of the society.

If religion is social in the sense that it primarily concerns society, it would be natural to ask what is the purpose and function of religion. The best statement regarding the purpose of religion which I have come across is that of Prof. Charles A Ellwood[1]. According to him:

> "religion projects the essential values of human personality and of human society into the universe as a whole. It inevitably arises as soon as man tries to take valuing attitude toward his universe, no matter how small and mean that universe may appear to him. Like all the distinctive things in human, social and mental life, it of course, rests upon the higher intellectual powers of man. Man is the only religious animal, because through his powers of abstract thought and reasoning, he alone is self-conscious in the full sense of that term. Hence he alone is able to project his values into the universe and finds necessity of so doing. Given, in other words, the intellectual powers of man, the mind at once seeks to universalise its values as well as its ideas. Just as rationalizing processes give man a world of universal ideas, so religious processes give man a world of universal values. The religious processes are, indeed, nothing but the rationalizing processes at work upon man's impulses and emotions rather than upon his precepts. What the reason does for ideas, religion does, then, for the feelings. It universalizes them; and in universalizing them, it brings them into harmony with the whole of reality."

Religion emphasizes, universalizes social values and brings them to the mind of the individual who is required to recognize them in all his acts in order that he may function as an approved member of the society. But the purpose of religion is more than this. It spiritualizes them. As pointed out by Prof. Ellwood :[2]

[1] "The Religious Reconstruction", pp. 39-40.

[2] *Ibid.,* pp. 45-46.

"Now these mental and social values, with which religion deals, men call 'spiritual'. It is something which emphasizes as we may say, spiritual values, that is, the values connected especially with the personal and social life. It projects these values, as we have seen, into the universal reality. It gives man a social and moral conception of the universe, rather than a merely mechanical one as a theatre of the play of blind, purposeless forces. While religion is not primarily animistic philosophy, as has often been said, nevertheless it does project mind, spirit, life, into all things. Even the most primitive religion did this; for in 'primitive dynamism' there was a feeling of the psychic, in such concepts as *mana* or *manitou*. They were closely connected with persons and proceeded from person, or things which were viewed in an essentially personal way. Religion, therefore, is a belief in the reality of spiritual values, and projects them, as we have said, into the whole universe. All religion—even so-called atheistic religions—emphasizes the spiritual, believes in its dominance, and looks to its ultimate triumph."

The function of religion in society is equally clear. According to Prof. Ellwood[1] the function of religion:

"is to act as an agency of social control, that is, of the group controlling the life of the individual, for what is believed to be the good of the larger life of the group. Very early, as we have seen, any beliefs and practices which gave expression to personal feelings or values of which the group did not approve were branded as 'black magic' or baleful superstitions; and if this had not been done it is evident that the unity of the life of the group might have become seriously impaired. Thus the almost necessarily social character of religion stands revealed. We cannot have such a thing as purely personal or individual religion which is not at the same time social. For we live a social life and the welfare of the group is, after all, the chief matter of concern."

Dealing with the same question in another place, he says[2]:

"the function of religion is the same as the function of Law and Government. It is a means by which society exercises its control over the conduct of the individual in order to maintain the social order. It may not be used consciously as a method of social control over the individual. Nonetheless the fact is that religion acts as a means of social control. As compared to religion, Government and Law are relatively inadequate means of social control. The control through law and order does not go deep enough to secure the

[1] "The Religious Reconstruction", pp. 42-43.

[2] "Society in its Psychological aspects" (1913), pp. 356-57.

> stability of the social order. The religious sanction, on account of its being supernatural has been on the other hand the most effective means of social control, far more effective than law and Government have been or can be. Without the support of religion, law and Government are bound to remain a very inadequate means of social control. Religion is the most powerful force of social gravitation without which it would be impossible to hold the social order in its orbit."

The foregoing discussion, although it was undertaken to show that religion is a social fact, that religion has a specific social purpose and a definite social function it was intended to prove that it was only proper that a person if he was required to accept a religion should have the right to ask how well it has served the purposes which belong to religion. This is the reason why Lord Balfour was justified in putting some very straight-questions to the positivists before he could accept Positivism to be superior to Christianity. He asked in quite trenchent language.

