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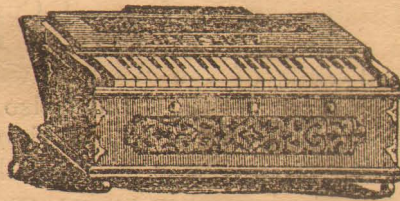
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THE HINDU ORGAN.

JAFFNA, WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 28, 1900

The Rev. F. P. Hunt on Caste. X

The pronouncement of Mr. Hunt on caste is as follows:—

"All wise people agree in characterizing caste as a very wicked institution. Low castes are regarded as even more unclean than animals like dog, &c. A Brahman must bathe if touched by a Pariah or Palla, but the Brahman is not rendered unclean by the touch of the dog in his house. Friends, what is that which does away with that cruelty called caste distinction? Is it not the Christian religion?"

When we read the above lines in Mr. Hunt's book on the "Evidences of Christianity", we were no less amused than surprised. We were amused at the attempt made to show that there is no "caste" in Christian countries, in the face of the thousand and one artificial rules and conventionalities by which "Society" is governed and regulated in Europe and America, and surprised at his ignorance of the rationale of the caste distinctions prevailing in the East. The Brahman is polluted by the touch of the Pariah because the former is scrupulously clean and the latter is hopelessly unclean. The European loves his dog more than he loves

his cook. He feels himself polluted by the touch of the "Nigger", but not by that of his dog. The high-born man in the West does not touch the street-beggar for fear of being rendered unclean. The more we examine the constitution of society in the West and the artificial restrictions it imposes on the free action of individuals, the more we are convinced of the wisdom of our ancestors, who, forming a proper estimate of human nature, founded the institution known as caste, not as applicable to all mankind, but only to those who are in certain stages of social and religious progress. The rule that certain sections of the people are to follow certain trades and occupations, limits the field of competition, and thereby saves the ruin of such trades and occupations. In the West, people in affluent circumstances discard their poor relations, but not so in Asia, where the rules of caste compel the inter-marriage of the members of the same caste only. In countries where the caste system is in force, the enactment of poor laws becomes unnecessary. The short space at our command will not permit of our recounting all the advantages of the caste system, which was elaborated by the Hindus thousands of years ago. True that now and then the system has been abused, but that is due to no fault of our ancient law-givers.

The feeling of caste is inherent in all societies. The evils which beset society in Europe and America are due to their social organization. Did Mr. Hunt compare the evils affecting society in the West with those said to have been produced by the caste system, when he called caste a very wicked institution? If the effects of the social organization of the West are more pernicious than those of the caste system, why condemn caste?

The statement that Christianity has been the means of doing away with the evils of caste is quite unfounded. Christianity has not only been unable to remove the social evils of the West for well-nigh two thousand years, but also done nothing to mitigate the alleged rigours of caste in the East. Who is that Christian in Ceylon who has given up his caste? Among the Singhalese, the feeling of caste is as predominant as ever. Every contest among Singhalese Christians for Municipal and Legislative honours, is fought on caste lines. If Christianity has done anything, it has only emboldened individuals belonging to low castes to assume high-sounding names and titles and pose as high-born gentlemen. The effect of the preaching of Christianity has been to foster the feeling of caste rather than otherwise, that is to say, while the high caste Christians have not given up their caste, the low caste Christians laying claim to high birth, have begun to assert an equality with the high castes. It is in Mission circles in Jaffna one hears of caste being talked about more than in any other quarter. The Native Christians who are recruited from different towns, villages, and communities, seldom agree among themselves as to the superiority in caste of one over another, and the disagreement results in unseemly bickerings and quarrels. It is a surprise to us that Mr. Hunt is unacquainted with this phase of Christianity in the Northern Province.

The principle underlying caste distinctions is explained in well-known treatises on Hindu polity, of which Europeans know little or nothing. The rationale of the distinctions applies not to all Hindus, but only to those who are in a certain stage of religious development. Generally speaking it applies to all Hindus in the householder stage, but not to *Gnanis*. The Hindu *Shastras* say that Nandan, a Pariah (one beyond the pale of caste) attained to the highest stage attainable by a Brahman. There are other instances of low caste and

non-caste, men having attained to the highest place in society and religion. On the contrary, Mr. Hunt cannot cite a single instance of a "Native" of India or Ceylon having been ever made a Bishop. Will the time ever come when a native of the East will be made Archbishop of Canterbury? The other day we were amused to find a writer in an English periodical suggesting the appointment of racial Bishops in India—a Tamil Bishop for the Tamils, and a European Bishop for the Europeans, &c. &c.

