

CHAPTER VII

RACIAL DIFFERENCE AS THE ORIGIN OF UNTOUCHABILITY

WHAT is the origin of Untouchability? As has been said the field is quite unexplored. No student of Sociology has paid any attention to it. Writers, other than Sociologists, who have written about India and her people have been content with merely recording the custom of Untouchability with varying degrees of disapprobation and leaving it at that. So far as my researches go, I have come across only one author who has attempted to explain how Untouchability has come about. It is Mr. Stanley Rice¹. According to Mr. Rice—

There is a strong probability that the outcasts were the survivors of the conquered peoples, who, as caste tended to coincide with occupation, became the drum-beating, leather-working, and farm labouring classes to which as serfs they had been relegated from early times. They were not the races conquered by the Aryans; the Paraiyans belonged to the aborigines who were conquered by the Dravidians and being of a different race they were not admitted to the totem of similar clans with which marriage is always intimately connected, since that would have led to free intercourse and the gradual degradation of race. But this prohibition cannot have been absolute; there are always exceptions. In the course of the centuries, some forty or more, the inevitable miscegenation may very well have obliterated the racial distinctions between aboriginal and early Dravidian. These people have been admitted to a sort of lowly participation in the Hindu system in the atmosphere of which they have lived for so long, for Hinduism is at once the most tolerant and intolerant of creeds. It does not proselytize; you cannot become a Hindu as you can become a Mussalman, and those within the fold are liable to the most rigid restrictions. But it has always been ready to embrace aboriginal tribes who are willing to submit to its laws, though it may assign to them a very lowly place and they have always been kept at a distance and have been excluded from the temples. It would seem, therefore, that anthropological arguments are in any case not conclusive when we consider these factors which must have profoundly modified the original racial characteristics and must have changed their outlook. Thus the Dravidians applied to the Paraiyans the same test which the Aryans are assumed to have

1. Hindu Customs And Their Origins : pp. 113-115. (Italics not in the original.)

applied to the conquered inhabitants. They reduced them to the position of serfs and assigned to them those duties which it was thought beneath their own dignity to perform. Nor was marriage the only consideration. The disabilities of the Paraiyans were due also— and to an even greater degree— to the mystical qualities inherent in Tabu. To admit such a man to the totem family was not only contrary to the social order, it would bring upon the clan the anger of their particular god. But to admit him to the worship of the god within the sacred precincts of a temple was to call clown authentic fire from Heaven, whereby they would be consumed. It would be sacrilege of the same kind as the offering of unconsecrated or unorthodox fire by Koran, Dathan and Abhiram. But though debarred from taking an active part in worship, the Paraiyans might yet do the menial services connected with it, provided that they did not entail the pollution of the sacred building. In Christian terminology the Paraiyan, although he could neither officiate at the altar, nor preach a sermon nor even be one of the congregation, might still ring the bell— on one condition. He could not regard himself as of the communion; he was, in fact, ex-communicate. And as such, he was ceremonially unclean. No washing with water, no cleansing ceremony, could remove that stain which was indelibly fixed by the operation of Tabu. To touch him, to have any dealings with him save as it were, at arm's length, was by a sort of contagious magic a defilement. You could employ him to till your field because that entailed no contact of any kind, beyond giving an order, you need have no further communication with him. The seal of pollution was set on his forehead; it was inherent in him as surely as the blood in his veins. And so from being the vile, degraded fellow which Indian opinion had made him, he became viler and more degraded from the kinds of occupation left open to him.”

The theory of Mr. Rice really divides itself into two parts. For, according to him, the origin of untouchability is to be found in two circumstances—Race and Occupation. Obviously, they require separate consideration. This Chapter will be devoted to an examination of his theory of racial difference as the origin of untouchability.

The racial theory of Mr. Rice contains two elements :—

- (1) That the Untouchables are non-Aryan, non-Dravidian aborigines; and
- (2) That they were conquered and subjugated by the Dravidians.

This theory raises the whole question of the invasions of India by foreign invaders, the conquests made by them and the social and cultural institutions that have resulted therefrom. According to Mr. Rice, there have been two invasions of India. First is the invasion of India by the Dravidians. They conquered the non-Dravidian aborigines, the ancestors of the Untouchables, and made them Untouchables. The second invasion is the invasion of India by the Aryans. The Aryans conquered the Dravidians. He does not say how

the conquering Aryans treated the conquered Dravidians. If pressed for an answer he might say they made them Shudras. So that we get a chain. The Dravidians invaded India and conquered the aborigines and made them Untouchables. After Dravidians came the Aryans. The Aryans conquered the Dravidians and made them Shudras. The theory is too mechanical, a mere speculation and too simple to explain a complicated set of facts relating to the origin of the Shudras and the Untouchables.

