

**Dr. B.R. AMBEDKAR
AS AN
EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL REFORMER**

RAMADAS V.

Lecturer

Regional Institute of Education

Ajmer, Rajasthan

Thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Education
University of Calicut

**DEPARTMENT OF ADULT EDUCATION
AND EXTENSION SERVICES
UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT
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DECLARATION

I, Ramadas. V. do hereby declare that this thesis
“Dr. B.R. AMBEDKAR AS AN EDUCATIONAL
AND SOCIAL REFORMER” has not been
submitted by me for the award of a Degree,
Diploma, Title or Recognition, before.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. V.', written over a horizontal line.

Ramadas V.

Calicut
9-4-2002

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CERTIFICATE

I, Dr. K. Sivarajan do hereby certify that this thesis
“Dr. B.R. AMBEDKAR AS AN EDUCATIONAL
AND SOCIAL REFORMER” is a record of
bonafide study and research carried out by Sri.
Ramadas V. under my guidance.



Dr. K. Sivarajan

Director

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Ramadas V.

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Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

- Need and significance of the study
- Stating the problem
- Objectives of the study
- Scope of the study
- Procedure in brief
- Delimiting the study
- Organisation of the thesis

INTRODUCTION

Education as a source of power has been instrumental to the social, religious, economic and political under currents of India. It remains to be an agent of power and control protecting the interests of the ruling class. In the hands of the native elites it was an apparatus to subject the Dalits¹, to the ideology which worked as the basis of the age old hierarchical caste hegemonic social structure in India. Later, the imperial forces employed it as a means to safeguard their colonial interests.

During the Vedic period, education was the concern of the priestly class and knowledge was confined to Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaisyas. The Shudras, the fourth category in the 'Chaturvarna System', and the outcastes were under severe penalties from access to the sacredness of the Vedic knowledge. Though the Buddhist and other movements challenged the upper caste hegemony in the socio- religious- political arena they could not make any fundamental breach in the elite monopoly of education at large. The exclusive possession of knowledge by the upper castes remained unshakable even in the pre and early phases of the colonial rule. This resulted in the subjugation of the Dalits for centuries, and threw them into an abyss of moral degradation.

The colonial education was neither a continuation nor a modernized transformation of the traditional system of Indian education; it emerged on the academic scene as an antiseptic isolation from the historically evolved structure². It, though targeted to meet the needs of the colonial administration and to establish the imperial economic-political structure, could play a role

in breaking down the traditional norms and values which were in consonance with the older feudal socio-economic-political structure³. It did also play an instrumental role in sowing the seeds of modern nationalism in India.

The English education, opened up a critique of the indigenous system and culture and thereby became instrumental to certain powerful movements of social and religious protests and reform movements like ' Satya Shodak Samaj' led by Jotiba Phule in Maharashtra⁴. Similar movements had been witnessed in other parts of the country too; for instances the movement led by E.V. Ramaswamy in Tamil Nadu, Narayana Guru and Ayyappan in Kerala., Achutananand in U.P. and Mangroo Ram in Punjab. Also it led to the emergence of the anti - imperialist movement for national liberation, which had drawn its energy in its early stages from the ideology of the Hindu nationalism.

Moving and living in such a complex milieu Ambedkar had to confront two impending dominations - colonialism and the caste Hindu hegemony. As a man of his time that was influenced by liberalism, socialism and industrialization, Ambedkar visualized an Indian society which would be constructed not from the 'spirit' of Hindu cultural nationalism but from the energy of the pluralistic culture which is the essence of India's national self. Discerning reconstruction of Indian society from a multicultural perspective, he considered education as a powerful instrument that would strengthen the effort to shake off the fixation to 'traditional values', and would accelerate extermination of Hindu social slavery and enhance construction of modernity.

Need and Significance of the Study

The present study purports to problematise Ambedkar's educational and

social thoughts – how does he conceive education as an instrument of liberation and construction of modernity. Ambedkar had to face a duplex situation, the colonial domination on one hand and the caste Hindu hegemony on the other. The imperial forces wanted to reproduce the colonial socio-economic-political relations by subjecting the native population to colonial notions. On the other hand, the caste elites being the over-lords for centuries but politically disposed under the colonial dominance had to thwart out the imperial regime; but they at the same time wanted to keep the low castes subdued under their socio-religious powers. This complex predicament transpired to pose a dual task for Ambedkar and other dalit leaders - resisting the colonial domination and breaking the age old social order which cater to the caste Hindu hegemony, casteism and untouchability.

How did Ambedkar confront these forces? On the one hand he wanted to better the conditions of the Dalits by liberating them from the Hindu social imperialism, for which he would have resorted to any available instrument irrespective of its source of origin. At the same time he did not want to submit himself to any kind of domination - external or indigenous. Realising that knowledge has a vital role in effecting social transformation, he ventured to channelise the colonial education, the only source of knowledge open for the Dalits, to cater to the needs of the movements organised for the emancipation of the depressed classes.

But, he found that the Dalits, being the victims of untouchability and casteism for centuries, had internalized their subjectivity to Hindu domination as if something 'natural'. Hence, a dispositional change on their part was

imminent to bring them into the space of the struggle for emancipation. As a means for a shift in their disposition, Ambedkar turned to education. He contemplated education as an instrument on the one hand to resist the native elite domination and on the other to construct new identities and relations of the Dalits.

Ambedkar visualized education not merely as a means of livelihood or as a means to raise the 'avarnas' to the status of the 'savarnas', but as a powerful weapon that would help the Dalits to liberate themselves from ignorance and to build up their fight against injustice and humiliation and thus lead them to their ultimate emancipation. Accordingly he considered education a pre-requisite for any kind of organization or movement. This is convincingly reflected in his trio-slogan of action "Educate- Agitate, Organize"

As a social revolutionary Ambedkar identified himself with the struggles of the downtrodden masses for human rights, dignity, freedom and justice. His non-ending war against the evil essence of caste-ridden Hindu social order has established his identity in the history of Indian social reformation. His sustained efforts and unyielding spirit in the fight against caste based discrimination will continue to inspire the exploited, subjugated and marginalized people in their struggle for a rightful place in the society, politics and economy.

Ambedkarism is today a living force in India and it defines the ideology of the Dalit movements⁵. But, Ambedkar as a thinker and as an ardent rebel of casteism is facing a systematic dememorisation. The communities of

knowledge and power are united in their efforts to becloud the thoughts and struggles of this social revolutionary. This unlearning is not attempted by an outright rejection of him but by celebrating him, which simultaneously functions as an instrument of organized memory and forgetfulness.

Our social scientists and academicians are a bit reluctant to discourse on Ambedkar's life and struggle against casteism. Though his observations and teachings are still relevant for India as well as the world, the academics in the country have almost ignored this intellectual and thus the scholarly studies of caste issues are discouraged. However, outside the academic world, attempts are being made to designate him as a false god, by rediscovering the facts which are 'feared' 'erased'⁶. Even abroad, the caste - Hindu minds are not found ready to recognise Ambedkar. The Non Resident Indians in New York recently raised money to finance a chair of South Asian Studies at the University of Columbia. But due to the upper caste domination among the NRIs the suggestion to name the chair after the Columbia University's most famous Indian graduate Dr. Ambedkar was sidelined⁷.

The UN world congress against racism (WCAR), held in South Africa from August 31 to September 7, 2001 discussed issues like racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. The conference was a testimony to the ongoing fight for social justice, to the battles already won as well as those remain to be fought. The conference made a note of the struggle against all the vestiges and forms of the brutal discriminations that so long has tyrannised a vast majority of people in India as well as other parts of the world. The South Africa conference was also a long stride in the global 'Dalit'

movement. After two and a half decades of obstructionism by the Indian elites caste is still recognized as a form of racist- related discrimination. However the United Nations forum could not discuss it in the South Africa conference. The government, the academics or the intellectuals in India still find it demeaning to discuss the issue of caste based discrimination and atrocities in the country and to suggest solution for it. But, what is truly demeaning is the efforts to block discussions, the refusal to have transparency before the world⁸. This unveils the collective conspiracy of silence on the part of the Indian elite with a view to becloud the sprouting Dalit – anti caste- class movement.

The surveys of educational research in India published hitherto present reports of the studies on the educational thoughts of many thinkers of indigenous and foreign origin. But not a single study is reported on the educational ideals of Dr. Amedkar in any of the six survey reports available at present. Therefore, the present study that is intended to expound Ambedkar's conception of education as an instrument for emancipation of the downtrodden masses in India is quite significant.

Stating the Problem

The problem for the present study has been stated as 'Dr. B.R. Ambedkar as an Educational and Social Reformer.'

Objectives of the Study

1. To analyse and interpret Ambedkar's ideological reflection on social and political aspects and on their reformation, in the light of the

characteristics of the social and political order that prevailed in India during his life time and before.

2. To assess the contribution made by Ambedkar as a social reformist, in terms of the development of the down trodden classes in India and with special reference to the Ambedkar Movement.
3. To assess the services rendered by Ambedkar in his various official capacities, for the propagation and establishment of his messages.
4. To analyse and interpret Ambedkar's conception of education as power, as a tool for the development of the individual as well as the society and as an instrument for the emancipation of the deprived groups.
5. To trace the contribution made by Ambedkar for the development of education in general and for the education of the Dalits in particular.
6. To analyse and interpret the educational ideas and activities of Ambedkar in the light of his message, 'Educate, Agitate and Organise'.
7. To establish meaningful linkages between Ambedkar's theories on social and political reformation and on education and its development.

Scope of the Study

The study essentially focuses on Ambedkar's conception of education – how he views education as an instrument that enables the Dalits to liberate themselves from their dominated position in the society. Here the analysis delineates how Ambedkar and the Dalits used education as a means to resist the age old social slavery imposed by the native elite supremacy. Further, his

theories on the social formations in India and conception of the role of education in effecting social change has been made the subject of inquiry.

To set the milieu for the above analysis an attempt has been made to trace the contribution of Ambedkar in the field of education for the elevation of the Dalits from their dominated position in the society. This invariably involves an analysis of his work as the member of Bombay Legislative Council and Viceroy's Executive Council for the education of the depressed classes, and an enumeration of the services rendered by the "People's Education Society" established by him in 1945. Apart from these, as Ambedkar's educational projects are inseparably intertwined with his social reform agenda, an exposition of the social struggle led by him for the emancipation of the Dalits is also pursued. In this connection the social actions organised by him for the eradication of untouchability, and for protection of the rights of the Dalits to enter the temples, to use public water tanks etc. too have been analysed. Based on the above expositions the philosophy underlying his trio-slogan of action "Educate-Agitate-Organise" which contends the spirit of his message to his followers also has been examined. The result of all these analyses have been further examined in terms of the applicability of his ideas in contemporary Indian Scenario.

Procedure in Brief

The methodology adopted for the study is primarily the procedure of content analysis. However insights from historical, sociological and philosophical perspectives were also utilised to enrich the methodology.

The primary source of the study included the writings and speeches of

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, together with source materials on Ambedkar and the movements of untouchables, both published by Department of Education, Government of Maharashtra. The books, articles and monographs written on Ambedkar and Dalit movements were used as secondary source of information.

The views and observations of different scholars on the Dalit movement in India were gathered through a scheduled interview. The schedule contained four open ended questions on Ambedkar's social and educational thoughts and the movement led by him. Both direct and postal means were used to gather information sought through the interview schedule.

As part of the preliminary analysis the literary sources were subjected to external and internal criticism. The information collected from the primary and secondary sources and interview schedule were examined by using the technique of textual analysis. The information gathered from these sources were correlated and corroborated to make the observations made by the investigator more reliable.

Delimiting the Study

Ambedkar lived many lives – as an academic, as a political activist, as a member of legislature, as a law minister in the pre-independent and independent India. But his sole aim was to liberate the Dalits from the shackles of Hindu hegemony. His contributions rest not only in the social and educational fields but also in the domains of economics, political science, law, constitutional studies etc. His thoughts can be studied from the perspectives of varied disciplines. However, the present endeavour has been

limited to the analysis of his educational contributions in the context of his social ideals and the movement for the emancipation of the Dalits. Apart from the social ideology, his educational ideals can be studied from the perspectives of economics, political science, religion etc. But it is beyond the pragmatic concerns of time and resources. Therefore, the focus of the study has been delimited to his educational and social projects.

Organisation of the Thesis

The present thesis is organised in ten chapters. The introduction contains need and significance of the study, statement of the problem, objectives and scope of the study and procedure and delimiting of the study.

The second chapter sets the milieu in which Ambedkar lived and moved. It also presents a brief biographical sketch focusing on certain concrete images of Ambedkar.

The next chapter is an attempt to review the major observations made by various scholars on Ambedkar's social and educational thoughts and the movement led by him. The fourth chapter gives a precise description of the methodology adopted for the study.

The chapters five to nine form the analysis part of the study. While chapter five deals with the unfolding of Ambedkar, ideology and the movement that he led in the 1920s chapter six focuses on Ambedkar's emergence as the unequivocal Dalit leader in the national political scene, the ups and downs of his movement and the final demise of this great social reformer. Chapter seven is an examination of Ambedkar's stand on various issues in the social and political chemistry of India. Here, his expositions on

the philosophy of Hinduism, questions of liberty, equality and fraternity, Hindu social order, origin and spread of caste, need for annihilation of caste, and questions of identities of the shudras and the untouchables are the objects of inquiry. The next two chapters trace Ambedkar's contributions for the educational upliftment of the downtrodden people. These chapters seek to explore how he conceived education as an instrument for the construction of modernity in India and for the emancipation of the Dalits. His trio slogan of action 'Educate, Agitate and Organise' is also examined in the relative context of education, power and politics.

The conclusion and suggestions of the study are presented in the final chapter of the thesis. A bibliography is given at the end.

Note:

1. Dalits are a class of people who are outside the four fold caste structure of Indian society. These outcastes were treated as untouchables and were forced to lead a life more wretched than that of slaves.
2. Kaur, K. 1985, *Education in India 1781-1985: Policies planning and implementation*, Chandigarh: CRRID, P.1.
3. Kamat, A.R. 1985, Educational and Social Change, in Sukhla, S. & Kumar, K (Eds.), *Sociological perspective in education*, Delhi: Chankya, p. 177.
4. Ibid.
5. Omvedt, G. (1999) *Dalit and democratic revolution: Dr. Ambedkar and the dalit movement in colonial India*, New Delhi : Sage, p.223.
6. Shourie, A. (1997) *Worshipping false gods: Ambedkar and the facts which have been erased*, New Delhi: Harper Coolings.
7. Omvedt, G. The UN, racism and caste- I, *The Hindu*, dated 10th April, 2001
8. Ibid.

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Chapter 2
AMBEDKAR : LIFE, TIME AND STRUGGLE

- Birth and education
- A victim of casteism and untouchability
- A student of Indian society and culture
- The war against casteism
- Advocate of state socialism
- The conversion
- Persons who influenced Ambedkar
- An unfinished life

AMBEDKAR : LIFE, TIME AND STRUGGLE

The life and activities of every great thinker or activist, depend to a great extent on the various problematic conditions under which he/she lives and works and struggles to bring about desired changes. In the case of Ambedkar, this societal relationship is far more evident, as he was born in a community which, for centuries, had been subjected to deprivations, miseries, humiliations, oppressions and denials in every worthy aspect of human life. Hence any indepth study on Ambedkar has to be attempted in the background of his familial and social circumstances only. As such, a brief study of his 'life, time and struggle' has been taken up here, to begin with.

Life of Ambedkar is inseparably intertwined with the most decisive socio- political developments in the history of modern India. At the time of his birth the Indian sub-continent was in the presage of a well required social revolution. It is too inadequate to qualify this revolution merely as 'nationalist movement'. Doubtless to say, the establishment of the political sovereignty was the impending need of the nation. But in fact, the rise and growth of nationalism was the political expression of the deeper changes that were undergoing in the society, culture and economy of the country.

Structurally India was in its very initial stage of transformation from an agrarian, feudal or semi-feudal economy to a modern industrial economy. The society was heading towards modernization with an emphasis on freedom of the individual, nucleation of the family, as well as emergence of new classes and rationalist - secular - humanist values. Despite the working of these forces the society remained a caste based hierarchy with all its anomalies.

The people were kept segregated on the lines of castes, religions, regions and languages and the feeling of togetherness was localized within these categories. The institution of caste had fixed the people on the social scale, interdicting the upward mobility of the individuals. This unscrupulous social scourge had made the caste elites the sole beneficiaries of the society. They exploited the downtrodden masses by all means, denied them knowledge and power and kept them under severe penalties for any defiance – social, religious, economic, educational and political.

The caste system with its baneful insistence on endogamy, hereditary occupation, untouchability and a pre-fixed social status made the conditions of the Dalits extremely miserable. The colonial rule, though it paved the way for the emergence of new classes like factory workers and plantation proletariat on the one hand and the industrial or business classes and a bureaucracy from the high caste Hindus on the other, could not effect changes in the caste hegemony and the rule of untouchability. Colonialism in India was “ *a political organization that shaped the traditional caste-feudal structures and Mughal bureaucracies to the needs of a new British - controlled colonial state.....In the process the traditional structures of caste were used, transformed and in some way even strengthened.*”¹ The result was that the caste-elites continued to have control over education, administrative positions and professions. Entry to the colonial state machinery was restricted to those who had English education and it was the privilege of the literate caste primarily the caste Hindus, who gained the monopoly of bureaucratic positions.

The struggle for independence and the social reform movement under the characteristic leadership, from the very beginning, had its basis on the ideology of Hindu Nationalism. The politically disposed caste-elites, the former exploitative ruling alliance, had to regain their rule in the country as against the colonial forces and also at the same time maintain their position against the masses within the Indian caste-class hierarchy. In order to safeguard this dual interest the caste elites who combined in them both the leadership of nationalist and reformist movements made the independence struggle primarily Hinduistic. But the inherent hierarchy of contradictions within the Hindu social order - the contradiction between the upper castes and the lower castes - was an obstacle to the harmonious development of Hindu nationalism.

The aspirations of the caste-elites to attain independence from the British imperialism and at the same time keep their power intact vis-à-vis the castes and classes below them, further got a jolt from the working of other reform movements in the country, which had disengaged from the Hindu reform agenda but had focused on a total social upheaval. This forced the caste-elites leadership to introduce a new dimension to the nationalist movement in order to make it compatible with the emergent socio-political compulsions. In the process the ideology of the oneness of Hindus as against the Europeans and the Muslims formed the basis of the entire movement. Moreover, the theory of Aryan superiority propounded by the colonial discourse worked in a new direction in the minds of the Hindus to identify the upper castes as 'Aryans' – equivalent to Europeans - and the Vedas as the core of the Hindu

religion. As a result of these, the freedom movement also set the stage for a confrontation between the fundamentalist sections of the Hindus and the Muslims. Obviously the colonial interests and the interests of the Muslim elites also contributed their own share to burn the fire in its fullest vigour. The Dalits and other depressed classes had to establish the identity of their movement against the Hindu nationalism and caste hegemony. The already divided national identities led to the 'historical necessity' of partition and formation of India, the Hindustan, and Pakistan. It was in this turbulent backdrop of history that Dr. B.R. Ambedkar lived and moved.

Birth and Education

Bhim Rao was born on 14 April 1891 in an untouchable 'Mahar' family at Mhow, near Indore in the present Madhya Pradesh. He was the fourteenth child of Ramji Sakpal and Bhimbai. Ramji Sakpal (1848-1913) was a headmaster in the Military School in the rank of subedar-major. Bhimbai (1854-96) belonged to a well-to-do family of Murbadkars who were also employed in the British army. Bhimrao's family hailed originally from the Ambavade village located in the Ratnagiri District of the present Maharashtra. His official name in the school register was Bhima Rao Ambavadekar. There was a Brahmin teacher in his school with the surname Ambedkar, who somehow had a soft corner for the boy. It was the kindness of this teacher which made him ultimately adopt Ambedkar as his surname.

Ambedkar got married to Ramabai, a nine years old girl, at the age of fourteen. He passed matriculation in 1907. The occasion was celebrated under the presidency of S.K. Bole, a leader of the Satyashodak social reform

movement, and he was presented with a copy of the biography of Buddha by the author K.A. Keluskar himself. With the help of a scholarship offered by Maharaja Syajirao Gaekwad of Baroda, he completed the B.A. degree in 1912. His higher education was in the West. There also his studies were financed by the Maharaja, on an agreement to serve in the Baroda state after completing the studies. He took his MA degree in 1915 and Ph.D degree in 1916 from the renowned Columbia University, New York.

After successful completion of his studies at the Columbia University he left New York for London and entered the Gray's Inn for doing Bar-at-Law and simultaneously enrolled himself in the London School of Economic and Political Science. But, when he was half the way through his studies the Maharaja of Baroda called him back, as the period of scholarship granted to him was over.

Back in India he assumed the office of the Military Secretary to the Maharaja. But due to the unbearable humiliation he had to suffer at the hands of caste-Hindus he left Baroda state. For a shortwhile he worked as a professor of political economy at the Sydenham College, Bombay. He resigned from this post to resume his economic and legal studies in London. This time the Maharaja of Kohlapur rendered him financial assistance.

Before leaving for London he had given evidence before the Southborough Commission on franchise; and had advocated separate electorate for the untouchables. In 1921 he got his M.Sc. for his thesis "Provincial Decentralization of Imperial Finance in British India" He obtained the DSc (Econ) degree in 1922 from the London University for the thesis.

“The Problem of the Rupee: Its Origin and its Solution”. Taking his Bar-at-Law degree from the Gray’s Inn he went to Germany and joined the famous University of Bonn for a higher course of studies in economics. But he could not complete his studies due to shortage of funds.

A Victim of Casteism and Untouchability

Ambedkar’s birth in an ‘untouchable’ community made him undergo humiliating experiences. In those days untouchability was deeply entrenched in the minds of the caste Hindus. It did not spare any indigenous population which took its place outside the Varnasystem. The touch, the shadow, even the voice of the low caste people were deemed to be polluting to the caste-Hindus.

At school, like every untouchable child, Ambedkar was a victim of this castes segregation. He was asked to sit away from the upper caste boys and was forbidden from mixing with them. His Sanskrit teacher refused to teach him at all. The other teachers did not touch the note books of their ‘untouchable’ pupils; refused to entertain even an oral interaction for fear of getting polluted.

Once Ambedkar and his elder brother were travelling by a bullock cart. They were thrown out by the cart man when he came to know their ‘untouchable’ identity. They could resume the journey only by paying double the fare. However, his brother had to drive the cart; the cart man followed it on foot.

These dehumanized conditions of life persevered to scourge him even when he came back from America after completing his higher studies. When

he took up the post of the Military Secretary to the Maharaja of Baroda, he found himself catapulted in the midst of upper caste humiliations. Even the peons used to throw the office files at him; he could not get drinking water in the office. He was thrown out of the Parsi Inn in which he was staying, when its owner came to know he was an 'untouchable'.

