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Book Review

THE UNMARRIAGEABLES: WHY THE NAME IS ESSENTIAL TO DENOTE THE SCHEDULED CASTES?

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What the Book is about? To dispel all the needless interpretations and confusions about the Caste and to compel all the Scholars, Academicians, Legislators, Politicians and even the Masses not to deviate themselves from the precise definition of Caste in the matters of Annihilation of Caste, Emancipation of Depressed Classes, Reservation etc. is what this Book aims to achieve. The concept of 'Unmarriageability' and the nomenclature of 'Unmarriageables' introduced in this Book is merely an extended reinterpretation of Dr. Ambedkar's finding in his Doctoral Thesis that Caste is nothing but the Mechanism of Endogamy. Hence, it became inevitable that the first chapter introduce the readers to the writings and speeches of Dr. Ambedkar for the better understanding about Caste and Untouchability- the premises based on which the entire Book is constructed. Proceeding from here, the rest of the chapters are in fact series of arguments built one over the other to expose the existence of stigma of Unmarriageability, its significance in sustaining Caste and the need to annihilate it in order to annihilate Caste. Whistle blowing the stigma of Unmarriageability is intended to dismantle the foundation of Caste system and also is a strategic spearhead to question the general conscience of this society and simultaneously safeguarding the principles of Social Justice, the aspects of which is dealt in the last two chapters.

Keywords: caste, untouchability, annihilation of caste, unmarriageability, dalits, scheduled castes.

When Purusha shukta mandala of Rig veda (tenth mandala) remained the general will of the Indian society, condition of the Depressed Classes, i.e the present day Scheduled Castes of India, were- unseeables, unapproachables, untouchables and unmarriageables. Bound to be Untouchables within the Hindu Social Organization, how are the Scheduled Castes being referred? Not by a standard term, to say. Dr. Ambedkar himself, in the preface of his book 'What congress and Gandhi have done to the Untouchables' has mentioned about the difficulty in resorting to a common name:

"The readers will find that I have used quite promiscuously in the course of this book a variety of nomenclature such as Depressed Classes, Scheduled Castes, Harijans and Servile classes to

designate the untouchables. I am aware that this is likely to cause confusion especially for those who are not familiar with conditions in India. Nothing could have pleased me better than to have used one uniform nomenclature. The fault is not altogether mine. All these names have been used officially and unofficially at one time or other for the untouchables. The term under the Government of India Act is 'Scheduled Castes'. But that came into use after 1935. Before that, they were called 'Harijans' by Mr Gandhi and 'Depressed Classes' by Government. In a flowing situation like that it is not possible to fix one name, which may be correct designation at one stage and incorrect at another. The reader will overcome all difficulties if he will remember that

these terms are synonyms and represent the same class"¹

In this paper, I put forward my argument towards the need to have a common name for the Depressed Classes and how the nature of such a name should be. I start with the latter i.e. how the nature of name referring to the downtrodden community should be, for that will eventually explain the necessity to have a common name for them.

What can a name's nature be of? In the first category, it can be simply for the purpose of denoting without carrying any meaning behind. Like a 'tree' simply means a tree, a name need not have any special meaning behind it. In the second category, a name can reveal some details about which it refers. The different names denoting the Untouchables can be taken to illustrate this:

Avarnas- those outside the fold of Varna System; Depressed Classes- the classes in our society that is under the depressed state; Suppressed community-; Untouchables- the degraded humans whom should not be touched, and so on.

Well, why these names are in negative connotation? Like depressed, suppressed, untouchables etc. The terms would have sounded nicer if it has been coined positive like how Mr. Gandhi referred the Depressed Classes- Harijans, Sons of God! But the names are not negative in its real sense. In fact, it is more positive than Mr. Gandhi's Harijan. Reason one, the terms express the truth- their deplorable condition. Reason two, to the Depressed Classes the terms have connoted the intended meaning, later on, only to achieve the contrary. What is positive has not been positive in actuality and what is negative has turned out to be positive instead. 'Harijan' pacified the Depressed Classes and had the effect of ripping off the feeling of indignation from them. Referring by that name acted like a candy given to a crying child just to stop her from crying. On the other hand, the name 'Untouchables' though was intended by the Caste Hindus derogatorily, the term had its part in uplifting the Untouchables as touchables. The Depressed Classes indeed perceived the term in a positive manner, though not at the very beginning itself. The term 'Untouchables' only kindled the thought why untouchability exists and made the way to go against it. The terms 'Depressed Classes', 'Suppressed Classes' for

sure made awareness among the Untouchables about their condition and created a sense of indignation. In fact, the term 'Dalit' which means 'broken men' has turned out to be the reminder of the identity of Depressed Classes, their pride and as an unifying term to exhibit their resistance against the caste system. That realization is the purpose in a name, I would say. And for a name to meet this purpose is very much a requisite in the context of a social problem. For to move towards a social change, conceiving the issues to be changed in the right way is a must, which in turn depends on the connotation of social terms used.

