

## Inviting the so-called “Untouchables<sup>1</sup>” to Islam<sup>2</sup>

Shaykh Muhammad Taqi Din al-Hilali رحمه الله 1311 هـ - 1407 هـ (1893-1987)

### **REINCARNATION:**

In summary the belief in reincarnation states the souls are of a limited number they do not increase or decrease. This includes the souls of humans and the souls of animals. Thus when a created being dies its soul goes from that dead body to a fresh body. They believe the recompense of every living being is for their soul to elevate to a body of a higher caste or to descend to a body of a lower caste, based upon their actions. If they were good in their previous life as it relates to their interactions with people and animals and avoided evil, when they die their soul will be placed in body of a higher caste system than they previously lived; as a reward for their good deeds. If they were evil their punishment is that their souls will return to the world in the body of a lowly caste. If this continues they will reach the caste of the “untouchables”. If he increases in sin he will continue to descend until he returns to the world in the body of a noble animal such as a horse. Then if his sins persist he returns to the world in the body of a lowly animal. This can go on until he returns as a mouse or a dung beetle.

### **CASTE SYSTEMS:**

The Hindus have many classes in their caste system<sup>3</sup>. The highest caste is the Brahmins. (According to their belief) they are born from the womb of their mothers holy, and everything they do is correct. Not even one sin is written against them their entire life. When they die their souls connect with the heavenly assembly. But if there are a limited number of souls in the universe then where do the new souls come from to replace the souls that remain in the heavenly assembly and do not return to the earth?!

The lowest caste is the “untouchables”. The higher castes are not allowed to mix with the lower castes, thus they do not eat or drink with them, sit with them or gather with

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<sup>1</sup> Translator’s note: The term “Untouchables” is obviously a derogatory term. This term has been changed to Dalit. Dalit meaning "oppressed" in Sanskrit is the self-chosen political name of castes in India which are considered and treated as "untouchable" (Kaminsky; Long, Roger D. (2011) India Today: An Encyclopedia of Life in the Republic)

<sup>2</sup> Summarized and translated from his book “Religion and the Universal Norm:

<sup>3</sup> The ranks in Hindu society come from a legend in which the main groupings, or varnas, emerge from a primordial being. From the mouth come the Brahmins—the priests and teachers. From the arms come the Kshatriyas—the rulers and soldiers. From the thighs come the Vaisyas—merchants and traders. From the feet come the Sudras—laborers. Each varna in turn contains hundreds of hereditary castes and subcastes with their own pecking orders. A fifth group describes the people who are achuta, or untouchable. The primordial being does not claim them. Untouchables are outcasts—people considered too impure, too polluted, to rank as worthy beings. (By Tom O'Neill National Geographic Magazine)

them in the same place of worship. Each caste has their place of worship. It is not permissible for individuals from the lower caste to marry from the higher caste. They don't live in the same city with higher castes; rather they live in huts far from the city. They dig wells and drink from them even if they are in close proximity to a large body of water with sailing ships. This is because they are not allowed to take water from the rivers for fear they will turn the water filthy. These rules are not only applied upon the untouchables by the higher caste; rather the untouchables themselves believe this is a decree ruled upon them from the gods, due to the sins they committed in a previous life.

#### **DAWAH<sup>4</sup>:**

Callers and preachers from the Muslims and the Christians continue to invite the "untouchables" to change their faith and consequently exit from their misery. But the invitation from the Muslims is more successful because when an "untouchable" accepts Islam he or she can marry from the Muslims immediately. And they are able to mix with all the Muslims in their Masjid, schools, and gatherings. None of the Muslims – even from the kings and leaders – will look down upon them, or deem themselves better than them.

As for the Christians, some of the Europeans deem it impure to sit with the "untouchables" and pray with them in the same church. Thus they ordered a specific church built for them.

From the events that facilitated many of the "untouchables" to accept the invitation to enter Islam; is when one of the Muslim scholars stayed with them inviting them to Islam for an extended amount of time. He clarified for them the virtue of Islam and the falsity of what they were upon until Allah guided all of them and they accepted Islam, and celebrated this day. The men, women, and children exited their huts each carrying a pitcher heading towards the river while they were saying "Allah is the Greatest". They filled the pitchers with water and returned to their homes overjoyed, praising Allah the One who removed this curse from them, purified them, and guided them to Islam.

↔ End of Shaykh Muhammad Taqi Din al-Hilali's words

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<sup>4</sup> Translator's note: This is what the Christians may refer to as proselytizing or evangelizing.

## EFFECTS OF THE DAWAH

The effects of the call to Islam did not go unnoticed. In July 1981 Carol Honsa published a piece in the *Christian Science Monitor* entitled: '*Hindu 'untouchables' converting to Islam for a chance at a better life*'<sup>5</sup>. In this article she wrote:

Mass conversions of hundreds of Hindu untouchables have sent **shock waves** through religious and government circles and riveted national attention on a unique -- and outlawed -- Indian form of apartheid.

Charges of money changing hands and sinister foreign influences have been hurled, and editorials and columns dissecting the reasons for the conversions have become daily newspaper fare. The central government has promised an investigation.

But the converts renouncing their traditional faith to become Muslims offer a simple explanation: a desire to escape the inequities of the Hindu caste system, which regards them as personally and inherently "unclean" -- hence untouchable -- and relegates them to the bottom of the Hindu social order.

The mass conversions of untouchables started this spring in the sleepy village of Meenakshipuram and have snowballed throughout the southern state of Tamil Nadu.

"We were sick of being treated like dirt," explained one of them who recalled having to speak with his head bowed and his mouth covered with a leaf to avoid accidentally "polluting" a caste Hindu with his saliva.

Other untouchable villagers complained of being abused verbally and physically by caste Hindus for the insolence of wearing shirts or shoes. Although untouchables formed the majority in Meenakshipuram, they were denied access to most public wells and water taps, segregated in one section of town, and, they have charged, frequently harassed by police.

**The villagers maintained that they became Muslims because Islam draws no caste distinctions and offers them social equality.**

Reacting to the mass conversions, many concerned Hindu leaders have called for religious reforms to eradicate the practice of untouchability and for stronger government efforts to help the harijans economically.

Translated and additional commentary added by Rasheed ibn Estes Barbee

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<sup>5</sup> By Carol Honsa, Special correspondent of The Christian Science Monitor JULY 30, 1981