The stigma of untouchability held on to vex him at Sydenham College, Bombay too. Here in spite of his being the professor of political economy he was never allowed by his caste colleagues to drink water from the pot in the staff room. In the Bombay High Court this lawyer was forced to confine to mofusil work as the solicitors refused to have any working relationship with him on the ground that he belonged to an 'untouchable' community. Thus, his academic laurels, high office and personal achievements could not defend him against the deep rooted caste prejudice.

A Student of Indian Society and Culture

Ambedkar was greatly influenced by the Western ideals. Much of his conception of the social issues, his socio-humanist approach to life and his critical mindedness were the products of his being educated in the equalitarian sunshine in the West. Notwithstanding all these, Ambedkar remained an Indian at heart. He was never capitulated to the fancies of the Western life styles. Whether at home or abroad he was always concerned with the reconstruction of the Indian society. Using the paraphernalia of history, economics, anthropology and sociology he investigated its what's, whys and hows.

His early academic writings reflect his identification with the working

class and his harsh critique of imperialism. Combined with the multifarious scholarship he was concerned theoretically with what puzzled him practically most - the caste ridden Indian society, its structure, pathology and reformation. His social, political and theoretical interest led him to unravel the origin and the structure of caste as a characteristic institution in India. His first work on this line was the "Castes in India: Their mechanism, genesis and development". According to him the superposition of endogamy on exogamy was the road that led to the creation of caste². Further, he considered caste as an enclosed class or Varna. The first Varna to enclose itself around endogamy was the Brahmins. The lower castes came into being through the same process of enclosing, by an imitation of the Brahmins.

In his book "Annihilation of Caste" he charges the caste system as being the single most disastrous feature of Hinduism. He characterized it not as a division of labour but as the division of labourers³. His other two scholarly works were "Who were the Shudras?" and "The Untouchables: Who were they and why they became untouchables" In the first work, he expounds the identity of the Shudras and the forces that made them the fourth Varna. In the second he traces the origin of the untouchables and the practice of untouchability. Rejecting the racial and occupational theories of untouchability he centralized his theory of untouchables on a notion of the 'broken- man'.

Ambedkar's study of the Indian social order was essentially an attempt to resolve the question of how and why it evolved into a hierarchical, unjust, fragmented, exploitative caste system. He never considered his theoretical

expositions as the final say on the subject, rather he put them before the erudites for their judgment. But, as this 'untouchable' was engaged in the exposition of the Hindu literature, he was and is being marginalized with a conspiracy of silence.

The Crypto Educationist

It is education that furnishes moral arsenal for any social movement. In his struggle for the liberation of the Dalits from the Hindu social slavery, Ambedkar had the right cognizance of the role that education has to play. He considered education as a powerful instrument for raising the overall status of the depressed and deprived classes.

The more education the more the chances for progress, he thought. He desired the elevation of the depressed classes to be the responsibility of the enlightened people in the country. Thus he established a chain of schools colleges and hostels under the shield of the People's Education Society which he had founded in 1945.

His emphasis, however, does not rest merely on academic education. He had realised the importance of mass education. Accordingly he conceived education as a means to make the Dalits aware of their social realities and to develop in them courage and commitment to fight casteism. He published four periodicals namely 'Mooknayak' (1920), 'Bahishkrit Bharat' (1927), 'Samatha' (1929) and 'Janata' (1930). He exhorted his followers that 'it is disgraceful to live at the cost of one's self respect and it is out of hard and ceaseless struggle alone one derives strength, confidence and recognition'⁴.

His career as teacher, principal and member of legislative enabled him

to get insight into the academic and administrative problems of higher education, it also provided him rich experience and knowledge of the complexities of educational concerns. He urged the teachers and the educated parents to meet the requirements and challenges of the modern world and called on them to work for inculcation of rational thinking and scientific temper among the masses in general and the young generation in particular. To him, education is the only right weapon to cut down social slavery. It will enlighten the dalits to achieve elevated social status, economic betterment and human and political rights. It would enhance adjournment of the age old values and would inculcate the values required for a pluralist society. It is out of this conviction that he made 'educate' the first word of his slogan "Educate, Agitate, Organise".

The War Against Casteism

Ambedkar fought the caste-ridden unjust society on all fronts- social, religious, political and economic. His encounter with casteism and untouchability opened a new course in the social reform movement in India. Unlike the earlier reformers who limited the cause of social progress and welfare within a general frame of reference, Ambedkar concentrated his power and resources on the cause of emancipation of a particular section, the Dalits.

His predecessors, saving a fingerely few like Phule and Periyar, lacked inclination for a fundamental or radical change in the existing social relation. They were reluctant to fire upon the ideological basis of the degenerated institutions. Their concern was not the rejection but the reinterpretation of the Hindu scriptures in the light of contemporary exigencies and reasons⁵.

But Ambedkar, seeing no reverence due to these scriptures, rejected them completely.

Ambedkar's ideological strife with the Hindu social order and casteism developed into direct action in March 1924 when a meeting of the untouchables was convened at the Damodar Hall, Bombay. The foundation of "Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha" set a concrete platform to represent the grievances of the depressed classes. The Mahad Satyagraha (1927) started with a view to protect the rights of untouchables to take water from the public tank was a mile stone in Ambedkar movement. The burning of Manusmriti on 25 December 1927 shook the world of the Hindu orthodoxy. The satyagraha organized at Ambadevi Temple at Amaravati, Parvati Temple at Pune and Kalaram Temple at Nasik demanded untouchables' accession to the temples. Thus during the early phase of his movement Ambedkar demanded equal rights particularly social and religious, for the Dalits.

But later the movement put emphasis more on the political rights of the depressed classes. Ambedkar no more fought within the fabric of Hinduism. While the congress boycotted the Simon Commission he did not hesitate to tender evidence before it on behalf of the Dalits. He felt that it was his duty to promote their interests by demanding separate electorates. On this matter he had to confront with Gandhiji in the Second Round Table Conference.

When the British Government headed by Ramsey Mc Donald proclaimed the communal award which considered the demand for separate electorates for the untouchables in 1932, Gandhiji opposed it on the ground that it would breake the 'unity' of the Hindu community and declared his fast unto death

to withdraw the scheme. Ambedkar was determined to have it implemented. But, Gandhiji's fast forced him to accept a compromise on 24 September 1932, by the Puna Pact, which guaranteed reserved seats for untouchables instead of communal electorates.

Ambedkar formed the Independent Labour Party (ILP) to promote the cause of the depressed classes. When, under the Government of India Act 1935, election to the provincial legislatures were declared, his party contested the election in seventeen seats in the Bombay Presidency and won fifteen. However, congress formed the government and Ambedkar joined the opposition. A notable achievement of his party in the legislature was the introduction of the bill for abolition of Mahar Watan and Khoti. The bill was aimed at liquidating the feudal land tenure system that prevailed in the Konkan region.

As a member of the constituent assembly and as chairman of the Draft Committee of Indian Constitution, Ambedkar did his best to safeguard the interests of the depressed classes. The constitution established a uniform or single system of citizenship law for the country. It outlawed the stigma of untouchability and prohibited discrimination on the ground of religion, caste, race and sex. There are provisions in the Constitution for protecting the political rights of the depressed sections of the society.

Beside drafting the Indian Constitution, Ambedkar had revised and submitted the Hindu Code Bill to the Constituent Assembly. He made extensive modification in the original bill to codify the Hindu personal laws based on the principle of right to property, order of succession to the property,

and maintenance, marriage, divorce, adoption, minority and guardianship. The Bill had the object of making the widow, the daughter and widow of a pre-deceased son eligible to inherit property. The Bill had aroused widespread controversy, and due to the opposition of the orthodox Hindu members of the Constituent Assembly it could not be adopted. This ended up in Ambedkar's resignation from the Ministry on 27 September 1951.

Advocate of State Socialism

Ambedkar was an eminent economist too - a recognized authority on problems of currency and public finance. The theses submitted during his higher studies in the West were on economic problems. He was a believer in state socialism which he upheld as essential for the rapid industrialization of India. In his work 'State and Minorities' he suggested to bring all the key and basic industries as well as agriculture and insurances under the control of State monopoly. He also postulated that the State should divide the acquired agricultural land into farms of standard sizes and let these out to farmers without any consideration of caste and creed.

The Conversion

Ambedkar embraced Buddhism formally on 14 October 1956. His renouncing of Hinduism, though a massive event at the last stage of his life, was not a decision taken all of a sudden. He subjected Hinduism, as an ideological institutional complex to thorough examination. Many of his writings themselves are expositions of the Hindu philosophy and the Hindu social order.

He judges the role and merit of a religion in term of the social ideal it

holds. He evaluates Hinduism with the twin tests of justice and utility. Any religion according to him, has an essential dominant part and a changing variable unessential part. He considered Manusmirti as the source of the core of Hinduism. He said that Manu instead of admitting and allowing religious equality denied it completely and effected graded inequality. In effect, Hinduism was the negation of equality- religious as well as social.

According to Ambedkar, the condition essential for the promotion of liberty – social and economic – is denied in Hinduism . It denies individuals' right to knowledge and the right to choose own means of livelihood. The division of Hindus into innumerable castes based on birth prevents the sentiment of fellow feeling. The Varna system, he considered as the antithesis of what justice and democracy stand for.

Manu's law could only protect the dignity and privileges of the caste-elites and maintain social inequality. There is no room for equality, liberty and fraternity in Hinduism. The denial of justice in turn denies utility itself. Thus Hinduism satisfies neither the test of individual justice nor the test of social utility. Its philosophy is opposed to the very thing for which religion stands.

Ambedkar said that humans are not meant for religion but the reverse is the right. Accordingly it is essential for any individual or society to make a right choice with regard to religion. He could accept a religion only if it promotes the values of equality, liberty and fraternity and has utility for the humankind. Also, it should not be incongruent with the values of the epoch.

The aim of religion should be the spiritual emancipation of all the human beings.

Ambedkar would hardly accept any religion other than Buddhism which he considered as the only religion that satisfies the modern criteria of liberal democracy, humanism and scientific rationalism. It is acceptable because it upholds the 'real' religious morale. He found Buddhism as the only philosophical alternative for liberation of humankind. The Buddhist Dhamma and the Sangha are the means of achieving human emancipation. Therefore he embraced Buddhism, the 'scientific religion.'

Persons who Influenced Ambedkar

Ambedkar as a person and leader of the Dalits movement was shaped by not a single personality or ideal, rather he was influenced by many individuals and ideals both indigenous and western. In the Satara school there was a Brahmin teacher named Ambedkar who had some sympathy for the young Bhimrao. He used to give him food and water in those dreadful days of untouchability. It was this teacher who changed Bhimrao's surname from Ambavadekar to Ambedkar. This was the first instance in his life that Ambedkar experienced affection at the hands of an upper caste Hindu.

The person who made a turning point in his life was none other than the Maharaja of Baroda, Syajirao Gaikwad (1863-1939). It was due to this Maharaja's magnanimity and generous financial assistance in the form of state scholarship that the young Ambedkar could reach America for his higher studies. The other prince who shared his feelings and helped him to continue his studies abroad was the Maharaja, Chhatrapati Shahu of Kolhapur.. He

was an enlightened prince who had acted as early as 1919 for the abolition of untouchability in schools, offices and places such as public wells, Government offices etc. in his state.

At the Columbia University, Professor John Dewey (1859-1952) the eminent philosopher and educationist, was Ambedkar's teacher. Ambedkar owes much to Dewey in the shaping of much of his later philosophical and sociological standings. Another person who influenced Ambedkar's student career at Columbia University was Professor Edwin Robert Anderson Seligman (1861-1939) who was his teacher of Public Finance. Seligman was very much appreciative of Ambedkar's impartial analysis in his doctoral thesis on *The Evolution of Provincial Finance in British India*.

In the London School of Economics and Political Science, Professor Edwin Cannan (1861-1935) guided Ambedkar on the working of his doctoral thesis on "The Problems of Rupees". Another eminent economist who influenced Ambedkar was John Maynard Keynes (1883-1946). Keynes' work 'Indian currency and Finance' has been acclaimed as a masterly analysis of India's financial structure and of the country's gold exchange standards. After the second world war Keynes was instrumental to the establishment of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. He was one of the celebrated economists with a reputation equivalent to that of Adam Smith and David Ricardo in the field of Economics. However, Ambedkar was critical of Keynes's conclusions on the Indian finance and gold exchange standards. Another professor who influenced Ambedkar in the London School

of Economics and Political Science was professor Harold Laski (1893-1950). It seems that Ambedkar was a student of Laski. When Ambedkar read his paper on "Responsibilities of a Responsible Government in India" before the student's union in 1923 Prof. Laski had opined that the thoughts expressed in the paper were of a revolutionary nature.

Ambedkar had an intellectual encounter with Bertrand Russel (1872-1970), one of the persistently influential and versatile intellectuals of the 20th century. Ambedkar had reviewed Russel's 'Principles of Social Reconstruction.' Both these stalwarts had a common object in their views, namely the reconstruction of society. Russel desired elimination of war by encouragement of impulses promoting human progress. But Ambedkar's concern was primarily the annihilation of the caste system and the abolition of untouchability. His life itself was a war against these odds, meant for the reconstruction of the Indian society on the principles of equality, liberty, fraternity and justice. Ambedkar was invited by Russell in 1920 for a discussion on the review article noted above. Unfortunately the records of the discussion is not available

The works of Karl Marx (1818-1853) had also made a profound impact on Ambedkar's approach to social problems. The testimony of this is his work "Buddha and Karl Marx". He found that both Buddha and Marx urged for the abolition of private property, but the means they recommended were diametrically opposite. Buddha advocated non-violence and persuasion of the people to adopt the principle of peace and love. Buddha would not allow

violence at any cost, but the communists do.

The personalities in modern India who influenced Ambedkar deeply are Jotib Phule (1827- 1890) and Phule's wife Savitabai (1831-1897). This great couple dedicated their lives for the upliftment of the downtrodden people, the untouchables, the exploited peasants, women, widows, orphans etc. It was they who started the first ever school for girls and untouchable children. Phule's 'Satyashodhak Samaj' was a source of strength and inspiration for thousands of people in Maharashtra. Ambedkar described Phule as the greatest Shudhra of modern India and dedicated his work "Who wee the Shudras" to this Mahatma.

There are, of course, several other thinkers and social reformers who must have influenced Ambedkar. But it is quite undoubtful that the teachings of the Buddha formed the living force of Ambedkar's movement. It is true that the teachings of the French Revolution did deeply influence Ambedkar and thus shaped his human and liberal ideology. But his ideology of emancipation of the Dalits and social reconstruction in India was primarily based on the teachings of the Buddha. Ambedkarism as the living force of the Dalit movement in India cannot be fully understood if the impact of the Buddha on the life and thoughts of Ambedkar is ignored. It is this life long influence that made him finally to choose Buddhism his religion.

An Unfinished Life

Ambedkar spent his last days for the renaissance of Buddhism in India. In July 1951 he founded the 'Bharatiya Buddha Jansangha' and in September

he compiled a Buddhist prayer book “Buddha Upasana Patha”. In the early part of the year 1956 his great work on the Buddha and Buddhism was almost completed. The People’s Education Society published this work in 1957 under the title “Buddha and his Dhamma”.

In June 1952 Columbia University honored him with the degree of L.L.D. in recognition of the work done by him in connection with the drafting of the Indian Constitution. Recognizing his eminent position and attainments, the Osmania University conferred on him the D. Lit. degree in January 1953. The great leader of the Dalit movement and Indian social reform passed away on 6 December 1956 at Delhi, within two months of his formal conversion to Buddhism leaving many things unfinished. He was awarded Bharat Ratna posthumously by the Government of India in 1991.

During his life time Ambedkar had published many books, but had also planned many other works. He had also expressed his intention to write his autobiography, biography of Mahatma Phule and History of Indian Army⁶. His unpublished works have been published by the Maharashtra Governemnt in the volumes 3,4,5 and 12 of “Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches”. These writings have revealed that Ambedkar had been working on two three books simultaneously. The unfinished works also proclaim that Ambedkar had deep insight in themes on Hinduism and the Hindu social order and that he was in an unending dialogue with the past as well as the present. The major works in this category include “ Riddles in Hinduism”; ‘Philosophy of Hinduism’; ‘India and the Pre-requisites of Communism’; “Revolution and Counter Revolution”; and “Untouchables or the Children of India’s Ghetto”.

Ambedkar combined in his personality the Western critical traditions and a deep understanding of the philosophy of the East. His deconstruction of the Hindu philosophy and social order, though exasperating to the orthodox Hindu minds, was committed to the reconstruction of the Indian society on the basis of the human values - equality, liberty, justice, and universal brotherhood. Looking at the current social scenario – the poverty deaths in the tribal belts, the atrocities on women, cruelty to the Dalits and minorities and discrimination based on caste and sex - one won't be at a loss to think that the country still has to go much ahead to achieve the cherished goals of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar.

The profile of Ambedkar presented through different spectral views is expected to be appraised not merely within the historical isochronism, but it must also be looked at from the present context of knowledge, especially in the post-colonial reference. Exempting the scathing overt attack by Arun Shourie, Ambedkar is being projected as a doyen of the very establishment against which he fought during his life time. He is even considered by the politicians and a section of the intellectuals as the saint who worked to bring about a homogeneous 'Hindu society'. But the truth that Ambedkar was an authentic victim and rebel of casteism and untouchability, his expositions on the Hindu scriptures and his wrath towards Gandhiji are no more wanted to be remembered. He is sought to be defaced systematically by absorption, adoption and domestication resulting in an organized oblivion. The people in the post-colonial India need not recall the foregone past. They are being shaped to believe that the condition has changed without leaving any trace of caste discrimination. They are impelled to view the 'Hindus' as a

homogeneity founded on equality, liberty, social justice and fraternity and as a people who are tolerant of anything . All these could easily be established if the annihilation of the very author of “Annihilation of Caste’ is completed. The exponents of this strategy know that the effective means to achieve this object is adoption rather than rejection. Only a reading of Ambedkar, ignoring the evolving Hindu cultural nationalistic trend to mystify his real contribution can ‘reform’ this great leader of the Dalits in the real pretext of contemporary history.

Note:

1. Omvedt, Op cit, 1994, p.83.
2. Moon, V. (Ed.) (1989), *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and speeches Vol-I*, Bombay: Education Department, Govt. of Maharashtra, p.9.
3. Ibid, p.47.
4. Keer, D. (1990), *Dr. Ambedkar : Life and mission*, Bombay: Sangam, p.129.
5. Kuber, (1991) W.N. *Ambedkar : A Critical Study*, New Delhi: People’s Publishing House, p.248.
6. Editors’ Introduction to vol.3 of *Writings and Speeches*

**Dr. B.R. AMBEDKAR
AS AN
EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL REFORMER**

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Chapter 3
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

- Works on social thoughts
- Works on educational ideals

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Though the literature on Ambedkar is enormously available, particularly after the celebration of his birth centenary, an exhaustive study concerning his educational thoughts is lacking. Despite there are doctoral studies on his social democratic ideology and the Dalit movement led by him the academic world has not yet attempted to inquire into his educational ideals in the context of development of modernity in India ,It is based on this observation that the investigator surveyed the related literature and presented a review of Ambedkar's social and educational thoughts as construed by different scholars.

Work on Social Thoughts

Eleanor Zelliott¹ submitted her Ph.D thesis entitled “Dr. Ambedkar and the Mahar Movement” to the University of Pennsylvania in 1969. In this pioneering study Zelliott establishes that it was the early Mahar movement which provided support for Ambedkar as a Dalit leader of national stature and importance. She has tried to establish that Ambedkar's effort in the beginning was to gain for the dalits a respectable place within the Hindu ‘great tradition’. When that proved to be impossible, he turned to the tradition of other religions to which his people might convert. Here, Ambedkar's conversion to Buddhism is attributed to his personal attachment to it and his conviction that Buddhism is a model as well as a religion of equality

The doctoral study by Lokhande² was aimed at discerning Ambedkar's role as a social democrat. According to him Ambedkar endeavored to erradicate sorrow from the lives of men through reconstruction of the social

and economic order which rendered the majority of men impotent sufferers of variable servitude. Lokhande observes that as a pragmatist to the core, Ambedkar believed that in the absence of economic and social justice, political independence would not bring about either social solidarity or national integration. The first step towards attainment of this goal according to him, was the liquidation of the hierarchical structuring of society on the basis of Chaturvarnya. Further, the investigator has argued that as a humanist Ambedkar was concerned about the fate of not only the greatest number of men but of all.

Chentharassery³ in his work attempts to assess Ambedkar's activities and philosophy. According to him Ambedkar was a man who devoted his life to annihilate the cancer of caste and untouchability from the body of Indian society. He further remarks that Ambedkar viewed Indian society which got degenerated due to castes and untouchability as incapable to carry out the responsibilities of an independent nation. Hence, before attempting to resolve the political questions India has to find out solution to the social problems. It was this contention, according to the author, that forced Ambedkar to put emphasis on the freedom of Dalits than on Swaraj.

The biography by Dhanjay Keer⁴ describes how Ambedkar raised from the lowest rung of society to reach the apex of glory by identifying himself with the ideology of the Dalit movement in India. It gives an account of Ambedkar's search for knowledge and his heroic struggle for the liberation of the Dalit masses from the elite domination. The work illustrates Ambedkar's contribution to Indian thought, history and literature as well as the formulation

of the Constitution of India. It also gives an introduction to Ambedkar's various works containing his social, political and religious thoughts.

Iyer⁵, in his book, surveys the problems of the Dalits in India. Apart from a summary of the current thinking on the subject the author describes the condition of the untouchables in India and the remarkable work done by Ambedkar for their uplift. He also discusses the contributions of Ambedkar to Indian social, political and constitutional thoughts.

Mowli⁶ in his work presents the life of Ambedkar in the back ground of the social conditions of his time. His economic ideology, social vision, political aims and views on national and international issues of his time have been discussed by profusely quoting his own words.

Rajasekhariah⁷ endeavours to determine the role of Ambedkar as an emancipator and a champion of the downtrodden people of India. He attempts to explain and evaluate the prominent aspects of the thinking and approach of Ambedkar with regard to the political and constitutional issues. Ambedkar as the architect of the Indian constitution and as one who had deep concern for the sufferings of the Dalits in general and for social justice in particular have also been discussed in this work. His political and social ideals are also presented and examined.

Kadam⁸ in his book "Dr. Babasahab Ambedkar and Significance of His Movements" deals with Ambedkar's socio political movements aimed at the liberation of the Dalit masses from their age old social slavery. The book is a chronology of events related to Ambedkar's life.

Datta⁹ analyses the universal elements of Ambedkar's social philosophy

and its local characteristics. He remarks that while the nationalists of his time aimed at only political independence of India Ambedkar's life mission was to gain freedom for the outcastes from the clutches of the caste system. According to the writer, Ambedkar built up separate and independent organizations for the outcastes because he had realized that justice to the untouchables could only come through their organized strength and not as a gift from the upper castes.