And when it comes to caste, the name just being a descriptive one has been not enough so far. For how efficient will it be in a nation that preserves the caste system like a precious and sacred heritage? For sure, the term 'Untouchables' has kindled the thought to go against untouchability, but the question is, has it kindled the people other than the Depressed Classes? For sure, the Caste Hindus will not bother about the annihilation of caste. They meant the term with disparagement. Their lives thrive on the superiority that they have within the caste system. When every Indian village practise untouchability even in its graveyards, what purpose have these terms achieved?

To handle the caste system better and deeper, the name being descriptive is just not enough. It should be comprehensive in bringing out the very root of caste system. It should strip the essence of caste. The term 'Dalit' is a revolting word and is aggressive by nature. But still, much more is expected from the term that antagonises the caste system. For this, the name's nature should be of its third kind- the kind that defines the very crux of what it denotes, the kind that compels the listener to conceive exactly the needed understanding of the term, deterring her from grasping its secondary details. Considering this should be the nature of a name in the context of caste, then, what are the terms that meet this criterion? Before moving to this, understanding what the caste is becomes necessary. For, without being aware of the right meaning of the caste, finding the right terms to reflect it will be an exercise of irrationality.

Though much has been said and written against caste, still the general conscience of this nation stays rotten in being favour of it. This fate could be attributed to, though only in partiality, to the voluminous speeches and writing made on caste without giving the foremost

emphasis on what caste is. We have talked a lot about caste without bothering to know even a bit about caste.

So, what is caste? Is it the dividing wall that isolates a downtrodden class from the rest? Or is it the Khap panchayats conducted in the Indian villages? Is it the festivals of each caste group celebrated for their Kula Theivams (mythical deities of each caste)? Or is it the graveyards debarred for specific castes? Is it the pride in having a caste surname? Or is it the pride of wearing a sacred thread? What is caste? None of the above and none like the above, to say. The expressions of caste system like the above should not be confused with what defines caste. To question further will make it clear. Why is there a dividing wall? What the Khap Panchayats are for? Why is there a custom in many caste groups to celebrate festival for their Kula Theivams? All these expressions of the caste system in a way or another are intended solely to regulate the kinship within a caste. There is no priority behind these expressions as the purpose is always same and specific- to strengthen the fencing that separates one caste from another. The dividing wall isolates the Untouchables from the rest. The Khap Panchayats ensures the isolation by checking the interaction among different castes. The festivals for Kula Theivams are to reiterate the solidarity within a caste. The graveyards humiliate the corpses of the excluded castes. It enforces the superiority of one caste and the inferiority of another. The surname, sacred thread etc exhibiting the caste prides assists in identifying men and women of same caste so that they can empathize their common caste feeling together. Thus, these expressions safeguard the system of castes. It is essential to understand here that these expressions only safeguard the system of caste and are not the reason to sustain caste. The question of what caste is and what sustains caste should not be considered as two different ones. They are one and the same. For what sustains caste explains what caste is about and of what it is made of.

Well, what sustains caste? Seeing the caste in a particular perspective will help to answer this. It is essential to understand that caste is nothing but restriction of kinship. Seen from this angle, the answer to what sustains caste is the answer to another significant question- what sustains kinship? Well, what other than marriage sustains kinship? It is the marriages that alone sustains kinship. The bloodline is nothing, but the follow-up of the regulation followed in the marriages. After all whom to marry and whom not to marry decide the bloodline. It can be quoted the other

way too. The bloodline decides whom to marry and whom not to marry. Either way, it is marriage that sustains kinship. And to consider specifically in the context of caste, it is the endogamous marriages.

