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## UNIT 3 IMPACT OF WORLD RELIGIONS ON DALITS

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### 3.0 OBJECTIVES

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This unit explores into characteristics of Dalit religion in contrast to other religions. The focus is on the impact and influence of all non-Dalit religions on the life of the Dalits.

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### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

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'Religion' which is known as '*dharma*' in Indian context is an important concept rooted in human mind. It plays an important role in the life and growth of people. It has been one of the tools people have used as an agent of either bondage or liberation. Religion influences the cultural life of societies like its thoughts and actions, philosophy, myths, literature, other arts, rituals, festival and ceremonials. That means, if one inspects the cultural elements of anybody's personality, one would find various elements created by religion.

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### 3.2 DALITS AND RELIGION

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India has been the cradle of religions for millennia. Many religions saw Indian soil fertile and flourished here. Some like Hinduism, Christianity and Islam came from outside and others like Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism were born here. These are some of the world religions that are professed by the people of India. We shall discuss some of these world religions and how they have played a role in the life of the Dalits as a means to protest and also vehicle of social mobility. Religion works to establish peace, harmony and fraternity and make everybody as equal. But in actual situation, religion has been the source of tension, animosity, riot and war, bloodshed and loss of lives. Indian history is rampant with facts of

violence and figures of deaths in the name of religion. So, religion has never been a neutral concept among its followers. It has affected Dalits more than anybody else as they share the lowest place even in the religious arena. This only played a crucial role in changing religious affiliation whenever there was a new religious movement introduced to the Dalits.

In India caste has been interwoven with religion which permeates in all aspects. Caste interpolates as cultural expression of Indian system with religious backing. Thus caste and religion are not just practices. They are two main pillars of Indian society which determine the social structure, status, hierarchy and functional roles of people. Historically, religion performed two functions. On the one hand it was used as an agency of social control and mechanism for social exclusion, and on the other, it brought social mobility. A careful study of India's social structure helps us understand the religious organization of Dalits. It can be described as 'a wheel within a wheel' where each caste is linked with social, religious and other responsibilities.

Dalits are by nature very religious and God fearing people but at the same time see religion as the embodiment of their social and cultural identity. Their sense of religious sentiment and pride go hand in hand as they believe that their religious inclination brings them self-dignity and self-respect. Historically they have often denounced religions which preach inequality and practice hierarchy like Hinduism. Before we embark upon the Dalit movement to other religions, we need to look into the salient elements of Dalit religion so as to know why they moved from one religion to another.

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### 3.3 FEATURES OF DALIT RELIGION

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It is quite clear from the existing surveys, research studies and writings that the Dalit religious tradition as a belief system is very different from that of mainstream Hinduism. Religious exclusion and marginal space within Hinduism pushed most of the Dalits to explore alternative religious identities. The untouchables were always in search of new religions at various historical junctures. Dalits look at religion as the extension of their identity, social dignity and self-respect.

#### **Nature as the embodiment of God's revelation**

Dalit religion discerns the divine in natural objects and the presence of supernatural in natural forces. Western writers, whose twin mission was to subjugate other cultures and to mutilate the Nature, had called this world-view as 'animism'. For dalits, beneath every object, whether a growing tree or a static stone, there is life supernatural. As symbol of this kinship of nature and the supernatural innate they have deified objects like stones and trees. In every hut or outside every dalit hamlet a stone or a tree had been dedicated as representation of the Deity. The worship of nature resulted itself in the preservation of the nature. Thus the dalit religion is eco-friendly.

#### **Thin space between the Divine and the Human**

God takes the closest place of the human as God(dess) also undergoes the passion and emotion of the human beings. The symbolism involved with food, thread and stick suggests they believed in God(dess) who can be hungry and thirsty, God(dess) who is industrious and God(dess) who is vulnerable. Another dimension of human quality they attributed to god is as god's blessings to every natural resources and abundance and god's wrath to every human and natural calamities. Often offerings were made to propitiate the Deity who withholds the

rain. Even construction of canals and dams were shown as divine means to water the lands and provide livelihood to dalits during the famine.