Makwana¹⁰ remarks that the main object of Ambedkar was to bring social revolution by breaking the system of varnas and castes so that everybody gets the opportunity of self development. He further states that the thinking of Ambedkar, who wanted to transform the political democracy into social democracy, was dominated by constitutional and democratic ideologies.

Parthasarathy¹¹ examines Ambedkar's views and solutions towards the upliftment of the weaker sections, from an anthropological perspective. He concludes that Ambedkar advocated an equality provision for underprivileged communities and provided constitutional safeguards to promote the desired interaction of the tribes with the national life of India.

Reddy¹² analyses the Ambedkar - led Dalit movement with an anthropological perspective. He observes that the mission of Ambedkar was aimed at bringing about radical transformation in the living conditions of millions of his community who had been condemned for many centuries to live degraded and dehumanized lives.

Sanajaoba¹³ observes that Ambedkar perceived Hindu hegemonist

section as the governing class and the rest, particularly the Shudra and the Panchama as the subject race.

Satish Chandra¹⁴ in his paper, analyses the structure of the caste system in India. His analysis is to see if Ambedkar's view of caste is adequate and his programme for its annihilation plausible. According to him, by rejecting socialism Ambedkar chose a reformist path rather than revolutionary path and never got to the problem of why caste stands in the way of the realization of class consciousness.

Arakeri¹⁵ designates Ambedkar as the greatest social reformer of the present era. He establishes that social reformers prior to Ambedkar could not touch the problem of untouchability because, being members of higher castes they were afraid of social boycott. He further observes that after the Buddha it was Ambedkar who could achieve a remarkable and reasonable victory in his endeavor to solve this problem and to guide the downtrodden masses in their effort to resolve the problem of untouchability.

The work of Chirakkarodu¹⁶ is an appraisal and exposition of Ambedkar's writings. His objective is to present a comprehensive study of Ambedkar's philosophy to the Malayalam readers. The author designates Ambedkar as a thinker who declared a new dimension of democracy in the characteristic milieu of India.

Farigh¹⁷ considers Ambedkar as one of the great Indian leaders who sought and fought not only for the political independence but also for the social and economic freedom of the country. He observes that Ambedkar had to fight both the caste Hindus and the British Government for the political

rights of the depressed classes. Ambedkar considered it suicidal to imagine that political independence necessarily would guarantee real all sided freedom. Unity of the country - both social and political – appeared to him as more notable a task than mere conflict with the alien government.

Gore¹⁸ in his work studies the ideology that Ambedkar enunciated to register his protest against the inequalities of Hinduism and to promote the liberation of the untouchables of India. The author discusses Ambedkar's analysis of Hinduism and the Hindu society and the social and spiritual meaning he found in Buddhism. The work in its totality is an effort to understand and delineate Ambedkar's ideology and to relate it to the social context in which it was enunciated.

Kadam¹⁹ in his essay attempts to highlight some of the guiding principles enunciated by Ambedkar. He observes that Ambedkar's object was to bring about a real, fundamental, revolutionary 'notional' change in man's outlook, if man has to live a full, peaceful and happy life here on the earth.

Re-reading India's freedom movement from a Dalit perspective, Kamble²⁰ contends that the struggle of the suppressed and the oppressed people in India should have constituted an epic chapter in the history of the Indian nation. He considers Ambedkar as a maker of modern India not only because he worked hard to emancipate the slaves of India from the age old bondage, but also because he put them on the political map of the nation.

Mallik²¹ remarks that Ambedkar's demand for abolishing untouchability was not meant for the benefit of a community only. On the other hand he demanded the destruction of the caste system for the uplift of the Indian

society as a whole. Further, Ambedkar's liberalism was combined with a radical nationalism. His ethics were utilitarian; his scale of value was determined by the usefulness of an action for the establishment of equality in the social order.

Prakash's²² analysis of Ambedkar's role in Indian politics establishes that during the national movement he wanted to bring the depressed classes on an equal footing in every walk of life in India. He wanted them to fight simultaneously against the Hindu social imperialism as well as against the British political domination. It was this conviction that led him to propound the thesis that the untouchables is a distinct and separate element in the national life of India.

In a revealing analysis Prasad²³ expounds why Ambedkar turned to Buddhism, became so aggressively militant and fully devoted his life to the annihilation of castes and to the attainment of the rights of the Dalits. He designates Ambedkar as a social reformer who was non-conformist and hostile to the establishment.

According to Shakir²⁴ Ambedkar's main achievement lies in his positive contributions to the radical reformist theory and practice in Maharashtra. Critically, he views Ambedkar's faith in constitutionalism as a major limitation. He further remarks that Ambedkar had chosen to act within the framework of Hinduism and failed to go beyond the religious framework. He even designates Ambedkar's social reform movement as a separatist one.

Omvedt²⁵ presents a historical account of Dalit movements during 1850-

1975 in the three states – Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka with special reference to the impact of Ambedkar's ideology. The author observes that Ambedkar frequently criticised the hypocrisy of non-Brahmin leaders but never gave up attempts to have an alliance with them as he believed that the Brahmins were the dominant enemies.

Batia et al²⁶ evaluate Ambedkar's perceptions of social justice, Indian freedom struggle and the problem faced by the women of India. They observe that Ambedkar's crusade was two faceted. On the one hand he fought the British who had enslaved India and on the other hand he waged a war against all those who for centuries denied equality and civil rights to the untouchables. He had not only to fight for the political emancipation of India but also to struggle relentlessly for achieving socio-economic freedom.

Ahir²⁷ provides a brief history of Ambedkar's encounters with the British colonial rule in India by presenting extracts from Ambedkar's writings published in the multi volumes by the Maharashtra Government, Department Of Education. This collection gives not only an insight into the social, political and religious conditions that prevailed in India during the British rule, but also a picture of Ambedkar's dealings with the colonial administration for social, educational and political upliftment of the Dalit. Ambedkar indicted the British rule for its discriminating treatment towards the depressed classes. Even though the book is a simple reproduction from the writings already published, the thematic presentation of the material gives a total picture of Ambedkar's view on British rule in India.

Das²⁸ in his debut work attempts to give a rejoinder to Arun Shourie's

‘Worshipping false gods’, The author observes that Shourie’s work not only lacks adequate relevant facts but also seems to be tainted by a prejudiced mental outlook. To Shourie’s ‘theory’ that Ambedkar lacked a sound ideological basis, the author replies that Ambedkar movement was carried out on a well thought out ideology of protest against political, social and economic prejudices against the untouchables. The basis of his movement was equality, liberty and fraternity. To Shourie’s idea that it was B.N. Rau, the Constitutional Advisor, who wrote the draft Constitution, the author says that it was S.N. Mukherjee who developed the first draft. Ambedkar completely redrafted the ‘sketchy document’ prepared from the first draft by B.N. Rau. Thus the author puts his work across the historical perspective of Ambedkar's life and mission and decries the contentions of Arun Shourie.

Arun Shourie²⁹ in his book argues that the image of Ambedkar established in the present is a false case. He asserts that Ambedkar does not deserve the recognition given by the nation in various forms. The author describes that Ambedkar was not only against the independence of India but also serving the British along with M.N.Roy and others. According to him this was what completely cut him off from every nationalist as well as Harijan group and leaders. Shourie firmly believes that Ambedkar was an instrument of the British and that his demand for considering the scheduled castes as a minority and to give separate electorate for them was a colonial strategy to break the unity of the Hindu community and to make split in the freedom struggle. The author considers Ambedkar as neither a social reformer with a sound ideology nor as one who had authorship in the making of the Indian Constitution; rather he designates Ambedkar as a False God. Going through

this commentary it is not difficult to see that the author is strongly prejudiced towards Dr. Ambedkar. Though he quotes the 'erased facts' to substantiate his arguments, he is silent on the facts that followed.

Webster³⁰ in his revised version of Ambedkar's lectures delivered at the National Institute of Social Work and Social Sciences, Bhubaneswar, Orissa, focuses on the religious strategies the Dalits have used during the course of their movement. Examining the scholarly perspective of Ambedkar and the experience of the Dalits, the author observes that the best known and the best researched case among the diverse Dalit movements is that of the Mahars led by Dr. Ambedkar, which tends to dominate on the subject. The author notes that Ambedkar put emphasis on universalization and spiritualization of social values and brought them to the mind of every individual. This he did because, he was certain that an individual can function as an efficient member of the society only if he/she recognises these values and infuse them in all his/her activities. According to Ambedkar, religion is primarily an instrument for conditioning and controlling social activities. The author opines that Ambedkar's views provide an important and essential starting point for any consideration of the role of religion in the total struggle for Dalit liberation.

Works on Educational Ideals

Kuber³¹ traces Ambedkar's legacy to three institutions - The People's Education Society, The Buddhist Society of India and The Republican Party of India. He observes that Ambedkar tried to liberate Indian politics from parochialism, traditionalism and theology and in this attempt he gave India its legal frame and provided the people the basis of their freedom.

Ahir's³² work makes an overall assessment of Ambedkar's multidimensional personality, his achievements and the legacy left behind by him. The chapter set aside for analyzing Ambedkar as an educationist provides only a factual account of various educational institutions established by Ambedkar.

Baisantry³³ attempts to deal with some aspects of Ambedkar's life and work. The author surveys various activities undertaken by Ambedkar for the causes of the Dalits. The two chapters included in the book – 'Ambedkar's services to Education' and 'Ambedkar: The Social Revolutionary' provide brief accounts of what Ambedkar did for the educational and social upliftment of the downtrodden masses in India.

Kuber³⁴ remarks that Ambedkar combined in himself the role of a social reformer, a political leader and a spiritual guide of the untouchables. He aroused in men and women the passion for right relation. His purpose was practical rather than speculative and his philosophy of life was essentially a development and evolution under the conditions and events that prevailed in the Indian society. Kuber observes that Ambedkar was against giving the same education to both boys and girls. Imparting education to girls on par with boys appeared to him waste of time, money and energy. He advised students not to take part in politics during their school days. He exhorted them to work for an ideal in life and to accomplish it through their own industry and perseverance.

Thomas Mathew³⁵ narrates the major theoretical and political contributions of Ambedkar along with a summary of the practical struggles

which he waged at different periods. He analyses Ambedkar's position from a democratic standpoint. The author observes that Ambedkar's philosophy of education aimed at creation of a liberating consciousness which is not formal education; but the conscientisation process of education, agitation and organization put together.

Khaparde³⁶ observes that Ambedkar did not visualize education merely as a means of livelihood but as a powerful weapon to liberate the Dalits from ignorance and to strengthen their fight against injustice and humiliation. In fact Ambedkar considered education as a pre-requisite for any kind of organization and movement of the depressed classes.

According to Rao³⁷, *prajna* (understanding) and *karma* (compassion), the Buddhist principles, are the basis of Ambedkar's philosophy of life as well as his perspective of education.

Jatav³⁸ states that Ambedkar's philosophy is grounded in the three triads: Liberty, Equality, Fraternity; Education, Agitation, Organisation; Buddha, Dharma, Sangha. He remarks that Ambedkar did not entertain philosophy as a subject of metaphysics and ontology, but as a moral standard by which one could measure human conduct in relation to man and nothing else. It is also observed that for Ambedkar education alone could create a sense of new thinking and awakening among the oppressed people in India. He wanted it for all, and not restricted to a few classes of society.

Paranjpe³⁹ notices that Ambedkar's place in the history of the untouchables is unique because he was not reconciled to his fateful existence. He did not wish to stay in the government job as a professor, for, he knew it

would hamper his freedom to work for his people, at times against the British government too. Further, the two tools Ambedkar realized for advancing his goals were the right to political power and the right to education.

Knowledge, according to Ambedkar, says Punalekar⁴⁰, is not for personal glorification or salvation, but it must lead to the understanding and resolution of issues like social inequality, injustice and subordination. Ambedkarism, observes the writer, essentially embodies a liberal democratic philosophy. It espouses the causes of socially and economically marginalized sections in the Indian society.

Rao's⁴¹ analysis of Ambedkar's life and thought provides a comprehensive interpretation and evaluation of his contribution to different domains of India's national life - social, political, legal, economic, religious and cultural. The author observes that Ambedkar regarded education as a crucial instrument for raising the overall level of the depressed classes.

Ray⁴² says that Ambedkar, though revolutionary in his social objectives, was always a moderate in politics; he had no taste for violence; like Phule he had great faith in education and law as instruments of change. Further, he had realized that without an intellectual and industrial revolution no structural transformation of the Indian society is ever to be effected.

Rasool and Verma⁴³ enumerate Ambedkar's educational views under five heads – Equality of educational opportunity; higher education; education for untouchables; safeguards for scheduled castes; and reservation for scheduled castes. Education for him, observe the authors, is not just a preparation for living but a continuous process; and one should always be

prepared to 'learn to live, live to learn'. They further state that Ambedkar, advocating a democratic way of education, believed education as the birth right of every human being, and that he rebelled vehemently against all forms of elitist tendency in the field of education.

Based on the literature surveyed, the following observations are made:

1. Ambedkar had a sustained thinking on educational matters.
2. He had a firm foundation of philosophy of life and a conscious, committed articulation of his position on the means and ends of education.
3. He had visualized education as a mechanism helpful in facilitating the Dalit's liberation from their dominated position. The Dalits were subjects of a double domination. On the one hand they were subdued to the Hindu social slavery; they were denied knowledge, power and basic human rights and were forced to lead a life of supine servitude. On the other hand they were also the victims of the British colonialism. This forced them to fight simultaneously with the Hindu social imperialism and the British colonial supremacy. But the lack of education prevented them from realizing the reality and from entering the path of social struggle. Ambedkar having the right cognizance of the role of education in social change considered education as an instrument to awaken the Dalits and to prepare them for the liberation struggle.
4. A comprehensive study of Ambedkar's educational thoughts has not come across by the investigator. It also seems that the authors have not given due importance to Ambedkar's conception of education so as to attempt an exhaustive analysis of his educational thoughts.

Therefore, a comprehensive study of Ambedkar's educational thoughts in conjunction with his social ideals has to be urgently taken up. Such a work will, no doubt, render to have a thorough understanding of the social and educational problems of the depressed classes in India.

In this context, it has to be pointed out that the survey has given the investigator an insight into how Ambedkar had been a product of the societal environment that surrounded him. It has helped also to see how he, as a person with sensitivity and sensibility could react with the conditions that prevailed and also could influence the society with the profound impact of his reflections, analytical interpretations, ideas and unique action plans. This insight has been the foundation upon which the whole edifice of this work has been constructed.

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**Dr. B.R. AMBEDKAR
AS AN
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Chapter 4
METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

- Sources of data
- The tool and technique
- Collection of data
- Organisation and analysis of data
- Interpretation of data

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The result of any research is the outcome of the application of a methodology which seeks to unearth, construct or provide knowledge for the solution of a problem encountered by the researcher. The methods followed in educational research has critical significance because the educational problems traverse the boundaries of various disciplines. Over the past two decades, a quiet methodological revolution has been taking place in the social sciences, by blurring the disciplinary boundaries. The social sciences and humanities have drawn closer together towards a common focus, on the foundation of an interpretive, qualitative approach to research and theory. The monopoly once enjoyed by statistical, experimental designs and survey research has been broken and many researchers have begun to consider ethnography, unstructured interviewing, textual analysis and historical studies to be more appropriate for social sciences. Scholars are now experimenting with new interpretational modes like linking research to social change, delving into characteristics of race, ethnicity gender, age and culture to understand more fully the relationship of the researcher to the research¹. This trends which fall under the rubric of qualitative research has not yet been properly appreciated in the field of educational research in India.

Though qualitative methods has proved its potential, quantification seems to be treated as advantageous for the educational researchers, particularly for the beginners. The highly qualitative procedures like content analysis and case study have been reduced to a matter of coding and counting resulting in unreliable and invalid conclusions². It had also been noticed that

philosophical researches continue to suffer from methodological anemia and absence of enterprise necessary to break away from the beaten track.³ It is by considering all these observations that the methodology of the present endeavour was adopted.

The present study; it having come under the purview of qualitative research has used historical approach as its prime mode of investigation. The major focus of the study has been to determine and present the significant facts about the life, struggle, thoughts and achievements of Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar, which have influenced the social and educational advancement of the Dalits, the downtrodden masses in India. Content analysis within the perspective of historical research formed the principal method of investigation. However, as the problem under study crosscut different disciplines, fields and subject matter it has called for a strategy of analysis embracing a complex, interconnected family of terms, concepts and assumptions, as well as the insights of sociological and philosophical perspectives, wherever required.

Sources of Data

Documentary data formed the major source of information for the study. Both primary and secondary sources were used in this regard. The following were the important primary sources.

- 1 Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar writings and speeches, Vol.1 to 15, Education Department, Govt. of Maharashtra.
- 2 Source material on Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and the Movement of Untouchables, Vol.1 and 2, Govt. of Maharashtra.
- 3 Constituent Assembly Debates, Vol.1 to 12, Lok Sabha Secretariate, New Delhi.

- 4 The Home Political Files, National Archives, Govt. of India
- 5 Ambedkar's letters (This includes the letters preserved in the National Archives, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library and those published under the editorship of Surendra Ajnat)
- 6 The Constitution of India.

The volumes of 'Writings and Speeches' comprise Ambedkar's published and unpublished works on various themes and issues, his testimonies before various committees and commissions, confidential reports, personal letters, speeches delivered at seminars and meetings, responses to questionnaires on educational matters, British government documents, letters to editors, etc. The 'Source Material' contains contemporary records, News paper reports etc. The 'Constituent Assembly Debates' provides details regarding the process adopted in the making of The Indian Constitution, which include debate on various articles and provisions of the constitution. Of the 'Home Political Files' only those related to Ambedkar have been referred to. These include Ambedkar's correspondence with the British government in India, as a member of government bodies. 'Ambedkar's letters' include correspondence between Ambedkar and various persons and organisations related to his life in one way or the other. Of course, the Constitution of India provides the various safeguards adopted for the Dalits and other depressed classes.

The secondary sources of the study include a wide range of material. This include books, articles, papers, biographies etc. written by persons who had direct contact with Ambedkar. The works of the scholars and social

scientists who have conducted studies on Ambedkar and Dalit movement in India were also used not only to locate many primary sources but also to enrich the observations of the researcher. The secondary sources served many useful purposes by acquainting the investigator to major theoretical issues in the field and to the works that have been done in the areas which have some bearing on the problem under study.

The Tool and Technique used for the study

Interview

Apart from the documentary sources of data the investigator sought the views and observations of scholars and social activists who have done some works on Ambedkar or were involved in the Dalit movement in India. For this purpose, an interview schedule consisting of four open ended questions on Ambedkar's social and educational ideals and the movement led by him was prepared. The following were the questions included in the interview schedule.

- 1 Could you explain Ambedkar's conception of social reconstruction in India?
- 2 How did Ambedkar conceive education in the context of the emancipation of the Dalits?
- 3 What do you think about Ambedkar's major contributions for the educational and social upliftment of the depressed classes?
- 4 How will you situate Ambedkar movement in the context of the British colonial domination and upper caste hegemony in India in the past?

The questions were finalised after discussion with six selected educational experts who have proved their authority in qualitative research at the national or regional level.

Field Visit

Beside the use of interview and documentary sources of data the investigator visited some of the educational institutions founded by Dr. Ambedkar, to gather relevant information on these institutions. Though a structured observation schedule was not prepared, the categories of information to be collected were outlined prior to the visits. These categories included 1. History of the institutions, (2) Need for the Institutions, (3) Aims and Objectives (4) Functioning and (5) Achievement.

Collection of Data

For collection of data the investigator had to visit many institutions, organisations and libraries across the country. Location of different documentary sources were done by consulting the scholars working in the related areas. Journals, Magazines and other secondary sources also helped to get addresses of various institutions and organisations engaged in the work on Ambedkar. The major institutions, libraries and organisations visited in this regard are :

- 1 Dr. Ambedkar Foundation, New Delhi
- 2 Central Secretariate Library, New Delhi
- 3 National Archives, New Delhi
- 4 Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi

- 5 NCERT Library, New Delhi
- 6 Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Research Institute, Mhow, Madhya Pradesh
- 7 People's Education Society, Bombay
- 8 Dr. Ambedkar Research Institute, Nagpur
- 9 District Library, Chandigarh
- 10 KIRTADS. Calicut, Kerala
- 11 Centre for Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuram
- 12 Kerala University Library, Thiruvananthapuram
- 13 British Library, Thiruvananthapuram

The information from primary and secondary sources were meticulously collected from these institutions. As for obtaining data from Ambedkar's own works, the investigator has purchased all the fifteen volumes of 'Writings and Speeches' published by Department of Education, Government of Maharashtra.

The interview schedule prepared for collecting the views and observations of the scholars and activists was administered both personally and by post. By post it was sent to 20 selected personnel which included university teachers who have some works to their credit on Ambedkar and Dalit movement, social activists having appreciable knowledge on Ambedkar's thoughts, and Dalit writers. Since the return of the mailed interview schedule was almost nil the investigator interviewed six personnel which included Dalit activists, writers and university teachers. As the

interview schedule consisted four broad and open ended questions on the problem under study the investigator posed many sub questions and cross questions to draw maximum information from the interviewees.

The investigator also visited two educational institutions founded by Dr. Ambedkar. These are the Siddharat College of Arts and Science, Bombay (founded in 1946) and the Siddharat Night School, Bombay (founded in 1955). The heads of these institutions, some of the teachers and students were contacted to collect information on the aims, functioning and achievements of these institutions based on the categories fixed in advance. Besides, the Head office of the People's Education Society, an organisation founded by Dr. Ambedkar to promote education of the depressed classes, was also visited by the investigator.

Organisation and Analysis of Data

The information collected from various sources were organised in a systematic manner so as to enable their easy retrieval for the purpose of analysis. The data were organised mainly under two categories : the social and educational conceptions and activities of Ambedkar. Within these two broad categories distinct sub categories were also established to make the organisation of data more precise. Some of these sub categories are :

- 1 Life and struggle of Ambedkar
- 2 Educational career
- 3 Influence of persons, ideals and ideologies
- 4 Social actions and protest movements

- 5 Publication of magazines
- 6 Thoughts on social reconstruction
- 7 Foundation of organisation or political party
- 8 Member of Legislature or Govt. bodies
- 9 On Hinduism and Hindu social order
- 10 Words with Mahatma Gandhi
- 11 On untouchables and untouchability
- 12 On University education
- 13 Educational projects
- 14 Education, Politics and Power

As part of the historical analysis, the literary data were subjected to external and internal criticism.

External Criticism

External criticism, also called lower criticism checks the genuineness and authenticity of the source material. Finding and assessing primary historical data is an exercise in detective work. It involves logic, intuition, persistence and common sense - the same logic, intuition, persistence and common sense that one would use to locate contemporary data or information pertinent to one's daily life⁴. Most of the primary sources used for the study are published under the editorship of reputed scholars, and much of these are published or preserved by different departments of the State or Central government or related agencies. For instance the 'Writings and Speeches' of Dr. Ambedkar

and the 'Source Material' on Ambedkar and the untouchable movements are published by the Department of Education, Government of Maharashtra. Many of the writings included in these volumes had been published during Ambedkar's life time itself. The editorial board which comprised renowned scholars and academics who have proved their authority in different fields of studies, claim that they had subjected the material contained in these volumes to rigorous scrutiny to decide their authorship, authenticity and approximate date of writing, before being approved for publication. However, the investigator could also get some of the prints of Ambedkar's works which had been published during his life time, and could collate the same with the material reproduced in these volumes.

