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Ambedkar and the Hindu Culture

By

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The Indian Neo Buddhism has aroused a movement since the 50s, which propagates Buddhism as the top form of the Indo-genous dharma. - The vast majority of that new religious movement belongs to the Dalits [1], people whose endogamous communities have been excluded from the varna system [2a] since centuries. The varna system is the traditional hierarchic structure of the relationships of those Indian communities who mutually acknowledge themselves as constituent members of their society. These varna jatis established a social class of people devoid of any basic social right. Declared as 'Untouchables' these people lost all human substance in the eyes of the varna jatis. Yet, that social degradation didn't primarily spring from racial, religious or even cultural reasons but from economic ones. When the old Indian agrarian production became a little more productive the division of labour was established as basic structure of the society; but in India the productivity remained on a low level during centuries so that the new non-productive jatis had to keep down the costs of the material production and the necessary services; they needed cheapest labour. Yet, they achieved that aim by creating totally oppressed jatis which they could extensively exploit. Through such a Dalitisation the varna jatis established the most cost-saving system of exploitation at all - even more cost-saving than slavery.

The slave-holder had to buy and to maintain his slave and couldn't send him away just as he wished - even if the slave became unable to work. Yet, the varna jatis could deal with the Dalits according to their particular interests and use them according to demand - without any responsibility. Not being even property of the varna exploiters the outlawed people were transformed through the process of Dalitisation from god-like human souls into cheap and downtrodden working bodies - unable to get themselves out of their cruel situation during centuries. The Dalitisation and even the creation of the varna system was a long lasting more or less uncontrolled social process of complex social interactions. Deriving it from a book or an ideology or religion is an absolutely naive view of real history. Such an interpretation is produced by the old brahmanical belief in the power of thought, spoken and written words and mantras. The Dalitisation got its shakti from the real unfathomable social process wallowing through the history and determining the historical chances of the people. The brahmanas and even Manu only tried to codify, to explain and to justify a found system that the social process had produced long time ago. - That social process is becoming reversed now. In India that reversion would have happened earlier if the invaders and colonialists hadn't have artificially maintained the antiquated Dalitisation. Under the new social conditions ultimately dissolving the traditional system of exploitation there isn't any need of the Dalit system - anymore. Nevertheless, although officially propagating the abolition of the 'caste'-system the so-called Savarnas [2b] try to maintain the out-dated varna system even to-day. The ongoing process of nationalisation of the Indian society which is intensively promoted by the Hindutvavadis successfully starts to completely eradicate that fossil system from Indian society. - Therefore, the Dalits are becoming increasingly aware of their lack of rights in the last decades and making the betterment of their social conditions a central point of Indian policy. So they are starting to play an important active and passive role in the Indian society. Not least, because of their millions of votes they have become a powerful vote bank. All political parties in India are highly interested nowadays in having their share of that cake. - Even the Dalits of the Neo Buddhist Religion are getting some ideological and political influence in India to-day. Yet, within the Indian Buddhist minority they have become the most powerful group - not only numerically constituting the majority of the Indian Buddhists but also being politically very active, well trained and aggressive.

These Neo Buddhists go back to the so-called 'Father of the Indian Constitution' Dr Bhimrao Ramji Sakpal, alias Ambedkar (1891-1956) [3]: therefore, they are called Ambedkarites. - Ambedkar belonged to the Mahar jati [4], which is one of the higher ranking jatis of the Untouchables in Maharashtra. Unlike the mass of his jati associates Sakpal succeeded with the help of his brahmanical school teacher in making an academic career. His brahmanical guru lent him even his own brahmanical name Ambedkar. By means of a scholarship from the Maharaja of Baroda Ambedkar could attain the degree of a Bachelor of Arts from Bombay university in 1912. A state scholarship of the principality of Baroda

permitted him to study afterwards at Columbia university in New York from where he graduated as a Master of Arts. A scholarship granted by the Maharaja of Kolhapur enabled him to study law at London so that he could take a degree as a Barrister-at-Law and a doctorate in economics. He has lived again in Bombay since 1923 launching into a very intensive activity as an attorney and teacher. However, he didn't make a career for himself, but became completely committed to the interests of the Untouchables: by means of upbringing, agitation and organisation of the Dalits. - That commitment made him the recognised leader of the Indian Untouchables and brought him the highest public offices of the colonial and free India. He became a member of the British Viceroy's Council, the chairperson of the constitution committee [5] and a minister of justice of the first free Government of India.

Ambedkar has mostly been known as a political leader of the Untouchables up to 1950. He set up three political parties to advocate the interest of the Untouchables in the public. His latest foundation, the Republican Party, is still active in Maharashtra, mainly as a communal party of the Mahars - however allied with the Congress party. - Politically set against the Indian National Congress of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948) and Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964) and compared to the Muslim league of Mohammed Ali Jinnah (1876-1948), the founder of the Indo-Islamic state of Pakistan, unsuccessful, Ambedkar put in order to help his jati associates more effectively on the religious card. - Concerning the religious background of Ambedkar we have to take notice that his family belonged to the Kabir Panth [6]. This Bhakti religion didn't acknowledge any jati and varna boundaries in religious, not yet in practical respect, and worshipped the Nirguna Rama. The origin from a Ram Bhakti Hinduism strongly denying the ruling varna system by religion and interpreting the Holy in the Nirguna way determined his further religious and political development.

The confrontation of his Untouchable jati with the Savarnas which caused also him the usual humiliations was nevertheless more lenient for him. It's true, the support of progressive high jati Hindus made him take an almost unprecedented social rise. However, as a leader of the Mahar community and of the other Untouchables he used his entire intellectual ability, ideological power and political influence for their interests and aspirations which he formulated programmatically, legitimised religiously and realised politically. - Seeing clear-sightedly that in the traditional Indian context the religious motivation is the most important issue for the liberation fight even of the Indian Dalits Ambedkar intensively looked out a useful socio-religious ideology. - The Kabir Panth, the traditional religion of his family, did not come into consideration since it represented only a small frozen quietistic community without any political interest and therefore for a modern mass liberation fight equipped not at all. - First, he planned to convert together with his jati associates to Sikhism. The then vice president of the Golden Temple Managing Committee in Amritsar, Sardar Dalip Singh Doabria, requested him for this purpose pointing out to the allegedly egalitarian character of the Sikh religion. [7b] That primary option may have stemmed from the fact,

