

# Caste and Race: Mechanisms of Dehumanization

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## Abstract

This essay explores the dehumanizing effects of caste and race, as two separate but interlinked social phenomena. The method followed is to analyze the issue of caste and race in diverse social contexts and bring out the similarities in the institutionalization of discrimination in the two practices. I do this by tracing the contours of racism and 'casteism', as historical experiences. While racism, as an experience, cuts across a host of geographical and temporal spectrum, caste is a phenomenon obtainable mainly in the Indian subcontinent and Diasporas. My argument is: despite the limited geographical spread of the latter and the wider theatre occupied by the former, the contours of the two were/are similar. The dehumanizing effects they had on the 'object' populations were equally demonic.

## Keywords

Dehumanization, Caste, Race, Discrimination, Aryan1

## Caste and Race: Points of Intersection.

According to Cox (Cox, 1948, pp. 428-61) race and caste do not share a common ground: caste, was something exclusive to India with no racial underpinnings; race on the other hand, is a modern phenomenon that was co-terminus with industrial capitalism and the resultant colonial expansion:

Probably a realization of no single fact is of such crucial significance for an understanding of racial antagonism as that the phenomenon had its rise only in modern times. [...] all racial antagonisms can be traced to the policies [of]...white people of Europe and North America. (Cox, 1948,p. 322)

This view is based on the notion of racism as a colonial product that relied on a neat colored-white opposition. Capitalism and economic imperatives, indeed, played a crucial role in modern racial formation. It is also true that racism took its modern form and embodiment during colonial times. But in this essay, I consider racism to be all those essentializing concepts based

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on a set of real or imagined differences that fostered hatred/suspicion in a group towards another. As such, it was neither an exclusively western phenomenon nor a mere offshoot of industrial capitalism. The following lines by the Arab historiographer Ibn Khaldun show, how deeply ingrained was the concept in medieval consciousness:

The inhabitants of the zones that are far from temperate, such as the first, second, sixth and seventh zones, are also farther removed from being temperate in all their conditions. ...Most of them go naked. ...Their qualities of character, moreover, are close to those of dumb animals. It has been well reported that most of the Negroes of the first zone dwell in caves and thickets, eat herbs, live in savage isolation and do not congregate and eat each other (Khladun, 1967, pp. 58-59).

Though Khaldun subscribed to the Islamic belief which sees humanity as a single society born of a single male and female, even he was not immune to race prejudices. A fear of the other, a suspicion concerning the stranger and his/her ways are deeply ingrained in the imagination of all insular and inward looking human societies held together by some form of solidarity. This has probably to do with what Asad (drawing from Barthes) described as the 'uncertainty' concerning the meaning of objects or attitudes (Asad, 2007, 30).' The 'outsider' or the 'stranger' always gives rise to a 'semantic' uncertainty within a group. As Asad says, every society tends to fix these floating signifiers using particular techniques. Since the presence of the other was bound to impinge upon questions concerning 'our' space, identity, beliefs and culture the easiest way of fixing this semantic uncertainty was evoking the primordial trope of the demonic Other. This is probably why antiracist thinkers like Paul Gilroy show an instinctive aversion towards the idea of solidarity that fosters a 'we,' 'they' attitude (Gilroy, 2004, pp. 97-131). In the case of Europeans, this sense of demarcation was accentuated by those visible markers, especially skin color, that provided an instant rationale for binary thinking. The logic of Indian caste system also owes to an 'insider-outsider' logic that has racist underpinnings, as will be evident as the discussion progresses.

### **Race: The Historical Trajectory**

Sardar traces the origin of western racism to its early encounters with the other, stretching back to the real or imagined accounts of Marco Paulo and Sir John Mandeville (Sardar, 2005, pp.25-32). In these accounts the Other is given an infrahuman status that fails to match up with the 'norm,' i.e. the white westerner. While the westerner was represented as civilized, rational, white and human, the other was given the negative attributes of being barbaric, irrational, and beastly. In the early phases of history, encounters between people belonging to different races were limited and, barring the case of a few adventurers and

travelers, spatial mobility was limited for most people. Even nomads ranged about only in a limited geographical space. But even during this phase, the West/Other encounter was characterized by hostility and mistrust. Lindqvist notes quoting Hodgen:

Africans have been called beasts ever since the very first contacts, when Europeans described them as “rude and beast-like,” “like to brute beasts,” and “more brutish than the beasts they hunt.” (Lindqvist, 1997, 8)