So, if endogamy is what caste is, are the terms referring to the servile classes comprehensive enough to reflect the poignancy of caste's meaning. It should be said no. To start with, the term 'Untouchables' touches the issue of untouchability. But it does not extend itself beyond that. It does not touch caste. Untouchability is considered as a social evil. But it does not pinpoint the evil of caste. There are still many sociologists and academicians, who are accepted to be so, considering untouchability and caste as separate issues. The term 'Depressed Class' describes that a class is in the state of unhappiness. While 'Suppressed community' gives a hint that a community has been kept aloof from progressing, 'Servile class' suggests a detail that there is a particular class whose only duty is to serve the remaining classes. All these terms- Untouchables, Depressed Class, suppressed community, Servile Class etc. describe the state of the downtrodden community. While they describe their state, they do not state the reason for it. It should be kept in mind that description is always less in effectiveness than reasoning. While the reasoning also describes, the description need not reason every time. Reasoning is very much important in the context of terms denoting the downtrodden community. For, to know why they remain downtrodden is the most essential part than getting acquainted with mere adjective descriptions about them like depressed, suppressed etc. Proper reasoning about the state of downtrodden community means providing the correct definition of the downtrodden community in relation to the system of caste. And it is not possible to derive a correct definition without touching the poignancy of caste- its endogamous prescription.

Though caste consciousness is the reason for their state, the reason that anchors them in that state is unmarriageability. A little contemplation is enough to understand that unmarriageability is only a synonym of endogamy. So, what makes caste poignant? It is endogamy. Endogamy makes the caste poignant. Endogamy is the venom of caste system. Endogamy makes the caste a monster hard to be tackled against. Endogamy makes the caste system impossible to be altered. Caste exists because endogamy persists. Caste is defined by endogamy. Endogamy defines caste. So,

dealing caste is nothing but dealing the custom of endogamy.

So, what is endogamy? Marrying within one's own caste. As simple as that. But to reason the downtrodden state of the Depressed Class, considering endogamy within the limited realm of caste is inadequate. Rather it should be studied alongside the system of castes. Of course, caste means embracing endogamy. This, otherwise, also means hindering exogamy. Endogamy should be studied alongside its contrast- the possibility of exogamy among the castes. Ascending order of reverence and descending order of contempt that dictates the exogamous marriages under circumstantial bends should be considered. How these dictates ploy in the cases of Depressed Classes must be taken into account to know where they are positioned within the caste system.

To say that Depressed Classes remain as Unmarriageables within the Hindu society stands in the line of fact. The functionality of ascending order of reverence and descending order of contempt can be considered only when the option of marriageability prevails. When the stigma of unmarriageability exist, these two dictates becomes consequently dysfunctional. Though endogamy is the thumb rule of caste, in reality, castes do intermingle when the situation bends. But it must be noted that the Depressed Class does not form a part in this interaction. The Savarna-Avarna dichotomy explains this. Labelled as Unmarriageables, the caste system ensures that they are always kept aloof from the rest. It is this aloofness that ensures the unalterable stagnant fate of the Depressed Classes. Though caste consciousness is the reason for pitiable state that the Depressed Classes have been subjected to, it must be understood that it is the curse of unmarriageability that has sealed their destiny. It is this curse that has dustened their lives and is dustening their lives. The curse of unmarriageability has made them forever as untouchables, servile, downtrodden, depressed, suppressed and everything that they are.

The issue of unmarriageability is not ripe enough to be handled before weakening the prevalence of untouchability. It is impossible to expect from a Caste Hindu to accept a downtrodden as marriageable before she/he is convinced of the Untouchable as touchable. Unmarriageability would fade off only after untouchability. But it is very much essential to mind that untouchability became prominent only due to the belief of unmarriageability. A stronger evil created a strong

evil. Unmarriageability paved for untouchability. A poltergeist created a goblin. To ensure that an Unmarriageable does not become marriageable, she was stigmatized to be an Untouchable. Untouchability got derived from the premise unmarriageability. Thus, referring the Depressed Classes as 'Unmarriageables' reflect them better alongside the issue of caste than calling them as Untouchables. 'Unmarriageables' is the name belonging to third kind- the kind that defines the very crux of what it denotes, the kind that compels the listener to conceive exactly the needed understanding of the term, deterring her from grasping its secondary details. Caste is nothing but the issue of unmarriageability and therefore no other term except Unmarriageables reflects the caste and also the Depressed Classes better. Dragging unmarriageability brings forth the reason for their state straight away. It comprehensively defines them. The term contains the caste system. Unmarriageables is the term that rightly represents the Depressed Classes. It rightly exposes how the system of caste detained them.