When students of ancient Indian history delve into the ancient past they do often come across four names, the Aryans, Dravidians, Dasas and Nagas. What do these names indicate? This question has never been considered. Are these names Aryans, Dravidians, Dasas and Nagas the names of different races or are they merely different names for a people of the same race? The general assumption is that they are different races. It is an assumption on which theories like that of Mr. Rice, which seek to explain the social structure of the Hindu Society, particularly its class basis, are built. Before such a theory is accepted it is necessary to examine its foundations.

Starting with the Aryans it is beyond dispute that they were not a single homogeneous people. That they were divided into two¹ sections is beyond dispute. It is also beyond dispute that the two had different cultures. One of them may be called Rig Vedic Aryans and the other the Atharva Vedic Aryans. Their cultural cleavage appears to be complete. The Rig Vedic Aryans believed in Yajna. The Atharva Vedic Aryans believed the Magis. Their mythologies were different. The Rig Vedic Aryans believed in the Deluge and the creation of their race from Manu. The Atharva Vedic Aryans did not believe in Deluge but believed in the creation of their race from Brahma or Prajapati. Their literary developments also lay along different paths. The Rig Vedic Aryans produced Brahmanas, Sutras and Aranyakas. The Atharva Vedic Aryans produced the Upanishads. Their cultural conflict was so great that the Rig Vedic Aryans would not for a long time admit the sanctity of the Atharva Veda nor of the Upanishads and when they did recognize it they called it Vedanta which contrary to the current meaning of the word—namely, essence of the Vedas—originally meant something outside the boundary of the Vedas and, therefore, not so sacred as the Vedas and regarded its study as Anuloma. Whether these two sections of Aryans were two

1. For an exhaustive treatment of the subject see my book "Who Were the Shudras?"

different races we do not know. We do not know whether the word Aryan is a term indicative of race. Historians have therefore made a mistake in proceeding on the assumption that the Aryans were a separate race.

A greater mistake lies in differentiating the Dasas from the Nagas. The Dasas are the same as Nagas. Dasas is merely another name for Nagas. It is not difficult to understand how the Nagas came to be called Dasas in the Vedic literature. Dasa is a Sanskritized form of the Indo-Iranian word Dahaka. Dahaka was the name of the king of the Nagas.¹ Consequently, the Aryans called the Nagas after the name of their king Dahaka, which in its Sanskrit form became Dasa a generic name applied to all the Nagas.

Who were the Nagas? Undoubtedly they were non-Aryans. A careful study of the Vedic literature² reveals a spirit of conflict, of a dualism, and a race for superiority between two distinct types of culture and thought. In the Rig Veda, we are first introduced to the Snake-god in the form of Ahi Vitra, the enemy of the Aryan god Indra. Naga, the name under which the Snake-god was to become so famous in later days, does not appear in early Vedic literature. Even when it does for the first time in the Satapatha Brahmana (XI.2,7,12), it is not clear whether a great snake or a great elephant is meant. But this does not conceal the nature of Ahi Vitra, since he is described always in Rig Veda as the serpent who lay around or hidden in waters, and as holding a full control over the waters of heaven and earth alike.

It is also evident from the hymns that refer to Ahi Vitra, that he received no worship from the Aryan tribes and was only regarded as an evil spirit of considerable power who must be fought down.

The mention of the Nagas in the Rig Veda shows that the Nagas were a very ancient people. It must also be remembered that the Nagas were in no way an aboriginal or uncivilized people. History shows a very close association by intermarriage between the Naga people with the Royal families of India. The Devagiri record of the Kadamba king Krisnavarma³ connects the beginning of the Kadamba-kula with the Nagas. The Royakota⁴ grant of 9th Century A.D.

1. On this point see my Volume : *"Who Were the Shudras?"*

2. For the facts stated in the next few pages, see a Paper on the Nagas and the Naga cult in Ancient Indian History by Miss Karunakara Gupta in the Proceedings of the Third Session of the Indian History Congress (1939), p. 214 onwards.