During colonialism the negative discourse on the other became thicker, as it was used to legitimize colonial oppression. The ‘Other’ was consequently animalized, feminized and infantilized. It was made out that the ‘protective’ presence of the colonizer was something s/he desperately needed. Kipling captured this sentiment in his exhortation concerning Whiteman’s burden:

Take up the White Man’s burden---  
 Send forth the best ye breed---  
 Go bind your sons to exile  
 To serve your captives need;[---]  
 Your new-caught; sullen peoples,  
 Half-devil and half-child. (Cox, 1948, p. 345)

The colonial discourse was multi-layered. It was given a scientific hue with the introduction of pseudo-sciences like eugenics and phrenology. The African’s skull was said to resemble the ape’s and s/he was consigned to the lowest rung of social ladder. Camper drew up an elaborate system to measure up human skulls and determine the extent of human kinship with apes:

He [Camper] set as the ideal an angle of one hundred degrees, a facial angle acknowledged not to exist in reality but often used to portray Gods and Goddesses in Greek statuary. Measured with this ideal in mind, apes were said to have a facial angle of forty-two to fifty degrees, African Negroes and Kalmuks [...] a facial angle of seventy degrees and Europeans a more noble angle of eighty degrees. (Schiebinger, 1993, p.149)

Travelers’ tales of Africans freely copulating with apes perfectly fitted in with this narrative. Apes were considered a corrupt and degenerate form of fallen humans because of the ‘fateful bite’ of the apple, and African their closest kinsman. Stephen de Vimse, a naturalist of great stature, argued in late nineteenth century how Golaks could only be a cross between humans and apes since they didn’t have tails (Schiebinger, 1993, p.95). In other words, the question of Golaks belonging to the human species was not even worth considering for Vimse. As for Edward Long ‘an orangutan husband’ could not be ‘any dishonor to a Hottentot female’ (Schiebinger: 1993, p.5).

A few Africans and aboriginals who had visible physical deformities were brought to Europe and exhibited at popular fairs to show how different 'they' were from 'us.' The story of the Hottentot Bartmann is remarkable. She was exhibited widely in England and France as a typical Other, closer to apes than humans. As European fancy took wings, Hottentot women were imagined to have a natural apron, an extension of their labia, a pelvis that resembled the ape's and a sensuality unseen among humans (Schiebinger, 1993 p.171). The African was also branded with pseudo-scientific appellations like *Homo troglodytes*.

The Darwinian theory of biological evolution translated into sociology proved excellent fuel for racists. As Lindqvist describes it in *Exterminate the Brutes*, European raciology in both manifest and latent forms granted little right for the savage other to exist (Lindqvist, 1997, pp.97-120). According to the racist interpretations of evolutionary theory, only the fittest races, by implication the Caucasians, had the right to survival. The usurpation of the space occupied by other races was only corollary to what happened in the larger animal kingdom where the less-developed species made way for more developed and better adapted organisms. This was clearly the message by Scottish anthropologist Robert Knox:

Their [the dark races'] future history must then resemble the past. The Saxon race will never tolerate them- never amalgamate-never be at peace [...] blame them not [...] I pretend not even to censure [...] Now the fate of all these nations must be the same; it results from the nature of their populations, and nothing can arrest it...they will soon form mere natural curiosities: already there is the skin of one stuffed in England; another in Paris [...] In a word, they are fast disappearing from the face of the earth.

(Lindqvist, 1997, p.127)

This perverse evolutionary logic called for an expansion of the European space at the expense of the outsiders less fit to survive. Charles Darwin himself lent support to this when he observed:

At some future period, not very distant as measured in centuries, the civilized races of man will almost certainly exterminate and replace throughout the world the savage races (Lindqvist 107)

The consequence of this view of humanity as divided into infra and supra camps has been catastrophic. Its most powerful expressions were the institutions of colonialism and slavery. The white man's burden of 'civilizing' the barbarian, took the concomitant forms of 'epistemic violence' and physical extermination. The sheer cost in terms of human lives was staggering:

Ten million African Americans perished in middle passage, on reasonable estimates. Death en passant to a life more often than not worse than death. Starved worked, beaten, suffocated, beaten, suffocated diseased to death. Numbers as large again prematurely killed in new world slavery. Systematically, brutally worked, beaten, saddened or maddened into death. Seven million aboriginal inhabitants of Australia wiped out by European colonization and modernization. A lynching every other day in the southern United States throughout the 1890s. Ten million battered into death by Leopald's vicious regime in the Congo between 1885 and 1908, half of the population of the area castrated and delimbed and diseased in a brutality matched only by the six million Jews and nameless others gassed and shot and tortured to death by Aryan superiority in the 1940's for which the Congolese experience served as a precursive laboratory. Each death exceptional in transnational process of violence and violation all too sadly not. One million people murdered in 1994 in Rwanda in the ethnoracial name of not belonging. In one month. More than seventy per cent of the more than two million people rotting in US prisons...people of color (Goldberg, 2009 p. vi).

One of the familiar tropes in the colonial accounts was the image of the cannibal. Africans and Indians were given to extreme forms of cannibalism; according to John S. Mandeville, there were even human farms where cannibals fattened their victims before consuming them (Sardar, 2005, p.27). Thus cannibalized and dehumanized, the barbaric other was portrayed to be eminently 'killable.' His subhuman status was underlined by the fact that he was incapable of logical speech. The African, of course, could not speak European languages: if s/he couldn't speak 'our' language, it simply meant s/he was incapable of speech and logical thinking. The name 'Hottentot' itself used to describe the Khoikhoi people in South Africa is derived from the Dutch expression 'hotteren-totteren' which means 'stammer' or 'stutter' (Heath 2005). In *Tempest*, Prospero, portrayed by Shakespeare to represent the very epitome of European virtues, is positively boastful when he talks of his attempts to civilize Caliban by teaching him language. The only use of the language for Caliban was however he could curse his master in the new language: a little solace when we realize that the prize he had to pray for this was his freedom (Act I Scene II, Lines 355-70).

The wounds of the colonial experience have not healed and will continue festering for a long time. Its legacy extends to the post-colonial landscape with its marked asymmetry between the First and the Third World; in the poverty, starvation, deprivation and disease-infested map that constitute the geopolitics of Asia and Africa; and in a chain of global institutions from the IMF to the World Bank, aimed at perpetuating this unjust asymmetry.

### **Caste, a Form of Racism?**

Caste was largely an Indian phenomenon. According to Thapar, the Aryans who invaded the Indus valley were divided into three classes, namely the aristocracy, the priests and the common people (Thapar 37.) This was merely a form of social organization and there was sufficient room for intra and inter class mobility. The rigidifying of castes occurred after the subjugation of the Indus people, following perceived fears of miscegenation:

The first step in the direction of caste (as distinct from class) was taken when the Aryans treated the Dasas as beyond the social pale, probably owing to a fear of Dasas and the even greater fear that assimilation with them would lead to a loss of Aryan identity. Ostensibly the distinction was largely that of colour, the Dasas being darker and of an alien culture. The Sanskrit word for *varna* actually means colour. The colour element of caste was emphasized throughout this period and was eventually to become deep-rooted in the North Indian Aryan culture. Initially therefore the division was between Aryans and non- Aryans. Aryans were the *dvija* or twice born castes (the first being physical birth and the second the initiation into caste status) consisting of the *Kshatriyas* (warriors and aristocracy), the *Brahmans* (priests) and the *Vaishyas* (Cultivators); the fourth caste, the *shudras* were the Dasas and those of mixed *Aryan-Dasa* origin (Thapar: 37-8).

The reification of caste system owes to the colonization and subjugation of the local inhabitants by Aryan invaders is clear from this. This is also the view of other noted historians like Kosambi, who considers the *Dasa* and the *shudra* castes to be the descendents of the vanquished indigenous peoples (Kosambi, 1964: 50). Cox's view is different. He says there are no visible physical markers that distinguish one caste from another in terms of race (Cox, 1948: 3-108). This seems to be a view from outside where all the Indians fit into a stereotype. However, as Thapar herself says the identifying of Shudras as both the indigenous conquered and those of mixed race at the beginning itself had caused a blurring of racial boundaries. In India, Brahmins, even those belonging to the Dravidian states like Tamil Nadu are considered to have Aryan blood. As Rajanayagam notes, Dravidians in Tamil Nadu view Tamil speaking Brahmin Aiyars as Aryans and refuse to assimilate them in the local culture (Rajanayagam, 1997:134).