### **Gender equality as the core of Dalit Religion**

The rituals and ceremonies of the dalits mirror the space that women occupied in the society. Dalits had recognized the feminine dimension of the Deity and it is evident in the fact that in most cases Deity manifested Her (Him) self in the form of feminine. They worshipped Goddesses like Mariamma, Yellamma, Kaliamma, Morasamma and Matangi, Somalamma and Moosamma. There were also Gods in the dalit pantheon but they only played a secondary role. This clearly shows that Dalit society was basically matriarchal which gradually was converted to patriarchal at the invasion of the Aryans.

### **Protest is an intrinsic element of Dalit Religion**

To a dalit, protest is lifestyle. There were several ceremonies that reflect the element of protest and some of them were incorporated into the Hindu culture. It had also been a custom among dalits to clean their streets with water mixed with turmeric whenever a Brahmin happens to pass by their hamlet. Though it was rare having a Brahmin pass through their hamlet, it was customary to purify the street from his polluting footsteps. It was a form of protest against Brahmins who did the same when dalits walked in the village.

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## **3.4 DALITS AND RELIGIONS COMING FROM OUTSIDE**

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There are two religious streams in India which have their strong following. They are basically theistic and atheistic. Theistic religions are those which accept the authority of the Vedas (Vedic Brahmanism and Hinduism) and atheistic which do not accept the authority of the Vedas. But here, we would like to bring in two other streams: those religions which came here from outside and those religions which originated in Indian soil. We make this as the line of difference for this chapter.

**Religions That Came From Outside:** All those religions which came from outside the Indian sub-continent are usually known as foreign religions. They are, Vedic Brahmanism, Christianity, and Islam. Since they were not originally from the Indian soil, they had to adapt to Indian culture, customs and basic social relationships. They did it either by accommodation or by co-option.

### **Vedic Religion- Brahmanism**

According to Indian social scientists like Kappen, it was Vedic religion, which provoked the first crisis of culture and religion in India. By Vedic religion he means the stage or religious consciousness represented by the Samhitas, the Brahmanas and the Upanishads, spanning a period of over 1500 years ending with the rise of Buddhism. During the Vedic period, the aborigines were denied the right to education and even the right to live. The caste system placed Dalit people at the bottom of the society with least wealth or power. They were the most oppressed and exploited lot, condemned to labor for freely or with a very little remuneration.

Fa Hien, a Chinese Buddhist pilgrim who recorded his visit to India in the early 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE., noted that Chandalas were segregated from the mainstream society as untouchables. Traditionally, they were considered to be beyond the

pale of *varna* or caste system. They were originally considered as Panchama or the fifth group beyond the fourfold division of Indian people. They were not allowed to let their shadows fall upon a non-Dalit caste member and they were required to sweep the ground where they walked to remove the ‘contamination’ of their footfalls. These are but a few to enumerate to show that they were subjected to innumerable hardships and obstacles to realize their human dignity. Both Vedic ritualism and the teaching of the supremacy of Brahman were bound to be called in question by the common people. The popular discontent found expression in dissident sects like Jainism (540-468 BC) and Buddhism (563-483 BC). There is no doubt that both Jainism and Buddhism were the first attack on the Brahminic religion and caste system.

In the second century B.C.E., the Brahmin Commander Pushyamitra Shunga had assassinated the last Maurya King Bahidhratha, and usurped the throne. After capturing political power, the people in Brahmin *varna*, created a tremendous havoc in the cultural life of India. On one hand, the system of Chaturvarna with Brahminic supremacy, and on the other, male dominated gender discrimination against women, were strengthened during this time. The Brahmins of Bhrigu race were on fore front in this. Manu-*smriti* which strictly implements above mentioned double social system was created by Brahmins of this Bhrigu *vamsha* during this period.

### Reasons of denying Brahmanism

1. This religion is not created by us. It has not voluntarily sprung up from amongst us. We have not accepted it ourselves of our free will. It has been thrust upon us from outside.
2. We have no authority to frame its rules or to change them as need arises. We have no freedom to analyze it.
3. It does not think of our welfare or wellbeing. But it is tyrannical to us. It erodes away the feeling of humanity from within us.
4. It compels us to commemorate the moments of our defeats as our festivals and celebrations.
5. It impresses on our minds the “*sanskaras*” of self-indignity such that we should denounce our own forefathers and worship the immoral forefathers of Brahmins.
6. It distorts the History.
7. It does not believe that all people in our own religion are equal as human beings.
8. It deprives us from all proper opportunities of development.
9. It has tortured all those who have tried for our cultural freedom. And this tendency has not changed even now.
10. In this religion, there are no ‘*sanskaras*’ to give proper respect to women.