that the founder of Ambedkars family religion, Kabir, may have been initially been a Sikh. The essential reason to put Sikhism into consideration was the cultural one: the religion of Guru Nanak to the Hindu Culture. [7c] - However, Ambedkar protruded more and more with pro-Buddhist statements since India had become independent; he required his political and social supporters, particularly his jati associates, to start celebrating Buddha Jayanti, Buddha's Birthday, every year. Under the title 'The Buddha and the Future of His Religion' he published in the Maha Bodhi Journal a programmatic article in the same year. He wrote, that Buddhism is the only religion that suits for the world, emphasising 'reason, morality, liberty, equality and fraternity' [8a]. Ambedkar established a new Buddhist dharma. Picking up the ideals of the French Revolution he created a religious-bourgeois social ideology denying the Marxist ideology and the egalitarian neo casteism of M. K. Gandhi. His turn to such a social bourgeois Buddhism - never found in India and elsewhere before — finally led to his personal religious conversion: Ambedkar took in Nagpur (Madhya Pradesh) diksha from the eldest Buddhist monk of India, U Chandramani Mahastavir, at the 14th of October 1956, some weeks before his death in December, in this way joining Buddhism ritually and officially [8b]. The convert immediately founded the Bharatiya Bauddha Mahasabha ('Indian Buddhist Union'), seemingly imitating the Hindu Mahasabha. Together with Ambedkar some hundred thousand followers mostly Mahars converted to that Ambedkariten Neo Buddhism [9]. Because of this mass conversion the number of the Indian Buddhists increased from 1956 to 1951 up to 3 250 000 members [10]. No doubt, by means of the Ambedkar movement the Indian Buddhism took an enormous upswing. Since those times uncountable Buddhist events have been performed and new Buddhist institutions, associations and monasteries were established at many places. The Neo Buddhism inspired also the small minority of traditional Indo-Buddhism mostly existing in the Himalayan areas (Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Sikkhim, Assam, etc.).

That mass conversion was certainly a big success for the increase of Buddhism in India, nevertheless the other side of the coin consisted in the split of the Dalit masses which were mostly Hindus and not interested to leave their traditional religions and to join the new Buddhist community. Ambedkar's attacks on the Savarna Hinduism had biographically seen their first origin - as above suggested - in Kabir's Avarna Hinduism [11]. To fight that Savarna Hinduism which discriminated against the Untouchables Ambedkar as a son of a Kabirite family didn't need any radical religious conversion. Such a fight has been and is particularly today a possibility within Hinduism itself. Ambedkar's turn to Buddhism wasn't so much a consequence of the non-political attitude of his original religion but far more because of substantial political reasons. In his view the National Indian Congress under the leadership of M. K. Gandhi was incapable and too reluctant to change the living conditions of the Untouchables. He saw that Gandhi's political movement was ready to give the Muslims a lot of advantages but refused to concede the same to the Hindu Untouchables. The Hindu modern-

ists, the so-called Hindutvavadis [12], absolutely committed to a united, jati and varna free Hindu nation, completely agreed with Ambedkar on this issue. Yet, their political influence was still very small in those times so that Ambedkar didn't ask them for support.

The actual political leadership of the Hindu masses was controlled by the open and hidden Savarna jatis of all Indian religions including Christians and Muslims. Their very successful organisation was the already mentioned Indian National Congress led by a Gujurati Vaishya Bania, M. K. Gandhi, and a Kashmiri brahmin, Jawaharlal Nehru. The Indian National Congress represented above all the great land owners and agriculturists who were mostly Savarnas and who were not naturally interested to grant any human and social rights to the Dalits. In addition, the ruling socio-economic class successfully prevented with the aid of the Indian National Congress the national upbringing, so that the lower jatis couldn't get any higher professional qualification to escape poverty nor develop a consciousness of emancipation to eradicate their deep implanted inferiority complex. The ruling class of free India also refused the introduction of a general compulsory military service fearing the military and intellectual arming of the masses. This service could have made an important contribution to the national education particularly to the Dalits and would have reduced the one-sided bondage of the military on the higher jatis. At last, the compulsory military service would have reinforced the unity of India. All those progressive developments the ruling class didn't and don't want till today; to maintain its socio-economic power it used and uses the splitting of the Indian masses into minorities, castes and religions imitating successfully the fundamental strategy of the British raj: ruling by dividing. Therefore, M. K. Gandhi couldn't never initiate any revolutionary crusade against the Savarnas to free the Untouchables from the retching grip of their oppressors [13]. Moreover, Gandhi didn't just refuse the jati system as such but merely the mental discrimination against single jatis, primarily against the Untouchables. In spite of Gandhi's Harijan ideology and in spite of a lot of anti-caste-discrimination laws, the influence of the jati system in general and of the Savarnas in particular, has increased more and more during the decades of the Nehru dynasty.

Although Ambedkar identified the Savarna Hinduism as the most powerful enemy of the Untouchables yet he kept in a decided manner a firm hold on the Indo-genous dharma which he and the Hindutvadis call 'Hindu Culture'. Therefore, Islam and Christianity were as serious alternatives out of question. Indeed, he compared himself with that Moses, [14] "who liberated his people from slavery" and highly respected Jesus Christ; but he was repelled by the Christians because they "never fought for the removal of social injustice" and practised themselves in southern India the Savarna system [15]. Ambedkar especially took exception to the fact that those Untouchables who converted to Christianity became "selfish and self-centred": "They don't care a snap of their finger what becomes of their former caste associates so long user system they and their families, or they and a little group who have become Christians, get ahead"[16]. The

Christian converts even denied their jati associates, they were contemptible traitors of their caste association. Therefore, he didn't want any increase of the number of such Christians. In addition, the increase of Christians would only reinforce the power of the British colonialism [17]. Moreover, Christianity might be only ninety percent a copy of Buddhism [18].

