

Further, shudras.
according to manu,
the chandalas



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Further, nowhere in India the Harijans or the Scheduled Caste people occupy the topmost position in the social, political and economic field. They are economically backward, socially depressed and educationally neglected section of the Indian population. Early References to Harijans: The ' Harijans' or the Scheduled Caste people were called by different names during the early days. For some time they were kept outside the Hindu social order and referred to as the fifth group (often as the fifth varna) or the " Panchamas". During the Vedic Period they were known as the ' Chandalas'. The Chandalas were considered to be untouchables.

The chandalas were the progeny of the most hated union of a Brahmin female with a Shudra male. In Vedic literature, we find the mention of chandalas as an ethnic group originating from inter-breeding of higher caste female and lower caste male. Patanjali considered chandalas as a variety of shudras. According to Manu, the chandalas were born out of the Pratiloma marriages. It is difficult to estimate the exact period in which the untouchables or chandalas originated. Still it can be said that they have existed in India since at least 2, 000 years. Majority of the Scheduled Caste people have been regarded as " untouchables" at one time or the other.

All the SCs are not regarded as untouchables in all the places of India. British called the so-called ' untouchables' the ' Exterior Castes'. The term ' Untouchable Castes' was made use of for the first time by the Simon Commission (1928).

Under the Government of India Act of 1935 the untouchables are designated as ' Scheduled Castes'. The Constitution of India (1950) has also referred to

them as the “ Scheduled Castes’. But Mahatma Gandhiji addressed them as “ Harijans”—the people of the God. Definition of Scheduled Castes: 1.

According to Dr.

D. N. Majumdar the term ‘ Scheduled Castes’ refers to the ‘ Untouchable Castes’. “ The untouchable castes are those who suffer from various social and political disabilities many of which are traditionally prescribed and socially enforced by higher castes”.

2. We can define the scheduled castes as those economically, socially, educationally and politically backward castes which are kept at a distance by the other castes as ‘ untouchables’ 3. Scheduled Castes are those untouchable castes which are subject to some disabilities in every walk of life—social, religious, educational, economic and political. Examples: Madiga Chalavadi gas, Billavas, Edigas.

Korama, Machigars, Dhoras, Samagaras, Mahars, Mangs, Holeyas, Upparas, Ezhavas, Chamars. The Scheduled Castes—an Integral Part of Village Life: The Scheduled Castes constitute an integral part of village life. According to the Census Report of 1971 the Harijans constitute 15. 04% of the total population of India. More than 90% of the are living in the villages. Still they are not in majority in any part of India. About 75% of them are engaged in agriculture and large number of them is landless labourers.

They are spread over the entire nation. In fact, there is no village in India in which the Harijans are not found. Even today, they continue to render some menial services to the other caste people. Most of them live below the line of poverty.

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B. Kuppu Swamy in his “ Social Change in India” states that for two reasons the Harijans were declared as ‘ impure’ castes or ‘ untouchables’ and were made to live outside the village. First, they were following the lowest kinds of occupations such as scavenging, leather work, removal of the carrion, etc. Second, they persisted in eating beef which was condemned as the most heinous crime by the caste Hindus. Referring to the position and the role of Harijans, M.

N. Srinivas writes, “ they are an integral part of the village life, they perform certain essential tasks in agriculture, they are often village servants, messengers and remove the leaves on which people have dined at community dinners”.