However, racial and caste boundaries were not strictly patrolled throughout history. As racial purity is itself a myth, we cannot imagine caste and race to have had an exact fit and the possibilities of many conquered indigenous populations later claiming or being granted the status of higher castes cannot be dismissed (Cox, 1948:8). Since the focus of this essay is the dehumanizing effect of caste and race and not the origin of the two phenomena,

it will be sufficient to summarize thus: caste divisions do not neatly fit into racial patterns; but the likelihood of the Aryan class formation taking a racist hue in their subsequent contact with the subjugated peoples, as pointed to by Thapar and Kosambi, cannot be denied.

The question whether caste was as inhuman as the race is one of degree and not essence. Both were equally inhuman with one or the other taking more monstrous manifestations at specific junctures. While race conflicts led to massive deaths, caste violence was more one-sided (i.e. we don't have many instances of the kind of all-out wars that took place between European conquerors and the Africans, for example) and was used over the ages as a technique of ensuring obedience and compliance rather than physical elimination. But physical torture and elimination were not entirely out of question in the caste equation and was employed when required.

Casteism relied on a hierarchical arrangement of humans into four distinct *varnas* or colors, viz. Brahmins (the priests and scholars), Kshatriyas (the royalty and the military), Vaishyas (the tradesmen) and Shudras (the servants). According to Hindu mythology, Manu created the Brahmins from his mouth, soldiers from his chest, Vaishyas from his thighs and Shudras from his feet (Thapar, 39-40). While the first two classes enjoyed virtual supremacy, the lot of the Vaishyas was not altogether bad. Being tradesman, they enjoyed financial security and wielded considerable power in the society. It was the lowest ranked Shudras, who were worst affected. They had to till the soil, toil for their lords, and enjoyed no right to land. To use Bourdieu's terms, they were completely denied all forms of capital whether symbolic, cultural or economic (Bourdieu, 1984). Their very visibility was defiling for other castes and were excluded from the public sphere: in other words, they were rendered invisible. As Gandhi remarked, it took a more sinister form than apartheid:

The laws of Cochin State are in a way much worse than those of South Africa...for an untouchable in Cochin is deprived of more human rights than the coloured man in South Africa. There is no such thing as unapproachability or invisibility in South Africa. I have no desire to single out Cochin for its disgraceful treatment of untouchables; for it is still unfortunately common to Hindus all over India, more or less (Cox 429).

The history of caste and untouchability is not as much drenched in blood as the history of race; but it was frequently punctuated by instances of violence where the helpless underdogs were molested, raped or killed with impunity by upper classes. Kamala Das, in her poem 'Honour,' refers to high-caste Nairs routinely beating and torturing their dependents belonging to the lower castes. Many a time corpses of women made pregnant by their masters

were found in village wells (Das, 1995: 56-7). Incidents like this were a norm rather than exception in caste violence.

But unlike race conflicts that took place in colonial settings, caste conflict was largely one-sided because caste operated at a different and probably more effective discursive level in which object populations were fully disempowered and incapacitated to protest. In this regard they were more like the slaves in the plantation who found themselves emotionally and physically displaced in alien settings. Just as the colonizers in the Caribbean islands took care to make the plantation labor a hetero-linguistic collection of Africans in order to forestall any organized rebellion, the upper castes split up the lower castes into a whole lot of vertical and horizontal divisions that precluded the possibility of a united revolt.

Here there was no need for mass extermination for *Lebensraum* the way imperialists practiced it in the colonies. The lower-castes offered the upper-castes the labor needed for their comforts. The farmland and the bulk of the produce belonged to higher castes but the labor was provided by lower castes. Though they were untouchables and had to hence stay away from the gaze of the 'touchables' (an expression used by Arundhati Roy to lampoon the touchable-untouchable divide, (Roy, 1997:13)), the fruit and grains they produced were not stigmatized (Nisar and Kandaswamy: 24). The caste system thus offered higher castes everything they wanted: abundant livelihood, ample leisure and an inexhaustible supply of labor; but it took away from lower castes their essential identity as humans. This was the worst form of treatment meted out to a proletariat in Marxist terms.

While the epistemic violence practiced on 'inferior' races took the form of pseudo scientific discourses, in the case of caste it was wrapped in an overarching religious discourse. While 'superior' races monopolized the 'scientific' discourse, the religious discourse was controlled by the scholarly Brahmins. Though Kshatriyas, and Vaishyas too were allowed to learn Sanskrit, the language of Scriptures, Brahmins alone had the privilege of teaching and interpreting them. Lower castes could neither teach nor learn them: in fact the injunction was to cut off his/her tongue if he/she happened to recite Veda (<http://www.raceandhistory.com/historicalviews/varna.htm>).

