



CHATURVARNYA SYSTEM

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The origin of the *Chaturvarnya* is traced back to the *Purushsukta*. The *Purushsukta* made the *Chaturvarnya* a 'sacred institution', 'a divine ordination'.⁰¹ This *Purushsukta* is in the ninetieth Hymn of the Tenth Mandal of the *Rigveda*.²

Verses 11 and 12 of the *Purushsukta* says as follows:

"Verses 11. When (the gods) divided Purusha into how many parts did they cut him up? What was his month? What arms (had he)? What (two objects) are said (to have been) his thighs and feet?"

"Verses 12. The Brahmana was his month, the Rajana was made his arms; the being called the Vaishya, he was his thighs; the Shudra sprang from his feet."³

Chaturvarnya System forced the Hindus into the sharp division of four *Varnas* (classes) . These four *Varnas* were as follows :

- "1) The Brahmin or the priestly class
- 2) The Kshatriya or the warrior class
- 3) The Vaishya or the trader class
- 4) The Shudra or the menial class."⁴



In this hierarchical system the *Brahmins* enjoyed the highest position with status, privileges, superiority over other three *Varnas*. Those belonging to this *Varna* System, '*Savarnas*'. Brahmin, *Kshatriyas*, *Vaishya* were '*Savarnas*' but hierarchically graded one above another.

Chaturvarnya system was generated by *Rigveda*. It was based on the graded discrimination. Since the *vedas* considered to be *apourusheya* , therefore the divine status was granted to the *chaturvarnya* system. It was said that due to the past birth sin person from the lower *varna* was born on lower *Varna*. Various restrictions were imposed on *Shudras* who were in fourth *varna* . *Ati Shudras* were not part of *Varna* system . They will given in human treatment by the upper *varna*.

Various cast were generated from *chaturvarnya*. Caste determined as per the birth of the person. Person who was born into that particular cast could not change the cars as there was no social mobility in the caste system lower caste people had to suffer ignomise due to caste system. Inter caste marriage was not possible with lower caste. upper caste were not inter dining with untouchables. Untouchables for socially boycotted and there shadow was considered to be way of pollution. Even untouchables were not allowed to enter inside the village during day time. Civil rights were denied to untouchables. They were forced to do menial work in society .The duty of *shudra* was to serve upper

three *varnas*. Education was denied to lower castes. Only upper castes could take education. Religion was the monopoly of upper castes. Untouchables were not allowed to enter inside the temples. Nana Saheb Peshwa has jotted down rules regarding rules and regulations of Trambakeshwar temple. He new borders that the untouchables does not be allowed to enter inside the temple such was the hatred for the untouchables in the minds of peshwas. It was considered that study of Vedas was the school right of the uppercase only and the Sudra *atishudras* were not allowed to study the religious text in India. Religious hegemony of the brahmins was maintained for thousands of years in India . Untouchables were not allowed to fetch water from water sources. Even barbers were not cutting the hairs of untouchables. Untouchables had no right to property. They were not allowed to wear new dresses and ornaments. Various punishments for imposed on the untouchables if they break or oppose the social norms which existed in the contemporary period. Untouchability system is social political educational cultural and religious victimization of the untouchables in true sense.

Chaturvarnya system was generated after the invasion of Aryans in India .Various caste and subcastes were outcome of *Chaturvarnya* system. *Sprushya* and *Asprushya* are two different categories which are developed due to *Chaturvarnya*. *Chaturvarnya* system is based on inequality. It has got religious sanction so it became rigid in society. Even the various rulers did not opposed or changed *chaturvarnya* system in ancient and medieval period since it was having religious sanction. For thousands of years *Shudra* and *Atishudras* had to suffer religious atrocities in India .

This *Chaturvarnya* System was based on birth. Once born in a *Varna* a person would remain in the same *Varna* till his death, no matter how superior or inferior he was or what worth and aptitude he had. This exhibits the immobility of the people from one *Varna* to the other.

Dr. Ambedkar analysed the *Purushsukta* as follows:-

- “(d) *The Purushsukta made the division of society into four classes as a matter of dogma; and*
 (e) *The Purushsukta had an official gradation of society laid down, fixed and permanent with an ascending scale of reverence and descending scale of contempt.*”⁴

Thus, the Brahminic law-givers fabricated the religious books and sanctified the ideal of *Chaturvarnya*.

Dr. Ambedkar has summarised the *Chaturvarnya* society as follows:

- “(b) *There cannot be social equality among these four classes. They must be bound together by the rule of graded inequality.*
 (d) *The right of education is given to the Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas. The Shudras and women have no right to education.*”⁰⁵

Thus, the *Chaturvarnya* was an unnatural social system, a fabricated sacred institution and a divine ordination deliberately created by the *Brahmins* to serve their own purpose.

Chaturvarnya was undemocratic because it denied the very principles of democracy i.e. liberty, equality, fraternity and social justice.

END NOTES -

1. Parkash, Prem., *Ambedkar, Politics of Scheduled Castes*, Ashish Publishing House, New Delhi, 2002, P. 11
2. Moon, Vasant, (Ed.), *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Writing and Speeches, Vol.-7*, Education Department, Govt. of Maharashtra, 1990, p.22
3. Ibid., p.22.
4. Ibid., p.23
5. Ibid., p.09