> "what has (positivism) to say to the more obscure multitude who are absorbed, and well nigh overwhelmed, in the constant struggle with daily needs and narrow cares; who have but little leisure or inclination to consider the precise role they are called on to play in the great drama of 'humanity' and who might in any case be puzzled to discover its interest or its importance ? Can it assure them that there is no human being so insignificant as not to be of infinite worth in the eyes of Him who created the Heavens, or so feeble but that his action may have consequences of infinite moment long after this material system shall have crumbled into nothingness ? Does it offer consolation to those who are bereaved, strength to the weak, forgiveness to the sinful, rest to those who are weary and heavy laden ?"

The Untouchables can very well ask the protagonists of Hinduism the very questions which Lord Balfour asked the Positivists. Nay the Untouchables can ask many more. They can ask: Does Hinduism recognize their worth as human beings ? Does it stand for their equality ? Does it extend to them the benefit of liberty ? Does it at least help to forge the bond of fraternity between them and the Hindus ? Does it teach the Hindus that the Untouchables are their kindred ? Does it say to the Hindus it is a sin to treat the Untouchables as being neither man nor beast ? Does it tell the Hindus to be righteous to the Untouchables ? Does it preach to the Hindus to be just and humane to them ? Does it inculcate upon the Hindus the virtue of being friendly to them ? Does it tell the Hindus to love them, to respect them and to do

them no wrong. In fine, does Hinduism universalize the value of life without distinction ?

No Hindu can dare to give an affirmative answer to any of these questions ? On the contrary the wrongs to which the Untouchables are subjected by the Hindus are acts which are sanctioned by the Hindu religion. They are done in the name of Hinduism and are justified in the name of Hinduism. The spirit and tradition which makes lawful the lawlessness of the Hindus towards the Untouchables is founded and supported by the teachings of Hinduism. How can the Hindus ask the Untouchables accept Hinduism and stay in Hinduism ? Why should the Untouchables adhere to Hinduism which is solely responsible for their degradation ? How can the Untouchables stay in Hinduism ? Untouchability is the lowest depth to which the degradation of a human being can be carried. To be poor is bad but not so bad as to be an Untouchable. The poor can be proud. The Untouchable cannot be. To be reckoned low is bad but it is not so bad as to be an Untouchable. The low can rise above his status. An Untouchable cannot. To be suffering is bad but not so bad as to be an Untouchable. They shall some day be comforted. An Untouchable cannot hope for this. To have to be meek is bad but it is not so bad as to be an Untouchable. The meek if they do not inherit the earth may at least be strong. The Untouchables cannot hope for that.

In Hinduism there is no hope for the Untouchables. But this is not the only reason why the Untouchables wish to quit Hinduism. There is another reason which makes it imperative for them to quit Hinduism. Untouchability is a part of Hinduism. Even those who for the sake of posing as enlightened reformers deny that untouchability is part of Hinduism are to observe untouchability. For a Hindu to believe in Hinduism does not matter. It enhances his sense of superiority by the reason of this consciousness that there are millions of Untouchables below him. But what does it mean for an Untouchable to say that he believes in Hinduism ? It means that he accepts that he is an Untouchable and that he is an Untouchable is the result of Divine dispensation. For Hinduism is divine dispensation. An Untouchable may not cut the throat of a Hindu. But he cannot be expected to give an admission that he is an Untouchable and rightly so. Which Untouchable is there with soul so dead as to give such an admission by adhering to Hinduism. That Hinduism is inconsistent with the self-respect and honour of the Untouchables is the strongest ground which justifies the conversion of the Untouchables to another and nobler faith.