3. I. A. VII. p. 34

4. E.L. XV. p. 246

mentions the marriage of Asvathama with a Naga and the foundation of the Pallava line by Skandasishya, the issue of this marriage. Virakurcha, who according to another Pallava inscription dated in the 9th century A.D. was the ruler of the dynasty, is also mentioned in the same inscription as having married a Naga and obtained from her the insignia of royalty.¹ The marriage of Gautamiputra, the son of the Vakataka king Pravarasena, with the daughter of the Bharasiva king Bhava Naga, is a historical fact. So is the marriage of Chandragupta II with princess Kuvera Naga 'of Naga Kula'.² A Tamil poet asserts that Kokkilli, an early Chola king, had married a Naga princess.³ Rajendra Chola is also credited to have won 'by his radiant beauty the hand of the noble daughter of Naga race'.⁴ The Navasahasanka Charita describes the marriage of the Paramara king Sindhuraja (who seems to have reigned towards the early part of the 10th Century A. D.) with the Naga princess Sasiprabha, with such exhaustive details in so matter-of-fact-a-manner as to make us almost feel certain that there must have been some historical basis for this assertion.⁵ From the Harsha inscription of V.S. 1030-973 A.D. we know that Guvaka I, who was the sixth king in the genealogy upwards from Vighraharaja Chahamana and thus might be supposed to have been ruling towards the middle of the 9th Century was "famous as a hero in the assemblies of the Nagas and other princes."⁶ Sanatikara of the Bhaumn dynasty of Orissa, one of whose dates was most probably 921 A.D., is mentioned in an inscription of his son as having married Tribhuana Mahadevi of the Naga family.⁷

Not only did the Naga people occupy a high cultural level but history shows that they ruled a good part of India. That Maharashtra is the home of the Nagas goes without saying. Its people and its kings were Nagas.⁸

That Andhradesa and its neighbourhood were under the Nagas during the early centuries of the Christian era is suggested by evidence from more sources than one. The Satavahanas, and their successors, the Chutu Kula Satakarnis drew their blood more or less from the Naga stock. As Dr. H.C. Roy Chaudhari has pointed out, the

1. S.I. I.II. p. 508

2. E.L. XV.p.41

3. EL XV. p. 249

4. I.A. XXII. pp. 144-149

5. E.I.I. p. 229.

6. E.I.I. p. 117

7. J. B. O. R. S. XVI. p.771

8. Rajwade.

Dvatrima Satpukalitta represents Salivahana, the mythological representative of the Satavahana dynasty, as of mixed Brahmana and the Naga origin.¹ This is amply attested to by the typical Naga names which occur in their dynastic lists. That the Naga grew to be very powerful towards the end of the Satavahana rule is also proved by a number of facts. A chief called Skandanaga is found ruling the Bellary district, in the reign of Pulumavi, the last king of the main Satavahana line. Secondly, Naga Mulanika the daughter of a Chutu king, is mentioned as making a gift of a Naga, together with her son, who is called Sivakanda-Naga-Sri. All the known kings of this line bear the same name and thus prove a close association with the Nagas. Thirdly, the name of Uracapura, the capital of Soringoi, suggests not an isolated reign of one Naga king but a Naga Settlement in that locality of tolerably long duration.

From Buddhist tradition of Ceylon and Siam we also know that there was a Naga country called Majerika near the Diamond Sands, i.e. Karachi.²

Then during the third and early part of the 4th Century A.D. Northern India also was ruled by a number of Naga kings is clearly proved by Puranic as well as numismatic and epigraphic evidence. Three independent groups of Vidisa, Campavati or Padmavati and Mathura are distinctly mentioned in such a way as to leave little doubt of their importance. The name Bhava Naga, the only known king of the Bharasiva dynasty, also seems to connect him with the Nagas. It is not possible to enter here into a discussion of the coins of the second group, or the question of identification of Achyuta Ganapati Naga or Nagasena of Allahabad Pillar inscription with these Puranic Naga kings.³ Of all the Nagas referred to in ancient Indian History, the North Indian Naga houses⁴ of the 4th century A.D. stand out as the most prominent and historically the most tangible. We do not know whether Nagabhatta and his son Maharaja Mohesvara Naga of the Lahore Copper Seal⁵ belonged to any of these three groups or formed a separate Naga family by themselves. But all this sufficiently justifies the conclusion of Dr. C. C. Roy Chaudhari that the Kushana kingdom of Northern India disappeared in the 4th Century A.D. having been conquered by the Nagas. These Nagas must have been

1. I. P. H. A. I, p. 280

2. Cunningham A. Geo. India, pp. 611-12

3. G. M. I. pp. 23-24

4. P. H. A. I. p. 364

4. G. I. p. 284

ruling over different portions of Uttarapatha till they were themselves swept away before the conquering arms of Samudragupta.