Ambedkar's choice finally fell for three reasons to Buddhism. He said: "I prefer Buddhism because it gives three principles in combination which no other religion does. Buddhism teaches Prajna (understanding against superstition and supernaturalism), Karuna (love), and Samata (equality). This is what man wants for a good and happy life "[19]. That picture of Buddhism is nothing else than an idealising construction for political reasons, devoid of any historical and actual evidence. The primary motive of Ambedkar's conversion was not so much of religious but of social and political nature. His main intention consisted in developing the worldly emancipation of the Untouchables. No wonder that a half million of his jati associates, the Mahars, accepted to follow him. Anyway, a change of religion by a caste and to follow a caste leader into an other religion is a very typical phenomenon within the Indian caste system. These masses mostly hadn't any relation to Buddhism before their conversion and followed Ambedkar for reasons of personal loyalty only. In such a way, a convert explained: "We became Buddhists because Dr. Ambedkar told us so"[20]. An other one said: "I got thinking about economic and social betterment and then I just followed Ambedkar to Buddhism"[21]. A third one confessed: "I had no other incentive but blind love for Ambedkar and the people. This is true for many"[22]. - Ambedkar's Buddhism obviously appears to be "a religion of liberation of the oppressed in society"[23]. On the one hand, through this definition Ambedkar's Neo Buddhism became the strongest rival of Christian and Muslim social ideologies and on the other hand, the sharpest opponent of the Savarnas. The Savarnas prevented very successfully with the help of the Indian National Congress the emancipation of all the Dalits. Because of the numerical dominance of Hindus within the Indian Savarna community Ambedkar developed an abstract anti-Hinduism blaming the Hinduism as such for the delusion of untouchability. Therefore, the anti-Hindu turn stems from the fact that the ruling class of India under the political leadership of the Indian National Congress suppressed the emancipatory power of the Hindus and abused the Hindu tradition for the tacit justification of the continued Savarna practise in spite of their contrary political declarations. Facing the numerical reality that the vast majority of the Untouchables are also Hindu, Ambedkar had to propagate religious conversion. The Dalits were told to become Buddhists and leave Hinduism if they want to be worldly liberated. That undifferentiated anti-Hinduism must necessarily fail. It isolates the Neo Buddhism from the Hindu Dalits and let it become in the long run a cast religion: predominantly as cast religion of the Mahars. Such developments happened in the Indian religious history very often. However, that self-isolation would be only a repetition of the old caste models: both the religion as well as other cultural elements are limited to one's own caste. The restric-

tion to the caste horizon is currently secured by an aggression Ambedkar mobilised against the Hinduism in general. - The Ambedkarites represent in the contemporary India the strongest Buddhist power. Even if the traditional Indian Buddhists separate themselves from them, in such a way, they increasingly emboss the picture of Buddhism in the eyes of the Hindus, of the Muslims and Christians: as a religion destroying relationships, preaching intolerance and using religion for political purposes. In spite of that extreme anti-Hindu propaganda [23a] the modernist Hindus don't condemn the mass conversion of Hindu Untouchables to Buddhism. The Hindutvavadis understand Buddhism as a part of the Hindu dharma. Such a conversion is seen only as a change within the Hindu fold. Therefore, the Hindus accept a such conversion earlier than the mass conversions to Christianity and Islam. The two other religions are unacceptable because they don't belong to the dharma. - Ambedkar also joined the Indian Buddhism, because of its actual non-existence. By this he could solve three difficult problems: 1. Under any circumstances didn't Ambedkar want to separate his movement from the Indo-genous dharma; therefore, his reason for choosing Buddhism as religious alternative was his strong attachment to the Hindu Culture. 2. Since there didn't actually exist any ritually pure Buddhist castes in India anymore, in case of conversion Ambedkar didn't have to reckon on any caste conflict with Buddhist Savarnas. Therefore, in Sri Lanka Ambedkar's Buddhisation of the Sinhalese Dalits would have been made fail by the Buddhist Goyigama jatis. 3. Although Ambedkar interpreted Buddhism in a very unusual way [24] he hadn't even to fear any religious conflict since a powerful Buddhist orthodoxy didn't exist in India. It seems as if the old Indian dharma uses Ambedkar's movement as a historical possibility of the dharmic re-integration of the Untouchables, which was prevented by the very anti-modern caste system.

Ambedkar's decision to convert to the Buddhist wing of the Indo-genous or Hindu dharma and his decisive rejection of any religion of non-Indian origin on one side, and the absence of any remarkable mass conversion to Islam or Christianity since his conversion on the other side is a success of the Indian dharma nobody was expecting before. The Christian and Muslim ideologists, missionaries and extremists were believed the dharma religions would vanish and the Hindu people convert to their adharmic faiths. Ambedkar has obviously rendered the Hindu Culture great service stopping the downfall of the dharma in India in general and the advance of Communism, Christianity and Islam within the Dalit fold in particular. The anti-Hindu Ambedkarism simply shows the overwhelming intellectual power of the Indian dharma tradition making dialectical progress with his evolution through the cunning of the dharmic reason. Ambedkar knew that his dharmic option for the Sikhism and later on for Buddhism and against Islam and Christianity was completely in accordance with the Hindutvavadis placing greater importance to the affiliation to the Hindu Culture in general than to the affiliation to a particular traditional or new Hindu sect. - In his fight to liberate the Dalits Ambedkar never left the Hindu Culture option. Even when Ambedkar was reflecting the possibility to join Sikhism he made a

clear statement that only a religion of the Hindu Culture could be an alternative for the depressed castes: "Looking at these alternative faiths purely from the standpoint of Hindus, which is the best - Islam Christianity or Sikhism? Obviously, Sikhism is the best." [25a] By this choice they have not to leave the Hindu Culture: "If the Depressed Classes join Islam or Christianity, they not only go out of Hindu religion, but they also go out of Hindu Culture. On the other hand, if they become Sikhs they remain within Hindu culture" [25b]. He ironically added, that his option for the Sikhs was "by no means a small advantage to the Hindus" [26]. No doubt, Ambedkar's historic choice was a clear vote for the Hindu Culture. In spite of vehement attacks on the Savarna Hinduism he never planned to eradicate the Indo-genous or - using Ambedkar's and the Hindutvavadis' term - Hindu Culture.