### Islam

Islam is a religion of egalitarianism and brotherhood. After the defeat of Buddhism, it maintained these values in India for centuries. Not only did those who became Muslims benefit by escaping from caste restrictions, but Muslim rule also provided a social and political context for the growth of Bhakti movements. Within these, to a greater or less degree, Dalits and low castes sought a religious equality and expressed a devotionism which heralded a supreme deity not very different from Allah.

Dalits were caught in this process. They were defined, by the elite, as “Hindus” – though they had few rights within orthodox Hinduism, and were not allowed even into the temples of the Bhakti cults. Almost all elite nationalists, including Gandhi, argued that Dalits should not identify with an “alien” religion but instead seek to reform “their own” religion. Yet it was only by a strange, imposed definition that Dalits could be said to be part of the Vedic- identified Hinduism which had never given them religious or social rights.

During much of the colonial period also, Muslims and Dalits were allies. They had in common a fear – often hatred – of the dominant Brahmanism. As Ambedkar pointed out in his book *Thoughts on Pakistan*, between 1920 and 1937 it was Muslims, Dalits and Non-Brahmans who had worked the reforms, holding office in provincial assemblies and working in alliance on issues involving constructing the nation – on programmes which included opening up water tanks, roads, schools to Untouchables. In areas such as Bengal, a strong political alliance was formed between the *Namasudra* (Dalit) movement and the Muslims, which gained strength because both were predominantly tenants fighting anti-landlord struggles. Dalits also embraced Islam attracted by its teaching of equality, compassion and justice as its hallmarks. But the reality was different as it was also influenced by the caste system. Thus Muslim society in India can also be separated into several caste-like groups. In contradiction to the teachings of Islam, descendants of indigenous lower-caste converts are discriminated against by “noble”, or “ashraf”, Muslims who can trace their descent to Arabian, Iranian or Central Asian ancestors. There are several groups in India working to emancipate them from upper-caste Muslim discrimination.

### Christianity

Though Christianity originated in Asia, it is widely known and accepted as European religion and anybody following Christianity in India is termed as ‘foreigner’. It is because Christianity brought a European face in terms of culture and civilization based on science. While Christian teachings like equality, brotherhood and compassion, social justice, etc. attracted Dalits more than any other religion, the dominant caste people were attracted by its educational facility, institutional capacity and other benefits. Christianity when introduced in India faced the same fate of allowing caste practice as part of Indian culture. The church placed more importance in the number of conversion and external liturgical practices like Sunday ceremony, ministering to sacraments than its social and ethical relation and impact upon its adherents. As a result, it allowed the caste practice creep into Christianity which has replicated Hindu social order among Christians.

Today there is no difference between a Christian whose religion does not believe in caste and a Hindu who believes and practices openly caste system. Both of them have the same mindset regarding the social hierarchy. Hence one can easily observe today that while most of the dominant caste and Shudra caste Christians clamour for power, prestige and wealth of and from the churches it is only Dalits who fight for the core teachings of the Gospel like equal treatment, sense of brotherhood and social justice. The recent tension in the churches in India is nothing but an assertion from the Christians of Dalit origin for equal treatment in the church and equal distribution of its wealth.

A 1992 study of Catholics in Tamilnadu found some Dalit Christians faced segregated churches, cemeteries, services and even processions. Despite Christian teachings these Dalits also faced economic and social hardships due to discrimination by dominant caste priests and nuns. Overwhelmingly, the mistreatment comes from the Hindu society - in the village, working place, from the landlord, at the village school, the village well, and the village shop. About 85% of Dalit Christians continue to live in the same segregated place, the same “*CHERI*” or COLONY or SLUM, even two or three generations after becoming Christians. A Dalit is not given the luxury of a new environment. A Dalit works in the same village, for the same wages, for the same masters, enduring the same tyranny and abuse, beatings and killings. His wife and daughter face the same molestation, rape and burning of huts and killing of children. Except for the records in the



revenue offices which grossly violated of her/his Constitutional rights to enjoy the benefits of reservation, he or she remains a Dalit in every sense of the word - ethnically, linearly, racially, socially, economically, culturally, vocationally, geographically, relationally, contextually and emotionally. The slaughter, rape or burnings of Veerambal (1955), Chundur (1993), Neerukonda Saukarankularn (G.O.1 402, July 76) Villupuram (11 Dec. 1980), Karamchedu (March 88), Kodianguam (Oct. 95) and hundreds of other Dalit villages where almost all victims were Christian Dalits is irrefutable evidence to the fact of atrocity.