All Hindus of whatever caste save and except non-caste Hindus like the Pariahs, can worship at any temple among the Hindus. A priest is a priest and a Brahman is a Brahman at whatever temple he worships or officiates. All Brahmans are equal provided they conform themselves to the rites and ceremonies prescribed by religion to the members of that caste. In Christendom, however, while the term caste is unknown as such, there are multi-various distinctions founded on birth, rank, wealth, religion, sect, &c. The distinctions between man and man are much more pronounced there than in the land of the Hindus. In religion, not to speak of the grand division into Protestants, Catholics, and Members of the Greek Church, there are thousand and one subdivisions among Protestants themselves. While higher Hinduism brushes aside all distinctions founded on caste, colour, and sect, Christianity upholds sectarianism throughout. Each sect and each communion claims itself to be the sole depository of the truth and sole interpreter of Christ's Mission. The criminations and recriminations taking place among these sects and communions are a study to the Hindus. In Mr. Hunt's book itself, the feeling shown against Roman Catholics, not to speak of Hindus and Muhammadans, is most un-Christian. The religion which preaches the "Father-hood of God and the brotherhood of man", is the religion which is most divided against itself of all religions of the world. And yet Mr. Hunt wants us to believe that it has abolished all distinctions and divisions among mankind.

We do not blame Mr. Hunt much for the misrepresentations and misstatements contained in his book. He is a victim of the faulty system adopted by Christian propagandists in modern times. Modern Christianity revels in words and promises. Very seldom do Christians practise what they preach. Pulpits and platforms sound and resound with fulminations against the distinctions of colour, caste, and creed. And yet the very preachers of these doctrines are greater sticklers after these distinctions than Hindus, Buddhists, and Muhammadans. Christianity has been an impractical ideal to Christians. Who is that Christian who follows the teachings of Christ as found in the gospels? Christ, not taking stock of the perversity of human nature, taught the doctrine of the equality of man as applicable to all stages of human progress. Hence Christianity has failed to influence the conduct of mankind. Theoretical Christianity is as much distant from the Christianity of modern Christians as the North pole is from the South pole. Christian preachers do not practise what they preach. This is how Christians have come to be accused of hypocrisy and insincerity. One looks in vain throughout Christendom for Christian practice. For the guidance of the Hindus, on the other hand, our ancient *Rishis* have prescribed rules, in the application of which to individuals, their social and religious progress are to be taken note of. Thus house-holders are subject to the rules of caste and *Gnanis* are not. The experience and conduct of mankind throughout the world are quite consistent with the precepts laid down by Hinduism. Hence the

comprehensiveness and universality of Hinduism and Hindu institutions.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION IN JAFFNA.

Mr. S. M. Burrows is inspecting the different colleges and schools in the District, and making himself personally acquainted with the educational requirements of the country. As the Director is new to the office, we think that one or two words addressed to him will not be out of place here. The Jaffna Missionaries were not able to hoodwink the last three Directors of Public Instruction, Sir Charles Bruce, Mr. H. W. Green, and Mr. J. B. Cull. Before the time of Sir Charles, the Missionaries were all powerful in the Department. Saivites who started schools had to appoint Missionary managers to them, as applications for grants in aid made by Non-Christian gentlemen and bodies were constantly refused by the Department owing to the opposition of the Missionaries. That large-hearted and liberal-minded Englishman, Sir Charles Bruce, broke the spell, and missionary monopoly of education has become a thing of the past. Mr. Burrows has large experience of Ceylon, and we are sure that he has rightly gauged the object of the Missionaries in starting schools in Non-Christian centres. We are, therefore, of opinion that he will duly encourage all indigenous efforts made to educate the people. Christianity is one thing and education another. It is quite consistent with true Christian conduct to entrust the education of the people to the people themselves, wherever and whenever they show their eagerness to undertake it. Christ and his Disciples never taught their followers to hold out the bait of secular instruction to attract pupils to the Bible classes. The policy has been inaugurated in India of encouraging and assisting the people to start denominational schools, so that religious instruction may be imparted to boys and girls side by side with secular instruction. Many an official in India thinks that Christians cannot educate Hindus any more than Muhammadans can educate Christians. We hope that the Director will adopt this view where practicable. Besides, the Missionaries of the North have been persistently opposing the introduction of a conscience clause into the grant-in-aid code. While Government is pledged to religious neutrality, can anybody who accepts Government aid refuse to maintain that neutrality?