The 'Constituent Assembly Debates' which involve Ambedkar's speeches related to the making of Indian constitution was published by the Lok Sabha Secretariate. In order to determine the authenticity of Ambedkar's letters preserved in the 'National Archives' and Nehru Memorial Library, New Delhi, the handwriting of and signature in these letters were correlated with Ambedkar's handwriting and signature provided in the third and thirteenth volumes of the 'Writings and Speeches'.

Internal Criticism

After the authenticity of the documents examined was thus established, the researcher proceeded to internal criticism. Internal criticism also known as higher criticism, is concerned with the validity, credibility or worth of the content of the document. Internal criticism is positive in nature when the researcher seeks to discover the literal and real meaning of the text. It is

negative when the investigator tries to seek every possible reason for disbelieving the statement made, questioning critically the competence, truthfulness or accuracy or the honesty of the author.⁵

While subjecting the literary data to internal criticism care was taken to follow the words of Tuchman that 'physical truth may be radically different from the interpretive truth needed to assess the application or test a theory⁶.' The competence and accuracy of authors of various works and documents were evaluated in relation to their status as experts in the field, their intention to record such remarks and the condition that favoured them to do so. The documents were also evaluated in terms of the time period that has elapsed between the events and their recording by the authors so as to ascertain whether the authors have depicted the events accurately without distortions. The distortion of the facts may result from author's motive, bias or prejudice. It may also result from their personal vanity or ambition, literary artifice, ignorance about the subject, desire to flatter oneself or superiors or one's own people, due to political or religious bias or some vested interests.

The secondary sources utilised for the study were authored by scholars who have established authority in their own field of work. These works have been found to be referred in many articles and other similar works. The validity of the historical facts contained in these documents were established by comparing them with the statements of other authors. The disagreement of authors about certain facts were looked over on the basis of overall credibility, reputation, independent authentication and general consistency with other known facts and statements. In this process the investigator at times, had to

rely on inferences based on logical deductions in order to bridge the gaps in the information contained in the works. In such cases, as suggested by Mouly⁷, the researcher has predicated the remarks on a particular fact or concept or event in question to the authors who have made some valuable observations on the same.

The data collected through the interview schedule were also subjected to textual analysis. The views of the respondents on the social and educational ideals and actions were collated with the observations of different authors and general consistency was established, as far as possible. This data in combination with the information gleaned through the field visit to the educational institutions founded by Ambedkar were made into the categories established earlier and were used to supplement the interpretation and observations attempted in the study.

Interpretation of Data

Qualitative historical data are to be collected, coded, analysed and interpreted with particular question in mind. This principle has been followed by this investigator also. After the data were examined to judge their authenticity and validity the researcher put them into the task of interpretation in the light of the problem under investigation. This task involved a thorough examination of Ambedkar's conception of education - how he conceived education as an instrument of liberation for the Dalits from their dehumanised position in the society. In order to lead to this focus his protest movements and their ideological basis, his struggle for establishing the social and human rights of the Dalits, and his contribution for the educational upliftment of the

downtrodden people were examined in depth. Additionally, the philosophy undergirding his slogan 'Educate Agitate Organise' was also subjected to exhumation.

As Ambedkar movement was focussed on the emancipation of the Dalits from their age old oppression under the caste ridden Hindu social order and as his time of action coincided with the great struggle of the Nation to liberate itself from the British colonial rule as well as from the feudal hegemony, the investigator had to trace out the ideologies of the era in which the problem under study was situated. The problem was situated in a terrain where many conflicting ideologies were operating on the front of social, political, cultural and economic reconstruction in India. In other words, the country was stepping on the threshold of modernisation. Different paradigms of development or revolution cutting across the Gandhian ideology, socialism, communism, capitalism and even cultural nationalism were competing to establish their domination in the emerging political chemistry of the nation. The colonial notions had not only been embeded in the forces of change and development but it had been deep rooted in the very process of construction of knowledge. All these had posed a big question of identity before the Ambedkar movement. Hence, interpretation of the data in this study was carried out by keeping these historical junctures in mind.

Qualitative data present problems too. One cannot simply read them, but must read enough examples to infer the norms that form the basis for what could be written and how it could be expressed. Just as one tries to understand how a contemporary informant speaks from a specific social location, so too one would want to establish the social location of a historical

figure⁸. In the present study Ambedkar formed not only the object of inquiry but he is also taken to be one of the informants who spoke from the social location of his life and struggle. There are many analogies used in the interpretation of data, particularly on the life, struggle, conceptions and personality of Ambedkar. But, Ambedkar is not compared with any historical personalities, rather he is depicted as being influenced by various personalities, ideologies and philosophers of the West as well as of the Orient. While tracing the evolution of Ambedkarian ideology and his positioning in the politics of India a comparison is attempted at the crypto level, between the Ambedkar of his early years of social action and the later Ambedkar. At times he is shown as having contradicted himself. His ideology or philosophy is not collated with any school of thoughts, rather his internalisation of various philosophical strands of his time is traced in the study through the process of reconstruction of meaning, out of the information gathered on his thoughts and actions.

A criticism usually raised against qualitative research and its interpretational strategies is that while quantitative analysis could give objective and precise conclusions, these drawn from qualitative analysis will be subjective and ambiguous. Experts in qualitative research have tried to put defence strategies against this criticism by suggesting compensatory measures against this probability for subjectivity. One such strategy is to add to the 'density' of the analysis. This indicates the need for making the analysis as dense as possible by examining and evaluating the data from all possible points of view so that subjectivity is reduced to the minimum. This has been taken care of by the investigator while the data were subjected to analysis.

Thus every relevant detail has been examined from the social, religious philosophical, political, educational, legislative, reformistic, modernistic, democratic, points of view and inter relations have been established wherever possible.

Note:

- 1 Preface, Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S.(Ed.), (1994). *Handbook of qualitative research*, Thousand Oaks : Sage, 1994.
- 2 Buch, M.B.(Ed.), (1986). *Third Survey of Research in Education*, New Delhi, NCERT, p.25.
- 3 Buch, M.B.(Ed.). (1991). *Fourth Survey of Research in Education*, New Delhi: NCERT, p.50.
- 4 Tuchman, G. 'Historical Social Science : Methodologies, Methods and Meanings'. in Denzin N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S., Op.cit., pp.306-323.
- 5 Koul, L., (1999). *Methodology of Educational Research*, New Delhi: Vikas, p.425.
- 6 Tuchman, Op.cit.
- 7 Mouly, G.J., (1963). *The Science of Educational Research*, New Delhi: Eurasia Publishing House, p.214.
- 8 Tuchman, Op.cit.

**Dr. B.R. AMBEDKAR
AS AN
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Chapter 5
AMBEDKAR MOVEMENT:
EVOLUTION OF AN IDEOLOGY

- Spokesman of the voiceless
- Conference of the untouchables
- Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha
- Mahad conference
- Bahishkrit Bharat
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AMBEDKAR MOVEMENT: EVOLUTION OF AN IDEOLOGY

In this section an attempt is made to trace the unfolding of the movement led by Dr. Ambedkar for the emancipation of the Dalits from their dehumanised position. Ambedkar was the first social reformer who rose from the community of untouchables and led a movement at national level for the liberation of the Dalits. Though there were several leaders who worked for the cause of the down trodden, for instance Mahatma Phule, Periyar, Narayana Guru, Vithal Rao Shinde, Aruna Desai, they belonged to the category of Hindus 'superior' to the untouchables. Though their dedication to the cause of the untouchables is unquestionable the movements led by them did not have an exclusive focus on eradication of untouchability and the emancipation of the untouchables.

Spokesman of the Voiceless

Many people consider the beginning of Ambedkar movement as his appearance in the public meeting held at the Damodar Hall in Bombay on 9 March 1924. But this is far from reality. One can see that the seeds of the movement had been laid down in his school day itself when he had undergone the trauma of casteism and untouchability. Certainly the young Ambedkar might have revolted against the casteism within the boundaries of his childhood. However, the overt crystallisation of the movement in the form of social action was in the year 1920 when he established the Marathi fortnightly the 'Mooknayak'. Ambedkar started 'Mooknayak' at a juncture when the printmedia were in the hands of the upper caste Hindus, and it was extremely

difficult, if not impossible, for any leader from the down trodden class to take the message of reformation to the people through a publication. When he sent a paid advertisement announcing the publication of 'Mookanayak' to 'Keshari', it refused to publish, eventhough Lokmanya Tilak was still alive.

The 'Mookanayak' was published with the financial support from Maharaja Chatrapati Shahu of Kolhapur and was aimed at making the untouchables aware of the dehumanised condition in which they were living. The editorials of the magazine, though at the very beginning of his public career, are indicative of the directions in which his mind was working. In the very first editorial of 'Mokanayak' he dealt with the hierarchical structure of the Hindu society which included the three major castes – the Brahmins, the non - Brahmins and the untouchables. The Brahmins at the top of the social hierarchy had access to religious as well as secular education and because of this they were represented in Government jobs in large numbers, quite out of proportion to their number in the population. The non-Brahmin caste Hindus had remained backward, because they didnot give any importance to education, though they had social and religious sanction for the same. The untouchables on the other hand were not only denied access to education but also were forced to stick to their lowly occupation. They were totally debarred from any oppportunity for self development.¹

In such a condition of social apathy Ambedkar made clear his position on the nationalist movement, that it was not enough for India to become independent, but the country must extend equal rights – social, religious and political – to all its inhabitants, irrespective of caste and creed and would

open the channels of development to all sections of society. The Indian National Congress had replaced its objectives of achieving 'Good Government' with the attainment of 'Self Government'. On this Ambedkar wrote:

While one cannot object to the principle involved, we would not be able to support. Whose self government is this going to be and what will be its practical goals – for practice is more important than principle².

He wanted that the untouchables should also have a share in such self-government; without it the 'self government' would mean a government over the already depressed. He urged further that the untouchables should receive not just a proportionate but a weighted representation in the legislatures. He was totally opposed to the suggestion that the representatives of the untouchables be chosen by nomination. Thus, through the 'Mooknayak' Ambedkar not only raised the strident voice of the untouchables for their share in the proposed measures of self government but also accused the Congress of the deliberate neglect of the interest of the untouchables.³

Apart from the criticism of the Hindu social order and the Congress, Ambedkar used the editorial column of the Mooknayak to expose the caste - Hindu social reformers like Tilak, V.R. Shinde etc. who had kept the Government ignorant of the true condition of the untouchables and had opposed their efforts to obtain a share in political power through independently chosen representatives. He remarked that the exposing of the game that the caste Hindu leadership was trying to play was a signal for a new awakening among the untouchables. His main objective was to establish a separate identity of the untouchable in the Indian society⁴.

Conference of the Untouchables

In March 1920 Ambedkar presided over a conference of the untouchables of Kolhapur state. At this conference Maharaja Chatrapati Shahu hailed him as the leader that the untouchables had chosen for themselves. The Maharaja told the gathering:

I am confident Dr. Ambedkar will not rest till he achieve your upliftment. And he will not rest there: a time will come when he will lead the entire nation. I feel certain about it⁵.

In the month of May the First All India Conference of Untouchables was organised at Nagpur under the presidentship of Chatrapati Shahu. Speaking in this conference Ambedkar severely criticised Shinde and his 'Depressed Class Mission', for submitting to the South Borough Committee a proposal to nominate the representative of the depressed classes in the proposed legislature of Bombay. Under the initiation of Dr. Ambedkar the conference passed a resolution requesting the Government to reject Shinde's suggestion and to let the untouchables select their own representatives.

The demand for selection of the representatives of the untouchables by themselves formed the most significant political demand of the Dalits at that time and of the Ambedkar movement, on which he was not ready for any compromise. This demarcated Ambedkar movement from all other attempts led by the caste Hindu leaders for the cause of the untouchables. Ambedkar held the ideological position that the interests of the untouchables are not the same as those of the caste Hindus and that could not be submitted.

Bahishkrit Hitakarani Sabha

Between September 1920 and April 1923 Ambedkar pursued his higher studies in the UK and Germany. Back in India he started practice of Law in the Bombay High Court, but continued his social action with new vigour and energy. Based on the foundation laid down through 'Mooknayak' and in the conferences of untouchables held in 1920 Ambedkar moved for establishing a broad organisation for the cause of the depressed classes. He convened a meeting of the persons sympathetic to the cause of untouchables on 9 March 1924 to discuss the need to found a society which could place the social and political problems of the untouchables before the Government. Accordingly the 'Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha', the society to serve the interests of the outcasts was founded on 20 th July 1924.

The members and the office bearers of the Sabha included not only untouchables but Parsis and upper caste Hindus as well. This particular composition of the Sabha indicates that Ambedkar wanted to form a broad platform within the fabric of the Hindu social order for working effectively for the cause of the untouchables. He had realised that the Congress and other organisations led by the caste Hindus cannot work for the cause of the untouchables because of their class interests. He had already expressed dissatisfaction with Shinde's style of leadership and insensitivity of the Congress to the problems of the untouchables. The adoption of a resolution on abolition of untouchability by the Congress in 1917 and passing the same in the Bombay conference on untouchability in 1918 were only a part of the political ploy to ensure that the untouchables remained with the congress.

Notwithstanding the nature of the membership Ambedkar was very much clear about the goal to be achieved by 'Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha'. The aim of the sabha as articulated by him was to Educate, Agitate and Organise the depressed classes for their upliftment.

The Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha had done much for the educational awakening of the untouchables. The Sabha opened up a hostel for the untouchable children, by which action he opened a channel for them to stay and study without being subjected to the humiliating practice of untouchability which usually had been the main cause for the Dalit students terminating their studies prematurely. Despite these the Sabha could not achieve what exactly Ambedkar dreamed of. Moreover, the 'Mooknayak', the periodical which he started in 1920 had stopped its publication. This created a period of vacuum, at least for the time being, in the realm of social movement. This situation convinced Ambedkar of the need to start a new organisation and a new publication. Meanwhile, at his individual level he gave evidence before the Hiltong Young Commision on Indian currency, in 1926 and continued his practice in law from his office in Parel. In 1927 he was nominated by the Governor to the Bombay Legislature. Earlier he had made strong plea to the British Government for resuming the recruitment of Mahars to the army. He had also criticised the Government for the ingratitude towards Mahars in denying them recruitment to the army, although the same Mahars had helped the British in their battles in Western India.

Mahad Conference

The most significant event of these years was the Mahad Conference

held in March 1927. This conference, organised with a view to assert the rights of the untouchables to draw drinking water from an open public tank (The Chowdar Tank), was the first act of public protest led by Ambedkar. The Bombay Legislative Council had passed a resolution in August 1926 directing the municipalities and the district boards to implement an earlier legislation throwing all public places open to all castes including the untouchables. Following the direction, Mahad Municipal Council had declared the Chowdar Tank, a natural rain water tank, open to all communities. Despite this legislation the local untouchables were hesitant to take water from the tank for fear of upper caste reprisal. Ambedkar found this as the right opportunity to lead a public action for the cause of the untouchables and accordingly the conference was convened.

Ambedkar and his colleagues organised 5000 untouchables from different parts of the Bombay Presidency to attend this conference. The conference was attended also by some sympathisers from the upper castes including Brahmins. Ambedkar's address at this conference was an indication of the unfolding of his ideology and strategy. He exhorted the audience to organise mass protest of the untouchables intended to establish their rights – social and political. He went on to urge upon his followers the importance of education, particularly higher education and the need for them to find independent means of livelihood. His advice was to give up the shameful life of beggarly dependence on the upper castes, as servants of the village and to take up independent cultivation instead.

In the opening sessions of the conference the speakers including caste - Hindu leaders implored that the untouchables should have equal rights with

the upper caste Hindus and that the decision of the Mahad municipality declaring the tank open to all should be put into practice. Although a resolution in the conference was adopted on this subject, there was no follow-up for an immediate action to operationally uphold the right of the untouchables to take water from the tank. But the subject committee decided to perform a symbolic act of assertion of the right and the decision was put to the open session on the next day. The caste - Hindu leaders who spoke eloquently on the need to abolish untouchability did not agree to such a direct action at that moment and withdrew from the session. Subsequently the volunteers in groups of four marched in a file to the tank and started drawing water. Ambedkar also walked down the steps of the tank and drank a handful of water from it.

This action provoked the caste Hindus of Mahad. Meanwhile a rumour had spread around that having taken water from the tank the untouchables were next intending to enter the near by Veereshwar Temple. Resultantly large crowds of caste - Hindu youths gathered with stones and sticks, rushed to the venue of the conference, fell upon the untouchables and started beating them.

Hearing the news of the havoc caused by the caste Hindus on the volunteers, Ambedkar went around the conference pandal and was moved by the condition of those who had been injured in the assault. He advised his followers to keep restrain and not to attempt to retaliate, and made arrangement for the wounded to get medical attention. He spent another couple of days in Mahad to collect information on the violent attack and the condition of the victims with the help of his colleagues. On he basis of the information thus

gathered, he gave a detailed report of the incident to the District Superintendent of Police and explained to him the need for special security and protection of the untouchables. He also tried to call a private meeting of the non Brahmin leaders of Mahad to seek their help in preventing recurrence of such incidents.

The entire event had emanated long term consequences in the relationship between the caste Hindus and the untouchables of the area. The orthodox Hindus in Mahad and Konkan became apprehensive of the challenge posed by the untouchables. The caste - Hindus purified the water tank from which Ambedkar and his followers drank water, as part of their symbolic protest. The untouchables on the other hand became more defiant.

The critical importance of this event in Ambedkar movement is that it opened up ways for educating and mobilising the untouchables for more concrete and vigorous actions of organised protests. The Mahad conference established the unquestionable leadership of Ambedkar in the space of Dalit movement.

Bahishkrit Bharat

The impact of the Mahad conference and the related incidents made Ambedkar to resolve not to settle the things down. This determination, however, could not be executed without a medium to communicate his message. The 'Mooknayak' had already stopped its publication. In its place, he started the fortnightly Marati paper. 'Bahishkrit Bharat' on 3rd April 1927. But this organ also could not survive for long. The last issue of the paper was published on 15th November 1929.

Within the short period of publication of 'Bahishkrit Bharat', Ambedkar

he himself being its editor, could clarify his positions on many current issues and also could awaken his followers for protest movements and direct actions for achieving social equality. His writing, in 'Bahishkrit Bharat' are considered as the most single source of Ambedkar's early ideas on the challenge posed by the practice of untouchability and on what the untouchables could themselves do to counter it⁶.

Ambedkar used 'Bahishkrit Bharat' not only as a medium to educate his followers but also to expose the hypocrisy of the Dalit leaders. In the very first issue of the paper he wrote:

It has been the tradition of the past forty years for leaders in Maharashtra to do nothing themselves to spread the right values among the people and then to a legitimate movement for justice on the plea of ignorance of the mass people⁷.

His writings in the periodical reveal that till then Ambedkar pursued a social reformist approach in movements for the upliftment of the untouchables. He had situated the movement and himself within the problematics of the Hindu social order. He kept the optimism that the Hindu society can be reformed from within; but at the same time he had sensed the difficulty in restructuring it on the basis of the principle of equality. In the same issue of 'Bahishkrit Bharat' Ambedkar asserted:

So long as we consider ourselves to be Hindus and so long as you consider us as Hindus we have a right to enter a temple and worship the idol. We do not want

separate temples..... Temples are intended to facilitate community worship and community interaction or community unity..... We want equal rights in society. We will achieve them as far as possible while remaining within the Hindu fold or, if necessary, by kicking away this worthless Hindu identity. And if it becomes necessary to give up Hinduism it would no longer be necessary for us to bother about temples.⁸

Thus, at this juncture a gradual ideological shift was happening in Ambedkar. He had realised that reforming the social order to establish social, political and economic equality by persuading the caste - Hindus to shed their attitudes towards the untouchables is impossible, if not futile. This might have ignited his thought to consider the possibility of abandoning Hinduism by the untouchables for achieving social equality. Such a thought was quite natural in the sense that cast system had made the Hindu social structure so rigid that it required an overhaul of the system for introducing equalitarian principles in it.

The graded inequality in the society, as termed by Ambedkar, gives social, politic and economic advantages to the upper castes and keeps the untouchables always at the lowest rung of the social ladder. Moreover a basic social reconstruction was not a priority in the agendas of the major political movements of the time. The British rule on the other hand had only contributed to strengthen the existing social order without harming their colonial interest. Thus the threat to abandon Hinduism by the untouchable was gradually being

given priority in the strategy of the Ambedkar movement. However, a religious conversion was not a concern of the movement at that point of time; rather Ambedkar preferred to solve the problem of untouchability within the fold of Hinduism if possible.

Thus, in the editorial of the second issue of (22 April 1927) of *Bahishkrit Bharat* Ambedkar remarked that what had happened in Mahad was not just a common riot but a religious war. It was a declaration by the untouchables that, being a part of the Hindu society and followers of Hinduism, they were equal in status and had the same rights as others. But the answer given by the high caste was negative. Ambedkar warned the caste Hindus that untouchables would look upon the episode over drawing of water not as a riot, but as the first battle in the religious war for establishing equality. He went on to inspire his followers that the ultimate victory would be theirs⁹.

In the issue of 6 May 1927 Ambedkar urged the British government in India that the untouchables had the legal right of equal access to public places and it was the duty of the Government to uphold it. He reminded the government that constraints imposed by customs on the free movement of members of any caste or community along the public road would be contrary to the principles of British administration. On what had happened in Mahad, he pointed out that the administration had failed to give adequate protection to the untouchable delegates attending the conference.

Ambedkar found that the caste Hindus were against the removal of untouchability. He no more believed in the eradication of this social scourge and betterment of the condition of the untouchables by an attitudinal change

on the part of the caste-Hindus. He wrote in the 20 May 1927 issue of 'Bahishkrit Bharat':

In brief, we can only conclude that the practice of untouchability is a whim of the caste-Hindus.' You are untouchables because we regard you as such'. There seems no reason other than this whim that explains the practice of untouchability. The higher castes call this 'whim' thier 'custom' and treat the custom as law to force untouchability on the outcastes.

A curious fact in the context of all the 'efforts' at untouchability removal is that no one has asked what the untouchables think of this so called 'custom' or 'tradition'. On the other hand, we are flatly told that there is need for further reform in the attitudes of the caste Hindus and until then we must remain untouchables ¹⁰.