### 3.5 DALITS AND RELIGIONS ORIGINATED IN INDIA

There are religions which sprang up from Indian soil. One may call them indigenous religions. But there is specific context for the emergence of these indigenous religions. If one looks at the socio-political and cultural history of the emergence of religions in India, one will observe that they were all revolt religions except Hinduism. While other religions criticized the practice of caste system and untouchability propagated by Vedic Brahminism, it somehow assimilated most of the indigenous practices including their gods and goddess, but retained the hierarchical social structure based on caste system and rechristened it as Hinduism.

#### Jainism

Jainism prescribes a path of non-violence towards all living beings. Its philosophy and religious practice emphasize the necessity of self-effort to move the soul towards divine consciousness and liberation. Any soul that has conquered its own inner enemies and achieved the state of Supreme Being is called *Jina*, Victor or Conqueror. Jainism is also referred to as *Shraman* (self-reliant) Dharma or the religion of *Nirgantha* (who does not have attachments and aversions) by ancient texts. Jainism, which its followers consider to have always existed, is believed by historians to have arisen between the ninth and the sixth centuries BCE. Some have speculated that Jainism may have its roots in much earlier times, reflecting native spirituality from before the Indo-Aryan migration to India. In the modern world, it is a small but influential religious minority with as many as 4.2 million followers in India. and successful growing immigrant communities some Western countries.

Though it is one of the ancient religions of India, it has not been affected by the caste system for two reasons: its followers are very small, almost negligible in number when compared with other religions; and second, it is like Buddhism, a revolt religion against Vedic Brahmanism. It totally denounces caste system and the practice of untouchability. And today, it has very influential minorities and does not have any of its members as untouchables. However it is not very influential as a religious sect as Buddhism was and that is why it did not attract many people as its teachings were much more rigorous and prescriptive. Hence it is understandable that today's Dalits were not part of Jainism both for ideological and practical reasons.

#### Buddhism

Buddhism began in the 5th and 4th centuries BC, and it carried India through more than 1000 years of prosperity, and then gradually declined. Then in the 13th century, an Islamic government came to be in India, and Buddhism disappeared from most of the Indian Subcontinent, with pockets of Buddhist people living in the Himalayan mountainous and other regions. The earliest known historical

people to have rejected the caste system were Buddha and Mahavira. Their teachings eventually became to be known as Buddhism and Jainism which their followers converted into religions. Though they are today known as different religions, they were in fact against religion and denounced the existence of God and the belief in caste system. During the English Colonial Rule, even though it was a short moment in the history of India, there was a small resurgence of Buddhism in India. In the 1890's, for example, Dammapara of Sri Lanka founded the Mahabodhi Society, and Iyothee Thass founded the Buddhist Society of South India, as well as other related Buddhist activities in Bengal and other places in India. The effects of these activities remained localized and never spread widely. In states like Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and few other regions, Dalits have come under the influence neo-buddhist movement initiated by Iyothee Thass and later promoted by Ambedkar.

In the 1950s, Ambedkar turned his attention to Buddhism and travelled to Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) to attend a convention of Buddhist scholars and monks. While dedicating a new Buddhist vihara near Pune, Ambedkar announced that he was writing a book on Buddhism, and that as soon as it was finished, he planned to make a formal conversion to Buddhism. In 1955, he founded the Bharatiya Bauddha Mahasabha, or the Buddhist Society of India. He completed his final work, "The Buddha and His Dhamma", in 1956. It was published posthumously. After meetings with the Sri Lankan Buddhist monk Hammalawa Saddhatissa, Ambedkar organized a formal public ceremony for himself and his supporters in Nagpur on October 14, 1956. Accepting the Three Refuges and Five Precepts from a Buddhist monk in the traditional manner, Ambedkar completed his own conversion. He then proceeded to convert an estimated 500,000 of his supporters who were gathered around him. Taking the 22 Vows, Ambedkar and his supporters explicitly condemned and rejected Hinduism and Hindu philosophy. According to Ambedkar Buddhism could be a universal religion because in the Buddha Sangha all are equal and there is no provision of different castes in Buddhism.