As late as the time of Skandagupta, however we find one Sarvanaga as the governor of Antarvedi¹ In the neighbourhood of Saurashtra and Bharukaccha especially, the Nagas seem to have held a prominent position down to the 6th Century A.D. From the Junagadh inscription Skandagupta appears to have dealt severely with a Naga rebellion.² In 570 A. D. Dadda I Gurjara uprooted the Nagas.³ who have been identified with the jungle tribes ruled over by Brihul laka of Broach.⁴ Dhruvasena II's grant of G.S. 334 (645 A.D.) also mentions as Dutaka the Pramatri Srinaga.⁵

The next important revival of the Nagas particularly in Central India seems to date about the 9th Century A.D. In 800 A.D. Maharaja Tivaradeva of Sripura in Kosala most probably defeated a Naga tribe.⁶ Sometime after this period, we also note two references to Nagas in the inscription of Bengal. The Ramganj record of Mahamandalika Isvara Ghosha introduces us to a Ghosha Naga family of Dhekkari, which was to be assigned to 11th century⁷ A.D. The Bhuvanesvara Prasasti of Bhatta Bhavadeva, the minister of Harivarmadeva in 12th century⁸ A.D. also refers to destruction of Naga kings by him. The Ramacharita mentions the conquest of Utkala, the kingdom of Bhava-Bhushana-Santati, by Ramapala, but it is not clear whether in this case the Nagas or the Chandras were meant. The greater probability would however lie in favour of the former, since they were the more well known.

It was in the period 10th-12th Century A.D. that the different branches of the Sendraka, Sinda, or Chindaka family, which called themselves lords of Bhogavati and Nagavamsi gradually spread themselves over different portions of Central India, particularly Baster. The Nagattaras of Begur, too, appear in an inscription of the 10th Century ⁹ A.D. as having fought against king Viramahendra, on behalf of the W. Ganga king Ereyappa and being distinguished for bravery in the fight. If the evidence of Navashasanka Charita is

1. G. I. p. 68

2. G.I. p. 59

3. I. A. XIII pp. 82

4. B.Gaz. I.i.115

5. ELI. p. 92

6. G.I. p. 298

7. Bhandarkar's List No. 2100

8. Inscription of Bengal III pp. 30 ff.

9. E.I.VI p.45

accepted, then the Naga king, whose daughter Sasiprabha was married to Sindhuraja Paramara, must also have been ruling in Ratnavati on the Narmada at about this period.

Who are the Dravidians? Are they different from the Nagas? Or are they two different names for a people of the same race? The popular view is that the Dravidians and Nagas are names of two different races. This statement is bound to shock many people. Nonetheless, it is a fact that the term Dravidians and Nagas are merely two different names for the same people.

It is not to be denied that very few will be prepared to admit the proposition that the Dravidians and Nagas are merely two different names for the same people and fewer that the Dravidians as Nagas occupied not merely South India but that they occupied the whole of India— South as well as North. Nonetheless, these are historical truths.

Let us see what the authorities have to say on the subject. This is what Mr. Dikshitkar, a well-known South Indian scholar, has to say on the subject in his¹ Paper on *South India in the Ramayana*:

“The Nagas, another tribe-semi-divine in character, with their totems as serpent, spread throughout India, from Taksasila in the North-West to Assam in the North-East and to Ceylon and South India in the South. At one time they must have been powerful. Contemporaneous with the Yakwas or perhaps subsequent to their fall as a political entity, the Nagas rose to prominence in South India. Not only parts of Ceylon but ancient Malabar were the territories occupied by the ancient Nagas In the Tamil classics of the early centuries after Christ, we hear frequent references to Naganadu..... Remnants of Naga worship are still lingering in Malabar, and the temple in Nagercoil in South Travancore is dedicated to Naga worship even today. All that can be said about them is that they were a sea-faring tribe. Their womenfolk were renowned for their beauty. Apparently the Nagas had become merged with the Cheras who rose to power and prominence at the commencement of the Christian Era.”

Further light is thrown on the subject by C. F. Oldham who has made a deep study of it. According to Mr. Oldham:²

“The Dravidian people have been divided, from ancient times, into Cheras, Cholas and Pandyas. Chera, or Sera (in old Tamil Sarai) is the Dravidian equivalent for Naga; Cheramandala, Nagadwipa, or the Naga country. This seems to point distinctly to the Asura origin of the Dravidians of the South. But in addition to this there still exists, widely spread over the Ganges valley, a people who call themselves Cherus or Seoris, and who claim descent from the serpentgods.³ The Cherus are of very ancient race; they are believed to have

1. Proceedings of the Seventh All-India Oriental Conference, pp. 248-49.

2. The Sun and the Serpent, pp. 157-161.

3. Elliot Sup. Glossary N. W. F.. 135. 136.

once held a great portion of the valley of the Ganges, which, as we have already seen, was occupied in very early times by Naga tribes. The Cherus appear to have been gradually ousted from their lands, during the troublous times of the Mohammedan invasions, and they are now poor and almost landless. There can be little doubt that these people are kinsmen of the Dravidian Cheras.