MR. J. H. LEAK C. C. S. AND HIS WORK.

Owing to pressure of work, the Government Agent deputed this year his Office Assistant Mr. Leak to dispose of applications for exemption from payment of road tax in the case of some of the divisions. A high tribute of praise is accorded to Mr. Leak for the sound discretion exercised by him in doing the work of exemption. Not only in this respect, but in many other ways Mr. Leak has endeared himself to the public. He has taken up the Secretaryship of the Jaffna Library and that of the Y. M. C. A., the duties of which are sure to engage most part of his spare time. He has also started an Agricultural Class and delivers lectures *gratis* every Thursday. Some of the prominent citizens of Jaffna are members of this class. Mr. Leak combines in himself the *suaviter in modo* and the *fortiter in re* and is deservedly popular with every section of the community. We hope that Government will not remove Mr. Leak from Jaffna before sufficient time shall have elapsed to enable him to leave the impress of his multi-various work in the District.

LOCAL & GENERAL.

The Kandyan Seat—We understand that Mr. S. N. W. Hulugala, Ratemahatmeya in the North-Western Province, has been appointed Kandyan Member of the Legislative Council. Mr. Hulugala is a most well-known, influential, and experienced headman.

The Hon. S. C. Obeyesekere 'At Home'—We are very glad to observe that Mr. Advocate Allagakoen of the local bar was the gentleman selected to propose the health of the new Low Country Singhalese Member, Mr. S. C. Obeyesekere, at the At Home given by that gentleman on the 21st Instant. Mr. Obeyesekere has so many friends and acquaintances among the Tamils, and it was but fitting that a leading member of the Tamil community was selected as the spokesman at a gathering intended to do honour to a leading member of the Singhalese community. Never was Mr. Allagakoen more happy than when he exhorted Mr. Obeyesekere to

look after the interests not only of the Singhalese community but also of the Tamils. Practically the Tamils are now unrepresented in the Legislative Council, Dr. Rockwood not being in touch with the leaders of public opinion in the Tamil Provinces.

A Cadet for the Jaffna-Kachcheri—The Gazette of the 23rd Instant announces the appointment of Mr. Conroy C. C. S. as a cadet attached to the Jaffna Kachcheri.

Mr. G. C. Tambapillai—Mr. Tambapillai, Sub-Inspector of Schools at Batticaloa paid a flying visit to Jaffna last week.

The Cambridge Examinations—It is notified that the Cambridge Local Examinations will be held on the 10th December 1900 and the following days at Colombo, Kandy, Galle, Jaffna and Batticaloa. The Mathematical Prize will be awarded to the candidate under 19 years of age who passes the best examination (Senior Local) in Mathematics. The Gilchrist Scholarship will be awarded to the candidate who passes the best examination in Senior Local. This scholarship is worth £. 150 a year and is tenable for three years in England.

A New Ship—We understand from the *Observer* that Mr. M. K. N. Kader Mohideen Marikar of Jaffna has built and launched a vessel called 'Patucal Cani.' It was surveyed and registered at Colombo. Her tonnage is 145-40 gross and 129-81 registered tons.

Obituary—We are sorry to record the sudden and untimely death of Mr. C. Tisseveerasinghe, employed in the Railway Department at Tallawakelle. He was a son of Mr. J. B. Tisseveerasinghe, of the Minor Courts, Chavakachcherri. Mr. J. B. Tisseveerasinghe had been to Tallawakelle and has returned.

The Postmaster-General—Mr. Moysey is now on a visit to Jaffna and is inspecting the Post and Telegraph Offices in the District.

Mr. Vaughan—This gentleman who is the Assistant Government Agent at Mullaitivu, is now at Jaffna, having come in connection with a case committed by him for trial before the Supreme Court.

Mr. S. Joseph—The Head Clerk of the Fiscal's Office, and Deputy Fiscal, Negombo, is on a visit to his friends and relations.

THE SUPREME COURT.