The opponents of conversion are determined not to be satisfied even if the logic of conversion was irrefutable. They will insist upon asking further questions. There is one question which they are always eager to ask largely because they think it is formidable and unanswerable; what will the Untouchables gain materially by changing their faith ? The question is not at all formidable. It is simple to answer. It is not the intention of the Untouchables to make conversion an opportunity for economic gain. The Untouchables it is true will not gain wealth by conversion. This is however no loss because while they remain as Hindus they are doomed to be poor. Politically the Untouchables will lose the political rights that are given to the Untouchables. This is, however, no real loss. Because they will be entitled to the benefit of the political rights reserved for the community which they would join through conversion. Politically there is neither gain nor loss. Socially, the Untouchables will gain absolutely and immensely because by conversion the Untouchables will be members of a community whose religion has universalized and equalized all values of life. Such a blessing is unthinkable for them while they are in the Hindu fold. The answer is complete. But by reason of its brevity it is not likely to give satisfaction to the opponents of conversion. The Untouchables need three things. First thing they need is to end their social isolation. The second thing they need is to end their inferiority complex. Will conversion meet their needs ? The opponents of conversion have a feeling that the supporters of conversion have no case. That is why they keep on raising questions. The case in favour of conversion is stronger than the strongest case. Only one does wish to spend long arguments to prove what is so obvious. But since it is necessary to put an end to all doubt, I am prepared to pursue the matter. Let me take each point separately.

How can they end their social isolation ? The one and the only way to end their social isolation is for the Untouchables to establish kinship with and get themselves incorporated into another community which is free from the spirit of caste. The answer is quite simple and yet not many will readily accept its validity. The reason is, very few people realize the value and significance of kinship. Nevertheless its value and significance are very great. Kinship and what it implies has been described by Prof. Robertson Smith in the following terms[1] :

> "A kin was a group of persons whose lives were so bound up together, in what must be called a physical unity, that they could be treated as parts of one common life. The members of one kindred looked on themselves as one living whole, a single animated mass of

[1] "Religion of the Semites", p. 273.

blood, flesh and bones, of which no member could be touched without all the members suffering."

The matter can be looked at from the point of view both of the individual as well as from that of the group. From the point of the group, kinship calls for a feeling that one is first and foremost a member of the group and not merely an individual. From the point of view of the individual, the advantages of his kinship with the group are no less and no different than those which accrue to a member of the family by reason of his membership of the family. Family life is characterized by parental tenderness. As pointed out by Prof. McDougall[1] :

> "From this emotion (parental tenderness) and its impulse to cherish and protect, spring generosity, gratitude, love, pity, true benevolence, and altruistic conduct of every kind; in it they have their main and absolutely essential root, without which they would not be."

Community as distinguished from society is only an enlarged family. As such it is characterised by all the virtues which are found in a family and which have been so well described by Prof. McDougall. Inside the community there is no discrimination among those who are recognized as kindred bound by kinship. The community recognizes that every one within it is entitled to all the rights equally with others. As Professors Dewey and Tufts have pointed out :

> "A State may allow a citizen of another country to own land, to sue in its courts, and will usually give him a certain amount of protection, but the first-named rights are apt to be limited, and it is only a few years since Chief Justice Taney's dictum stated the existing legal theory of the United States to be that the Negro 'had no rights which the white man was bound to respect'. Even where legal theory does not recognize race or other distinctions, it is often hard in practice for an alien to get justice. In primitive clan or family groups this principle is in full force. Justice is a privilege which falls to a man as belonging to some group—not otherwise. The member of the clan or the household or the village community has a claim, but the Stranger has nothing standing. It may be treated kindly, as a guest, but he cannot demand 'justice' at the hands of any group but his own. In this conception of rights within the group we have the prototype of modern civil law. The dealing of clan with clan is a matter of war or negotiation, not of law; and the clanless man is an 'outlaw' in fact as well as in name."

[1] "Introduction to Social Psychology", p.