He did not want the untouchables to wait and wait for a change of minds of the upper-castes to get rid of the bane of untouchability. Rather he held that if untouchables had resisted it organisedly the caste-Hindus would not have been forced untouchability on them. Therefore, he exhorted them to organise mass social actions rather than following in the path of persuasion .The past three decades had revealed that however reasonable and justifiable were the demands of the untouchables, they could not get even an iota of consideration from the Hindus. Hence, the only means to awaken the people, the caste-Hindus as well as the untouchables themselves, was social resistance through public protests.

Ambedkar gradually found that there is no meaning in waging his struggle within the social space of Hinduism. He thought that a boycott of the religion would give a fatal blow to the caste-Hindus and would speed up the process of social readjustment. In the subsequent issues of the 'Bahishkrit Bharat' Ambedkar's voice became more strident; he literally declared the boycott. Clarifying the position, he wrote:

We do not value Hinduism, we value human dignity. If we were to find this dignity while remaining Hindus we would not give the advice of boycotting the Hindus.... Further, we are fully aware that if Hindu society ever recognise our humanity it will not be because of the self-evident nature of our humanity; but because of the force of circumstances¹¹

Thus, a strategic change in the Ambedkar movement can be seen at this juncture. Moving ahead from convening conferences and exhorting the untouchables about their dehumanised position in the society to a strategy of mass protest and resistance gave the movement a radical face. Ambedkar used the word 'Pratihar' to emphasise the potential of the protest and resistance which included not only an open fight against the caste-Hindu high-handedness but also the assertion of the natural rights by the untouchables. The other potential strategy was the 'boycott' of caste-Hindus by withholding services from them. The conversion from Hinduism was conceived, at this stage, only as a threat to the Hindu sentiment, but at any rate no spiritual implication was involved in the use of the strategy of boycott. Alongside,

Ambedkar also resorted to implore the British administration to ensure justice to the untouchables, and continued to educate his people about their rights and the need to stand on their own with improved self-respect and to prepare them for any confrontation with the established order.

Burning the Manusmriti

In August 1927, the Mahad municipality reversed its earlier decision to allow the untouchables to take water from the Chowdar Tank. Ambedkar asserted that this action would not overrule the rights of the untouchables but would only strengthen their resolve to fight for this right. On 25th December the volunteers gathered again in Mahad to launch their protest by taking water from the tank. This resolve to take water from the tank was not just to assert their rights but it was considered as a major action in the greater struggle for abolishing the very system of untouchability. Ambedkar explained to his followers the danger of seeking temporary solutions to the problems faced by the untouchables. Drawing on the lessons of the French Revolution he emphasised the need for abolishing the existing system. Here one can see that Ambedkar had gone a step further in his movement for the emancipation of the Dalits by adopting a larger goal for the overhauling of the Varna system. The assertion of the rights for taking drinking water and for, entering the Hindu temples became the steps leading to this ultimate goal.

Ambedkar exhorted his followers that the only class which can bring about social revolution is the depressed classes. One cannot expect the Brahmin class to give up the privileges they had been enjoying due to the hierarchic structure of the society. The non-Brahmin classes, the intermediary

between the untouchables and the Brahmins would not be committed to any principles and are weak in their aspiration for social revolution. Ambedkar addressed the volunteers:

We should accept that we are born to achieve this larger social purpose and should consider that to be our lives goal. Let us strive to gain that religious merit. Besides, this work (of bringing about social revolution) is in our interest and it is our duty to dedicate ourselves to remove the obstacles in our path.¹²

This radical thoughts reflect an influence of Marxism. The Marxists hold that a revolution leading to the establishment of a classless society is the responsibility of the proletariat or working class and the Communists can bring about a total revolution. Ambedkar also holds that annihilation of the caste and the establishment of a casteless society is the need and responsibility of the depressed classes.

The most significant event of the Mahad Satyagraha was the burning of a copy of 'Manusmriti', the sacred law book of the Hindus, on 25th December 1927. Though the act of burning 'Manusmriti' was not unplanned, fore seeing the explosiveness of the event, no publicity was given to it in advance. The resolution in this regard was moved by Gangadhar Neelkanth Sahasrabuddhe, a Brahmin associate of Ambedkar, and was seconded by P.N. Rajabhoj, an untouchable leader.

The burning of 'Manusmriti' in the Mahad Satyagraha shook the caste - Hindus and gave rise to much criticism in the Hindu press. Ambedkar

justified this action in 'Bahiskri Bharat'. He considered 'Manusmriti' as abusive and insulting in its treatment of the shudras and the untouchables; also social equality has never been supported by it. Hence, burning 'Manusmriti' should be considered an action meant to register strong protest against the idea of inequality it represented.

The major action of protest proposed for the satyagraha – drinking of water from the Chowder Tank – could not be carried out. Some of the caste - Hindus had obtained an interim injunction against allowing the untouchables to take water from the tank. The district collector also persuaded Ambedkar to postpone any action until the case had been decided upon by the court. But Ambedkar did not agree to it. However, he allowed the collector to address the conference after the matter had been discussed in the open session. The issue of Sathyagraha and the collector's suggestion were discussed in the subject committee and it was reiterated to go ahead with the proposal to drink water from the tank. Even after collector's address the decision was not suspended. However, the seriousness of the situation was discussed again by the leaders and a decision was taken to postpone the satyagraha for the time being and to organise a circumbulation of the tank by the delegates at that moment.

Demand for Separate Electorate

Ambedkar movement was hither to confined more or less to the Bombay presidency. His writings clarifying his positions on the struggle of the untouchables and its direction as well as those aimed at educating his people were in Marathi. Consequently his message had not reached the non-Marathi

speaking people. Despite he had some contact with some non-Brahmin leaders of the Madras Presidency, his audience were primarily the Maharashtrians. But, gradually his movement gained attention of the whole country. The two significant events that marked his appearance in the national political scene at this time was his disposition before the Simon Commission (the Indian Statutory Committee) and his critique of the (Motilal) Nehru Committee Report.

The congress had given a general call to boycott the Simon Commission and following this there was a country wide protest against the commission. But, Ambedkar decided to submit a memorandum to the Commission representing the grievances of the untouchables, on behalf of the Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha. Also, he gave evidence before the commission on 23, October 1928 and urged it to include provision for safeguarding the interests of the untouchables in any future constitutional frame work. In the memorandum dated 29, May 1928 Ambedkar used the term Depressed Classes as synonymous with untouchables and made the following demands for the consideration of the Commission¹³.

1. Adequate representation of the Depressed classes in the Legislature.
2. Guaranteeing the civil right of the Depressed classes as a minority.

Giving evidence before the Commission, Ambedkar emphasised the status of the depressed classes as a distinct community to be considered separately alongwith the Hindus, Muslims and other communities. He stated:

We must be treated as distinct minority separate from the Hindu community. Our minority character has been

hitherto concealed by our inclusion in the Hindu community, but as a matter of fact there is really no link between the depressed classes and the Hindu Community. The first point, therefore is that we must be regarded as a distinct and independent minority. Secondly, I should like to submit that the depressed classes minority needs greater political protection than any other community in British India, for the simple reason that it is educationally very backward, that it is economically poor, socially enslaved and suffers certain grave political disabilities from which no other community suffers. Then I would submit that, as a matter of demand for political protection, we claim representation on the same basis as the Mohamedan minority. We claim reserved seats if accompanied by adult franchise¹⁴.

This radical position that the untouchables are distinct from the Hindus indicates an ideological departure from his earlier stance where he had situated the depressed classes within in the Hindu fold itself. His demands reflect not only a vision to develop the Dalits into a potential power that can influence the decision making at the political level, but also an objective of establishing a new identity for the untouchables. He admits that the untouchables and the touchables might have grown and formed a part of one culture or religion but he disregards to consider them as parts of the same society.

He explained that though the caste Hindus and the outcaste untouchables

belong to one culture or civilization, they belong to separate societies, for culture and society are different from each other¹⁵. He found no reason for the Dalits to form a part of the Hindus, as the latter had no basis to claim a community interest with the untouchables who had been treated as outcastes for centuries. It is this ideological conviction that led him later to give up Hinduism when he realised that neither Hinduism could be reformed on the foundation of the principles of equality nor the conditions of the Dalits be improved within the Hindu fold.

Ambedkar was very much critical of the Nehru Committee Report which had suggested the abolition of all community based constituencies except in the case of Muslims. The committee had also suggested a language based reconstruction of the provinces. Ambedkar severely criticised the committee on both the counts and said that they were against the national interest. He charged the above recommendation regarding community based constituencies as a move to perpetuate the Brahmin hegemony and to keep the untouchables away from power.

Though Ambedkar proclaimed the distinct socio-political identity of the depressed classes in his critique of Nehru Committee Report and the evidence presented to the Simon Commission, he had not yet made up his mind to declare a conversion. Explaining his position on the issue of conversion from Hinduism, opened up by the untouchables of Jalgaon, Ambedkar wrote in 'Bahishkrit Bharat' (15 March 1929):

“We are not ourselves ready as of today to change our religion. We still have the courage to fight for human

rights of the outcaste members of Hindu society and to overcome the obduracy of Hindu society and hope that we will be successful. Yet we cannot bring ourselves to dissuade those who being tired of Hindu society are now desirous of giving up Hinduism”¹⁶

Thus, though Ambedkar disentangled himself from the Hindu fold he did not see the time ripe for a conversion from Hinduism. However, he did not discourage those who desire to do so. He continued the fight within the space of the Hindu social order. Beside direct social actions in the form of mass public protests he had also started seeking legislative intervention to remove the social disabilities of the untouchables. The emphasis on separate electorate for the depressed classes stands significant in this regard.

Ambedkar and Class Struggle

Ambedkar’s perspective on the economic and class issues in the context of Dalit movement had taken its concrete shape by the late 1920s. This is very much embedded in his stands on the peasants and working class struggle. According to Omvedt there is a kind of parallelism in the issues as they confronted Ambedkar and other leaders; and Ambedkar approached them with the basic view point of autonomy plus alliance:

In both cases Dalits were workers and they were peasants; but as workers they were invariably in the lowest paid and most unskilled industrial job and as peasants they were likely to be landless or poor peasants who spend most of the time working as wage labourers as well as toiling on the cesset-imposed tasks of untouchables. In both cases the ‘problem of entry’ — of getting jobs

and getting land – could sometimes override the question of organising the workers and peasants. In both the cases they faced problems of caste discrimination, unwillingness of caste Hindu workers and peasants to accept Dalit leadership; the differences were a greater severity in village customs on the one hand and the emerging role of communists on the other.¹⁷

Ambedkar lived most of his life among the industrial workers¹⁸. Though he was not so directly involved with the textile workers, he was observing the efforts taken by the communists and others to organise them. He was also taking note of the problems of untouchables as they were being excluded from the higher paid weaving jobs and were, therefore, less represented in organising efforts. He was very much critical of the Indian communist's tendency to ignore the problems of caste based discrimination towards the workers. Looking at the historic textile strike of 1928 from the perspective of Dalits cause. Ambedkar said

..... in the recent Bombay strike this matter was brought up prominently by me. I said to the members of the union that if they did not recognise the rights of the depressed classes to work in all the departments, I would rather dissuade the depressed classes from taking part in the strike. They afterwards consented, most reluctantly to include this as one of their demands and when they presented this to the mill owners the mill owners very rightly snubbed them and said that if this was an injustice, they certainly were not responsible for it.¹⁹

In the second strike in 1929, which resulted in a massive defeat of Girni Kamgar Union, Ambedkar did ask the untouchable workers to go back²⁰. This was done with a view to put stress on the discriminatory treatment of the money lenders towards the striking untouchable and to protect them from a 'misdirected movement'²¹. Ambedkar was quite irritated by the communists for ignoring the issues posed by the exclusion of the untouchable from employment in the textiles mills. He argued that the trade union movement must be distinguished from the communist movement which is a political movement aimed at revolution. His disagreement with the communists was not on their aim of creating a socialist society but about the use of violent means to do so²².

On the issues of peasants and the problems of rural Mahars, Ambedkar took an anti - landlord stand. In his debut speech in the Bombay Legislative Council he criticised the imposition of land tax on the peasants, even when they could not earn any profit. In 1928 when the non Brahmins organised the peasantry in opposition to a proposed 'Small Holders Relief Bill' Ambedkar supported them. In the Legislative Council he registered his dissent on the suggestions in the bill to consolidate smaller holdings. He argued that the consolidation of holdings could only push down the majority of small peasants in to landlessness while holdings would get concentrated under a single individual. He suggested that if consolidation of smaller holdings is felt necessary, it should be done to form small co-operative firms²³. Ambedkar had also supported the struggle of the peasants of Bardoli.

Apart from this support to the peasant movements in general, Ambedkar did begin in the 1920s to take up special problems of the Dalit peasants in

particular. He campaigned against the 'Mahar Watan' which made the Mahar families to work as village servants at the mercy of feudal lords for a doubtful privilege of cultivating a piece of 'Watan' land and the right of begging for livelihood. He found that the 'Mahar Watan' had made the Mahars a permanent dependant of the landed gentry among caste Hindus.

Ambedkar brought the Hereditary Offices Act Amendment Bill before the Bombay Legislative Council, which sought to turn the Mahar and other untouchable village servants into paid government servants, to do away with their various village hononariums and to commit their 'watan' land into ordinary private holdings. He considered the 'watan' as the greatest obstacle in the progress of Mahars. He warned the government that if nothing was done the result would be a war between the Revenue Department and the Mahars²⁴. According to Omvedt the Mahar Watan struggle led by Ambedkar which continued through out the 1930s and 1940s *was the concrete form of the fight against feudalism which Marxists in many parts of India have struggled against with the general term 'Vethbegar'* ²⁵.

Another question which invited his attention was the 'problems of entry' of the Dalit agricultural labourer. According to Omvedt, Ambedkar adopted almost no programme or campaign for agricultural labourers as such; his main concern was that the Dalit should cease to be agricultural labourers, and that they should escape from their landlessness either by securing industrial or white - collar employment or by obtaining land for cultivation²⁶. The main type of land he wanted to be obtained by the untouchables was the government 'forest land' or 'waste land' much of which originally belonged to the village

communities. He had been raising questions about this in the Bombay Legislative Council in the late 1920s²⁷.

Ambedkarism in the Making

The exposition of Ambedkar movement attempted above unveils the form and direction which Ambedkar ideology had taken during the 1920s. The decade did witness the emergence of a vigorous movement of the depressed classes under the leadership of Ambedkar, almost entirely based on the Mahar caste in the Bombay Presidency. The movement decisively rejected the pro-Hindu 'integrationist' option represented by the Maratha leader V.R. Shinde and some of the Nagpur Dalit leaders, and chose instead a position of Dalit autonomy linked with a policy of general alliance with the non-Brahmin movement. It also reflected a policy of support for the struggles of the working class and peasants organised with a view to assure Dalit's entry as workers and peasants by gaining jobs, land and education²⁸. The decade also witnessed the Mahad Sathyagraha, the declaration of the untouchable's right to live as human beings.

The positions taken by Ambedkar in the 1920s on the status of the untouchables and the direction of their movements can be summarised in the following propositions.

1. The untouchables had historically been subjected to systematic exploitation by the caste - Hindus and untouchability was the result of Hinduism which perpetuated a social order based on graded inequality.
2. The philosophy of Hinduism equals the philosophy of Brahmanism

which remained inflexible and got frustrated at the efforts to reform its basic feature.

3. The untouchables constitute a definite entity distinct from the caste - Hindus. They might belong to the same religion, but in no way they were a part of the society to which the caste- Hindus belong.
4. The untouchables have to fight for establishing equality and justice and not to seek favours from the upper castes. The caste Hindus would not allow to reform the hierarchic structure and build up a free social order.
5. The untouchables would also seek to attain legitimate equalitarian goals and special protection in the political, economic and educational spheres, within the fold of Hinduism as far as possible, but would not mind abandoning the Hindu religion if it becomes necessary.

Thus, Ambedkar movement in the 1920s was in the process of a major shift from its early position of fighting for the rights of the Dalits through protests within the space of Hinduism. It was a presage to the political mobilization of the Dalits, to the adoption of constitutional means for safeguarding their interests and for a total rejection of the Hindu religion.

Note:

- 1 Cited in Gore, P. 75
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Ibid, p.76.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Cited in Kadam, K.N, Opcit, P77.

- 6 Gore, Opcit, p.90.
- 7 Cited in Gore, Ibid, p.91.
- 8 Cited in Gore, Ibid.
- 9 Cited in Gore, Ibid, p.93.
- 10 Cited in Gore, Ibid, p.96.
- 11 Ibid
- 12 Ibid, p.105.
- 13 *Writings and Speeches, Volume 2, P. 428-58.*
- 14 Ibid, p.465.
- 15 Gore , p.113.
- 16 Ibid p.118.
- 17 Omvedt, p.154.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 *Writings and Speeches, Volume 2, P. 474.*
- 20 Omvedt, p.154.
- 21 Ibid (Bahishkrit Bharath).
- 22 Ibid, p.155.
- 23 *Writings and Speeches, Volume 2, P. 134.*
- 24 Ibid, p.87.
- 25 Omvedt, p.157.
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 *Writings and Speeches, Volume 2, pp. 1-321, (Speeches in the Bombay Legislature).*
- 28 Omvedt, p.158.

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Chapter 6
AMBEDKAR AND NATIONAL POLITICS

- The Nasik Sathyagraha
- The Round Table Conference
- The Poona Pact
- Ambedkar and Gandhi: The split of interest
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AMBEDKAR AND NATIONAL POLITICS

The 1930s were of critical significance in the history of the Dalit movement in India. The strategic transition from the social reformation by being within the Hindu fold to political intervention through an alliance of the Dalits and the non-Brahmins became the prominent focus of Ambedkar movement during this decade. These years witnessed the Nasik Sathyagraha, the All India Depressed Classes Conference in Nagpur, The Round Table Conferences and Ambedkar's clash with Gandhi on the issue of separate electorate for the depressed classes, the Poona Pact, Yeola Conference and announcement of the final disillusionment with Hinduism and the formation of the Independent Labour Party (ILP). All these projected Ambedkar as the unparalleled leader of the Dalits and forced the Congress leadership to deal with his demands.

The Nasik Sathyagraha

The sathyagraha for the right of the untouchables to enter the Kalaram Temple, which began on 2nd March 1930 and went on for six long years, was the last link in Ambedkar movement with regard to the reform within the Hindu fold. Ambedkar as a member of the Bombay Legislature had made his mark as an articulate and able member of the Assembly and had started giving more importance to the political demands of the depressed classes, instead of focusing on the issues like right to enter Temples, which required a solution within the domain of Hindu social space. He had been concentrating on using political means to achieve social equality of the depressed classes. However, his participation in and the guidance given to the Nasik Sathyagraha

reveal that he was concerned with the organisational value of such direct social action for political interventions.

When the Nasik Sathyagraha for temple entry began, the Gandhi - led Congress movement against the salt tax was also about to start. The Congress leaders in the Bombay Province kept a divided opinion on the Nasik Sathyagraha. While some leaders like B.G. Kher and Swami Anand supported the sathyagraha and were present when it began, the Hindu orthodoxy in the Congress held away from it¹. This indicates that the Congress, did not give much attention and support to the Sathyagraha for Temple entry even though at that time the removal of untouchability had become a major item of its reform agenda.

It seems that the Nasik Sathyagraha which went on for long and the decade long experience of his struggle for social reformation taught Ambedkar that Hindu society is unredeemable and the social equality of the depressed classes cannot be achieved as long as they are inside the Hindu society. Thus he opened up his mind before his followers and asked them to give up the hope of achieving the social rights of the depressed classes by reforming the Hindu Society. He said at the Yeola conference on 13 th October 1935:

Even this movement to obtain our ordinary rights as human beings and achieve equality in Hindu society has failed. The time, the money and the energy on this movement have proved wasteful. This is a tragic situation. Thus the time has arrived for us to take a final decision. This weak and lowly status that we occupy is because we are part of the Hindu Society²

He exhorted the depressed classes to leave Hinduism and embrace other religions where they will obtain peace and dignity, and declared his resolve: *It was not my fault that I was born as an untouchable. But I am determined that I will not die a Hindu*³. Accordingly he advised his followers to abandon the Sathyagraha at Nasik for entry in the Kalaram Temple.

The Round Table Conference

The most significant political developments of these years were centred around the Round Table Conference, convened by the British Government, as a follow-up to the recommendations of the Simon Commission to consider proposals for constitutional reform in India. In September 1930 Ambedkar received an invitation to attend the first Round Table Conference. He had made important depositions before the Simon Commission on behalf of the depressed classes and had worked as a member of the committee of the Bombay legislature which was associated with the Commission. The Indian National Congress which had boycotted the Simon Commission boycotted the first Round Table Conference also.

Before going to attend the Round Table Conference in London Ambedkar summoned the All India Depressed classes Conference at Nagpur on 8th August 1930. His presidential speech in this conference was indicative of the themes central to the struggles of the coming decade⁴. In this speech he emphasised the necessity for national independence and argued that the multiplicity of castes, races, religions and languages did not make India unfit for political freedom. He went on to point out that the British rule had only impoverished India and nothing had been done to lighten the burden of

untouchability or to reduce the exploitation of peasants or workers. At the same time he argued that safeguards, particularly for the untouchables are necessary for self rule in the caste – divided India. In the Round Table Conference Ambedkar repeated his stand presented to the Simon Commission testimony – separate electorate on adult suffrage for the untouchables, reserved seats, employment and strong legal measures against untouchability and social boycott.

In the Round Table Conference, Ambedkar and M.N. Srinivasan were the two persons to represent the untouchables. In the conference Ambedkar was unequivocal that untouchables needed political power and was equally definite that this could only be gained within the framework of an Independent India. Explaining his stand Ambedkar stated:

The beurocratic form of Government in India should be replaced by a Government which will be a Government of the people by the people and for the people. This statement of the view of the depressed classes I am sure will be recieved with some surprise in certain quarters..... Ours is an independant decision. We have judged of the existing administration solely in the light of our circumstances and we have found it wanting in some of the most essential elements of a good Government⁵.

He compared the condition of the depressed classes before and during the British rule and found that there was no fundamental change in their

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loathsome condition. The British rule had only reproduced the established Hindu social order for safeguarding their colonial interests. He said that the wrongs towards the depressed classes remained as open sores and they have not been righted although 150 years of the British rule have rolled away. He commended on the expressed good will of the British as irrelevant for the depressed classes and declared:

Nobody can remove our grievances as well we can and we cannot remove them unless we get political power in our own hands. No share of this political power can evidently come to us so long as the British Government remains as it is. It is only in Swaraj constitution that we find any chance of getting the political power into our own hands without which we cannot bring salvation to our people⁶.