The Cherus have several peculiar customs and amongst them one which seems to connect them with the Lichhavis, as well as with the Newars of Nepal. This is the election of a raja for every five or six houses, and his investiture, in due form, with the tilak or royal frontal mark.¹ Both Lichavis and Newars had many customs in common with the Dravidians of the South. Each venerated the serpent, Karkotaka Naga being to Nepal what Nila Naga was to Kashmir. A Naga, too, was the tutelary deity of Vaisali, the Lichavi capital. The marital relations of Newars and Lichavis closely resembled those of the Tamil people, and go far to show a common origin.

Property amongst the Newars descended in the female line, as it once did amongst the Arattas, Bahikas or Takhas of the Punjab, whose sisters' sons, and not their own, were their heirs.² This is still a Dravidian custom. In short, a recent Dravidian writer, Mr. Balakrishna Nair, says that his people 'appear to be, in nearly every particular, the kinsfolk of the Newars.'³

Besides all this, however, there are other links connecting the Naga people of the South with those of the north of India. In an inscription discovered by Colonel Tod at Kanswah near the river Chambal, a Raja, called Salindra, 'of the race of Sarya, a tribe renowned amongst the tribes of the mighty' is said to be ruler of Takhya.⁴

This was evidently the Takhya or Takha kingdom of the Punjab, which was visited by Hiou-en-Tsiang,⁵ and which has been already referred to. It seems, therefore, that the Naga people of Takhya were known also by the name of Sarya.

Again, in the outer Himalaya, between the Sutlej and Beas Valleys, is a tract of country called Sara, or Scoraj. In this district the Naga demigods are the chief deities worshipped.

There is another Seoraj in the Upper Chinab Valley, and this too is occupied by a Naga worshipping people.

The name Saraj, or Seoraj, appears to be the same as the Sarya of Colonel Tod's inscription and as Seori, which is the alternative name of the Cherus of the Ganges Valley. It also seems to be identical with Sarai, which we have already seen, is the old Tamil name for the Chera or Naga. Apparently, therefore, the Saryas or Takhya, the Saraj people of the Sutlej Valley, the Seoris or Cherus of the valley of the Ganges, and the Cheras, Seras, or Keralas of Southern India, are but different branches of the same Naga-worshipping people.

It may be noted, too, that in some of the Himalayan dialects, Kira or Kiri means a serpent. This name, from which was perhaps derived the term Kirate

1. Sherring Races of N.W.P., 376,377

2. Mahabharata, Karna, p. xiv

3. Calcutta Review, July, 1896

4. Annals of Rajasthan, i. 795

5. Hiouen Tsiang, Beal, i. 165

so often applied to the people of the Himalayas, is found in the Rajatarangini, where it is applied to a people in or near Kashmir. The Kiras are mentioned by Varaha Mihira, and in a copper plate published by Prof. Kielhorn.¹

An inscription at the Baijnath temple in the Kangra valley gives Kiragrams as the then name of the place.² This, in the local dialect, would mean the village of serpents. The Naga is still a popular deity at Baijnath, and throughout the neighbouring country. The term Kira is thus an equivalent for Naga, and it can scarcely be doubted that the serpent-worshipping Kiras of the Himalayas were closely related to the Dravidian Keras, Cheras or Keralas of the South.

Similarity of name is not always to be trusted, but here we have something more. These people, whose designation is thus apparently the same, are all of Solar race; they all venerate the hooded serpent; and they all worship, as ancestors, the Naga demi-gods.

From the foregoing it would seem tolerably certain that the Dravidians of Southern India were of the same stock as the Nagas or Asuras of the North."

It is thus clear that the Nagas and Dravidians are one and the same people. Even with this much of proof, people may not be found ready to accept the thesis. The chief difficulty in the way of accepting it lies in the designation of the people of South India by the name Dravidian. It is natural for them to ask why the term Dravidian has come to be restricted to the people of South India if they are really Nagas. Critics are bound to ask : If the Dravidians and the Nagas are the same people, why is the name Nagas not used to designate people of South India also. This is no doubt a puzzle. But it is a puzzle which is not beyond solution. It can be solved if certain facts are borne in mind.

The first thing to be borne in mind is the situation regarding language. Today the language of the Southern India differs from that of the people of Northern India. Was this always so? On this question the observations of Mr. Oldham³ are worth attention.