The first Criminal Sessions of the Supreme Court for the year 1900 commenced here on the 23rd Instant. The Hon'ble Justice Lawrie presiding, with Mr. Templar as Crown Counsel, Mr. Stork as Registrar, Mr. Julius as Private Secretary, Mr. M. S. Ramalingam as Tamil Interpreter, and Mr. Silva as Singhalese Interpreter.

The first case taken up was No. 3 on the Calendar in which Raman Kanapathy, a Nalavaman of Pasaioor was charged with cutting the throat of one Naki, his own wife, with intent to murder. The prisoner was not defended. His defence was that the injury on the woman was self-inflicted. Though the wound was of a serious nature, yet the woman recovered and gave her evidence in Court very rationally and in a straightforward manner implicating her husband as the person who cut her throat while both were lying down on the same mat and while she felt a little drowsy on the night of 17th October last. The Jury, of which Mr. de Niese was foreman, however, acquitted the accused by a majority of 5 to 2.

Another case was disposed of on the same day, Case No. 5 in which Muttutamby Kanagan, a lad of 15 years of age was charged with rape, alleged to have been committed at Allapiddy, on a girl of about 12 years of age. The same Jury tried this case also. The prisoner defended himself. The Jury were unable to arrive at a verdict they having been divided 4 against 3, which is not a majority according to the new Procedure Code. His Lordship asked them to reconsider their verdict and try to return a verdict by a proper majority. The foreman, however, informed the Judge after a few minutes' further consideration there was not any likelihood of their agreeing on a verdict. His Lordship thereupon discharged the accused with a warning to behave well in future.

The whole of the 24th was taken up with the trial of Case No. 1 from Mullaitivu, in which a Singhalese man by the name of Bastian was charged with the murder of a Tamil woman at Oddisuddan on the 26th June last. An English speaking Jury with Mr. William Mather was called to try this case. Mr. Advocate Kanagasabai who was assigned by the Crown ably defended the accused. He was, however, convicted of the capital offence and sentenced to be hanged. The Prisoner protested his innocence, but his Lordship informed him that the verdict was a proper one and that he will report to His Excellency the Governor to that effect.

On Monday the 26th Instant the Pungudi-tivu Murder case No. 6, on the Calendar was taken up, in which three notorious characters of that Island were the accused. The 1st and 2nd accused were defended by Mr. Kanagasabai and the 3rd by Mr. Tirunavukarasu. This case occupied the whole day and the Jury of which Mr. de Niese was foreman convicted the 1st accused of causing grievous hurt and acquitted the other two accused. The convicted man was sentenced the next day to 18 months' imprisonment. This case is known throughout the Islands as a most brutal and cold-blooded murder. But this result has been brought about by the conflicting character of the evidence which was purposely given, it is said, to save the accused from the gallows. The third accused admitted having been a party to the murder before the Magistrate, but cleverly explained, that he was compelled to do so by the pressure brought to bear on him by others. We hope the Government Agent will inquire whether the village headmen had acted promptly in bringing the culprits to justice.

The remaining two cases were disposed of on the 27th Instant and the Sessions closed at 1-30 P. M. The 1st case taken up that day was the rape case from Vavuniya, in which a husband was charged with the offence, committed on his girl wife aged 11 years and 11 months. The girl after living with the accused for a few days died, and it was found by post mortem examination that her death was the result of the accused having had intercourse with her. The Judge charged for acquittal and the Jury without retiring acquitted the accused. In the next case which was one of abduction the accused was acquitted on the direction of His Lordship as soon as the girl alleged to have been abducted gave her evidence.

CORRESPONDENCE.

To the Editor, "Hindu Oagan"