Kinship makes the community take responsibility for vindicating the wrong done to a member. Blood-flood which objectively appears to be a savage method of avenging a wrong done to a member is subjectively speaking a manifestation of sympathetic resentment by the members of the community for a wrong done to their fellow. This sympathetic resentment is a compound of tender emotion and anger such as those which issue out of parental tenderness when it comes face to face with a wrong done to a child. It is kinship which generates, this sympathetic resentment, this compound of tender emotion and anger. This is by no means a small value to an individual. In the words of Prof. McDougall :

> "This intimate alliance between tender emotion and anger is of great importance for the social life of man, and the right understanding of it is fundamental for a true theory of the moral sentiments; for the anger evoked in this way is the germ of all moral indignation and on moral indignation justice and the greater part of public law are in the main founded."

It is kinship which generates generosity and invokes its moral indignation which is necessary to redress a wrong. Kinship is the will to enlist the support of the kindred community to meet the tyrannies and oppressions by the Hindus which today the Untouchables have to bear single-handed and alone. Kinship with another community is the best insurance which the Untouchable can effect against Hindu tyranny and Hindu oppression.

Anyone who takes into account the foregoing exposition of what kinship means and does, should have no difficulty in accepting the proposition that to end their isolation the Untouchables must join another community which does not recognise caste.

Kinship is the antithesis of isolation. For the Untouchables to establish kinship with another community is merely another name for ending their present state of isolation. Their isolation will never end so long as they remain Hindus. As Hindus, their isolation hits them from front as well as from behind. Notwithstanding their being Hindus, they are isolated from the Muslims and the Christians because as Hindus they are aliens to all—Hindus as well as Non-Hindus. This isolation can end only in one way and in no other way. That way is for the Untouchables to join some non-Hindu community and thereby become its kith and kin.

That this is not a meaningless move will be admitted by all those who know the disadvantages of isolation and the advantages of kinship. What are the consequences of isolation ? Isolation means social segregation, social humiliation, social discrimination and social

injustice. Isolation means denial of protection, denial of justice, denial of opportunity. Isolation means want of sympathy, want of fellowship and want of consideration. Nay, isolation means positive hatred and antipathy from the Hindus. By having kinship with other community on the other hand, the Untouchables will have within that community equal position, equal protection and equal justice, will be able to draw upon its sympathy, its good-will.

This I venture to say is a complete answer to the question raised by the opponents. It shows what the Untouchables can gain by conversion. It is however desirable to carry the matter further and dispose of another question which has not been raised so far by the opponents of conversion but may be raised. The question is : why is conversion necessary to establish kinship ?

The answer to this question will reveal itself if it is borne in mind that there is a difference between a community and a society and between kinship and citizenship.

A community in the strict sense of the word is a body of kindred. A society is a collection of many communities or of different bodies of kindreds. The bond which holds a community together is called kinship while the bond which holds a society together is called citizenship.

The means of acquiring citizenship in a society are quite different from the means of acquiring kinship in a community. Citizenship is acquired by what is called naturalization. The condition precedent for citizenship is the acceptance of political allegiance to the State. The conditions precedent for acquiring kinship are quite different. At one stage in evolution of man the condition precedent for adoption into the kindred was unity of blood. For the kindred is a body of persons who conceive themselves as spring from one ancestor and as having in their veins one blood. It does not matter whether each group has actually and in fact spring from a single ancestor. As a matter of fact, a group did admit a stranger into the kindred though he did not spring from the same ancestor. It is interesting to note that there was a rule that if a stranger intermarried with a group for seven generations, he became a member of the kindred. The point is that, fiction though it be, admission into the kindred required as a condition precedent unity of blood.

At a later stage of Man's Evolution, common religion in place of unity of blood became a condition precedent to kinship. In this connection it is necessary to bear in mind the important fact pointed out by Prof. Robertson Smith[1] that in a community the social body is

[1] The Religion of the Semites. Lecture II. Prof. Smith makes this distinction as though it was a distinction between ancient society and modern society. It is of wider importance. In reality, it is a distinction which marks off a community from a society.

made not of men only, but of gods and men and therefore any stranger who wants to enter a community and forge the bond of kinship can do so only by accepting the God or Gods of the community. The Statement in the Old Testament such as those of Naomi to Ruth saying : "Thy sister is gone back into her people and unto her gods" and Ruth's reply "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God" or the calling of the Mobites the sons and daughters of Chemosh are all evidences which show that the bond of kinship in a community is the consequence of their allegiance to a common religion. Without common religion there can be no kinship.