"It is evident that the old Sanskrit grammarians considered the language of the Dravidian countries to be connected with the vernaculars of northern India; and that, in their opinion, it was especially related to the speech of those people who, as we have seen, were apparently descendants of the Asura tribes. Thus, in the 'Shahasha Chandrika', Lakshmidhara says that the Paisachi language is spoken in the Paisachi countries of Pandya, Kekaya, Vahluka, Sahya, Nepala, Kuntala, Sudesha, Bhota, Gandhara, Haiva and Kanoj; and that these are the Paisachi countries.⁴ Of all the vernacular dialects, the paisachi is said to have contained the smallest infusion of Sanskrit.⁵

1. Rajatarangini, Stein, viii. 27, 67, Rapson J. R. A. S., July 1900, 533

2. J. R. A. S., Jan., 1903, p. 37

3. The Sun and the Serpent.

3. and 5. Muir O.S.T. ii.49

That the Asuras originally spoke a language which differed from that of the Aryas seems evident. Several passages are quoted by Prof. Muir, from the Rig Veda, in which the word 'mridavach' is applied to the speech of the Asuras (R.vi.74, 2; v. vi.3; v.vii.6). Of these passages, Professor Muir observes: "The word mridavach, which I have translated "injuriously speaking", is explained by Sayana as meaning "one whose organs of speech are destroyed".¹ The original meaning of the expression was, doubtless that the language of the Asuras was more or less unintelligible to the Aryas. The same explanation will apply to another passage in the Rig Veda, where it is said : 'May we (by propitiating Indra) conquer the ill speaking man.'²

From the Satapatha Brahmana we find that 'the Asuras, being deprived of speech, were undone, crying. 'He lava', 'He lava'. Such was the unintelligible speech which they uttered. And he who speaks thus is a Mlecha. Hence, let no Brahman speak barbarous language, since such is the speech of Asuras'³

We learn from Manu, that 'those tribes who are outside of the classes produced from the mouth, arms, thighs and feet of Brahman, whether they speak the language of the Mlechas or of the Aryas, are called Dasyus.'⁴ In the time of Manu, therefore, the Aryan language and that of the Mlechas or Asuras were both in use. At the period described in the Mahabharata, however, the Asura language must have almost died out amongst the Aryanized tribes; as Vidura addressed Yudhishtira in the Mlecha tongue, so as to be unintelligible to all except Yudhishtira.⁵

At a later period than this, however, the grammarian Rama Tarkavagisa refers to 'those who speak like Nagas.'⁶ It would seem, therefore, that the unregenerate Asuras retained the language, as well as the religion and customs, of their forefathers long after their converted brethren had discarded them. It was evidently amongst these unregenerate tribes that the Paisachi dialects were in use; and amongst these tribes, as we have just seen, were the Dravidian Pandyas.⁷

This view, that the Tamil and cognate tongues were founded upon the ancient Asura speech, is very strongly confirmed by the fact that the language of the Brahuis, a tribe on the borders of Sind, has been found to be very closely allied to them. Indeed, Dr. Caldwell says: 'The Brahui (language) enables us to trace the Dravidian race, beyond the Indus, to the southern confines of Central Asia. This country, as I have already pointed out, was the home of the Asuras or Nagas, to which race apparently belonged the founders of the Dravidian kingdoms.'

Taking into consideration all the evidence which has been brought forward, the only possible conclusion seems to be, that the Dravidians, of the south of India, were of the same stock as the Asuras or Nagas of the North."

The second thing to be borne in mind is that the word 'Dravida' is not an original word. It is the Sanskritized form of the word Tamil'.

1. Muir, O.S.T. ii. 49

2. Rig Veda, Wilson VII, XVIII, 13

3. Satapatha Br. iii. 2, 1, 23

4. Muir, Haughton x. 45

5. Mahabharata, Adi. Jatagriha, p. cx/vii

6. Muir, O.S.T. ii. 52

7. Ibid. 49

The original word 'Tamil' when imported into Sanskrit became *Damita*¹ and later on *Damilla* became Dravida. The word Dravida is the name of the language of the people and does not denote the race of the people. The third thing to remember is that Tamil or Dravida was not merely the language of South India but before the Aryans came it was the language of the whole of India,² and was spoken from Kashmere to Cape Camorin. In fact, it was the language of the Nagas throughout India. The next thing to note is the contact between the Aryan and the Nagas and the effect it produced on the Nagas and their language. Strange as it may appear the effect of this contact on the Nagas of North India was quite different from the effect it produced on the Nagas of South India. The Nagas in North India gave up Tamil which was their mother tongue and adopted Sanskrit in its place. The Nagas in South India retained Tamil as their mother tongue and did not adopt Sanskrit the language of the Aryans. If this difference is borne in mind it will help to explain why the name Dravida came to be applied only for the people of South India. The necessity for the application of the name Dravida to the Nagas of Northern India had ceased because they had ceased to speak the Dravida language. But so far as the Nagas of South India are concerned not only the propriety of calling them Dravida had remained in view of their adherence to the Dravida language but the necessity of calling them Dravida had become very urgent in view of their being the only people speaking the Dravida language after the Nagas of the North had ceased to use it. This is the real reason why the people of South India have come to be called Dravidians.