The basic value of the Hindutvavadis [27] as mentioned above is the maintenance of Hindu Culture in an united Hindu nation; in their opinion is the most important factor weakening the Hindu Culture the creation of the caste system. Therefore, it's quite logical that the destruction of the caste system and the eradication of the untouchability are fundamental aims of the Hindutvavadis. [28] Therefore, Hindu nationalism is nothing else than the political will to strengthen the Indian nation by unification; but the unity can only be reached through a casteless society of equal citizens. That fundamental interest of the Hindutva movement makes clear that in spite of some important differences there is nevertheless an basic ideological convergence between Ambedkar and Hindutva: the maintenance of Hindu Culture. - Ambedkar wanted the destruction of the caste system by caste-motivated reasons, the Hindutva wants the same by national ones. Due to this common interest it is no wonder that "Ambedkar had intimate relations with the Hindutvawadis" [29] of the Hindu Mahasabha and its president V. D. Savarkar. Both ones were joined together in the decisive will to extinguish untouchability from the Hindu society. The judgement of the Hindutva movement on the untouchability was classically formulated by Savarkar as follows: "This system of untouchability is unwarrantable and suicidal, hence only for the sake of humanity we the Hindus should eradicate it" [30]. With the official of the Hindu Mahasabha, Munje, Ambedkar exchanged extensively letters; once he asked him concerning his possible conversion for advice [31]. Later on he criticised Savarkar for not doing enough to defend the Hindu interests in face of the British-Muslim conspiracy! [32] During the second world war, however, both ones played the military card: "Savakar blessed Ambedkar's programme of militarisation. He expressed confidence that under the able leadership of Ambedkar the Mahar brethren would exhibit their military merits and strengthen the 'collective power' with their militancy" [33]. That the chief of the Hindu Mahasabha appreciated the military arming of the Untouchables, shows very clearly about the narrow kinship between Ambedkar and Hindutva [34]. If the Hindutva would have been the enemy of the Dalits how could the leader of an radical Hindu organisation accept the military power of the Untouchables? That the chief of the Hindu Mahasabha the military arming of Untouchables greeted, no

doubt, shows clearest the narrow kinship between Ambedkar and Hindutva [34]. Over and above that Savarkar declared in order to stop the Pan-Islamism conjured by Mohammed Ali Jinnah, such an alliance "would be retaliated by hatching pan-Hindu-Buddhism." The "Hindu-Bouddh unity from Jamnu to Japan" would put an end to the machinations of Jinnah [35].

There is no doubt, Buddhism was by the Hindutva seen as is an integral part of Hindu Culture from the very beginning [36]. In the frame of this understanding of the Bauddha dharma as part of the more general Hindu dharma the conversion of Ambedkar was nothing else than a change of an apartment within the same house. Therefore, it's not surprising that Ambedkar writing the Indian constitution co-operated narrowly with the Hindu Mahasabha [37]. Together with the Hindutvavadis he fully shared the idea of 'Hindu nationalism'; just this ideology was his essential motive not convert to Islam and Christianity: "Conversion to Islam or Christianity will denationalise the Depressed Classes"[38]. Ambedkar's criterion of Indian nationalism didn't consist in the identification with the abstract Indian Nation but with the Indo-genous dharma; therefore he excluded Christians and Muslim from but included Hindus and other dharma people into the Indian Nation. Under any circumstances the Untouchables shouldn't leave the Indian dharmic nation but become her fully acknowledged members.

To surmount the traditional social isolation of the Untouchables in India Ambedkar realised sharp-sightedly that this was possible only by the integration of the Dalits into the Hindu fold, into the majoritarian dharma society; otherwise the converted Dalits would give up or loose the solidarity of all the other Hindu Dalit castes. Conversion to adharmic communities has made the Dalits fully helpless victims of their oppressors inside and outside their new community. Beyond that: conversion to adharmic communities weakened the possible power of the Dalit community as a whole and was therefore nothing else than a disastrous betrayal of the solidarity of the Untouchables. Logically, the dharma nationalism was an essential item for the emancipation of the Untouchables. Separating the Untouchables from the Indo-genous dharma didn't mean nothing else than their denationalisation. The Untouchables shouldn't under any circumstances been alienated form the other parts of the Indian dharma society. It's obvious: Ambedkar believed in the emancipate power of the Indo-genous dharma for the Dalits: neither Christianity nor Islam could give the Dalits the chance to become free. Therefore it was very clear that Ambedkar didn't want to strengthen Muslims or Christians although they always disseminated to be egalitarian and casteless religious communities [39]!

Although Ambedkar knew that all these communities were caste ridden nevertheless his basic argument against them didn't consist so much of their casteistic reality but in their adharmic character! Even if they would have been casteless he wouldn't have accepted a conversion to them. The argument of the denationalisation stated here reveals that Ambedkar took the Indian Muslims and also the Indian Christians as communities, that didn't belong to the country, to the nation [40], reveals him as a very exclusive and extremist Indo-genous nationalist. Af-

ter having excommunicated Christians and Muslims from the Indian nation, the question arises: Who, then, did according to Ambedkar belong to that Indian dharmic nation? The Hindus, the Sikhs and the Buddhist, those people only who follow the Indo-genous dharma, called by the Hindutvavadis Hindu dharma [41]. However, the absolute dominance of the Indo-genous dharma went in the thinking of Ambedkar even further. Even the caste aspirations have to be subordinated to the dharma! He calculates: "On the other hand, if they embrace Sikhism, they will not only not harm the destiny of the country but they will help the destiny of the country." [42a] Destiny, however, means dharma, the Indian dharma, which besides Sikhs and Buddhists in spite of sharp criticism also the Hindus also belong to. The Untouchables aren't allowed to damage that dharma - therefore only a religious change within "the destiny of the country" comes into consideration. Only following the Indo-genous dharma, the Dalits can build a more advanced India. Ambedkar then appeals to the non-Muslim, the actual Hindu nation: It might be exactly the same way in interest of India, that the Untouchables, if they must change their belief, the Sikhism accept [42b]. Therefore, the common nation of the Hindus, the Buddhists and Sikhs, the Indo-genous religious communities, must have an interest next to it, that the Untouchables don't desert to the Christians who were collaborating with colonial rulers and the Muslims who are only interested in their communal domination. The exclusion of the two exogenous religious communities, which are denationalised, and therefore doesn't belong to the nation shows very clearly, that Ambedkar's nationalism wasn't based on racial, caste or religious but on cultural criteria, on the Indo-genous culture or the dharma arising from the soil of India - which as we said above the Hindutvavadis call 'Hindu dharma' or 'Hindu Culture'.