Terms should not be mere terms with regard to caste system. Nor it should be so with regard to any social problem. They have a greater significance. They have a greater significance to impart some clarity about the issue. They should kindle thoughts about the issue. To the least they should reveal what the issue is. With regard to caste system, unmarriageability is the issue and unless the attention is drawn towards it, any effort to act against caste is not complete.

Dr. Ambedkar dealt the issue of name when he argued for the Depressed Classes to come out of the Hindu religion. Let me deal the same again just to deter in advance the unmindful objection that might arise in calling the Untouchables as Unmarriageables. The Doctor writes:

Will conversion raise the general social status of the Untouchables? It is difficult to see how there can be two opinions on this question. The oft-quoted answer given by Shakespeare to the question what is in a name hardly shows sufficient understanding of the problem of a name. A rose called by another name would smell as sweet would be true if names served no purpose and if people instead of depending upon names took the trouble of examining each case and formed their opinions and attitudes about it on the basis of

their examination. Unfortunately, names serve a very important purpose. They play a great part in social economy. Names are symbols. Each name represents association of certain ideas and notions about a certain object. It is a label. From the label people know what it is. It saves them the trouble of examining each case individually and determine for themselves whether the ideas and notions commonly associated with the object are true. People in society have to deal with so many objects that it would be impossible for them to examine each case. They must go by the name that is why all advertisers are keen in finding a good name. If the name is not attractive the article does not go down with the people.

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

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

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

not be a satisfactory answer. It will certainly not be accepted as a final answer. The inquiry is bound to be further pursued. The answer 'Hindu' is bound to be followed by another; 'What caste?'. The answer to that is bound to be followed by the question: "What subcaste?" It is only when the questioner reaches the ultimate social category which is either caste or sub-caste that he will stop his questionings.

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

From this discussion two things are clear. One is that the low status of the Untouchables is bound upon with a stinking name. Unless the name is changed there is no possibility of a rise in their social status. The other is that a change of name within Hinduism will not do. The Hindu will not fail to penetrate through such a name and make the Untouchable and confer himself as an Untouchable. The name matters and matters a great deal. For, the name can make a revolution in the status of the Untouchables. But the name must be the name of a community outside Hinduism and beyond its power of spoliation and degradation. Such name can be the property of the Untouchable only if they undergo religious conversion. A conversion by the change of name within Hinduism is a clandestine conversion which can be of no avail.²

So, when the name 'Untouchable' repels, forbids and stinks, is not the name 'Unmarriageable' even stinkier than that? Should not be construed so, hurriedly. Let me consider 'Untouchable' before dragging 'Unmarriageable'. The term 'Untouchable' indeed had better effects. This can be realized in Doctor's writing itself:

The social attitude of the Hindus towards the untouchables is determined by the very name 'Untouchable'. There is a fixed attitude towards 'Untouchables' which is determined by the stink which is imbedded in the name 'Untouchable'.³

True it is. But on whom the name has such an effect? The Caste Hindus! Can it be said a dignified name as a substitute would have a different influence on them? It cannot be said 'yes' either. Because 'Harijan' promoted by the Mahatma himself failed to do so. The name 'Untouchable' single handedly do not drive the Caste Hindu's attitude. Their heart and mind are in concurrence in the hatred they have on the Depressed Classes. The fulcrum of hatred stems from their attitude. This is not only being complemented but also compounded by the stink in the name 'Untouchable'. But, mind it, all this happens within the sphere of Caste Hindus. What the name 'Untouchables' did to the Untouchables?

There is a general attempt to call themselves by some name other than the 'Untouchables'. The Chamars call themselves Ravidas or Jatavas. The Doms call themselves Shilpakars. The Pariahs call themselves Adi-Dravidas, the Madigas call themselves Arundhatyas, the Mahars call themselves Chokhamela or Somavamshi and the Bhangis call themselves Balmikis. All of them if away from their localities would call themselves Christians.⁴

The Untouchables resorted to this kind of protective discolouration. But why they did so? It is because of the name. The name 'Untouchable' repelled them from Hindu society. So, to enjoin themselves stealthily, they had to hide their stigma of untouchability. As one's identity straight away is reflected in her name, the untouchables dignified their names. I would say this as reflexive thinking of mediocrity than considering it as a thoughtful realization. Because, it is only natural for the Suppressed Classes, in the initial hazy wake of their collective thinking, to try to escape from the stigmas that are imposed upon them. They just attempted to escape from being humiliated. They did not revolt against the humiliation. They tried to escape but not revolt. It happened so as their fear of standing against triumphed over the courage to reinstate their dignity. Though delayed, the Depressed Class did realize that their escape from untouchability is not possible unless and until the path of revolt is chosen.