But Ambedkar was well aware that with the establishment of 'Swaraj' in the prevailing condition, the political power would be passed from the British to the hands of those who wield the economic, social and religious sway over the depressed classes. Still he wanted the Swaraj to be achieved even at this contingent risk. However he raised a precondition to this:

We are prepared to take the inevitable risk of the situation in the hope that we shall be installed, in adequate proposition as the political sovereigns of the country along with our fellow country men. But we will consent to that on one condition and that is the settlement of our problems is not left to time.⁷

Ambedkar spoke at the conference for a unitary state and adult suffrage, with reserved seats and safeguards for the untouchables. He said, *as a member of a minority, we look to the central government to act as a powerful curb on the provincial majority to save the minorities from the misrule of the majority.*⁸ The preference for a strong central Government was out of his conviction that as one moved from the centre to the province and from the province to the district one moved from the universalistic to increasingly particularistic value frameworks and in the process, the interest of the untouchables would suffer.⁹ The conference, however favoured a federal state in which the princely states could enter as autonomous units, and it was accordingly that the 1935 Govt. of India Act was framed.

After the first Round Table Conference the Congress called off its civil disobedience movement and the Gandhi-Irvin pact led to the appearance of M.K.Gandhi at the Second Round Table Conference. Between the two conferences Ambedkar had his first meeting with Gandhi on 14th August 1931 in Bombay and it took place in a turbulent atmosphere. Reporting this meeting '*Times of India*' of 15th August 1931 wrote :

He (Ambedkar) tried to impress on Mr. Gandhi his point that the Congress had not so far done anything tangible for the depressed classes and Mr. Gandhi was under a delusion imagining that the depressed classes were solidly behind him..... Dr.Ambedkar eventually left without convincing Mr. Gandhi or being convinced by him.¹⁰

In the Second Round Table Conference both Gandhi and Ambedkar claimed to speak on behalf of the untouchables. But there was a vast difference in their points of view. While Ambedkar stressed the need for political power for the depressed classes, Gandhi argued for reform and protection from above. Gandhi vehemently opposed the suggestion for separate electorate for the depressed classes on which he was convinced that it could do no good for them but do much harm, and he said that the Congress is wedded to adult franchise which would place the depressed classes on voter's roll."¹¹ In his own words, "*what these peoples need more than election to the legislatures is protection from the social and religious persecution*"¹². Gandhi did not want the untouchable to be classified as a separate group which would entitle them for separate electorate; in his view it would create a division in Hinduism. Therefore he asserted:

Those who speak of the political rights of untouchables do not know their India, do not know how Indian society is today constructed, and therefore I want to say it with all the emphasis that I can command that, If I was the only person to resist this thing I would resist it with my life.¹³

Earlier, Ambedkar had made his position clear that he was not against the transfer of political power from the British to the hands of Indians, but he had also stressed that,

Power shall not fall in to the hands of a clique, in to the hands of an oligarchy, or into the hands of the people,

whether Mohammedans or Hindus, but the solution shall be such that the power shall be shared by all communities in their respective proportions.¹⁴

It appears that Gandhi at that juncture did not want the Untouchable to share the political power except that of adult franchise. His fear on the supposed 'division in Hinduism' was nothing but a political division in the villages, a threat on the impression that he was the only 'real' representative of the Indian people and the untouchables.

Gandhi refused to admit Ambedkar being invited as the representative of the untouchables in the Round Table Conference, claiming that the depressed classes supported only him and the Congress. As Omvedt described, the confrontations between Ambedkar and Gandhi has ensued a political battle in which the entire Congress elite as well as the pro-congress press sought to organise meetings of the untouchables, and to manoeuvre or produce Dalit spokesmen who took a line opposing Ambedkar and to do whatever they could to show that the untouchables are denouncing Ambedkar and that there was a wave of support for joint electorates.¹³

The Poona Pact

The Second Round Table Conference ended without a decision on the issue of minorities representation and the matter was left to the decision of the British Prime Minister. Gandhi was signatory to this, but when the British Premier Ramsey McDonald declared communal award on 16th August 1932 which recognised the separate identity of the untouchables and gave them separate electorate, Gandhi felt that the Hindu and national interests were

threatened. He announced his fast unto death on 18th September 1932 in the Yeravada jail, to get the decision to provide separate electorate to the depressed classes revoked.

On Gandhi's decision to go on fast, Ambedkar asked in a press communique that if separate electorate for Sikhs and Muslims could not divide the Nation, there was no reason why separate electorate for the depressed classes would. The depressed classes were, in fact, more in need of protection of their interests.¹⁴

Meanwhile efforts were hastened to reach a compromise and Ambedkar became the centre of attention, for without him there could be no solution. On the previous eve of the beginning of Gandhi's fast, that is on 19th September 1932, a large conference of the Hindus and untouchable leaders including Ambedkar was convened in Bombay. Ambedkar held that he would not be a party to any proposal that would be against the interests of the depressed classes. Gandhi started his fast on 20th September. Ambedkar was criticised not only by the Hindu nationalist press but also by a section of Dalit leaders. But he presented a firm front. He said:

It has fallen to my lot to be the villain of the peace but I tell you I shall not defer from my pious duty, and betray the just and legitimate interest of my people even if you hang me on the nearest lamp post in the street.¹⁵

Hard bargaining took place. Gandhi had already completed two days of his fast when Ambedkar met him in the Yeravada Jail, accompanied by M.R. Jayaker, Birla, Chinnilal Mehtha and C. Rajagopalachari to discuss the terms

for ending Gandhi's fast. Gandhi agreed to accept the terms of settlement reached at the Bombay conference. At this meeting an agreement was hammered out by Tej Bahadur Sapru and Ambedkar in which a two tier system of voting would allow the untouchables, first to select a panel of four depressed class candidates through separate electorate and then to elect one from among these four candidates by the joint electorate. On 24th September 1932 Ambedkar signed with Gandhi the Poona Pact, giving up the demand for separate electorate and making it possible for Gandhi to end his fast.

The Poona Pact, thus turned the confrontation started in the second Round Table Conference to a compromise resulting in the gain of double the number of seats to the depressed classes compared to the original provision in the communal award. However, Gandhi could desist the depressed classes from getting separate electorate, but he had to accept reserved seats for them. Ambedkar also had some reason to be satisfied, in that the seats reserved for the depressed classes were nearly equivalent to their proportion in the population. A total of 148 seats were earmarked for the depressed classes, out of the 780 seats, as against the allocation of only 71 in the original plan by the Mc Donald award. The poona pact was another great movement in the history of the Dalit movement in India, that established Ambedkar as the unequivocal leader of the untouchables at the National level. The Pact also made the unerasable impression that Gandhi was the representative of the Hindu social order and Ambedkar was the representative of the Dalits, which Gandhi and the Congress always refused to accept.

The reactions to Gandhi's fast and the Poona Pact were much varied,

but they clarify the political chemistry of the time. The perceptive diversity in responses to the Pact is not just a matter of differences in interpretation, but also of the fundamentally different perspective of the caste Hindus and the Dalits.¹⁶ It seemed that almost all upper caste Hindus held a common position. For Gandhi the fast was an action of 'purification' attained by seeking to 'purge Hinduism' of the 'blight of untouchability and thus motivating caste Hindus to take up the campaign against untouchability. The Gandhians praised the Poona Pact as an important step in maintaining the integrationist nature of the Hindu society. But the Hindu revivalists condemned it as a step for selling out the interests of Hindus. Many upper caste Hindus, particularly Bengalis, protested against the Pact in strong words for overriding their interests. No one other than Rabindranath Tagore himself expressed this view in a cable gram:

While entertaining a great love for Mahatmaji and a complete faith in his wisdom in Indian politics I dare not wait for further consideration to declare that justice had been sacrificed in case of Bengal. I have not the least doubt now that such an injustice will continue to cause mischief for all parties concerned keeping alive the spirit of communal conflict in our province in an intense form making peaceful government perpetually difficult.¹⁷

Some members of the Bengal Legislative Council expressed their strong protest, as the "Poona pact introduces revolutionary change, cutting at the

root of normal progress of Hindu society in Bengal” and they urged for modifying the pact¹⁸.

But, for Ambedkar, the whole issue was something different. He considered Gandhi's fast as directed against the untouchables, that is, against the separate electorate given to them, and in the interest of keeping them in the Hindu fold. It was a 'moral black mail', since Gandhi's death would have provoked a violent backlash against Dalits throughout the villages. In fact, it was hard power politics rather than a moral dialogue that was at play in the negotiation that settled the fast.¹⁹ Gandhi at the beginning of the negotiation was not even ready to concede reserved seats for the untouchables.²⁰

Ambedkar and Gandhi: The split of Interest

As an immediate effect of the Poona Pact the temple entry movement for 'Harijans' gained momentum among the integrationist cast Hindu Gandhians. It seemed that the confrontation between Ambedkar and Gandhi, which started from the time of the second Round Table Conference and reflected in the issues related to the fast and the Poona Pact impelled the Congress to take up some direct social action against untouchability. Thus, the Poona Pact opened up a new vista for the struggle against untouchability. The caste Hindu leadership began to emphasise temple entry and common meal programs, but Ambedkar focused on political education and mobilisation of the depressed classes. The Nasik Sathyagraha for temple entry that began in 1930 was still on in 1932 and was going through various phases with street processions, 'sit ins' at the four doors of the temple, court litigation etc. Congress volunteers again did not show much enthusiasm in the Nasik

Sathyagraha and followers of Ambedkar did not take much interest in the Guruvayur Sathyagraha began by K.Kelappan, which had the much coveted blessings of Gandhi.

It seemed that Ambedkar and Gandhi would work together on a common platform when the Anti-Untouchability League which later became the Harijan Sevak Sangh was founded on 30th September 1932. But with no loss of time the difference between the two surfaced. The two cardinal issues on which the difference transpired were: Whether the league could be controlled by caste Hindus or whether the depressed classes could have at least a share in the control, and whether the league would seek only to abolish untouchability or it would also aim at abolishing the 'Chaturvarnya' itself. Gandhi wanted the caste Hindus to control the League, because he held that as the untouchability was an 'evil' of Hinduism it would be purged by the Hindus themselves, and he did not find any problem with 'Chaturvarnya'. Ambedkar on the other hand was emphasising a structural change in the Hindu social order. Thus it was quite impossible for the two to work together for a 'common cause'. There would not have been a common political interest between Gandhi and Ambedkar, the representatives of two opposing class interests.

The developments of 1930- 1932 reveal the strength that Ambedkar movement had achieved during the 1920s. The events of these years placed Ambedkar and the issue of untouchability at the centre of the national politics, along side the demand for independence of the country. These developments resulted also in the final disillusionment of Ambedkar with Hinduism, which

he ultimately declared in the Yeola conference. The events according to Omvelt, made it clear that (a) Gandhi who represented the best of Hinduism, would not budge from paternalism and acceptance of 'Chaturvarnya' (b) In spite of the moralistic atmosphere that surrounded the fast and pact, it was hard bargaining and power (mobilising strength) that counted (c) Large sections of the caste Hindus did not support Gandhi in giving even limited right and representation to the untouchable, as illustrated by the storm of opposition to the Poona Pact and (d) Other Dalit leaders could be used by the upper caste as long as they identified with Hinduism.

Formation of the Independent Labour Party

The four years that followed the Poona Pact were momentous in the history of the Ambedkar movement. Though these years could witness actions primarily on socio religious issues, the period did mark a turning point in the movement. The final withdrawal or 'failure' of the Nasik Sathyagraha, which Ambedkar had predictably foreseen, made him to declare his determination to give up Hinduism. He made this epoch making announcement on 13th August 1935 at the Yeola Conference: *it is the inequality in Hinduism*, he said, *that compel me to quit Hinduism.*²¹ The declaration of abandoning Hinduism opened a tornado of reactions by the caste Hindus. Ambedkar's speech 'Annihilation of Caste' to be delivered in a conference planned by the Jat-Pat- Todak Mandal of Lahore was cancelled because he had stressed in this pre-written speech. the need for destroying 'Chaturvarnya' and to break the strangle - hold of the 'Sasthras', in order to achieve this. Ambedkar, however, published this undelivered speech as a booklet. This work formed

a major source of debate between Ambedkar and Gandhi on the meaning of Hinduism.

By this time it had become imminent for Ambedkar to establish an organisational platform to continue the struggle for achieving the political objectives. Moreover, the fate of Nasik Sathyagraha, the growing disenchantment with the caste Hindu reformist movement and the general election declared at the provincial levels set a great challenge for Ambedkar movement to prove its autonomy and power in practice. Though the temple entry movement could work as a means to energise the depressed classes and to open their eyes to the social realities, it could no more further the struggle for empowering the Dalits politically. Accordingly Ambedkar advised the depressed classes to concentrate their energy and resources on politics and the Independent Labour Party (ILP) was founded on 5th August 1936.

Ambedkar tried to project the Independent Labour Party not simply as the party of Dalits but as the party of the workers and peasants as well. This characteristic representation of the party, in a sense, signified the needs of the time. The Gandhian sathyagraha techniques seemed to have failed and there was a resulting polarisation in the Congress, by which leaders who had established mass appeal (like Patel, Rajendra Prasad, Rajagopalachari etc.) swung to the right. Resultantly, a disillusionment within the Congress was mounting up among the radicalised youths, peasants and workers. This tremors continued to increase, particularly when the congress came into power in many states and failed to fulfil radical reformist promises.²² The period had also witnessed many political alternatives at different parts of the country,

for example, the Unionist Party (Punjab) and the Krishak Praja Party(Bengal). In this sense, formation of the Independent Labour Party led by Ambedkar was also a part of the trend; aspiring to provide an alternative in the freedom struggle by uniting the Dalits, peasants and workers.

Ambedkar's party won 17 seats in the 1937 general election conducted under the Government of India Act 1935. This electoral success included 11 of the 15 reserved seats and 3 general seats in the Bombay Presidency, and 4 of the 19 reserved seats in the central province. Ambedkar himself won his seat from the Bombay defeating the Congress candidate by 1297 votes. The program of the Independent Labour Party, published in 1937, described it as a labour organisation in the sense that it would work for the welfare of the labouring class.²³ It promised to undertake legislation to protect agricultural tenants from eviction and to regulate employment, promotion and dismissals of employees in Industry. It also promised measures to save peasants from the clutches of money lenders, put up a strong opposition to land revenue and campaigned for legislation for a more equitable system of tax as well as for the establishment of land mortgage banks and agricultural producers' co-operatives and marketing societies. The party, despite the fact that its mass base remained in the Bombay presidency and the Central Province only, was projected as a party of the workers and peasants, one of the people's alternative to the Congress which had been viewed by many as the party of Hindu-capitalist-landlord combine. The fight against castism was taken as a necessity for creating worker - peasant unity, and the congress was condemned as a party controlled by the exploiting class, and which would neither end exploitation nor would fight vigorously against the British Imperialism.

Search for Dalits - Non-Brahmin Alliance

By 1938 the Ambedkar movement had evolved into a struggle against class - caste exploitation. Presiding over a conference of the Railway Depressed Class Workers, organised by the Independent Labour Party at Manmad on 12 - 13 February, Ambedkar focussed on the exploitation of the Dalits. He spoke on the need to organise against the twin enemies namely 'Brahminism and Capitalism'²⁴. He described how the untouchable workers had been relegated to lower and more exploitative jobs and stressed the necessity of an anti Congress political stance.²⁵

Ambedkar worked for bringing the non - Brahmin and Dalit workers and peasants on a common platform. The late 1930s and the early 1940s were significant in this search. Ambedkar kept his hope on the radical peasant activists and non-Brahmin leaders. He found his strategic allies in these two categories. Though he was also ready to make an alliance with communists and had a temporary agreement, he disregarded them on some basic issues of the communist theory and strategy. Therefore, he looked towards the non-Brahmins with full hope. But at this juncture the non-Brahmin movements were in their way to enter the grand space of 'National Politics' occupied by the Congress. He attempted to dissuade them from leaning towards the Congress and also tried to establish a common front of the depressed classes and working classes of other communities, against the Brahmins, the capitalists and other exploiting classes. But it was simply beyond their imagination to listen to the words of someone who was lower in the social hierarchy and status of leadership. How could they recognise Ambedkar as a 'National Leader'? At that moment he would have only been recognised as

the leader of the untouchables. But Ambedkar found that even this recognition had been denied to him by the caste - Hindu leaders; what they would allow him was only the leadership of the untouchables of the Bombay Presidency²⁶

Therefore, after the mid-1930s there was no important non-Brahmin leader in Maharashtra with whom Ambedkar could form an alliance. He discussed the matter with Periyar, when the great Tamil non-Brahmin leader went to Bombay in January 1940, but there was little outcome. The Tamil non-Brahmin movement by itself was too far away and too weak at that time to provide a concrete base for a strong alliance.²⁷

However, Ambedkar started looking toward the emerging peasant movements for potential allies. 'Janata', the mouth piece of the Independent Labour Party, had begun to report the activities of the Kisan Shabha. The reports in Janata praised the independent tendency shown by the Kisan Shabha and its leader Swami Sahajanand by having left the path of Gandhism. The reports published in Janatha on 2nd April, 28th May, 2nd and 23rd July 1938 and 24th February 1940 indicate that Ambedkar and the ILP gave maximum support to the Kisan Sabha's fight against landlords in Gujarat and Bihar.²⁸ But towards the end of 1938 the difference between Swami Sahajanada and Ambedkar, on the issue of political independence of the peasants surfaced. Swami argued for just an independent organisation of the peasants, but Ambedkar stressed that it was equally necessary to build up their independent political power. Swami insisted to join with Congress for fighting out imperialism, claiming that no other party than the Congress had the tradition of struggle against imperialism. But this was not acceptable to Ambedkar. He said:

Congress is not engaged in an anti imperialist struggle. It is using the constitutional missionary to advance the interest of the Capitalists and other vested interests; it is engaged in bolstering them up by sacrificing the interests of workers and peasants.²⁹

The dialogue between Swami and Ambedkar could not continue further, because the former held his faith in the usefulness of working with the Congress while the latter strongly believed that being a capitalist organisation of caste Hindus, supporting landlordism, the Congress could not become a genuine anti-imperialist force. Thus, the search for an alliance of workers, peasants and Dalits against economic and caste oppression ended in a failure. However, the attempt revealed the core of Ambedkar's politics. While he was at this time rejecting 'Hindus' as a whole, he was identifying Brahminism as the ideological and political enemy and was striving to bring non-Brahmins, peasants and other social groups in to a united political front that would maintain its identity from the Indian National Congress.³⁰

Fighting Colonialism and Caste

Hegemony: Ideological Dialectics

By the early 1940s there was no political movement in India, which did not contemplate British imperialism as the menace to the progress of the country. Ambedkar movement also made consistently clear its opposition to the colonial regime. However, the movement focussed on the immediate concern of the Dalits, namely, the age old Hindu hegemony and the class-caste exploitation. Ambedkar made his position clear in the conference at Sinnar (Nasik District), which was organised to agitate against the tax on

'Mahar Watans'. He asserted that the depressed classes surrounded by enemies on all sides could not afford to fight on all fronts at once. Therefore, he affirmed their decision to fight the two hundred year old tyranny and oppression of the depressed class before everything else.³¹

It was the biting reality of the time that landlordism and caste Hindu hegemony were the major causes for the miseries of the Dalits. The imperialism had not disturbed the established feudal structure and the Congress was safeguarding the interests of the upper castes, landlords and the capitalists. Ambedkar himself had remarked during his dialogue with Swami Sahajananda that the Congress was not leading a true struggle against imperialism. He cited the stand taken by the Congress on the question of 'Federation'. In 1939 the Congress and all other major parties had accepted the federal structure and some of them were even implementing that part of the Government of India Act 1939, which was related to provincial autonomy.³² Ambedkar considered the acceptance of federal structure at the centre as a compromise with the princely states, as it would subject the people of India to the permanent sovereignty of the princes who entered the proposed federation. In his address on 'Federation and Freedom', which he delivered at the Gokhale Institute of Economics, Pune, on 29th January 1939, Ambedkar pointed out that accession of the princely states to the Federation was to be governed by the various conditions of their historical treaties with the British Crown and the instrument of accession they could sign. The representatives of the provinces to the two federal houses were decided upon by election, but the state representatives were the nominees of their autocratic rulers. These representatives would always be at the beck and call of the British

bureaucracy which enjoyed paramountcy over the rulers. He went on to say that, 'as in the matter of representation, so too in that of taxation, administration, legislation etc., the scheme stood in favour of the princes. Thus, the princes were the arbiters of the destiny of the British India'.³³

Ambedkar's point of view was that by accepting the Federation, the Congress was safeguarding the interests of the princes, without hampering the colonial interests, but posing a threat to freedom and the interests of the poor. In fact, the Congress and its Gandhian leadership did little to oppose the appeasement of the princes pursued in the Govt. Of India Act 1935. Neither the Congress nor the Communists could do much in this direction³⁴. Ambedkar's problem in this situation was that he did not have a strong party or alliance to oppose proposals of the Federation. What he could do was to seek to protect the interest of the Dalits.

There were a number of other issues on which Ambedkar came in conflict with the British Government in India. One such significant issue was that of 'Mahar watan'. Ambedkar had been agitating on this issue since as early as 1927. He wanted the 'Watan' to be made regular holdings, to be assessed at the normal rate and the Mahar village servants to be paid directly for their labour. The Government refused to admit his demands and went on raising the levy on the 'Watan' lands. He campaigned against this through organised struggles of Mahars; he continued the fight for abolishing the 'watan' system, in the Bombay Legislative Assembly also. Paradoxically, the abolition was effected only in 1959, after he had passed away.

Ambedkar was made a member of the newly established Viceroy's

Defence Advisory Committee in July 1941. But this did not put down his anger on the non representation of the depressed classes in the reconstituted Executive Council of the Viceroy. He regarded it as a slight over the depressed classes and wrote to the Secretary of State for India to make good of this lapse. He met the Bombay Governor and expressed his desire to dissociate himself from the Viceroy's Defence Advisory Committee. On the suggestions of the Governor, Ambedkar was appointed to the Executive Council.

Ambedkar burnt out at the British when he found that the Crips Mission ignored the issue of protective measures for the depressed classes. On the occasion of the celebrations of his 50th birth day (he was appearing at such an occasion for the first time) he warned the British Government that the depressed class would fight if they were not given adequate representation and if they were betrayed by sacrificing their interest. He told his followers:

You will have to be ready for action, I don't care what action, constitutional or unconstitutional, violent or non violent, peaceful or disturbing.... You may be faced with a constituent assembly again. Your place then will not be inside the constituent assembly. You will not find your place there. Your legitimate place will be in your own headquarters, manufacturing bombs. Yes, bombs. Make no mistake about it. We can handle grenades better than many other people...

He asked the Congress to state what the position of the depressed class would be in the independent India:

You are fighting for Swaraj. I am ready to join you. And I may assure you that I can fight better than you. I make only one condition. Tell me what share I am to have in the Swaraj. If you don't want to tell me that and you want to make up with the British behind my back, hell on both of you.³⁵

Even though Ambedkar unleashed his fury on the British and the Congress, he maintained his links with the Government through his membership in various councils and committees. This strategic deal with the British colonial regime on the one hand and the nationalist movement led by the Congress on the other enabled him to place the case of the depressed classes convincingly on the political front, particularly during the process of transfer of power. He was concerned of the political independence of the country, but at the same time he was more particular about the power to be shared by the depressed classes in the 'Swaraj'. This ideological dialectics of the Dalit Politics, with more stress on safeguarding the interests of the depressed classes in an uncompromised way, was the unique feature of the Ambedkar movement. However certain people thought that by taking this stand the Movement ignored the "national interest".