In places like Kerala, lower castes were made to observe elaborate dress and behavioral codes: their women could not cover their breasts; men could not grow mustache and were banned from venturing out during noontime when their large shadows could defile the Caste Hindus. Women of the lower tribes were supposed to carry a broom with them, so that they could sweep the roads they polluted by their presence. The untouchables were similarly barred from using roads meant for bullock carts. The rigorous observance of these rules



made life hell for the untouchables. It was in this context that Swami Vivekananda remarked Kerala to be a 'lunatic asylum' (Nisar and Kandaswamy, 2007:18).

### **Conflict versus Consensus?**

According to Cox, race relationships were marked with conflict unlike caste relations that were based on consensus (Cox, 1948: 435-36). This is true only to an extent. Caste, embedded as it was in a religious narrative, succeeded to a great extent in forestalling rebellion. In sociological terms, it was an ossified structure that left little room for agency of those consigned to the lower strata. Empowerment in all forms was denied for them: with no cultural, symbolic or economic capital they had no means to express protest: in fact, the majority of them believed it to be their fate, as ordained by God, and willfully resigned to their lot. However, it will be wrong to assume that caste was always based on consensus, as Cox implies. In spite of all the repressive machinery employed by the Brahminic class, there were instances of vehement opposition and rebellion by the downtrodden classes.

One of the earliest protest movements was led by Ayyankali in Kerala (Nisar &Kandaswami, 2007). Ayyankali belonged to the untouchable class of Pulayars, who were not allowed to ride bullock carts or use highways. During the latter half of the nineteenth century, Ayyankali organized the movement called *Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangham* (Society for the Maintenance of the Destitute). The organization's aims went beyond mere maintenance; it was a proactive organization that defied the prescriptions of caste hierarchy. Ayyankali and his men rode bullock carts on highways proscribed for untouchables and fought the upper caste men when they tried to prevent them. He organized untouchable women and exhorted them to wear blouses which was forbidden. Similarly he urged them to give up wearing iron ear rings that marked them off as 'untouchable.'

These symbolic steps were revolutionary in the nineteenth century context and sparked off many riots; during riots caste-Hindus chopped off the ears of some untouchable women for refusing to wear the iron ornaments and taking to clothes covering their breasts. Ayyankali's activism saw him win many concessions from the Government including educational rights for untouchables. But when untouchable children started going to school, (some of them, aged sixteen and seventeen, were no longer children when they joined school) the caste Hindus kicked up a storm and boycotted the classes. Ayyankali, however, did not succumb to the pressures and went on pressurizing for greater rights for the untouchables (Nisar & Kandaswamy 88-89).

The struggle led by Dr. Ambedkar in the twentieth century was on a much larger scale and had a pan-Indian perspective. Being a western educated Indian, belonging to the untouchable class of Mahars, Ambedkar organized Dalits from different parts of the country and made a unified case for affirmative action (Moon, 2001:107-17). As the architect of the Indian constitution, he made provisions for reservations for Dalits in government jobs and legislative assemblies. These were contentious moves that led to protests from the upper castes and, in many instances, led to caste and religious riots.

### **Caste & Race: A Narrative of Similarities.**

In this section, I shall make a brief overview of four first-person narratives to illustrate the similarities between the experiences of race and caste. The books I examine are the autobiographies of Frederick Douglass (1892), and Malcolm X (Haley, 1964) from the race angle and that of Omprakash Valmiki (2003) and Vasant Moon (2001) from the caste angle. The dominant tropes of these autobiographies are illustrative of the similarities between race and caste as institutions of dehumanization.

Both race and caste were institutionalized using mechanisms of exclusion, exploitation, systematic disempowerment, material deprivation and in some cases brute aggression. Frederick Douglass and Malcolm X represent two distinct phases of the black struggle in America. Frederick Douglass was born a slave; he didn't know who his father was and met his mother only on a couple of occasions (Douglass, 1962:28-9). He was brought up by his grandmother from whom he was separated in tragic circumstances. One of the most telling instances in his biography is the way his master reacted when his mistress tried to teach him letters. His master was angry and warned his wife that teaching the Negro letters will be the first step toward making him 'unfit to be a slave' (Douglass79).