Where people are waiting to find faults in the argument in favour of conversion it is better to leave no ground for fault-finders to create doubt or misunderstanding. It might therefore be well to explain how and in what manner religion is able to forge the bond of kinship. The answer is simple. It does it through eating and drinking together.[1] The Hindus in defending their caste system ridicule the plea for inter-dining. They ask : What is there in inter-dining ? The answer from a sociological point of view is that is everything in it. Kinship is a social covenant of brotherhood. Like all convenants it required to be signed, sealed and delivered before it can become binding. The mode of signing, sealing and delivery is the mode prescribed by religion and that mode is the participation in a sacrificial meal. As said by Prof. Smith[2] :

> "What is the ultimate nature of the fellowship which is constituted or declared when men eat and drink together ? In our complicated society fellowship has many types and many degrees; men may be united by bonds of duty and honour for certain purposes, and stand quite apart in all other things. Even in ancient times—for example, in the Old Testament—we find the sacrament of a common meal introduced to seal engagements of various kinds. But in every case the engagement is absolute and inviolable; it constitutes what in the language of ethics is called a duty of perfect obligation. Now in the most primitive society there is only one kind of fellowship which is absolute and inviolable. To the primitive man all other, men fall under two classes, those to whom his life is sacred and those to whom it is not sacred. The former are his fellows; the latter are strangers and potential foemen, with whom it is absurd to think of forming any inviolable tie unless they are first brought into the circle within which each man's life is sacred to all his comrades."

If for the Untouchables mere citizenship is not enough to put an end to their isolation and the troubles which ensue therefrom, if kinship is

[1] On this subject see Smith, The Religion of the Semites, pp. 270-71. [2] *Ibid.,* pp. 271-72.

the only cure then there is no other way except to embrace the religion of the community whose kinship they seek.

The argument so far advanced was directed to show how conversion can end the problem of the isolation of the Untouchables. There remain two other questions to be considered. One is, will conversion remove their inferiority complex ? One cannot of course dogmatize. But one can have no hesitation in answering the question in the affirmative. The inferiority complex of the Untouchables is the result of their isolation, discrimination and the unfriendliness of the social environment. It is these which have created a feeling of helplessness which are responsible for the inferiority complex which cost him the power of self-assertion.

Can religion alter this psychology of the Untouchables ? The psychologists are of opinion that religion can effect this cure provided it is a religion of the right type; provided that the religion approaches the individual not as a degraded worthless outcastes but as a fellow human being; provided religion gives him an atmosphere in which he will find that there are possibilities for feeling himself the equal of every other human being there is no reason why conversion to such a religion by the Untouchables should not remove their age-long pessimism which is responsible for their inferiority complex. As pointed out by Prof. Ellwood :[1]

> "Religion is primarily a valuing attitude, universalizing the will and the emotions, rather than the ideas of man. It thus harmonizes men, on the side of will and emotion, with his world. Hence, it is the fee of pessimism and despair. It encourages hope, and gives confidence in the battle of life, to the savage as well as to the civilized man. It does so, as we have said, because it braces vital feeling; and psychologists tell us that the reason why it braces vital feeling is because it is an adaptive process in which all of the lower centres of life are brought to reinforce the higher centres. The universalization of values means, in other words, in psycho-physical terms, that the lower nerve centres pour their energies into the higher nerve centres, thus harmonizing and bringing to a maximum of vital efficiency life on its inner side. It is thus that religion taps new levels of energy, for meeting the crisis of life, while at the same time it brings about a deeper harmony between the inner and the outer."

Will conversion raise the general social status of the Untouchables ? It is difficult to see how there can be two opinions on this question.