### **Hinduism**

Hinduism is the offshoot of Vedic Brahmanism as it was becoming more and more untenable to the people of India and also it faced more and more criticism and opposition due to the domination of Brahmins and total subordination of the indigenous people like the Shudras and the Dalits of today. It was around this time that Lord Buddha initiated a radical critique of the contemporary religion and society. He was forthright in repudiating the caste system and the notion of purity associated with it. When Vedic Brahmanism realized that it could no longer survive in its present form it took a lot of indigenous customs and practices and rechristened into Hinduism. From out of the struggles between the Vedic religion and heterodox movements like Jainism and Buddhism was born what is today called Hinduism which reached its golden time during the Gupta period (300 – 700 AD). There are many factors responsible for it: Brahmanism succeeded in integrating within itself popular religions. Popular deities were absorbed into the Vedic pantheon through a process of identification or subordination. The Bhakti movements within Hinduism are the earliest known reformation during the medieval period. They encouraged the active participation and inclusion of Dalits. It became a socio-religious expression of the revolt of the masses originated in Tamilnadu but soon spread to Karnataka and Maharashtra, and eventually swept through the whole north India. It is undeniable that the Bhaktas represented the aspirations of the downtrodden masses as against the interest of the twice born. Saints of the bhakti Movement came from all castes, and the movement had a large support.

Unfortunately it could not maintain its initial thrust and was domesticated by Hindu orthodoxy. As Dumont observes, “a sect cannot survive in Indian soil if it denies caste”.

### **Sikhism**

Although Sikhism clearly admonishes the idea of caste system, going to the lengths of providing common surnames to abolish caste identities, many families, especially the ones with immediate cultural ties to India, generally do not marry among different castes. Dalits form a class among Sikhs who stratify their society according to traditional casteism. Kanshi Ram himself was of Sikh background although converted because he found that Sikh society did not respect Dalits and so became a neo-Buddhist. The most recent controversy was at the Talhan village Gurudwara near Jalandhar where there was a dispute between Jat Sikhs and Ravidasa Sikhs. The different Sikh Dalits are Ravidasa Sikhs and Mazhabi Sikhs. There are sects such as the Adi-Dharmis who have now abandoned Sikh Temples and the 5 Ks. They are like the Ravidasis and regard Ravidas as their guru. They are also clean shaven as opposed to the mainstream Sikhs. Other Sikh groups include Jhiwars, Bazigars, Rai Sikh (many of whom are Ravidasis.) Just as with Hindu Dalits, there has been violence against Sikh Dalits.

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## **3.6 DALIT CRITIQUE ON WORLD RELIGIONS**

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Dr Ambedkar, perhaps the most important leader next only to Buddha who lived in the fifth century BCE and the founder of Buddhism, an anti-caste movement and the philosophy of egalitarianism, was the *bête noir* of Hinduism because of its serious damage on the life of the Dalits; but he was very much in favor of religion. According to him religion is essential to society. He considers the foundations of religion as essential to life and the practices of society. It is a part of one's inheritance. He claims that what good thing he has in him or whatever have been the benefits in his education to society he owes to the religious feelings in him. At this he says, “I want religion, but I do not want hypocrisy in the name of religion.”

According to Ambedkar material comfort was by no means the solution of all human ills. Religion to him is the driving force for human activities. The man has a mind which needs food for thought and religion instills hope in man and drives him to activity. He was growing skeptical about the way Hinduism was practiced and the impact upon the society, especially the evil effects caste system and the practice of untouchability. Hence he started moving away from Hinduism much before he officially embraced Buddhism. Meanwhile, Dr Babasaheb had many options to choose while he was contemplating the renouncing of Hindu religion after he announced his firm decision in 1935. Very early in life, Dr Babasaheb had realized that if he has to bring his people to path of progress and up-lift their socio-economical status, the first and the most important step would be to come out of the shackles of Hindu religion.

Dr Ambedkar, after reading world philosophies and religions believed that neither bourgeois nationalism nor republicanism nor traditional Marxism provided any satisfactory solution to the problem of caste. Religion is not the appellation for such an unjust order. Religion must be judged by social standards, based on social ethics. He linked religion with the social well being of the people. To him, religion, social status and property are all sources of power and authority. He wanted to have a religion in the sense of spiritual principles, truly universal and applicable to all countries and to all races. He treated religion as a source of social and spiritual unity. But his reason and his religious conviction were



circumscribed by social environment, the decaying and degenerate condition of his fellow brethren.