Sir
It affords us no little pleasure to see that you have undertaken to expose the errors and fallacies contained in Rev. T. P. Hunt's treatise on the evidences of Christianity. It is your duty to do so inasmuch as the book misrepresents facts and tends to create false impressions in the minds of the uneducated Hindus. Please give me also room in your valuable journal to make some observations on the first chapter of the book dealing with miracles for the present. In fact, about one-third of the chapter is taken up by attacks on Hinduism, which are almost entirely irrelevant, and which do not at all help to establish the truth of Christianity. He would have done some service to the Christian religion, had he solely devoted his time and labour to bring forward some arguments, if any, in support of the Genesis account of the creation and so forth, which have been severely criticised by eminent scientists such as Professor Huxley and others and proved to be quite incompatible with science. The book has shown beyond doubt Mr. Hunt's utter ignorance of Hinduism. Hinduism does not rest for its support upon miracles. Let us look into the miracles enumerated in the Bible and estimate their value. The progress of science has shown beyond doubt that all miracles recorded therein, excepting one or two, could be performed by man without the aid of supernatural powers. In many cases a strong impulse communicated to the brain by means of Hypnotism, mesmerism, or some other process, may send a current along a nerve, which may temporarily or even permanently restore motion to a paralysed limb or give fresh vitality to a paralysed nerve. Thus the dumb may speak, the blind see, the lame walk without the aid of supernatural agency. Only Christ's raising the dead and he himself rising on the third day from the dead, can be called miracles in the real sense of the word. But the evidence adduced to support them is insufficient. That evidence, notwithstanding Mr. Hunt to the contrary, is no better than the evidence produced by the priest of Sella Sannatty Temple in support of the miraculous event which, Mr. Hunt tells us, is said to have taken place there. One day, the priest stirred up the people who were sleeping in the temple and told them that the temple deity appeared to him in a vision and told him that a thief was plucking some coconuts in the temple premises. When they went there with a torch light together with the priest, they saw the thief in the middle of the tree shivering with fear being neither able to get down nor climb up. It is only when the priest ordered him to get down, he was able to do so. Mr. Hunt says that this was a pre-arranged plan to deceive the people. Mr. Hunt may be right because

though there is no conflict in the evidence adduced to support the alleged miracle, it is more probable that the testimony of human witnesses should be false than that laws of nature could be violated. In the same way, though the writers of the Gospels might corroborate one another as regards the evidence put forward to support the miracles in question, yet no sensible man would believe that the dead were raised because the evidence to establish such a violation of the laws of nature must be overwhelming so much so that no other possible construction could be possible. Mr. Hunt himself would have come across many books written by eminent scientists calling in question the possibility of the miracles. The agreement among the writers of the Synoptical Gospels is only apparent. When their evidence is examined minutely, contradictions can be discovered. Now, let me return to Mr. Hunt's sneers at the miraculous events narrated in some of the Puranas and Itihikasas. Assuming that the miracles were false, their falsity would not affect Hinduism a whit. The Vedas are the knowledge of God. They are the chief authority on Hinduism. Puranas were written to popularise Hinduism. They were not meant for scholars, but for the ordinary people who cannot understand esoteric Hinduism and philosophy. So Vedic knowledge was placed in concrete form before the common people in the Puranas, where the lives of Devas, Asuras, great men, saints, and kings are recorded. Some writers have had recourse to fables also. Taking Skanda Purana, for instance, the fight between *Suras* and *Asuras* for supremacy indicates the fight between good and evil. Did Mr Hunt ever read the opinions of the great Oriental scholars, such as Professor Max Muller and others on the Puranas, Maha Bharata, the Ramayana, etc? It is strange that a man of Mr. Hunt's reputation and position in the American Mission should proceed to criticise Hinduism without knowing or caring to know the criticisms passed on it by eminent savants and Orientalists.

Yours truly
M. V.

Hatton
22/2/1900.

SELECTIONS.

A Mahar Saint.

MAHARS of the Deccan are the same as Pariahs of Madras. They live outside towns and villages and though so many centuries have passed since we (Aryas) have come in contact with them they know very little of our ethics and religion. They have imitated our habits social customs and have adopted our Gods and deities. Ask a Mahar what his caste is, and he will tell you he is "*Chokhumela*." He feels pride in being called by that term. I wish to write something of that great saint, Chokhamela, who has become the pride of his community.

Chokhamela, though a Mahar (Pariah) by caste, was a great devotee of Pandurang, the deity of Pandharpur. Pandharpur, like Srirangapatam, is famous for its deity in the Deccan, and thousands of devotees from far and near pay visits to its shrine every year. Chokha was an inhabitant of Pandharpur and being a Mirasidar had to do several duties assigned to the Mahar of the town. From ancient times Mahars are considered outcasts. They are shunned and hated, their very shadow or touch being considered a great pollution. Chokha, though purer in his heart and actions than a Brahmin, had to share the fate of his caste. Nobody touched him or allowed him to mingle in their community.

Though he had to put up with these mortifications every minute he never stooped to take them into consideration. He was sincere in his devotion to Pandurang. Whenever he saw *Sadhus* or saints, he fell at their feet and begged them to enlighten him on some abstruse points of religion and philosophy.