In the other two narratives (this aspect is not so evident in Moon) too, we notice how the dominant race/caste tried to prevent the downtrodden from getting the benefit of education/literacy. This had to do with a basic ontological uncertainty. The dominant powers knew the Other was capable of being like her/himself provided s/he was given access to resources. Hence, these zealous attempts to deny him/her the basic resource: knowledge. Douglass in his narrative says how slaves had no idea about Calendar month or year; didn't know their birthdays or who their fathers were. All their masters wanted them know was their mothers, and hence they too, were slaves (Douglass,1948: 27-9) . This shows how race was used as an instrument of exploitation, (by using sexually exploiting African women; using them as machines to produce more children and thus more labor and not allowing them to take care of their babies or be with them), disempowerment and exclusion (by not allowing the blacks to

learn or have the benefit of education). Douglass's account of early life is littered with instances of brutal physical torture and deprivation that slaves had to put up with. It is a tale of hunger, starvation and inhumanity.

Malcolm X belonged to a later phase when Blacks were no longer slaves. But they were only legally free; it was the time when the terror of the Ku Klux Klan was at its peak. Malcolm's father Earl Little was killed by white terrorists; on more than one occasion his house was torched by Klan and the police offered his family little protection. The insurance firm claimed his father's death to be a suicide and refused to pay the family its dues. He and his brothers had to starve for days and survived on unwholesome food. At school, his white teachers were not sympathetic and said it was better for him to be a carpenter than trying to be a lawyer. The Welfare agents of the state took him off from his mother whom they declared insane, and sent him to a white foster family; his mother was sent to a lunatic asylum. As he remarks, his family was completely destroyed by the state (Hailey 1-46).

It is the same motifs of exclusion, exploitation, deprivation and disempowerment that dominate the writings of Valmiki and Moon. Valmiki's autobiography is titled *Joothan*, a word that means 'leftover.' Being born into an untouchable community, his family had to feed on the leftovers of the upper castes; most of the time they went starving. When Valmiki went to school, it was the same experience that Douglass and MalcolmX had to face, probably more bitter. His teachers didn't understand why an untouchable was attending classes; they often asked him to sweep classrooms and the compound; forced him to all kinds of physical labor. Still, he was brutally punished when he failed produce the correct answers. His upper-caste class-mates bullied and ridiculed him. The upper classes feared education would make untouchables rebellious. Though he was ranked first in the class, he was not allowed to take part in the extra-curricular activities. Like his two black counterparts, his life is a story of success against formidable odds (Valmik, 2003:1-50).

The autobiography of Moon is less 'tragic' compared with the other three. He lived in comparatively better circumstances and his Gandhian teachers were sympathetic to him. But his Mahar caste too had to put up with material and emotional deprivation and social boycott. Carrying and disposing off carriages was the task traditionally ascribed to the Mahars. Once when the community refused to discharge this caste-duty, they were boycotted and threatened. He and his siblings led a miserable life of deprivation and had put up themselves in the cramped room of a generous neighbor. He mentions how he went to school in coarse clothes with an empty stomach (Moon, 2002:1-39).

Poverty and starvation are overriding motifs of these autobiographies. Poverty and hunger totally deprive one of his/her sense of personal dignity and

self-respect. It was hunger that was used by both caste and race hierarchy to maintain their regime; Once the 'underdog' was kept in a state of perpetual poverty and hunger, his/her disempowerment and social exclusion could be achieved with the use of minimal force. MJ Akbar observes:

When a generation or two dies of the ultimate denial, delirious for a handful of rice, while a chorus of spiders fattens indifferently in the background, physical and mental slavery becomes an easy option to the dying (Akbar, 1988, p. 87)

### **Conclusion.**

The above analysis shows how race and caste are similar in most respects. Viewed in this light Cox's argument that they are two entirely separate phenomena with incommensurable structures does not seem tenable (Cox, 1948, pp. 428-53). Similarly, his theorizing of caste as one based on consensus is flawed. The history of caste is actually marked by several instances of struggle. This narrative of race and caste as instruments of brutal deprivation and inhuman exclusion extends to the present world. This is a point well-illustrated by Goldberg (2009) and Akbar (1988). In short, the Black and the Untouchable are kinsmen separated by oceans but united by a shared fate.

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