The special application of the use of the word Dravida for the people of South India must not, therefore, obscure the fact that the Nagas and Dravidas are the one and the same people. They are only two different names for the same people. Nagas was a racial or cultural name and Dravida was their linguistic name.

Thus the Dasas are the same as the Nagas and the Nagas are the same as the Dravidians. In other words what we can say about the races of India is that there have been at the most only two races in the field, the Aryans and the Nagas. Obviously the theory of Mr. Rice must fall to the ground. For it postulates three races in action when as a matter of fact we see that there are only two.

1. B. R. Bhandarkar, Lectures on the Ancient History of India (1919), p: 80 .

2. Ibid pp., 25-28

II

Granting however that there was a third aboriginal race living in India before the advent of the Dravidians, can it be said that these pre-Dravidian aboriginals were the ancestors of the present day Untouchables of India? There are two tests we can apply to find the truth. One is the anthropometric test and the other is the ethnological.

Considered in the light of the anthropometric characteristics of the Indian people Prof. Ghurye has something very striking to say in his volume on 'Caste and Race in India' from which the following is an extract :

"Taking the Brahmin of the United Provinces as the typical representative of the ancient Aryans we shall start comparisons with him. If we turn to the table of differential indices we find that he shows a smaller differential index as compared with the Chuhra and the Khatri of the Punjab than with any caste from the United Provinces except the Chhatri. The differential index between the Khatri and the Chuhra¹ is the only slightly less than that between the Brahmin of the United Provinces and the Chuhra of the Punjab. This means that the Brahmin of the United Provinces has closer physical affinities with the Chuhra and the Khatri of the Punjab than with any caste from his own province except the very high caste of the Chhatri..... The reality of this close affinity between the United Provinces Brahmin and the Punjab Chuhra is more clearly brought out if we look at the table of differential indices between the United Provinces Brahmin and the Brahmins of other regions. Even the differential index between the United Provinces Brahmin and the Bihar Brahmins, who from what we know about the history of spread of the Aryan culture, is expected to be very nearly allied to the former, is just as high as that between the United Provinces Brahmin and the Chuhra..... On historical ground we expect Bihar to approximate to the United Provinces. On referring to the table we find that the Kurmi comes near to the Brahmin, and the Chamar and the Dom² stand much differentiated from him. But the Chamar in this case is not as much distinct from the Brahmin as the United Provinces Chamar is from the United Provinces Brahmin. The table for Bengal shows that the Chandals³ who stands sixth in the scheme of a social precedence and whose touch pollutes, is not much differentiated from the Brahmin, from whom the Kayasthas, second in rank, can hardly be said to be distinguished. In Bombay the Deshastha Brahmin bears as closer affinity to the Son-Koli, a fisherman caste, as to his own compeer, the Chitpavan Brahmin. The Mahar, the Untouchable of the Maratha region, come next together with the Kunbi, the peasant. Then follow in order the Shenvi Brahmin, the Nagar Brahmin and the high caste Maratha. These results are rather old. Stated in a generalized form they mean that there is no correspondence between social gradation and physical differentiation in Bombay.

1. Chuhra is an Untouchable of the Punjab.
2. Dom is an Untouchable of Bihar.
3. Chandal is an Untouchable of Bengal.

Finally we come to Madras. Here we must treat the different linguistic areas separately for the schemes of social precedence in the various areas are different. According to the average given by Risely and by E. Thurston the order of castes is as follows:

Kapu, Sale, Malla, Golla, Madiga, Fogata and Komati.

According to their social status they are ranked as below:

Brahmin, Komati, Golla, Kapu and others and Sale, Fagota and others. Mala Madiga occupy the lowest rank being the Pariahs of the Telugu country.

In the Canarese the nasal index gives the following order :

Karnatak Smarts, Brahmin, Bant, Billiva, Mandya Brahmin, Vakkaliga, Ganiga, Linga Banajiga, Panchala, Kurha, Holey, Deshastha Brahmin, Toreya and Bedar.

In the scheme of social precedence the castes are as under:

Brahmin, Bant and Vakkaliga, Toreya, etc., Kuruba and Ganiga, Badaga and Krumba and Solaga, Billiva, Beda Holey.

The significance of the comparison is enhanced when we remember that the nasal index of the Holey, the Untouchables of the Canarese region is 75.1 that of the highest of the Brahmin being 71.5 while those of the jungle Krumba and the Solaga, who when Hinduised occupy the rank allotted to them in the list, are 86.1 and 85.1 respectively.