He used to hear *Kirtanas* with great delight and observe regularly the fast of Ekadashi. He kept the surrounding place of the Temple clean and always uttered the name of Pandurang. His wife was a pious and chaste woman, who always promptly obeyed the orders of her lord. She too was a sincere devotee of Pandurang. Both of them, though very poor, lived a happy life and thought little of this world. Though their earning was very small, they never forgot the claim charity had on them. With their humble means and humble opportunities they tried to help the needy, feed the hungry and console the bereaved. In short, the life they lived was an exemplary one, not only to their own community but even to many of the high-caste Brahmins.

Castes and creeds are pure inventions of man. Owing to his inherent pride, man has brought these institutions into existence. But in the eyes of God there are neither castes nor creeds, all individuals being alike to him. He is only fond of *Bhakti* or devotion a man has towards him.

On a certain *Kartika Ekadashi* God Pandurang went to Chokha's cottage and asked to give Him something for eating. It being a fast day, there was

nothing in the house except a little curd. Chokha went to his wife and asked her whether there was any thing for eating in the house as would become their Lord. His wife gave him the little curd which she had. Chokha went to the Lord and offered him curd. While the Lord was partaking of the curd with great relish, Chokha with folded hands asked the Lord to come to his cottage next day for finishing the fast of *Ekadasi*. The Lord complied with his request and disappeared.

A Brahmin who happened to go by Chokha's cottage that time, saw the Lord there and heard the request made by the outcaste. The Brahmin boiling with rage wended his way to the temple and going straight to the idol began to examine him very minutely. He happened to see a particle of curd over the *Pitambar*, "Pollution! Pollution!!" he cried with great indignation. The Brahmins who were standing near him were surprised and they could not understand what he meant. He told all what had happened and also informed them that the Lord is to go again to Chokha's house for dinner to-morrow. The idol has clothes upon it, and it is against religion and practice to touch such clothes if polluted by a Mahar.

The Brahmins put their heads together and resolved not to touch the idol unless Chokha be killed or his impure deed be put a stop to. They went to the Dewan of the King and complained of Chokha's conduct. They said they would lose their caste and religion if such things were allowed under his benign control; they would prefer death than submit to such *Varnasakar* and lead polluted lives. The Dewan, being an orthodox man of the same type, ordered that Chokha should forthwith be brought before him.

Nine or ten Yavanas went to Maharwada and caught hold of Chokha at once. Chokha being surprised was at his wits' end to know what had happened. He begged of the Yavanas to be civil and a little courteous. But in vain! They forthwith took him to the Dewan without allowing him a moment's time to breathe. Chokha cared little for his personal mortification and agonies. His Lord was to come to his house for dinner and he was busy all the time with it. He was now anxious that his Lord would have to go back hungry and unfed.

When he reached the palace, Chokha fell on the ground and bowed to his majesty the Dewan. He asked why the *Mahar Sarkar* wanted him so urgently there. The Dewan unmoved by this pathetic scene cried out "you wretch! you knave! you worse than a rogue! do you wish to pollute our sacred shrines, our idols, as well as our caste by such wicked acts. You must know that you are a Mahar and as such you must not enter the shrine. These people say you enter the temple every night and call Pandurang to dinner. This is a great pollution and you must be punished for it."

Chokha with clasped hands bowed down his head and making a *Johar* said "Sirkar! I am fully aware of my position. I shall be the last man to offend any body or to go against the established rules of Society. I am a humble devotee of the Lord and I never enter your sacred temple. The Lord, it seems, is pleased with my sincere devotion and he himself comes to my cottage. I am in no way to be blamed for the offence you allege against me. Though I am an outcaste my God is the same as yours. All men are equal in the eyes of God and he never makes invidious distinctions of castes like man. The supreme Chaitanya pervading your body and mine is one and the same and cannot be distinguished. A Brahmin and a Mahar tread on the same ground, and still the earth is pure and unpolluted. Brahmins and Mahars both bathe in the holy waters of the Ganges and still the water never loses its sacredness. It would be better if humanity were guided by such broad principles."

The Dewan lost his patience and told the outcaste to hold his tongue. He said "Brahmins need not learn *Vedanta* from a Mahar." He called the *Kotwal* and told him that the villain should be tied to the feet of a bullock and the animal driven through the town till he is dead.