Regarding the Indo-genous culture as the highest value and connecting the liberation of the Dalits with the dharma he prevented the massive emigration of the Untouchables from the Indo-genous culture. Indeed, it isn't wrong to say that Ambedkar kept the Hindu Dalits from leaving the Indo-genous dharma by becoming adharmic Christians or Muslim; but he did more, no less: he even tied ideologically the Dalits to the dharma - paying as price the justified denunciation of the Savarna Hindus who oppressed the karuna ethics of the Hindu dharma. As rulers the Savarnas forced the varna Hindus into the discrimination of the Dalits. Within the traditional Indo-genous religious communities there was actually hardly any varna caste which could escape that prejudice. The Hindutvavadis being no caste but a voluntary organisation and only a small group lacked any political importance in those times. - So, adopting the Buddhism as a new caste religion of the Mahar Untouchables Ambedkar found a brilliant compromise. Buddhism almost absent in India and therefore not controlled by Savarnas belonged nevertheless to the dharma. Converting to that religion one would be liberated from the ideological dominance of the Savarnas and got hold of the dharma. Considering the Savarnas' ideology that the Dalits don't belong to the dharma society Ambedkar succeeded in integrating the Untouchables into the

dharma society for the first time. His identity wasn't based on religion, jati, varna or language but on the Indo-genous culture. Therefore, his Neo Buddhism only seems to have been anti-Hindu. It was anti-Savarna. Rather, Ambedkar started a social movement, which will most effectively get rid of the socially grounded deformation of the dharma in future. Reason is that his movement basically agrees with the Hindutvavadis to maintain the Indo-genous culture, the dharma, and to reach this aim through a social revolution, that is the eradication of untouchability and the whole caste system. That objective convergence of the Dalit and Hindutva interests will inevitably bring together both movements. Therefore, the newly made political coalitions between the BJP and Dalit parties are very logical; they will continue even if the Dalit leaders influenced by the Congress ideology are very inconsistent in political affairs. Nevertheless, the egalisation of the Indian and particularly the Hindu society propagated by the Hindutvavadis and pre-formulated in Swami Vivekananda's socio-political programme of Brahmanisation including all castes and people [43] is backed by the Dalit movement. The liberation of the Dalits absolutely depends on the equalisation of the whole people and the eradication of the Savarnic splitting of the Indian society.

Notes

1] The Indian Untouchables call themselves 'Dalits' today. Cf., James Massey: *Dalits in India*, Delhi 1995, p. 15 seq.

2a] The colonial term 'caste' is muddling the two sociological categories meaning completely different social states of affairs: 'jati' and 'varna'. Jati means real working community of birth, marriages, of profession, culture and religion; varna, however, means the social rank, status, ordo.

varna does not mean the work-sharing assignment of the jatis. This has been always an element of the jatis themselves. The socio-cultural evaluation of the jatis, their ranking place, is expressed by the hierarchical varna.

The Dalits fell out of the prevailing varna. They were regarded by the Savarnas [see next note] as avarnas. Nevertheless, they are living also in endogamous groups separating themselves with hierarchical assignment from all the other Dalit jatis. Therefore, it is in every respect non-valid to designate them as 'casteless'.

India is up to now as the series 'People of India', edited by the Anthropological Society of India (ASI), Delhi 1993 seq., has blatantly proved a society embossed by the jati system. India consists of 4635 identified jatis. The jatis are the subjects of the Indian society and not the individuals. Therefore, the Indian society isn't a system of the relations of individuals (Theodor W. Adorno) but a system of relations of jatis. The sociology of castes has confirmed these investigations. Over and above that it has shown, that the power of the jatis didn't fall down during the time of the Nehru dynasty - more than that the power increased (cf., D.L. Sethi: *Caste and Politics: A Survey of Literature*. In: *Contributions to South Asian Studies 1*. Ed. by Gopal Krishna. Dehli 1979).

A lot of Indian parties officially rejecting the caste system in their manifestos; don't find it any problem yet in order to gain votes and power to make more or less openly politics on jati basis. Such a jati communalism is particularly practised by those political parties which favour minorities. The Neo Buddhist and Christian Dalit leaders are practising that jati communalism too being of the opinion that the emancipation of the Dalits could be successful only by stabi-

lising the All-Indian solidarity of the Dalit jatis. That communalism is a new social fact because it has become a nation wide jati communalism including all jatis of the same varna or Avarna status. The new nationalised jati consciousness is concentrating the power of the traditionally singularised jatis.

All those tendencies have brought about a real renaissance of the whole but new caste system in India today. It is somehow an triumph of M. K. Gandhi's social concept of a system of equalised jatis. Yet, the reinforcement of the nationalised and equalised jatis is a highly dangerous development threatening the unity of the country.

However, the Hindutvavadis can't practise jati communalism because they are ideologically interested in empowering a non-divided nation of equal Indian citizens. The so-called 'nationalism' in India doesn't mean in a Western manner an ideology propagating aggressive politics against other and foreign nations but an ideology for promoting the social integration of the nation. The Christian European colonialists successfully prevented such a modernising development in India to maintain their exploiting regime.

While the majority of the Indian politicians don't have any problem to declare themselves to a jati the approval of the varna system is yet regarded as reprehensible. The public defence of the varna doctrine comes about only rarely today. Anyhow, the Varnaism in combination with the Jatiism, e.g. in the case of love matches and other forms of the private interest, is common practice. This also goes for the so-called progressists and the press media supporting them. In contrast to the open pro-varna traditionalists the repress all memory of their own varna arrogance practice and their jati communalism withdrawing their actual way of life from any critics of public discourse. This repression of the own practise by the majority of the Indian society of all religious communities and the almost absurd imputation of the Hindutvavadis as communalists (during simultaneous defamation as nationalists!) leads - up to now successful - to the situation, that India has been hindered to get a position in the world community adequate to the already developed potentials and resources.

Instead of this, provided there is no political change, India threatens to become an insignificant 'banana republic'. (Cf., Arun Shourie: 'It Is Just That The Banana Is large'. In: <http://bjp.org/bjp/articles/shourie/may31-97.htm>).

In addition, the ignoring of the conceptional distinction of jati and varna has prevented the progressive transformation of a still protective social system. The ideologically motivated mixing up of the destructive varna system with the still supportive jati system de-stabilises the social identity of the masses living under conditions dissolving the traditional dharma.