Hence he turned to Buddhism. His long and arduous search for the emancipation is enshrined in his magnum opus: the Buddha and His Dhamma. He rejected Christianity and Islam because, though formally egalitarian religions, they did not face in their origin the task of fighting the caste system. The only religion, according to Ambedkar, which arose and grew out of the struggle against caste system and never succumbed to it, was Buddhism.

Characteristics of Religion according to Ambedkar: Religion in the sense of morality must, remain the governing principle in every society. Religion, if it is to function, must be in accordance with reason which is merely another name for science. Its moral code must recognize the fundamental tenets of liberty, equality and fraternity. Unless a religion recognizes these three fundamental principles of social life, religion will be doomed. Religion must not sanctify or ennoble poverty. He advocated that the centre of religion should not be between man and god but between man and man.

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### **3.7 CASTE AND DALITS' RELIGIOUS IDENTITY**

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The conversion of Dalits to other religions does not really change their lives. Caste is like a shadow. It follows them wherever they go. They go through the same ordeal in their new religions what they experienced in their former religion, Hinduism. Though their conversion to other religions creates some ripples during the process, it does not alter the social and cultural map of the Dalits from the moment a dominant caste fellow also converts to this new religion. He/she carries this caste baggage and spreads upon the head of the Dalit and the Dalit is encircled by this caste cloak and finds very difficult to tear off and come out.

#### **Caste cuts across barriers of Religions**

So sadly and oppressively deep-rooted is caste in our country that it has cut across even the barriers of religions. The caste system has penetrated other religions and dissenting Hindu sects like Arya Samaj, and Brhmo Samaj to whom the practice of caste should be anathema. Today we find that Hindu dissentients and practitioners of other religious faiths are sometimes just as rigid in adherence to the system of caste as the conservative Hindus. We find Christian Dalit, Christian Nadars, Christian Reddys, Christian Kammas, and Mujbi Sikhs. Centuries-long caste oppression would not disappear by a mere change of religion. Even among the other religious groups in this country, the division of society between the dominant and subordinated castes is the only way of life. Almost all followers of the non-Hindu religions, apart from those of the Zoroastrians, are converts from the Hindu religion. Into the new religion they have carried with them their caste. It is hardly to be expected that the social prejudices and biases, the notions and feelings of superiority and inferiority, nurtured for centuries on end, would disappear by a mere change of religion.

#### **Change of Religion has not changed the status of Dalits**

Change of religion did not always succeed in eliminating castes. The converts carried with them their castes and occupations to the new religions. The result has been that even among Sikhs, Muslims and Christians, casteism prevails in varying degrees in practice, notwithstanding their teachings of equality, fraternity and freedom and social justice. Casteism has thus been the bane of entire Indian society, the difference in its rigidity being of a degree varying from religion to religion.

### 3.8 LET US SUM UP

Dalits are the people who have more attracted towards world religions than anybody else in the society. One will find that Dalits are spread out in all religions that are followed in India. This only shows that they are the first ones to take the call of change; they are open to what is good, true and liberating to human society that divine world. They are the people who envision a caste free, gender unbiased and egalitarian society. Ambedkar also saw moments of liberation in Indian history. That was the way he saw Buddhism. He called Buddha his guru. He said that he didn't learn principles of democracy from Western philosophers but from his guru, Gautama Buddha.

"Positively, my social philosophy may be said to be enshrined in three words: liberty, equality and fraternity. Let no one, however, say that I have borrowed my philosophy from the French Revolution. I have not. My philosophy has roots in religion and not in political science. I have derived them from the teachings of my master, the Buddha". In his philosophy, liberty and equality had a place: but he added that unlimited liberty destroyed equality, and absolute equality leaves no room for liberty. In his philosophy, law had a place only as a safeguard against the breaches of liberty and equality; but he did not believe that law could be a guarantee for breaches of liberty or equality. He gave the highest place to fraternity as the only real safeguard against the denial of liberty or equality or fraternity which was another name for brotherhood or humanity. This was another name, according to Ambedkar, for religion.

### 3.9 KEY WORDS

<b>Shamanism</b>	: Religions of Indigenous origin in India like Buddhism and Jainism
<b>BRAHMANISM</b>	: Vedic religion which Dalit intellectuals regard as alien to Indian religions.

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