The Untouchable who adopts the new name in a protective discolouration finds that the new name does not help and that in the course of relentless

questionings he is, so to say, run down to earth and made to disclose that he is an Untouchable. The concealment makes him the victim of greater anger than his original voluntary disclosure would have done.⁵

So, what did the name 'Untouchables', derogatorily termed by the Caste Hindus, did to the Untouchables? The name reminded their cursed state in untouchability. Their initial effort of protective discolouration, to conceal their identity, was because of this. Though the effort went futile, the name 'Untouchable' brought eventually a worthy realisation- it made the Untouchables conscious of being stigmatized and suppressed. I would call it an immense realization. And the immense significance it has. The struggle of Slaves against their Masters and Slavery, Serfs against their Lords and Feudalism, Blacks against the Whites and Apartheid, Proletariat against the Bourgeois and Capitalism, all were not the unavoidable events that the history of mankind had to fetch for itself as it furthered. The realization of the suppressed classes of being dehumanized by the Masters, enslaved by the Lords, discriminated by the Whites and exploited by the Bourgeois mended the history. The human mind and Human history cuddle each other. The history had always been of what the mind was conscious of. The realization had always been the seed for revolts and revolutions. So, the name 'Untouchables' though embarrassed the Depressed Classes in the beginning, it did its part in awakening their minds. Anti-untouchability movements would not have been possible without this clarity brought in the minds of Untouchables. The prime reason why these movements took off was the ever bent Untouchables learnt to stand against untouchability. And the stinking name 'Untouchable', when every time was spelt out, after a point of time, though delayed, reasoned to them, why their knees should not be bent anymore. The name had the crucifying effect. Though in the beginning, it killed the dignity of the Depressed Classes and devalued them, it prepared them to rise for their self-esteem. 'Untouchables' backfired on the Caste Hindus. They coined the name to corner the Depressed Classes forever. But the name instead united the Depressed Classes to crush the fallacious supremacy on which the Caste Hindus thrived. The term 'Untouchables' pulled down the Untouchables, kindled their thoughts, raised

and rised them against untouchability, over time. Stinking though, it didn't spread the odour till the end. Instead, the name kindled the urge for their equality with the rest.

But I do believe now that it is time to discard the usage of the reference 'Untouchable'. In fact, long before it should have been made defunct. The name has become a hurdle now. Decades before, the issue of unmarriageability should have been the main concern of the Depressed Classes. But here they are, shouting rhetorics still against untouchability. The symptoms need to be tackled. But should not diagnosing the disease and finding the cure for it be the main concern? The system of caste exposes itself in vibrant modes. One such is via untouchability. Unfortunately, the Depressed Classes remain succumbed to the peripheries of the caste system. The menace of untouchability never favoured them to surpass it and see through the issue of unmarriageability. The very breath of the caste system remains undisturbed- untalked, untouched, yet to be tackled. It is in this illiterate scenario, the name 'Unmarriageables' acquires its urgency to be familiarized. The Untouchables need to reckon, first and foremost, that they are the Unmarriageables of the Hindu Social Organization. And nothing can remind much better and more often about unmarriageability than the name 'unmarriageable'. I again remind on what Dr. Ambedkar stressed:

Names serve a very important purpose. They play a great part in the social economy. Names are symbols. Each name represents the association of certain ideas and notions about a certain object. It is a label. From the label, people know what it is.⁶

'Unmarriageable' symbolizes the cause through which the caste system sustains itself. The name represents the scheduled state of the Depressed Classes citing the genuine reason for it. It highlights the notional defilement imprinted on them. Being so, it becomes the precise label to catalyse them to take into their hands this very long neglected issue of unmarriageability. And mind it, to touch unmarriageability is to make a hole into the soul of the caste system itself.