That strategy of weakening the Indian masses practised by the British rulers has been adopted by the political and ideological successors of the colonialists. Propagating individualism while practising communalism is the a very effective schizopheno-gene method of mass control. Some politicians and ideologues of the Dalits and the OBCs show very clearly that successful politics in favour of their people is only working if they fight the varna system and use the their own jatis as basis of their fight for complete equality.

But because of that schizophrenic propaganda the majority leaders of the Untouchables follow the crypto-varnaic politicians and intellectuals instead of the Hindutva nationalism. Repressing Varnaism and isolating jati communalism are still the dominant factors of Indian politics, nationalism yet is only a minoritarian force. The BJP led government (since 1998) shows a little change in the mentality. but the very aggressive reactions of the communalists and Savarnas of the mass media and their political parties reveals the power of the colonial tradition to divide the Indian Nation.

2b] Savarnas, vide note 11].

3] Cf., Eleanor Zelliot: The Dalit Movement. In: Dalit - International Newsletter Vol.1 No.1 (1996) p. 1 seq. and Balkrishna Govind Gokhale: Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar: Rebel against Hindu tradition. In: Religion and Social Conflict in South Asia. Ed. by Bardwell L. Smith. Leyden 1976, p. 14 seq.

4] Cf., Ambedkar and the Neo Buddhist Movement. Ed. by T. S. Wilkinson and M. M. Thomas. Madras 1972 (= Wilkinson), particularly: T. S. Wilkinson: Buddhism and Social Change among Mahars.

5] With the help of that position he achieved the Buddhist wheel of dharma being included into the Indian national flag and Ashoka's lion capital chosen for the national symbol of the free India.

6] Gokhale, op. cit., p. 17; regarding the Kabir religion cf. William J. Dwyer: Bhakti in Kabir. Patna 1981.

7b] B. A. M. Paradkar: The Religious Quest of Ambedkar. In: Wilkinson, p. 55-70

7c] B. A. M. Paradkar op. cit. In: Wilkinson, p. 56

8a] D. C. Ahir: Buddhism in Modern India, 1991, p. 18

8b] B. A. M. Paradkar, op. cit. In: Wilkinson, p. 65 seq.

9] B. A. M. Paradkar, op. cit. In: Wilkinson, p. 66

10] Ahir, op. cit., p. 22

11] Savarnas, the people supporting and practising the dominant varna system, are present in all Indian religious communities as well as in so-called secular ones i.e. the Marxist parties. Cf., Jose David: Communist Kerala citadel crumbling under casteist ostracism. Indian Express, 9th of March, 1997; Imtiaz Ahmad: Caste and Social Stratification among Muslims in India. Delhi 1979; there see: A. R. Momin: Muslim Caste in an Industrial Township of Maharashtra. - The Savarnas declare Avarnas those jatis which do not belong to the varna system of Manu (brahmanas, kshatriyas, vaishyas and shudras). Very often, scholars were and are adopting Manu's model as a description of the real Indian society but this is very doubtful. The Indian sub-continent has been a conglomerate of extremely different cultures. One of them has been the varna dominated sub-cultures. Islamic invaders of India and particularly the colonial rulers used and reinforced Manu's model. Bimal Chandra Mahapatra: Buddhism and Socio-Economic Life of Eastern India, Delhi 1995, has recently shown that just the Buddhist kings [of Orissa and Bengal] introduced the brahmanical varna system. Believing in the ideology that Buddhism basically fights the varna system he is amazed about that fact and writes: "Though Ksamankara (sc. the king of Orissa, 9th century A.D.; the author) was a staunch follower of Buddhism he established four orders (caste) in their proper place" (p. 78-9). The ideological pressure produced by Western indological propaganda is so heavy that Mahapatra can't use his own critical evidences to correct the ideological interpretation of Buddhist history; confused he even neutralises his own evidences according to the rule that it can't be what's not allowed. Therefore he denounces the Buddhist ruler to disregard the Buddhist teachings! (op. cit.) According to Mahapatra's studies it becomes more and more evident that just during the centuries of Buddhist rule the varna system was spread all over India. The Hindu Bhakti movement started the fight against that system. The frontal attack on the varna system in India has its origin in the Hindu religion and on no account in the Buddhist one.

12] Hindutvavadis (Bharatiya Janata Party [BJP], the Vishva Hindu Parishad [VHP], the Rashtriya Svayamsevak Sangh [RSS] and so forth are fighting for unity, equality and evolution of the Hinduism. Their enmity against the caste system i.e. the dominance of the jati over the nation as well as the discrimination of jatis, particularly of the Dalits, is not only morally motivated but also a question of political reason.

The vehement aggression which they are suffering in India has its roots their nationalism. Their enemies believe that the Hindutvavadis are indeed ready to extinguish the caste system. The other political parties are known to limit to the corresponding declamations and to misuse in a communalistic way the castes as 'vote bank' for the polls (particularly the Indian National Congress, the Samajwadi of Party and of the Janata Dal). Therefore, it is very easy to understand that the Indian People's Party [BJP], the political wing of the Hindutvavadis, 1997 supported the election of a Dalit as Indian President; likewise they were successful with their

initiative to elect a Dalit as speaker of the Lok Sabha for the first time (March 1998) - as for the rest against the voices of the above mentioned parties.

13] Ambedkar: Gandhi and the fast. In: Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches. Edited by Vasant Moon. (=WS), vol. 8, Bombay 1990, p. 375 seq.

14] B. A. M. Paradkar, op. cit. In: Wilkinson, p. 59

15] B. A. M. Paradkar, op. cit. In: Wilkinson, p. 59; Ambedkar is the most authorised contemporary witness, that the missionaries' ideology, the Indian Christians were unlike the Hindus committed to social justice, is nothing else than propaganda.

The same goes for the mission ideology too spreading the prejudice the varna system not to be valid among the Christians of India and to be particular to the Hinduism.

That the Savarna Christianity flourishes strongly today, has been discovered by the revolts of the Christian Dalits within the church.

The Christian Dalits could indeed get some leading positions of the Indian churches (e.g. the episcopate in Chennai and Delhi); the Savarna Christians yet control the church management and hold the disposal of the western financial resources in their own hand.

16] No doubt, that's indeed the most fatal moral reproach being ever raised against the Indian Christian converts.

However, that reproach also shows how much Ambedkar's conscience was committed to the faith to and solidarity with one's own jati.

