

ISLAMIC IMPERIALISM, BRITISH IMPERIALISM

During the British regime, and during the time Christian Church was expanding its wings in India, the issue of untouchables assumed significant publicity and notoriety. Therefore, let us start from there.

The society had been under more than thousand years of imperialistic foreign rule, as after Islam came the Portuguese, French, Dutch and the British. They all fought over to for the sovereignty of India. British the most cunning of all emerged the victorious. Hindu society had already been weakened very substantially by inhumane barbaric presence of Islamic invaders and conquerors. Therefore it could not offer the necessary resistance. Islamic imperialism was already in its last leg and they were all fighting amongsts their own kiths and kins, a characteristic typical of muslim regime anywhere in the world in the past and even today. They first eliminate non-Muslims and then they fight amongst themselves. For British it offered very convenient ground.

India was once the land of riches, to find which Columbus and Vasco Da Gama set their sails. After British it became a land of poorest.

The mass poverty that was inducted during the British regime made the living conditions of the poor pathetic. Government's responsibility is to create an environment for better living conditions. British Government in India ensured that the exact opposite was done. The story of oppression is not the right place for discussion here. British were successful in creating a class of people who religiously continued British approach long after they left India. These are the children of McCauley who cunningly devised an education system that ensured in his own words: "Indians in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect"

Islam's long presence had already added another dimension. Multiple wives system and resulting number of many children led to population explosion. Growing in numbers was an Islamic motto. When population grows, beyond proportion to the shareable resources of the land, poverty ensues. It affects all, not only those having multiple wives. It indirectly affects all because the total shareable resources of the land are now shared by many more than before.

That poverty encourages unclean living habits. Hindu society was thus subjected to gradual and systematic erosion of resources and a section thereof was reduced to extreme poverty.

LIVING HABITS OF UNTOUCHABLES IN HINDU SOCIETY

Extreme poverty and unclean living habits generally go together. Living unclean had become part of their nature and habit. They worked as scavengers, drainage cleaners, dead body burners, and in such other occupations.

SHADOW OF UNTOUCHABLES

Other Hindus with cleaner living habits preferred avoid touching them or being physically close to them. *Shadow was the measure of proximity, easily expressed and understood, and that was the minimum physical distance they would want to maintain.*

Earlier days Easterners had never been good at, expressing a negative issue in positive manner, which they are gradually learning now from their western counterparts.

Looking in retrospect, they were rather foolish to have said: Avoid the shadow of the untouchable. One should not be so straight and blatant. It would have sounded better if they were to say in Western way: Remember, hygiene is very important. Keep a minimum physical distance that would be four feet!

EMBRACE THE UNTOUCHABLE

Look at a scavenger, or drainage cleaner on the street and embrace him. Would you do that gladly, and also as often as you see him? Or would you rather want him to first go and take a bath and then wear a clean tidy dress and then come to you for a hand shake only? People who lived dirty, other Hindus avoided touching them and maintaining a specific distance, easily expressed in terms of a shadow. Why would you now avoid embracing a scavenger?

LIVING CONDITIONS OF UNTOUCHABLES IN THE HINDU SOCIETY

They lived in a separate locality of the village. They were *not* slaves to any one. But, they were slaves to their poverty. They had a low standard of living. They were economically poor, rather extremely poor. Extreme poverty led to unhygienic and unclean living habits. So did the nature of their work and their lifestyle.

ROMANS AND THEIR SLAVES

Was the social and economic position of slaves, under Roman Empire, not qualitatively far more worse (including physical cruelty inflicted on them) than the untouchables in the Hindu society, where it was more of a question of avoiding physical contact due to the issue of hygiene, though not exactly expressed in those terms?

SOUTH AMERICAN WHITES AND THEIR BLACK SLAVES

Was the social and economic position of slaves, in the white Southern American society, not qualitatively worse than the untouchables in the Hindu society, where it was more of a question of avoiding physical contact due to the issue of hygiene, but not slavery?

NORTH AMERICAN WHITES AND NEGROES IN THEIR SOCIETY

Was the socioeconomic position of Negroes, in the white North American society, qualitatively any better than the untouchables in the Hindu society?