To justify the reference 'Unmarriageables' for the Depressed Classes, I believe to have reason enough. But still, to convince the unconvinced minds, if any, I put my arguments further. Why should the Untouchables, apart from being demeaned, demean themselves with the

term, 'Unmarriageables'? That should be the question, I suppose, to be raised as an immediate objection. A name sounding dignified should not be so much a priority as to the name reminding the Depressed Classes about their long-lost dignity, I suggest. The concern should be more about revealing the crux of the caste system than the euphemism needed in a name. 'Unmarriageables' reasons their state. This alone suffices to justify the name's need. Secondly, to say that the name carries insult is altogether a wrong understanding. How absurd will it be, if the Blacks refuse to call themselves as Blacks and resort for another name just because the prejudiced human minds equate White as fair? The dark skin to them is as much as their flesh is to their blood. Against the prejudice and not the blackness, is what the Blacks stood. Unmarriageability is very clearly an issue of prejudice. The Hindu religion had made it inseparable from the Depressed Classes. Whether they change their name or not, whether it sounds respectful or not, theirs' unmarriageability prevails. There is no change in it. The Unmarriageables have to strive against the unmarriageability and not against their name. The stinking custom of unmarriageability insults them and not the name 'Unmarriageable' which illuminates them about it. Being an Unmarriageable only means being a victim of unmarriageability. It brings out the prejudice. It exposes the trick of the caste system. The name does not insult. Rather, it symbolizes the insults being met.

In the wake of annihilation of caste, the issue of unmarriageability has not been raised so far. The Depressed Classes know that they are the untouchables within the Hindu society and being so have inclined themselves to remove the blot. The nation has seen anti-untouchability movements. But they have not quite realized that they too are the Unmarriageables. They have not yet realized that to fight against their unmarriageability lies their ultimate struggle against the caste system. They are yet to get provoked for remaining as Unmarriageables. Why so is the delay? The reason begins with the references denoting them. The Caste Hindus called them as Untouchables and not as Unmarriageables. There existed this term, Untouchable. And not the term Unmarriageable. There is the reason for this too. Under the sway of the caste system, the acceptance of Caste Hindus towards physical association with the Depressed Classes itself was a mighty improbability. When the question of physical proximity with the Depressed Classes itself stood absurd, where is

the chance to think of them as marriageables? When it is too much for the Hindu society to accept the Depressed Classes even as touchable where the question of imagining them as marriageables are? Marriageability was too much an issue to be touched. That is why, unlike the term 'Untouchables', no similar term existed referring to the stigma of unmarriageability associated with the Depressed Classes. Also, the Depressed Classes themselves never went satisfactorily beyond the fight against untouchability. To be conscious of the fact that untouchability is just an extension of caste is very important. The existence of untouchability simply means that society is diagnosed with caste. Untouchability is just a symptom of caste. The Depressed Classes dealt only with the symptom and not against the disease. Caste is a disease called unmarriageability. They never put a blow on it.

The term 'Untouchables' had a counter effect. It strived to make the Depressed Classes as touchable. It instilled among them a consciousness to fight against untouchability. Like so, it is very essential to have the term 'Unmarriageables' for the Depressed Classes. The mere reference of the term 'Unmarriageables' will remind that unmarriageability exists. No one is conscious of this evil which sustains caste. The term will remind the evil's existence. The term will reason out why Khap panchayats exist and dishonour killings happen. The term will bring to light the curse of unmarriageability. And more importantly, the term will awaken the Depressed Classes to stand against unmarriageability, to cut the very root of the caste system.

There is a chance to nod that the call for the need of inter-caste marriage to abolish caste has dealt the issue of unmarriageability. A wrong nod this would be if nodded. It would be a greater mistake not to brief about how the two are different. I would like to handle this beforehand. Inter-caste marriage is the binding up of two castes together by marriage alliance. It could be any two castes. Its acceptance is either due to the fading of caste consciousness or because of the ascending order of reverence a caste has for another. While the former reasoning can be called progress, later is an attempt of the caste system to safeguard itself in the next best possible manner when its prescription of endogamy gets breached. Such an acceptance, I have explained earlier, is guided by a relaxed descending order of contempt. This being the case of inter-caste marriage, the issue of unmarriageability is altogether different. Though the