Ambedkar very clearly saw that these Christians jati apostates became useful helpers for weakening the protective Dalit jatis and therefore obedient servants of the colonial regime and the higher jatis.

17] B. A. M. Paradkar, op. cit. In: Wilkinson, p. 60 seq.

18] B. A. M. Paradkar, op. cit. In: Wilkinson, p. 62

19] B. A. M. Paradkar, op. cit. In: Wilkinson, p. 62. That description of Buddhism is pure wish thinking. Although well educated in historiography Ambedkar invented by actual ideological reasons that modern Ideal Buddhism.

The international propaganda follows that ideology, exempting the Buddhists from public criticism knowing that violence inwards (China, Cambodia, Burma, they Shri Lanka), aggression outwards (China, Japan) or moral decay (Thailand) are in use and democracy and human rights are mostly unknown in predominantly Buddhist countries.

20] Adele M. Fiske: The Understanding of 'Religion' and 'Buddhism' among the India's New Buddhists. In: Wilkinson, p. 112

21] Adele M. Fiske, op. cit. In: Wilkinson, p. 112

22] Adele M. Fiske, op. cit. In: Wilkinson, p. 112

23] Adele M. Fiske, op. cit. In: Wilkinson, p. 119; cf., Edmund Weber: Religion - A source of Oppression and Liberation (of the Dalits). In: Bulletin of the Christian Institute for Religious Studies, Batala, vol. 23, no. 2, July 1994, p. 1 seq.; cf., Journal of Religious Culture, No. 2, 1997 (<http://www.rz.uni-frankfurt.de/htdocs/FB/fb6a/religion/relkultur02>).

23a] That behind the fight against the solidarisation the of the mostly Hindu Dalits and the Dalits belonging to minoritarian religions is not only an Indian but also a western interest it can easily be learned from the aggressive propaganda of the already mentioned American 'DALIT International Newsletter'. Owen M. Lynch: 'Dalit Buddhism: The Liberate Bodh Gaya Movement' (Vol. 3 No.1, Feb. 1998) is a very good example, how non-Indian pressure groups abusing Buddhist religion attempt to misuse the Dalits to destabilise India. The Buddhists should also be raised at the same time against the Hindus. The author feels, that India's historical chance depends on the renewal of Hinduism particularly by its reunion with its Buddhist tradition and on the decisive fight of the Hindutvavadis against the Savarna system. Within the general strategy to weaken India it's just the primary function of those Western so-called pro-Dalits to stop the threatening re-unification of Buddhists and Hindu Dalits.

24] Vakil: Gandhi-Ambedkar-Dispute. New Delhi 1991 (=Vakil), p. 107: "Ambedkar did not explain Buddhism as it was but as what it ought to be".

25a] B. A. M. Paradkar, op. cit. In: Wilkinson, p. 56

25b] B. A. M. Paradkar, op. cit. In: Wilkinson, p. 56. Ambedkar decided in connection with the Pakistan question quite decisive: "There (sc. in India; the author) has been a cultural unity from time immemorial". That cultural unity includes all Indians and shouldn't given up, "simply because some Muslims are dissatisfied"! (WS, vol. 8, p. 348)

26] B. A. M. Paradkar, op. cit. In: Wilkinson, p. 56

27] See note 12.

28] The Second Hindu World Congress 1977 in Prayag (Allahabad) passed the following decision: "(1) To protest untouchability even if it is practised anywhere; (2) To create immediately such an atmosphere in which such tendencies and attitudes could be discouraged and dispelled; (3) To arouse social consciousness to disqualify all tendencious efforts to fan the passion over untouchability for political bargaining by anti-national elements. This Vishva Hindu Sammelan makes an unequivocal declaration that nobody among the Hindus is an untouchable"[Hindu Vishva, March April 1979, Vol. 14, No 7 & 8, Special Number: Second World Hindu Conference].

One of the seven fundamental objectives of Vishva Hindu of Parishad which is the biggest Hindu Organisation of the world reveals what the Hindutvavadis are ready to do: (7) "To eradicate the concept of untouchability from the Hindu society"[Global Vision 2000. Global Conference Washington D.C. 1993, p. 54]. Examples of the systematic injury of the untouchability taboo through Hindutvavadis, here through members of the Rashtriya Svayamsevak Sangh, gives H. V. Seshadri: 'The 'Mantra' for Exorcising Untouchability [Hindu Vishva, November 1985, p. 7 seq.] The Hindutvavadis have a strategic reason forcing them to drive forward the extermination of the untouchability: their Hindu nationalism.

Ambedkar's and the Hindutvavadis' arguments are the same ones: the Hindu society can only survive by introducing social equality.

Like Ambedkar the Hindutvavadis are strong anti-caste Hindus; they sharply conflict with the casteism practising Savarnas. The Savarnas are amongst all religious communities and are active particularly in the so-called secular parties which are using the caste system for political purposes.

Ambedkar's prophetic comment: "In my opinion only when the Hindu society becomes a casteless society that it can hope to have strength enough to defend itself. Without such internal strength, Swaraj (sovereignty) for Hindus may turn out to be only a step towards slavery" (WS, vol. 1, 1989, p. 80) nobody else has understood better and determined dealt than the anti-caste Hindus of the Hindutva.

Ambedkar's ideas and the anti-caste ideology of the Hindutvavadis being very close, he attempted even to join the Hindu Mahasabha.

The most recent examples of the continuous pro-Dalit ideology of the Hindutvavadis is the support of the Bharatiya Janata Party for the first Dalit woman, Ms Mayavati, to become Chief Minister of the most populous Indian state Uttar Pradesh.

The BJP is favouring the Dalits: they are brothers and sisters within the Hindu community.

On occasion of the Protestant National Congress (Evangelischer Kirchentag) in Frankfurt am Main (1987) Vishva Hindu Parishad which took part in this event declared in an official statement: "Good bye to Untouchability. Untouchability has been the scourge of India. ... Caste has not been created by God or nature. Still untouchability had run deep roots in the hearts and minds of of the caste Hindus who arrogated themselves a superior suit. ... The Vishva Hindu Parishad tried and was successful in the last Prayag (Allahabad) Sammelan (congress) in putting forth a resolution condemning this practice of untouchability in unequivocal terms by the Mathadhipaties (leaders of the Maths, will say gig and important Hindu centres and monasteries), which was forcefully supported by various religious heads.