The Tamil castes may be arranged according to their nasal index as follows:

Ambattan, Vellai, Edaiyan, Agamudaiyan, Tamil Brahmin, Palli, Malaiyali, Shanam and Parayan. The Nasal indices of four typical Malayalam castes are: Tiyan, 75; Nambudri 75.5; Nayar 76.7; Charuman 77.2. The order of social precedence among these is: Nambudri, Nayar, Tiyan and Charuman. The nasal index of the Kanikar, a jungle tribe of Travancore is 8.46. Thus, the Charuman (an Unapproachable) belonging to the same race as the Brahmin rather than to Kanikar."

To omit from the above extract what is said about other communities and to draw attention to what relates to the Untouchables only, it is clear that the nasal index of the Chuhra (the Untouchables) of the Punjab is the same as the nasal index of the Brahmin of the United Provinces; the nasal index of the Chamar (the Untouchables) of Bihar is not very much distinct from the Brahmin of Bihar; the nasal index of the Holey (an Untouchable) of the Canarese is far higher than that of the Brahmin of Karnatak and that the nasal index of the Cheruman (an Unapproachable lower than the Pariah) of the Tamil belongs to the same race as the Brahmin of the Tamil Nad. If anthropometry is a science which can be depended upon to determine the race of a people, then the result obtained by the application of anthropometry to the various strata of Hindu society disprove that the Untouchables belong to a race different from the Aryans and the Dravidians. The measurements establish that the Brahmin and the Untouchables belong to the same race.

From this it follows that if the Brahmins are Aryans the Untouchables are also Aryans. If the Brahmins are Dravidians the Untouchables are also Dravidians. If the Brahmins are Nagas, the Untouchables are also Nagas. Such being the facts, the theory propounded by Mr. Rice must be said to be based on a false foundation.

III

The racial theory of Untouchability not only runs counter to the results of anthropometry, but it also finds very little support from such facts as we know about the ethnology of India. That the people of India were once organized on tribal basis is quite well known, and although the tribes have become castes the tribal organization still remains intact. Each tribe was divided into clans and the clans were composed of groups of families. Each group of families had a totem which was some object, animate or inanimate. Those who had a common totem formed an exogamous group popularly known as *Gotra* or *Kula*. Families having a common gotra were not allowed to intermarry for they were supposed to be descended from the same ancestor having the same blood running in their veins. Having regard to this fact an examination of the distribution of the totems among the different castes and communities should serve as good a test for determining race as anthropometry has been.

Unfortunately, the study of the totems and their distribution among different communities has been completely neglected by students of sociology. This neglect is largely due to the current view propagated by the Census Commissioners that real unit of the Hindu social system and the basis of the fabric of Hindu society is the sub-caste founded on the rule of endogamy. Nothing can be a greater mistake than this. The unit of Hindu society is not the sub-caste but the family founded on the rule of exogamy. In this sense the Hindu family is fundamentally a tribal organization and not a social organization as the sub-caste is. The Hindu family is primarily guided in the matter of marriage by consideration of *Kul* and *Gotra* and only secondarily by considerations of caste and sub-caste. *Kul* and *Gotra* are Hindu equivalents of the totem of the Primitive Society. This shows that the Hindu society is still tribal in its organization with the family at its base observing the rules of exogamy based on *Kul* and *Gotra*. Castes and sub-castes are social organizations which are superimposed over

the tribal organization and the rule of endogamy enjoined by them does not do away with the rule of exogamy enjoined by the tribal organizations of *Kul* and *Gotra*.

The importance of recognizing the fact that it is the family which is fundamental and not the sub-caste is obvious. It would lead to the study of the names of *Kul* and *Gotra* prevalent among Hindu families. Such a study would be a great help in determining the racial composition of the people of India. If the same *Kul* and *Gotra* were found to exist in different castes and communities it would be possible to say that the castes though socially different were racially one. Two such studies have been made, one in Maharashtra by Risley¹ and another in the Punjab,² by Mr. Rose and the result flatly contradicts the theory that the Untouchables are racially different from the Aryans or the Dravidians. The main bulk of the population in Maharashtra consists of Marathas. The Mahars are the Untouchables of Maharashtra. The anthropological investigation shows that both have the same *Kul*. Indeed the identity is so great that there is hardly a *Kul* among the Marathas which is not to be found among the Mahars and there is no *Kul* among the Mahars which is not to be found among the Marathas. Similarly, in the Punjab one main stock of people consists of Jats. The Mazabi Sikhs are Untouchables most of them being Chamars by caste. Anthropological investigation shows that the two have the same *Gotras*. Given these facts how can it be argued that the Untouchables belong to a different race? As I have said if totem, kul, and gotra, have any significance it means that those who have the same totem must have been kindred. If they were kindred they could not be persons of different race.

The racial theory of the origin of Untouchability must, therefore, be abandoned.

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1. Census of India 1901. Ethnographical Appendices.

2. Glossary of Tribes and Castes in the Punjab by Rose, Vol., III, p. 76.