cure for unmarriageability also involves inter-caste marriage binding up the two different castes, it is not any random two castes. In its case, one caste is always from the Depressed Classes and the other coming from higher castes. The one stamped as Avarna and the other belonging to one of the four Varnas. The one who was stigmatized and the other who stigmatized. The one branded as Unmarriageables and the other being as marriageables. So, this kind of marriage in which one of the castes is from Depressed Classes can't take place unless the consciousness of caste fades away. The thrashing of unmarriageability is, therefore, a reform for sure while the occurrence of any inter-caste marriage should not be construed to be so always. An inter-caste marriage that abolishes unmarriageability creates a change against the existing. For, it converts the Unmarriageables into marriageables. But when the regular inter-caste marriages happening within the Hindu Society is considered, it has to be said that the Depressed Classes usually do not form a part in it. Their inclusion in an inter-caste marriage that is devoid of social ex-communication happens not that often. Even if they are involved, the new kinships that marriage usually establishes are denied to them. They are inducted as the 'not to be accepted' member into the family of their spouse. Though the marriage happens between two individuals of two different castes, the one belonging to the Depressed Class is denied the luxury of marriage by the family of others who belongs to a higher caste. Theirs is a distinguished inter-caste marriage. They are accommodated and adjusted with annoyance but not embraced and empathized. The treatment they receive as a daughter-in-law or son-in-law is pseudo and not real. Do mind that it is treatment and not bonding or kinship. They remain as individual instead of getting accepted as a member of the family. In the worst turn out, such an inter-caste marriage faces the blow of dishonour killings.

So, it is an illiterate understanding to consider that any inter-caste marriage is a blow to the caste system. Caste system itself is a hierarchical conflict of ascending order of reverence and descending order of contempt. Being so, it is not unusual when a lower caste's reverence over a higher caste defeats the higher caste's contempt towards the lower caste eventually leading to an inter-caste marriage between the two. But what is unusual is when the castes not belonging to Depressed Classes form an inter-caste marriage alliance with a caste categorized

within the Depressed Classes. For, it is coming together of those who are considered as marriageables with those excluded as Unmarriageables. A forbidden marriage happens here. A deviancy occurs. The Hindu Social Order receives a bolt of disobedience. Not just a shocking bolt it is but also a reforming bolt. To the Caste Hindus, who dehumanized the Depressed Classes, now to enter into marital relation with them defines what contradiction is. Unless the venom of caste oozes out from their minds completely, such an occurrence is utopian for sure. To not be the one they so far have been demands immense changes over. It demands a notional change. It demands the caste consciousness be ripped off completely. The Dharma of Manu needs to be forgotten entirely. The effort will topple the Hindu social organization. Such is the significance of inter-caste marriages with the Depressed Classes.

So, the inter-caste marriages in which only the four varnas interact should not be put on par with the inter-caste marriages between one of the four varnas and the avarnas i.e. the Depressed Classes. To do so is a grave misunderstanding about the caste system and inter-caste marriages. The former is just breaking up of the caste system's foremost rule i.e. endogamy while the latter is leaving out the stubbornly long held notional defilement concerning the Depressed Classes. While the former is just a circumstantial bend, the latter is a bend made to the caste system itself. While the former fractures the caste system, the latter annihilates it. While the former disrupts the caste system, the latter puts a death blow to it. Easier to theorise than to drive a change. So true it is in the context of the caste system. Is the Hindu Society receptive to the inter-caste marriages with the Depressed Classes? This pertinent question drags the Hindu psyche into consideration.

Such being the rotten psyche of the Hindus, can they be expected to intermingle with the Depressed Classes? When the Depressed Classes are considered unfit for human association, mockery it would be to expect from the caste Hindus to enter into a marital relationship with them. The notion of unmarriageability is deeply entrenched inside the minds of Caste Hindus. To handle it is to handle the caste system. And to handle the caste system is to shake the foundation of Hinduism itself. Any effort against any one of the three- unmarriageability, caste system or the Hindu religion, tampers all the three. The three stands together and if it has to fall, will fall together, for, each comprises only the other two. So, to raise the issue of unmarriageability equates to getting hold of both the caste system and the Hindu religion and strangulating them to the point of their death. It all begins with the change in reference. It will be absurd to ask anymore what there in a name is. For, everything lies in a name. It will be a greater realization if the Depressed Classes understand that they are the Unmarriageables in this society. And if realized, they have the potency to drive the noblest social change- the annihilation of caste.

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