Nearly 36 dharmacharyas (theological authorities), Jagatgurus (great religious leaders) and leading Swamis (monks) signed a resolution condemning practice of untouchability ...". It becomes clear here that the Hindutvavadis divide up the Hindu into two classes: 1st the Savarnas practising the caste system and 2nd those people condemning that system. Apart from the Hindutvavadis, the most important Hindu authorities of India are belonging to the second ones today. Anti-Hindu propaganda attempts to mislead the world public by means of systematic misinformation, spreading the totally absurd lie that the Hindutva movement might be inspired by caste spirit.

The reason for this campaign lies in the fact that the Hindutvavadis have taken over the leadership of the Hinduism, have begun to eradicate the caste spirit in the own lines, and in this way helped the Hinduism to become a world-wide equally ranked inter-cultural partner and competitor.

Not only the Islam but also the Hinduism has started to put an end to the religio-cultural colonialism.

29] Vakil, op. cit., p. 94 (4)

30] Quoted in Vakil, op. cit., p. 120 note 2

31], Vakil, op. cit., p. 94 (4)

32] Vakil, op. cit., p. 132

33] Vakil, op. cit., p. 132

34] Gandhi's simultaneously instigated anti-military 'Quit India!'-campaign should obviously prevent the anti-caste Hindus and all the Untouchables to prevail the congress and colonial power securing the caste society, a system the Mahatma never wanted to eradicate.

The so-called peaceful resistance and the draw of the Muslims against the Hindu would then have been used to this also.

35] Vakil, op. cit., p. 138 for

36] Vakil, op. cit., p. 138

37] Vakil, op. cit., p. 180

38] Times of India on July 24th, 1936, quoted by B. A. M. Paradkar, op. cit. In: Wilkinson, p. 56

39] A myth that is currently scattered too by the Pseudo-Secularists of the Congress Party and the left parties of India for tactical reasons: to gain more votes in the elections. Caste research proved the dependence on caste system too of of these religious communities for a long time. The disregard of these research results in the public discussion is used by the Savarnas of all religious communities to divide up the Dalits. Ambedkar himself knew the caste conditions of the Muslim community of India and described them en detail: "Take the caste system. Islam speaks of brotherhood. Everybody infers that Islam must be free from slavery and caste. ... But if slavery has gone, caste among Muslamans has remained. ... But facts for Bengal are enough to show that the Mahomedans observe not only caste but also untouchability." Ambedkar particularly took in amiss that there is no social reform movement among the Muslims that he finds with the Hindu. In opposite: "Indeed, they oppose any change in their existing practices" (Pakistan: Social stagnation. WS vol. 8, p. 230).

40] Ambedkar decisively rejected in his writing: Pakistan or the Partition of India, Bombay 1940, every possible unity between Hindustan and (that not yet existing but thought as a country of the Indian Muslims) Pakistan: "The unity between Pakistan and Hindustan is a myth," because a "unity" an only be based on a common religious culture: "If unity is to be of an abiding character, it must be founded on a sense of kinship, in the feeling of being kindred. In short, it must be spiritual." However, such a spiritual kinship doesn't exist between Hindu and Muslims. Spiritual relatives are Hindus and Buddhists as the next sentence is illustrating: "Indeed, there is more spiritual unity between Hindustan and Burma than there is between Pakistan and Hindustan" (WS vol. 8, p. 66). Buddhism and Hinduism, therefore, are akin to each other; but Islam (and also Christianity) do not appertain to this family, because Pakistan,

that means the Indian Muslim community, "which, to repeat, is politically detachable from, socially hostile and spiritually alien to, the rest of India." To this rest, however, also counts Ambedkar his Neo Buddhists and Untouchables. In such a way, this introduction of heterogeneity of the Indian Muslims has been radicalized by Ambedkar that he very hardly scolded the Hindu Mahasabha and Mahatma Gandhi because they did not want to accept the separation of Pakistan, rather assuming the possibility that the Muslims could live without any problems in the free India ruled by a majority of Hindus (cf., his article: Hindu alternative to Pakistan. WS vol. 8, p. 129 seq.). Ambedkar was one of the leading anti-Muslim ideologues and politicians who by cultural reasons stood up for the separation of India. In this regard the Hindutvavadis and Gandhi were overtaken by Ambedkar to the right. The extreme criticism of Ambedkar on the Hindu society never made him - and particularly here his absolute adherence to the dharma is very clear - to take into account to emigrate with his Untouchables to Pakistan; instead of this, he further let his caste associates in the Hindu caste society so wicked after him. Pakistan was "the obvious remedy" for the termination of the social stagnation of Muslims and of Hindus. Accordingly, he expected from the separation an improvement of the Hindu society he wanted to remain (and which he remained in) - for the benefit of the Untouchables!: "Unless there is unification of the Muslims who wish to separate from of the Hindus and unless there is liberation of each from the fear of domination by the other, there can be no doubt that this malaise of social stagnation want not be set right." (WS vol. 8, p. 248) Ambedkar having to decide between Muslim (and Christian) culture on one side and Hindu dharma on the other one choose the Hindu Culture. His historic decision for Hindustan and against Pakistan shows that Ambedkar knew very well that the liberation of the Dalits couldn't be realised in Muslim or Christian societies although propagating social equality but only within the Hindu society although he was criticising it all the time. The reason may be the historic experience that neither the Christian rulers nor the Muslim conquerors although in power never changed the fate of the Untouchables. The only chance of the Untouchables to get emancipation is within the Hindu society which can be changed by her own moral arguments (revival of the Buddhist compassion) and her own political power (reinforcement of democracy).

41] Vakil, op. cit., p. 177: "However, culturally as Ambedkar thought the Buddhism what not different from Hinduism. Therefore the Indian Culture absorbed other religions having their origin in India. The Indian culture removed the separate entities of Buddhism and Jainism." Then Vakil gives the striking argument that Ambedkar understood the Buddhists and other Indo-genous communities as Hindus: "Ambedkar must be in the know of this therefore in the Indian Constitution Buddhist, Jain and Sikh people are treated as Hindus."

42a] B. A. M. Paradkar, op. cit. In: Wilkinson, p. 57

42b] B. A. M. Paradkar, op. cit. In: Wilkinson, p. 57

43] Cf., Journal of Religious Culture [No. 05b](#)