The oft-quoted answer given by Shakespeare to the question what is

[1] The Reconstruction of Religion, pp. 40-41.

in a name hardly shows sufficient understanding of the problem of a name. A rose called by another name would smell as sweet would be true if names served no purpose and if people instead of depending upon names took the trouble of examining each case and formed their opinions and attitudes about it on the basis of their examination. Unfortunately, names serve a very important purpose. They play a great part in social economy. Names are symbols. Each name represents association of certain ideas and notions about a certain object. It is a label. From the label people know what it is. It saves them the trouble of examining each case individually and determine for themselves whether the ideas and notions commonly associated with the object are true. People in society have to deal with so many objects that it would be impossible for them to examine each case. They must go by the name that is why all advertisers are keen in finding a good name. If the name is not attractive the article does not go down with the people.

The name 'Untouchable' is a bad name. It repels, forbids, and stinks. The social attitude of the Hindu towards the Untouchable is determined by the very name 'Untouchable'. There is a fixed attitude towards 'Untouchables' which is determined by the stink which is imbedded in the name 'Untouchable'. People have no mind to go into the individual merits of each Untouchable no matter how meritorious he is. All untouchables realize this. There is a general attempt to call themselves by some name other than the 'Untouchables'. The Chamars call themselves Ravidas or Jatavas. The Doms call themselves Shilpakars. The Pariahs call themselves Adi-Dravidas, the Madigas call themselves Arundhatyas, the Mahars call themselves Chokhamela or Somavamshi and the Bhangis call themselves Balmikis. All of them if away from their localities would call themselves Christians.

The Untouchables know that if they call themselves Untouchables they will at once draw the Hindu out and expose themselves to his wrath and his prejudice. That is why they give themselves other names which may be likened to the process of undergoing protective discolouration.

It is not seldom that this discolouration completely fails to serve its purpose. For to be a Hindu is for Hindus not an ultimate social category. The ultimate social category is caste, nay sub-caste if there is a sub-caste. When the Hindus meet 'May I know who are you' is a question sure to be asked. To this question 'I am a Hindu' will not be a satisfactory answer. It will certainly not be accepted as a final answer. The inquiry is bound to be further pursued. The answer

'Hindu' is bound to be followed by another; 'What caste ?'. The answer to that is bound to be followed by question : "What sub-caste ?" It is only when the questioner reaches the ultimate social category which is either caste or sub-caste that he will stop his questionings.

The Untouchable who adopts the new name is a protective discolouration finds that the new name does not help and that in the course of relentless questionings he is, so to say, run down to earth and made to disclose that he is an Untouchable. The concealment makes him the victim of greater anger than his original voluntary disclosure would have done.

From this discussion two things are clear. One is that the low status of the Untouchables is bound upon with a stinking name. Unless the name is changed there is no possibility of a rise in their social status. The other is that a change of name within Hinduism will not do. The Hindu will not fail to penetrate through such a name and make the Untouchable and confer himself as an Untouchable.

The name matters and matters a great deal. For, the name can make a revolution in the status of the Untouchables. But the name must be the name of a community outside Hinduism and beyond its power of spoliation and degradation. Such name can be the property of the Untouchable only if they undergo religious conversion. A conversion by change of name within Hinduism is a clandestine conversion which can be of no avail.

This discussion on conversion may appear to be somewhat airy. It is bound to be so. It cannot become material unless it is known which religion the Untouchables choose to accept. For what particular advantage would flow from conversion would depend upon the religion selected and the social position of the followers of that religion. One religion may give them all the three benefits, another only two and a third may result in conferring upon them only one of the advantages of conversion. What religion the Untouchables should choose is not the subject matter of this Chapter. The subject matter of this Chapter is whether conversion can solve the problem of untouchability. The answer to that qustion is emphatically in the affirmative.

The force of the argument, of course, rests on a view of religion which is somewhat different from the ordinary view according to which religion is concerned with man's relation to God and all that it means. According to this view, religion exists not for the saving of

souls but for the preservation of society and the welfare of the individual. It is only those who accept the former view of religion that find it difficult to understand how conversion can solve the problem of untouchability. Those who accept the view of religion adopted in this Chapter will have no difficulty in accepting the soundness of the conclusion.

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