ISLAM AND SLAVES

Was the socioeconomic position of slaves, in the Islamic society, qualitatively any better than the untouchables in the Hindu society?

EGYPTIANS AND PYRAMIDS

How were the pyramids built? Whose labor went into building them? What was their status in the Egyptian society? What were their living conditions? Was their socioeconomic position qualitatively any better than those untouchables in the Hindu society?

BRITISH RAAJ AND INDIANS COOLIES

What was the status of Indians in the British Raaj? What pride did the English derive by calling the Indians as coolies? How they treated the Indians during their

Raaj? How they crushed them under their boots? They were not discriminating a section of the society, but the whole society, the entire nation of people. This was about social inequity.

What about economic inequity? Handfuls of British were gloating at the cost of rest of numerous Indians. Were Indians originally poor or, were they later unjustly robbed off their wealth? If India were not a land of wealth, why would Columbus and Vasco da Gama sail in search of the land of extraordinary riches? British took two centuries to make that a land of the poorest!

Was the poverty of untouchables in Hindu society greater than the poverty of the entire Indian nation in the British regime?

BRITISH EDUCATED INDIAN INTELLECTUALS IN BRITISH RAAJ

Intellectuals of any nation have the responsibility of showing the proper path to the rest of the society. For that reason they have been endowed with their intellect. Did the Indian intellectuals serve their role well? Or, did they allow themselves being subjected to the mental slavery of the British?

Did they try to understand the system of division of the society based on individual qualities and nature of work performed by people in the society? Did they try to re-educate the society if it had fallen over the passage of time? Did they fail to recognize the fundamental truth that everything deteriorates with time, and so does the society?

Did they fail to recognize the fact that the Islamic imperialism, which was followed by the British imperialism, also had something significant to do with this deterioration? Did they have any idea as to what thousand years of foreign rule and cultural subrogation could do to destroy the social structure of a nation?

Did they reckon their responsibility to set it right? Did they work hard enough to restore the system in its original logical shape? Or, did they resort to escapism? Did they find the easy way out to dissociate themselves with their inherent responsibility? Did they find it easier to condemn the system as it is, and withdraw all their social responsibility to rectify the error?

THE REAL ISSUE BEHIND THE CONDEMNATION – THE MOTIVE

Christianity had a motive. It had to spread its wings. The easiest prey were those who were less privileged in the Hindu society. Condemnation was the modus operandi. Condemning Hinduism on all possible counts, where the weaknesses could be found, was an effective tool.

PROPAGANDA AND THE ISSUE OF DISCRIMINATION – THE GAME

Christian Church told under privileged Hindus that you are underprivileged, join us and there will be no discrimination. However, they conveniently avoided telling them that all Indians are discriminated under British Raaj as coolies. Church also found it in their interest to avoid telling them that all Hindus are discriminated under Christian regime as infidels, in any case. They made it a point to say that all infidels would not be eligible for salvation. They did not hesitate conveying to the human race that only Christians were worthy of salvation. In other words, they did tell the humanity that God discriminated human race based on their religion.

OPPRESSION OF THE HUMANKIND

What social equity, justice, humanitarian treatment, right to live on their own, economic parity, were offered by British Raaj to Indians, by Romans to their slaves, by South American Whites to their black slaves, by North American Whites to their Negro inhabitants, by followers of Islam to their slaves and to the followers of other religions, and by Christian Church to the followers of Hinduism? And now, they champion themselves speaking of social justice and equity!

OUR IMAGES AND IMPRESSIONS

Our images about others are often faulty. For, they are often based on what we are told through books or what we are shown through commercial media that often thrives on sensationalism, or has other vested interests including missionary ambitions.

Negative impressions about others are easily formed. We see American films full of sex in its barest form and violence in its crudest form. We read so much about Italian Mafia or see them in movies. We read or hear about genocide by Christians and Muslims in earlier centuries in the name of Crusade or Jihad and of Christian oppressions on native red Americans. We have not yet started taking sufficient interest in unpublicized Christian Church's ignoble activities in British India, whose documentation is now gradually becoming available.

So, do we say that Americans are sex-maniacs and gun-crazy? Do we say that Italians are gangsters? Do we say that Christians are mass murderers? Answer is an emphatic No, yet it is easy to jump to such conclusions.