The scene was very pathetic. The words of the high-handed Dewan fell on the ears of those who were there with great surprise. Even the bigoted Brahmins now began to feel pity for the poor victim. Others who were standing there being completely overwhelmed began to shed tears. Two wild bullocks were brought and the innocent Chokha was tied to their feet. He was serene and calm, all the while praying Pandurang to rescue him from the calamity. He had firm faith in his God and lost no moment in invoking the aid of His supreme hand. His words, it appears, reached heaven and Pandurang came down running to relieve his beloved *Bhakta* just as he did in the cases of Droupati, Prahlada and Gajendra.

The bullocks though ferocious and mighty did not move an inch. They were, as it were, nailed to the ground on which they stood! They were terribly beaten still they did not move. The news spread apace through the town and many flocked to witness the wonderful scene. Meanwhile Chokha's wife who was away in the jungle returned home. No sooner she stepped in the house, news of the troubles of her husband reached her ears. She was a *Pativrata* and adored her husband just like her God. She went straight to the place where Chokha was tied to the feet of the bullocks and embraced him. Tears ran down her eyes and she began to cry. Chokha soothed and consoled her. But her emotions could not be stopped. Chokha told her that God had come to his rescue and there was no fear any longer. She opened her eyes

and saw the Lord standing by the side of her husband. She fell on the ground and expressed her obligation for relieving her husband and restoring him to her.

People were surprised to find this great change in their attitude. They remained fearless and the bollocks stood near them like sheep. Chokha explained them that as the Lord has undertaken to protect him, no human efforts could deprive him of his life. The spectators were now convinced that some supreme power must have come to Chokha's help. They asked him to show them his God. Thereupon he replied: "He is only seen by those whose acts are pure and who pray and worship him with sincere devotion. Unless you ennoble yourself, you can never see him." Chokha was well known for his pure life and sincere devotion. They had no idea that a humble man like him should have so much knowledge as would do justice to a *Vedantist* of the highest type. Many of them fell at his feet and others dispersed with admiring hearts. The high-handed Dewan and his clique were ashamed of the hasty step they had taken in persecuting a man of great knowledge and exemplary character. Chokha was no longer persecuted, and he was from this time forth treated with great reverence and respect by all classes of the Hindu society. Chokha's name is well-known in the Deccan and his life has got a place in *Puranas* and *Sankirtanas*. He was called a saint, and his cottage was frequented by many for hearing discourses on ethics and religion.

Chokha was allowed free access to the temple. But he, in deference to the rules of the society, declined the concession. However, he went to the fourth step, whence he could see the face of the idol, and expressed his willingness to see his beloved deity every day from that place. The fourth step is yet called Chokha's step, and Mahars are allowed free access as far as that step!

Another story of his life comes down to us, and it runs as follows:—

Owing to some caste squabbles, Chokha was boycotted by his caste-men and all intercourse was stopped with him. He being a man of high ideals and reformed views was seldom understood by his ignorant caste-men. Though the persecution was bitter he cared for it very little. He had firm faith in God and believed that though the bigotted had abandoned him, he would be the last to do it. He being a *Mirasidar* it was one of his duties to take away all carcasses from the villages and to consign them to jungles. As no-body helped him in this duty the work of dragging huge carcasses of oxen and buffaloes fell to him alone. Once upon a time a buffalo died and his caste-men thought it a good opportunity to humiliate him if he came to ask their help. They were certain that it was impossible for him to drag the buffalo alone and they flocked to the spot where the carcass was lying. Chokha with anxious steps came to the place. It was quite impossible for him to drag the animal alone. All eyes were set upon him and his humility increased every moment. He did not talk a word to his caste-men, but was looking quietly at the carcass. He fell on his feet and invoked the aid of God. He prayed that if He would not help him that time his fate was doomed. Great humiliation and bitter persecution were in store for him. He prayed and prayed most devoutly and thought that somebody told him to begin the work. He prepared himself, and after tying the carcass to a wooden beam began to pull it on. The crowd set their eyes on him and eagerly watched the affair, Chokha dragged the carcass alone to the jungle! His castemen were convinced of his devotion and the help God had offered him in his troubles. They were mortified and now felt repentance that they had in vain excommunicated and persecuted such a noble and pious man.

Chokha's name is well-known throughout the length and breadth of the Deccan and the devotees of Pandharpur are proud that they had under their banner men like Chokhamela who though born in low classes attained *Mukti* by sincere devotion towards Pandurang.

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