The Scheduled Caste Federation: A Step Backward

Ambedkar's induction in to the Viceroy's Executive Council on 20th July 1942, as the 'Labour Member' had coincided with the folding up of the ILP which was his experiment in developing a class - caste political alternative of Dalits, Peasants and workers. The All India Depressed Class Conference,

again held at Nagpur on 17-20 in July, marked the formal end of the ILP and the foundation of the Scheduled Caste Federation. A massive gathering of about 70,000 people, of which one third were women, attended the conference from Bengal, Bombay, Punjab, Central provinces and Berar, Madras, Hyderabad and the United Provinces.³⁶

The first resolution of this conference condemned the proposals of the British Government regarding the constitutional changes formulated by the Crips Mission as a betrayal of the interests of the scheduled castes and a breach of the assurance given to them that a constitution would not be imposed upon them without their consent. Subsequent resolutions were simply the restatement of the demands that had been part of the Ambedkar movement since its earliest days. These include funds for primary and advanced education of the sheduled castes, representation in the public services and all legislative bodies and separate electorates. There were two new resolutions, one demanding a constitutional provision for transfer of scheduled castes to separate village settlements, away from and independent of Hindu villages, and the other one resolving to establish a political party for the purpose of carrying on the scheduled castes movement, designated as the Scheduled Caste Federation³⁷. Besides, the conference maintained most of the other thrusts of the ILP programmes regarding the demands of the peasants and workers.

The Scheduled Caste Federation came in to existence as one step backward in the Dalit movement under the leadership of Ambedkar. The very foundation of this organisation was a move away from a larger goal to

a specific one. The Federation focused on the issue of sheduled castes, a category referred to under the Government of India Act 1935 to categorise those castes that were regarded as untouchables by the caste Hindus. Thus, the efforts to form a broad based radical party of the Dalits, peasants and workers as a political alternative at the national level was completely given up. The Scheduled Caste Federation focused on constitutional means to safeguard the interests of the sheduled castes. Accordingly, Ambedkar consolidated his efforts to ensure that the Government would act on various grievances and representations of the sheduled castes.

As a labour member in the Viceroy's Executive Council, Ambedkar helped to develop a new policy thrust in matters relating to industrial labour. He argued for greater uniformity in labour legislation in various provinces and for specific procedures for settling industrial disputes. As a member of the Bombay Legislature, he had opposed the Industrial Dispute Bill which he viewed as a draconian measure aimed against the workers. He had submitted to the Governor General a memorandum, "Grievances of the Scheduled Castes", which cited issues like the inadequate representation of the scheduled castes in the Central Legislature and the Executive Council, the need for reservation for scheduled caste candidates in government jobs, and representation in the Federal Public Service Commission. The focus on legal measures with a view to safeguard the interests of the scheduled castes indicates that Ambedkar had moved away from radical politics to the politics of representation of the scheduled castes. This politics urged the group to press for their demands, as a special interest group within the emerging democracy in the country.

Encounter, Concurrence and the Ultimate

In 1945 the Labour Party came to power in Britain. The new Government decided to hold fresh elections in India and to summon a constitution making body. The election, held at the beginning of 1946, resulted in the defeat of the Scheduled Caste Federation and the formation of Congress Governments in the provinces. The Congress had won 201 out of 389 seats at the centre, with the Muslim League securing 73 positions. But the Federation could not win even a single seat. Thus, the fear of what the joint electorate would do to the scheduled castes as expressed by Ambedkar came true.³⁸ Ambedkar's official position as labour member in the Viceroy's Executive Council prevented him from involving actively in party organisation. The official election report prepared by Ambedkar himself showed that in the primary election, in which scheduled castes alone voted, the Federation had secured more votes than the Congress in Madras, Bombay and the Central Province. He also offered proof that, in each province, the majority of the scheduled caste votes had gone to non-Congress candidates.³⁹

But the Cabinet Mission and Prime Minister Atlee did not accept Ambedkar's views on election figures. The British had ignored the demand for minority status and separate electorate for the scheduled castes. Lord Pethic Lawrance, the member of the Cabinet Mission, made it clear that the British could neither declare the scheduled castes as a minority who should be represented in the Minority Advisory Committee of the Constituent Assembly nor could they secure representation of Ambedkar's organisation in the Committee.⁴⁰ As a result, the matter of scheduled caste representation in the Minority Advisory Committee was left to the decision of the Constituent

Assembly which was sure to be dominated by the Congress. It was clear that Ambedkar and the Scheduled Caste Federation would no longer find any support from the British political leaders who did not want to arouse controversy with Gandhi at that crucial moment. Thus, it became evident that the scheduled castes would be represented in the Minority Advisory Committee by those who favour Gandhi and the Congress.

Ambedkar resorted to extra-parliamentary action to press the demand for recognition, and in 1946 the Scheduled Caste Federation conducted large scale sathyagrahas at pune, Nagpur, Luknow and Kanpur for separate electorate and for recognition of the demands of the scheduled castes, by those who were planning for Indian Independence.⁴¹ Ambedkar asked the Congress to declare its policy regarding the scheduled castes and reiterated the demand for separate electorate. He also tried to make a direct appeal to the British Government, and even made a trip to London to call up on Winston Churchill, but he received no positive response.

Ambedkar had been elected to the constituent assembly from Bengal with the support of Yogendra Nath Mandal and other scheduled caste members. The Constituent Assembly started its work of framing free India's constitution on December 9, 1946. The Muslim League stayed away from the Assembly and the princely states had not yet decided their position on the new Indian Government which would replace the British regime. Jawaharlal Nehru moved an eight point resolution regarding the aims and objects of the Indian State⁴². The resolution declared 'firm and solemn resolve to proclaim India as an independent Sovereign Republic and to draw up for

its future Governance a Constitution'. Dr. M.R. Jayakar pleaded that adoption of the resolution should be temporarily postponed to give a chance to the League and the representatives of the princes to join the task of laying down the fundamentals of the constitution. Ambedkar supported the motion and suggested to make another attempt to bring about a solution of the dispute between the Congress and the Muslim League and to carry with the country all the sections of the society towards its unity.⁴³ He felt that adoption of the resolutions in the absence of the League was likely to precipitate a boycott of the Assembly by the League. Ambedkar was still opposed to the idea of partition. He declared at the floor of the Assembly on 17th December 1946:

With all our castes and creeds, I have not the slightest hesitation that we shall in some form be a united people. I have no hesitation in saying that notwithstanding the agitation of the Muslim League for the partition of India, some day enough light would dawn upon the Muslims themselves and they too will begin to think that a united India is better even for them.⁴⁴

In March 1947 Ambedkar published his 'States and Minorities' in which he spelt out his concept of fundamental rights, minority rights and safeguard for the scheduled castes. He considered the reconciliation of the interest of the Hindus, Muslims and untouchables as the major political problem to be tackled by the Indian Constitution, and he focused on the question of protection of the minorities and the scheduled castes. Following the division of Bengal, Ambedkar lost his seat in the Constituent Assembly. But soon he

was re-elected from Bombay in the vacancy caused by Jayakar's resignation. On the question of princely states he felt that the only way by which these states could free themselves from the British paramountcy was by bringing about a merger of sovereignty or suzerainty. This would only happen when the Indian states join the Indian Union as its constituent units. Ambedkar was also concerned over the principles adopted for defining the boundaries of India and Pakistan, which were inconsistent with geographical boundaries. Arbitrary boundaries based only on population composition, he perceived, would be difficult to defend.

The early days of independence found Ambedkar in a position from which he operated constructively and co-operatively with the new Government. He was named Chairman of the Drafting Committee for the Constitution, which meant he was responsible for guiding it through the Assembly, and was included by Nehru as the Law Minister in the first cabinet. In a public meeting in Bombay, organised by the Scheduled Caste Federation he told his audience to place the country above their community to avoid jeopardy of the independence. The scheduled castes, he said, should forget the past differences with Congress and other political parties. Co-operation, although not federation with any other organisation, should be the goal.⁴⁵

The Constitution Drafting Committee had the services of B.N.Rau as the constitutional advisor. The first draft of the constitution was prepared by S.N.Mukherji, a joint secretary to Government of India, from which Rao sketched out a document which consisted of 243 articles and 13 schedules.⁴⁶ Ambedkar redrafted it thoroughly and brought out a new draft of 315 articles

and 8 schedules, which was further expanded during the debates in the Constituent Assembly in to a draft of 395 articles and 8 schedules. The work of revising the draft, incorporating the suggestions made by the members of the Assembly were done personally by Ambedkar with the assistance of Mr. Mukherji and the members of the drafting committee. His colleagues in the constitutional assembly bestowed on him generous praise and candid approval of his role as the principal architect of Indian Constitution. Dr. Pattabi Sitaramaiha summed up the sentiments of the Constituent Assembly when he said,

What a steam roller intellect he brought to bear upon this magnificent task: irresistible, indomitable, unconquerable, levelling down all palms and short poppies; whatever he felt to be right he stood by, regardless of consequence.⁴⁷

Ambedkar's joining Nehru's cabinet offered him the opportunity to work for the cause of the scheduled castes from within the Government, which would have been impossible otherwise. Though he was always an ardent critic of the establishment, he never turned his back to the opportunities to work for the depressed classes from within the parameters of the establishment, however limited would its scope be. He found that an approach of co-operative operation would fetch better results with regard to the interests of his people than pursuing a confrontation with the Government. Thus, in his Luknow speech of April 1948 he said "*This is not the time to declare a war on the Congress. We must try to get what we can through co-operation*

and understanding"⁴⁸ Ambedkar participated in the making of the Constitution as chairman of the Drafting Committee, as the member of the Advisory Committee, the Assembly's committee on functions' and the Union Constitution Committee. He was also a member in the sub committees on fundamental rights and on minorities.

What could the Constitution offer for the untouchables? The Constitution has created a framework under which conditions of social, civic and political equality would arise, provided the laws are observed not only in letter but also in spirit. The Constitution declared that untouchability be abolished. The resolution to this effect had been adopted even before Ambedkar joined the Cabinet and elected as chairman of the Drafting Committee. But, in a later clause, the Constitution recognised that despite the declaration of the civic and social equality of the people of India, the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes did suffer from social and economic disadvantages. In order to eliminate these disabilities, it recognised the need for certain affirmative actions or protective measures like reservation of seats in legislatures, educational institutions and government employment.

The Constitution also empowered the state governments to undertake special measures of assistance and welfare for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and the socially and economically backward communities. Further, the Constitution created the special office of Commissioner for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes to report to the parliament from time to time on the measures taken and the results achieved by the central and state governments in promoting their welfare. At a later stage parliament enacted

the Untouchability Offence Act, making the practice of untouchability an offence.

The era of co-operation ended in 1951, just before India's first general elections. Ambedkar resigned from the cabinet his position as Law Minister primarily because of the lack of Congress support for the Hindu Code Bill. He found, he had little voice in the Cabinet and the old oppression of the scheduled castes existed unchanged.⁴⁹

As the Law minister he had introduced and steered through parliament the Representation of People Bill 1950. But he devoted his complete energy and attention to the Hindu Code Bill. He found that there was unprecedented opposition against the Bill, not only inside the parliament but also among the caste - Hindus through out the country. The orthodox Hindu press and religious organisations had already started a campaign against the Bill and had been questioning Ambedkar's 'interference' with Hindu Practices. Ambedkar was aware that there was a kind of inner party caucus in the Congress that functioned and often took decisions on important issues before they were placed before the cabinet and the party.⁵⁰ He was also disappointed at the manner in which the cabinet functioned and he also felt that the interests of the scheduled castes suffered because of the government's inability or unwillingness to institute quick measures of redressal. Nehru's foreign policy had cost India its friends and the official position on Kashmir caused an unnecessary impasse, he stated.⁵¹ Thus, finally he resigned from the Nehru cabinet in September 1951.

Scheduled Caste Federation participated in the 1951 election as a bitter

opponent to the Congress. The manifesto of the Federation dealt with larger issues. It spoke more specifically of the backward classes, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and pledged to insist on reservations in order to enable them to find their place in the Civil and Military Services of the country. Expansion of production, birth control, co-operative or collective farming, the need to partition, the abandoning of the neutralist foreign policy, the formation of linguistic states, nationalisation of insurance, all were approved by the party. In this election the performance of the Federation was so poor that even Ambedkar did not get through it. Out of the thirty eight candidates of the Federation for the Bombay Legislature all except B.C. Kambel were defeated. Dhanajay Keer explains Ambedkar's defeat as due to his advocacy of the partition of Kashmir and the overall organisational weakness of his party.⁵² However the chief reason for the defeat of the Federation according to Zelliot, was that,

They had nowhere to go with their political power. The Federation constituency was limited to a minority by the factor of caste. In 1937 election, the reserved seats in Bombay had evidently been left to the scheduled castes at the time of voting; votes recorded for these seats were in most cases considerably fewer than votes recorded for general seats. In the following elections this factor does not seem to have held. With the coming of independence and the partition, separate electorate became a psychological impossibility both for Muslims and Scheduled Castes and the occupant of the reserved seats was to be determined by the general vote.⁵³

In September 1956 Ambedkar declared his intention to start the Republican Party of India. It was an attempt to transform the Scheduled Caste Federation into a party which would work for the cause of all the downtrodden, the scheduled castes, the scheduled tribes and other backward classes. In the next month, on 14th October 1956, came his conversion to Buddhism in Nagpur. Ambedkar and his wife Savita Ambedkar along with a vast concourse of the scheduled castes took the Buddhist vows. The Republican Party was not formally organised during his life time. The effort to form the party and the conversion to Buddhism was an ultimate move towards taking the untouchables out of the Hindu fold, politically as well as religiously, with a view to achieve their rightful place in the society and polity. Ambedkar died on 6th December 1956 in less than two months after setting the conversion movement and posing the idea of the new political party with a view to heralding a new era of Dalit Politics.

Note:

- 1 Gore, p.125
- 2 Keer, P. 236
- 3 Ibid
- 4 M.P. Ganjare (ed.) Dr. Bakasahed Ambedkaranchi bhashane, Vol.2 (Cited in Omvedt, p.167)

- 5 Writings and Speeches Vol. 2
- 6 Ibid P.505
- 7 Ibid
- 8 Ibid p.507
- 9 Gore, p.129
- 10 *Source material* Volume 1, P.52
- 11 *Writings and Speeches* Vol.2, P.660
- 12 Ibid p.669
- 13 Ibid p.663
- 14 Ibid p.662
- 13 Omvedt, p.172
- 14 *Source Material* Vol. 1 p.80
- 15 Keer, p.209
- 16 Omvelt, p. 174
- 17 *Writings and Speeches* Vol.2, P.711
- 18 Ibid, P. 708
- 19 Omvedt, p.174
- 20 *Times of India*, 19 September 1932, in *Source Material*, vol. 1, p. 87
- 21 Kadam, p.106
- 22 Omvedt, p.192. Also See Sumit Sarkar, (1983) *Modern India 1885-1947*, Delhi, MacMillan India Limited, p.346
- 23 Gore, p. 150
- 24 Kadam, p.111
- 25 *Source Material*, Vol
- 26 *Writings and Speeches*, Vol. 1, P. 346, P. 165-66
- 27 Omvelt, P. 209
- 28 Ibid, P. 209-210

- 29 *'Bombay Chronicle'*, 27 December 1938 and *'Times of India'* 27 December 1938. Cited in *Source Material*, Vol. 1 P 181-184
- 30 Omvelt. p. 211
- 31 *Source Material* Vol, 1 P. 233-35
- 32 *Writings and Speeches*, Vol. 1 (Introduction)
- 33 Ibid, P. 279-353
- 34 Omvedt, p. 214
- 35 *'Bombay Sentinel'*, 28 April 1942, *Source Material*, Vol. 1 PP. 248-49
- 36 Keer, p. 348
- 37 Zelliott, E, 'Learning the Use of Political Means: The Mahars of Maharashtra', in Kothari, R. (1995) *Caste in Indian Politics*, Hyderabad: Orient Longman, PP 27-65
- 38 Gore, p. 174
- 39 Zelliott, in Op. cit P. 50
- 40 Pethic Lawrence's letter to Atlee, *Writings and Speeches* Vol. 10, P. 515-516
- 41 Zeliot, in Op.cit. P. 50-51
- 42 *Writings and Speeches*, vol. 13 p. 6
- 43 Ibid, PP 7-14 (Ambedkar's maiden speech in the Constituent Assembly)
- 44 Ibid, P. 9
- 45 *'Times of India'*, January 12, 1950. cited in Zeliot, P. 52
- 46 Das, G, who worship false gods, P. 60
- 47 *Writings and Speeches*, Vol. 13, P. 1202
- 48 Cited in Gore, P. 183
- 49 Zeliot, in Opcit. P. 52-53
- 50 Gore, P. 188
- 51 Zelliott in Opcit, P. 53
- 52 Keer P. 436
- 53 Zelliott, in Opcit, p. 53

**Dr. B.R. AMBEDKAR
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Chapter 7
AMBEDKAR: THE SOCIAL ANALYST

- A test of religion
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- Tenets of a free society
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AMBEDKAR : THE SOCIAL ANALYST

It is impossible to deny that Dr. B.R Ambedkar has had a profound impact on the discourses of class-caste politics in the colonial and post colonial times. As an activist ideologue of the depressed classes his thoughts have formed the philosophy of Dalits emancipation. Ambedkar lived many lives: as a victim and fighter of casteism, as an academic, as a political activist and as a lover of humanistic values; his life was also a part of the intellectual life of modern India; he had influenced the social reformation in India in multiple ways-socially, intellectually and politically. Ambedkar did not spend his active life in research and writing with political activism as a sideline, rather, his private life as well as his public life were one and the same. Though many of his crucial ideas were formed in the 1930s almost all of his major writings appeared in the 1940s and 1950s.

A Test of Religion

Though Ambedkar, as an activist occupied the socio political terrain to fight for the civic equality of the depressed classes, a major share of his life was devoted to underline and expose the iniquitous characteristics of Hinduism. He had realised that social reconstruction in India was intertwined with religious reforms. Accordingly most of his writings highlighted Hinduism as responsible for the inequitarian practices in the Indian society.

For Ambedkar, religion is a collective thing inseparable from the society. Religion as a theological substance propounds an ideal scheme of divine governance, the aim and object of which is to make the social order in which 'men live a moral order'. The theology referred here is neither the 'mythical

theology' nor the 'civic theology', rather it is the 'natural theology' which he considered as the doctrine of God and the Divine, an integral part of the theory of nature consisting of three theses : 'that God is the author of nature or the universe, that God controls all the events which make the nature, and that God exercises a government over mankind in accordance with His sovereign moral law.'

The philosophy of religion, according to Ambedkar, deals with the teachings of a religion; at the same time it involves the use of critical reason for passing judgement on these teachings. Thus, he regarded philosophy of religion as a science - descriptive and normative as well. He specified that the study of religion should focus on (1) the theology with its doctrine of God and the Divine as an integral part of nature, (2) the ideal scheme for which the religion stands and (3) the criteria to be adopted for judging the value of the ideal scheme of divine governance for which the religion stands.

Ambedkar's analysis of religion reveals that there were two revolutions had undergone. The first being an external revolution was the revolt of science against the extra jurisdiction assumed by the religion over a field to which it did not belong, and the other one an internal revolution that resulted in the reconstitution of the scheme of divine governance. Though an internal one the second revolution did not bring about a religious reorganisation of society resulting in the shifting of the centre from the society to the individual, rather it was a revolution in norms. Based on this analysis, Ambedkar established a twin test of 'utility' and 'justice' for judging the worth of a religion. For him 'justice' was what that liberty, equality and fraternity constitute. Thus, the

principles of justice include all other principles which form the foundation of a moral order. Being a liberal humanist, Ambedkar emphasised the principle of equality: 'If men are equal all men are of the same essence and the common essence entitle them to the same fundamental rights and to equal liberty.' He did not find any antagonism between justice and utility, 'what is unjust to the individual cannot be useful to the society.'² It was this conviction that formed the living force of Ambedkar ideology that was the dynamic force behind the movement for the emancipation of the depressed classes.

Inequality : The Soul of Hinduism

Employing the twin test of religion Ambedkar arrived at the conclusion that Hinduism as a religion could neither serve social utility nor satisfy individual justice. He situated caste, as the determinant of social relationship, at the centre of the Hindu social order. His analysis reveals that Hinduism does not recognise equality, liberty and fraternity, the three corner stones of liberal humanist philosophy. Rather than the society or the individual, it is a class of people - the class of supermen, the Brahmins - that forms the ideal centre of Hinduism. It holds that, to be right and good the act must serve the interests of this supermen. In other words, 'what is right for the supermen is the only thing which is called morally right and morally good.'³

Ambedkar found that the philosophy of Hinduism had influenced the thoughts of Nietzsche whose philosophy had become the basis on which Nazism was built in Germany. Nietzsche's philosophy had been identified with will to power, violence, denial of spiritual values, superman and the sacrifice, servility and debasement of the common man.⁴ In fact Nietzsche

was following the scheme propounded in the Manusmriti, says Ambedkar. However, he makes a distinction between the agendas of both Nietzsche and Manu :

'Nietzsche was genuinely interested in creating a new race of men which will be a race of supermen as compared with the existing race of men. Manu on the other hand was interested in maintaining the privilege of a class who had come to arrogate itself the claim of being supermen. Nietzsche's supermen were supermen by their worth. Manu's supermen were supermen by reason of their birth.'⁵

Therefore, Hinduism is interested neither in the common man nor in the society as a whole. The centre of its interest is the concern of a class, and its philosophy is concerned with sustaining and supporting the rights of that class. Its exponents philosophise the actions of this class and make them legitimised.

Ambedkar's analysis of philosophy of Hinduism is based primarily on 'Manusmriti'. He did not find any fundamental difference among the teachings of the Vedas and the Bhagavat Geeta as compared to that of Smritis. All these literatures recognise the division of society into four sections as ideal and proclaim inequality as the ideal relationship between these four sections. The only difference is that the Vedas and the Bhagavat Geeta deal with the general theory while the Smritis are concerned in working out the particulars and details of this grand theory. Thus, Ambedkar affirms that the philosophy

of Hinduism as embedded in the Vedas, Manusmriti and Bhagavat Geeta is one and the same. Further, he did not make any distinction between the legal philosophy and the moral philosophy of Hinduism. What was legal to the Hindus was moral also - the legal being also the moral.'

Ambedkar considers 'varna' as the parent of caste and Manu, who preached the sanctity of varna, as the progenitor of the caste system. It is through the varna system, a system of grading the people based on a fictitious theory of birth, that the social inequality go legitimised. Ambedkar traced out many prohibitions and enforcement laws that maintained the caste system intact at all times, in all places and for all purposes. The Shudras, although they formed the fourth varna, were destined by the Hindu laws to be the slaves or servants of the other varnas. The Untouchables, being considered not as a part of the varna system, were not even given the status of animals. Neither of these classes was entitled for knowledge and power. They were permanently thrown at the abyss of the social order.

The mechanism of prohibition was strengthened through enforcement of laws. Manu opposed intermarriage which he thought would do harm to the principle of inequality and would lead ultimately to the break down of the caste system. Hence, each varna or class had to marry within the varna itself. The punishment system was also founded on inequality principle. There were differential punishment for the same offence depending on the varna to which the offender belonged. Higher the varna of the offender, milder would be the punishment. This unequal punishment was designed not merely to punish the offender but to protect the dignity and to maintain the social inequality on which the whole scheme is based.⁶

Thus, Ambedkar concludes that the soul of Hinduism is nothing but inequality. He said it is a misnomer to call Hinduism a religion, because it had not got the basic of a religion - the impulse to serve the humanity. Its sole concern is the interest of a specific class of people - the Brahmins, and its philosophy is opposed to the very thing for which religion stands.

Tenets of a Free Society

Ambedkar's exposition of Hinduism and its philosophy not only illustrates the spirit of an inherent debasement of the common people in the Hindu social order but also problematises the very concepts of equality, liberty and fraternity and their operation in the Hindu social order. The delineation of his social thoughts attempted here is primarily based on his writings published in the Volume 3 of the 'Writings and Speeches' compiled by Vasant Moon. As the writings in this volume belong to the later part of his life one can definitely take the thoughts contained in them as his matured conceptions of the social order that he had visualised.

Ambedkar did envisage a free society in which the individual can develop to the fullest possible. The two fundamentals of such a free social order as articulated by him are :

- 1 The individual is an end in himself and the aim and object of society is the growth of the individual and the development of his personality. The society is not above the individual and if the individual has to subordinate himself to the society it is because such subordination is for his betterment and only to the extent necessary.
- 2 The terms of associated life between members of society must be regarded by consideration founded on liberty, equality and fraternity.

Ambedkar's conception of the individual as a human person has a spiritual super-existence through knowledge and love. Rather than the physical being, it is this spiritual existence that makes the individual a human person with 'the values of a person, his dignity and rights.'

For him equality is not a quantitative measure which can establish the equivalence of a thing in measure, amount, number, degree, value or quality as used in Physics or Mathematics. He conceived equality as the common fundamental characteristic of humanity, which is embodied by the phrase 'moral equality'. On this subject, he adheres to the exposition of Prof. Beard that moral equality asserts in ethical value⁷. Moral equality is asserted against inequalities in physical strength, talents, industry and wealth; it denies the the view that superior physical strength provides a moral right to kill, eat or oppress human beings merely because it is superior.

Ambedkar elaborated the concept of fraternity as the disposition of an individual to treat the human beings as an object of reverence and love and one's desire to be in unity with his/her fellow beings. It strengthens societies and gives each individual a stronger personal interest in practically considering the welfare of others. It helps to identify the individual's feelings more and more with goodness of others.

'A person in whom social feeling is not developed cannot but bring himself to think of the rest of fellow beings as struggling with him for the means of happiness when he must endeavour to defeat in others that he may succeed in himself.'

Ambedkar identified two categories of liberty operating in a society - the civil liberty and the political liberty. The civil liberty involves freedom of movement or freedom from arrest without due process of law, freedom of speech and freedom of action. Political liberty consists in the rights of the individual to have a share in the framing of laws and in the making and working of governments.

It seems that Ambedkar approached the three fundamentals - liberty equality and fraternity - from three different perspectives, respectively from political, spiritual and social stand points. The constitution of the individual as a spiritual being at the centre of the society declares that all human beings are 'equal'. It adds strength to the conception of 'moral equality', because no one is to consider people as equal in the material sense, it is in the ethical domain that they are regarded as equals. Similarly, it is clear from the expounding of 'fraternity' that Ambedkar was emphasizing the ways of associated life which can promote social cohesion and unity of the country. Rather than looking from a philosophical perspective, he explained 'liberty' from a political point of view, which worked, as the guiding force of his protest movement.

Hindu Social Order : Negation of Individual's Worth :

Ambedkar's judgement on the Hindu social order is based on the triumvirate of liberty, equality and fraternity. He says that a society can be called a free one in so far as it recognises these tenets. Liberty and fraternity are integrally connected and are inseverable. Once fraternity is admitted, liberty follows automatically and once the sacredness of human personality

is admitted the necessity of liberty, equality and fraternity must also be admitted as the proper climate for the development of personality. In Hindu society none of these tenets are practiced, observed Ambedkar. It does not recognise the individual as the centre of social purpose, because it is based on varna or class. There is no room for individual merit and no consideration for individual justice. Privilege or even disability of an individual is a matter of the class to which the individual belongs.

Ambedkar's exposition of the Hindu social order with regard to the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity is based on the myths and realities depicted in the sacred Hindu literature and the life experience of the Untouchables. Being born and brought up in an untouchable community Ambedkar had not to look elsewhere for evidence of the negation of this triumvirate tenets. He argued, the doctrine that the four varnas were created from different parts of the Divine Being was primarily to legitimise the inequalitarian Hindu social order. The doctrine had generated the belief that it must be the Divine will that different classes remain separate and distinct.

It is this belief which created in the Hindu an instinct to be different, to be separate and to be distinct from the rest of his fellow Hindus.... It is also the Hindu instinct due to the same belief never to overlook a difference if it does exist but to emphasise it, recognise it and blazen it forth.⁸

The most extensive and wild manifestation of this spirit of isolation and separation is the caste system. Therefore, 'what fraternity can there be in a social order based upon such sentiments? asks Ambedkar.

He observes that the Hindu doctrine of creation of humans by God consists of two parts : "The first part is that men are created by God. The second part is that God created different men from different parts of His 'Divine body'. Ambedkar found that the second part above is more important and more fundamental for the Hindus so that fraternity could never develop among them. Because, they emphasised the difference instead of commonness, and this had led to all the inequalitarian practices.

The answer to the question of equality in the Hindu society was also not in the affirmative. He said, the democratic diction that 'men are born equal' is repugnant to the Hindu social order in all fronts. In the spiritual sense the Hindu social order is a falsification of this doctrine. Though the Hindus consider that 'men are the children of the creator of the universe' they refused to treat people as equal on that count, for, they maintained that 'men are created from different parts of the creator. On the one hand, the Hindu social order did not bother to examine the tenet whether it was founded on biological facts. If the men are not equal in their natural endowment so much worse would be for the tenet. In the ethical sense the Hindu social order refuses to recognise that all individuals, how profoundly they may differ in their capacity, are equally entitled as human beings to consideration and respect and that the well being of a society is likely to be increased if it plans its organisation in such a manner that would enable all its members to make use of the best of their powers and abilities.

Dispelling the Hindu social order on the test of equality and fraternity Ambedkar ferreted out three basic principles on which it is reared : (1) graded

inequality, (2) fixity of occupation and (3) fixation of people within their class. He noted that the vertical positioning of different varnas or classes was intended to establish the spiritual, moral and legal authorisation of the discriminative practices. It was this hierarchy that set up the unequal status for different classes of people and regulated their life through the enforcing of laws of marriages, slavery, punishment, samskaras and sanyasas. The economic activities of the people were also decided by the principle of graded inequality. The economic system did not recognise equal need, equal work or equal ability as the basis of reward for labour; its motto was that the highest in the social hierarchy must get the most and the best and those who are classed as the lowest must accept the least and the worst.

Explaining how the occupation was made hereditary for each class Ambedkar asserted that the Vedas and the Manu Smriti legitimised the assignment of respectable professions for the three higher varnas and the dehumanised status for the shudras and the untouchables in the name of the Divine Will. Every member of the Hindu social order had to follow the occupation delegated to him by birth. There was no scope for choice or inclination of the individual. The individual was bound to the profession of his/her ancestors.

Ambedkar was not against the 'varna' which he equated with 'class'. He did not find anything unnatural in the fact that the Hindu society's division into varna or classes, because such classes existed 'everywhere and no society is without them.' His objection was to the isolation and exclusion of the classes and the resultant non-social relationships, rigidity of class consciousness and

inimical attitudes towards one another, fixation of people's life in one class or one occupation, and categorisation of the classes into privileged and unprivileged or masters and servants.

The Hindu social order did not give a positive result on Ambedkar's test of liberty also. There was no scope for civic liberty (freedom of speech and action) and political liberty in the society. It did not leave any choice open for the individual in the matter of social life. Class, occupation, social status, everything was pre fixed for the individual. The only thing left for the individual was to conform to the established order and regulations.

There are three characteristics which Ambedkar considered as the unique features of the Hindu social order. The most striking one is the worship of superman. Relocating Nietzsche's 'Posthumous Men' in the Hindu society, he identified Brahmins as the supermen who enjoyed privileges by birth, which resulted in the debasement of the common people. The Brahmin was deemed to be infallible, he could not be hanged even though he might be charged of murder. He could enter into wedlock with any woman from his and other classes without being bound to the woman by tie of marriage or conferring upon the children the right to his status or to his property. He had possessed the power to punish his wrongdoer without resorting to court. He was exempted from taxation and was not bound by the rules of occupation if he faces a distress.

Secondly, the Hindu social order was preserved by employing a two fold mechanism which prevented a social revolution from within. The king was responsible for maintaining the social order; any failure of the king in

this regard made him liable for prosecution and punishment. If the king's action go against the established order, Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaisyas had to rebel against the king. But the right to rebellion was denied to the Shudras. A violent attack on the established order was bridled very intelligently. Ambedkar expounds that a revolution occurs only when the three conditions are fulfilled: (a) the existence of a sense of wrong, (b) capacity to know that one is suffering from a wrong and (c) availability of arms. A revolution against the established order was possible only from the Shudras and the classes below it, because all other classes above them had been drawing the benefit from the system. But, Ambedkar observes that such a revolution was prevented effectively, not by using force and violence but by denying opportunity to the common people to rise, by denying education to them for all generation to come and by denying the right to use arms.

The third demeaning feature of the Hindu social order is its divine character that it is designed by the God. The divine doctrine had made the established order sacred, unabrogative, unamendable and beyond criticism. The attribution of divinity to the social order is a part of the strategy of creating religious myths to consecrate the social interdictions or to give the colour of 'God's will' to all social evils.

Ambedkar's exposition of the Hindu social order in contrast to an ideal and free social system affirms that he was deeply influenced by the Western liberal ideals. The free society he envisaged was nothing less than the social order propounded through the ideals of the French Revolution. He wanted India to throw away the shackles of feudalism, brahmin hegemony and

casteism and to build an industrialised nation based on liberty, equality and fraternity.

A Theory of Caste

Caste was one of the major themes of Ambedkar's writings as well as social actions. His exegesis on the Hindu social order highlighted the centrality of caste system. His theoretical exposition on caste had appeared as early as in 1916, when he was only 25 years old, in a paper written for an anthropological seminar at the Columbia University. Much later, that is towards the end of his life, he had prepared a well drawn scheme for writing more on the theme, but he could not complete the same.⁹ He concluded that it was the superimposition of endogamy over exogamy that gave rise to the caste system.

Ambedkar observes that the population of India had never been monolithic and it is an amalgamation of various stocks of people -Aryans, Dravidians, Mongolians, Scythians etc. Ethnically all people are heterogenous. The only criterion of a homogenous population is the cultural unity. In this sense India did form a homogenous whole, says Ambedkar¹⁰. For him, formation of castes in India was an artificial chopping off of the population in to fixed and definite units, each one prevented from fusing into another through the custom of endogamy.

Ambedkar described endogamy as the characteristic that is peculiar to the caste. But, citing the instances of 'gotras' he observes that the Indian society was primarily exogamous. In spite of the formation of the caste system based on endogamy, exogamy is strictly observed within the gotras and there

are more rigorous penalties for violating exogamy. This indicates the tendency of all groups to be in close contact with one another to assimilate and amalgamate and thus consolidate into a homogenous society. But this tendency is still being counteracted in the interest of castes by circumscribing a 'circle' outside which people should not contract marriage.¹¹

He traces the strategies and practices that preserve endogamy and the caste system. He asserts that endogamy could be preserved through maintaining a numerical parity between the male and female members of a group or section of the society. A disparity in the number of marriageable males and females would result in 'surplus men' or 'surplus women'. Both these groups had the potential to pose threats to the endogamy of the social group; hence there arose a need to dispose or contain these surplus groups; else they would violate endogamy through marriage outside the caste, if they do not find suitable partners inside their prescribed circle. Ambedkar observes that practices of Sati (burning of the widow on the funeral pyre of her deceased husband), 'Enforced Widowhood', and the 'Girl Marriage' were effective means to meet the problems of surplus men and surplus women. It was these customs that worked out the structure of caste, and the philosophies enshrined in honour of them were intended to popularise them.

The observance of Sati was a means to get rid of the widow. But it was impractical to burn all the widows on the funeral pyre of their deceased husbands. However, the enforced widowhood met the threat posed by the widows to the endogamy. Ambedkar observes that Sati was a better solution than enforced widowhood because being dead and gone the widow would

not create any problem of remarriage either inside or outside the caste. But he asserted that compulsory widowhood was superior to burning of the widow, because it was more practical. Besides, being comparatively humane it also could guard against the 'evils' of remarriage as did by Sati.

Ambedkar's concern for the women as a dominated class is reflected in his observations on the mechanism by which the Hindu society prevented the 'menace' of 'surplus women'. He regarded the practices of Sati, enforced widowhood girl marriage and other related customs as practices that led to the debasement of the personality, identity and social and human rights of women in India. The means resorted to resolve the problem of 'surplus men' was also at the cost of women, which reflected the tendency for male domination. Ambedkar's exposition of the discriminative treatment of women in combination with his critic of Manusmirit could have provided force to the feminist theorisation and movement in India. He noticed :

From time immemorial man as compared with woman has had the upperhand. He is a dominant figure in every group and of the two sexes has greater prestige.¹²

Ambedkar left unexplained how the man established his domination. He went on to state that, 'with this traditional superiority of man over woman his wishes have always been consulted. Woman on the other hand, has been an easy prey to all kinds of iniquitous injunctions – religious, social or economic. But man as a maker of injunction is most often above them all.'¹³

Such being the case, it was impossible to accord the same kind of treatment to a 'surplus woman' and a 'surplus man', observes Ambedkar. He

notes that the deep rooted bias was against women, 'The project of burning him (surplus man) with his deceased wife is hazardous in two ways. First of all it cannot be done, simply because he is a man, secondly, if done, a sturdy soul is lost to that caste'.¹⁴ Under this circumstance the 'surplus' but the 'privileged man' was either induced (not forced) to remain as a widower for the rest of his life or imposed celibacy on him. But, neither of these means would be beneficial for the male hegemonic caste system. Hence it was the interest of the caste system to keep the Man as a Garhastha (one who raises a family). Thus, the 'surplus man' was provided with a wife from within the caste, but a girl not yet marriageable, to tie him down to the group. This opened up the practice of girl marriage in the Hindu society, which not only guarded the numerical depletion of men but also preserved the 'moral' of endogamy.

Having unfolded the mechanism of preservation of caste, Ambedkar tracks down the origin of caste. For him the 'origin of caste' is the 'origin of the mechanism of endogamy'. He asserts that every society is class – divided, economically, intellectually or socially. Accordingly he considered the 'varna system' as a system of classes, in which originally the individuals when qualified could change their classes. It is this varnas or classes that transformed into caste through the process of 'self enclosing' by adopting endogamy.¹⁵ The first varna to become self enclosed or endogamous was the Brahmins, the priestly class. Ambedkar does not explain why the Brahmins enclosed themselves into a caste. Nor does he provide direct and concrete evidence to prove his position. However, he supports the hypothesis on the basis of the customs, practices and the social superiority arrogated by the priestly class,

which he considers as sufficient enough to prove that the Brahmins are the originators of caste.

The other varnas also followed the Brahmin class to enclose themselves into distinct endogamous groups or castes. They did so on their own volition. Ambedkar explains the spread of caste or formation of innumerable number of castes by his theory of 'infection of imitation'. He says that the propensity to imitate is a deep seated characteristic of the human mind and the same need not be deemed inadequate explanation for the formation of various castes in India¹⁶. Further, the human groups tend to imitate those who are superior to them in social status. The conditions for imitation are : (i) that the source of imitation must enjoy prestige in the group and (ii) that there must be numerous and daily relations among members of a group. Thus the Brahmins who were considered as semi-god or demi-god, became the object of imitation for the rest. Interestingly, one can find a parallel of Ambedkar's theory of 'infections of imitation' in M.N. Srinivasan's 'sanskritisation theory' which explains how the lower castes have adopted a cultural imitation of the Brahmins.

While explaining the spread of caste as infection of imitation Ambedkar characterised the formation of innumerable caste as a mechanistic process of proliferation. 'It is mechanical because it is inevitable,' he explained. 'There is no such thing as a caste : There are always castes'. That is, a caste can exist only in relation to another caste. To put it differently, caste exists in plural number. For instance, while turning itself into a caste, the Brahmin class created the non-Brahmin castes; while enclosing themselves they were closing others out.¹⁷

Ambedkar's theory of caste, as expounded in his seminar paper of 1916 can be summarised in the following points :

- 1 Caste is a parcelling into bits of a larger cultural unit.
- 2 The origin of caste is the origin of the mechanism of endogamy.
- 3 Endogamy was preserved through the customs and practices like Sati, Enforced Widowhood and Girl Marriage.
- 4 There was one caste to start with
- 5 Classes have become castes through imitation and excommunication.

He ended up his paper with a note : 'I am ambitious to advance a theory of caste, if it can be shown to be untenable I shall be equally willing to give it up.' Unfortunately his theory of caste did not receive the attention of scholars. However, Ambedkar seemed to have upheld this theory throughout his life. It is evident from one of his later writing entitled 'Symbols of Hinduism', in which he remarked :

For a time there were merely classes. After a time what were only classes (varnas) became castes (Jatis) and the four castes became four thousand. In this way the modern caste system was only the evolution of the ancient varna system.¹⁸

In 'Symbols of Hinduism', one of his incomplete projects, Ambedkar observes caste as not a static entity, but as a growing institution which has never been the same at all time. The shape and form of caste as it existed when Megasthenes wrote his account was very different from what the shape

and form it had taken when Albaruni came and it was still different as perceived by the Portuguese.¹⁹

He asserts that although caste is an evolution of the varna, one cannot get an idea of the caste system by a study of the varna system. Rather, caste must be studied apart from varna. Ambedkar elaborates the notion of caste as a unique characteristic of the Hindu society. In 'Symbols of Hinduism' he expounds caste as a social grouping having a belief in the Hindu religion and bounded by certain regulations with regard to marriage, food and occupation, and a common name by which it is recognised. His positions on the Hindu regulation on marriage, food, occupation and status were the same that he had expatiated in the anthropological seminar paper and other writings. He had expounded that endogamy was the rule of the caste system, that only those who intermarry could interdine, and that occupation and social status were hereditary and fixed. However, the significance of a common name that marks the identity of the caste is a new point in Ambedkar's exposition of the system.

In modern times caste is not at all a loose or floating body, rather it has become a highly organised social grouping, observes Ambedkar. The separate and distinct identity makes a caste an organised and involuntary grouping, a corporation with a perpetual existence and a seal of separate entity. It is the name which the caste bears that gives it the fixity, continuity and individuality, and that defines who its members are. Thus, in modern times, in most cases, a person born in a caste carries the name of the caste as his/her surname. The caste name as the surname makes the enforcement of caste rules and

regulations easy, asserts Ambedkar. In the first place it prevents the offender in passing off as a person belonging to another caste and thus escape the jurisdiction of the caste. Secondly, it helps to identify the offending individual and the caste to whose jurisdiction he/she is a subject so that he/she is easily handed up and punished for any break of the caste rules.

Annihilation of Caste

Ambedkar found caste as an impediment in the path of social reform in India. He presumed that without destroying the caste system any effort to reform the Hindu social order would end up in failure. Passing through two decades from 1916 to 1936 Ambedkar had moved much away from the agenda of social reform within the Hindu fold. His experience had convinced him that the ideological basis of caste was irreconcilable with the goal of social equality. Thus he emphasised the need for the annihilation of caste in his undelivered presidential address prepared in 1936 for the Jat Pat Todak Mandal.

Analysing the social reform movements in India. Ambedkar points out that the early reformers focussed on family rather than the caste and the Hindu society as a whole. The failure of these integrationist movements on the social front had exposed the difficulties on the political reform front. He asserts that the political reform cannot succeed unless social and religious reforms precede: the emancipation of the mind and the soul is a necessary pre-requisite for the political expansion of the people.²⁰ His critique of earlier movements also throw light on the nature of power and its role in the social reformation.

It seems that Ambedkar conceived power as something which can initiate a change in the individual, institution or society. For him source of power is not singular, rather he considered anything as a source of power-property, religion, education or social status. Control over these sources of power gives 'authority' to the individuals or the classes. For instance, the 'Mahatmas' (Great personalities) across the world or the priestly class in India used to hold a sway over the common people simply because of their social or religious status, observes Ambedkar. The religion, social status and property are all sources of power and authority that enable the individual or a class even to control the liberty of another. But, if one is predominant at one stage the other will be predominant at another. Ambedkar had realised the potential of these sources of power in affecting social reformation. It is the non-cognizance of this potentiality of the sources of power that led the early reformers in India to end up in failure when they gave primacy to economic or political agenda and sidelined the social reform front to the secondary position. Thus, he exhorted 'caste is a monster that crosses your path. You cannot have political reform, you cannot have economic reform, unless you kill this monster'.²¹

To those who defended caste system as being a 'division of labour' Ambedkar retorted by stating that it is a 'division of labourers'. The conception of caste as a division of labourers is quite different from the notion of caste as a division of labour, he explained. Caste establishes an hierarchy in which labourers are graded one above the other. This division is not based on natural aptitude, it is not based on individual's competency to choose and make his/her own career, rather it is based on birth.

Ambedkar perceived caste as an obstruction in the path of economic and social development of India too. The growth of Industry was dependent on the availability of free labourers. He said, 'industry is never static. It undergoes rapid and abrupt changes. With such changes an individual must be free to change his occupation.'²² The growth of industry and the development of the conditions of individuals are mutually related. Hence, Ambedkar went on, to add 'without such freedom to adjust himself to changing circumstances it would be impossible for him (the individual) to gain his livelihood.' He asserted that the caste system will not allow individuals to change their occupation, because of its hereditary fixation. In the social arena the status of the individual is fixed and upward social mobility is completely blocked by the rigid caste system. Hence, Ambedkar emphasised the elimination of the caste system as the true way to free the individuals from bounded occupation and to enable them to enter the industrial profession and thereby promote their social mobility. In this context, if caste in India is seen as inseparably connected with the feudal social formations one can categorically say that the Ambedkar movement in essence was against the feudal establishment, and was for the building up of a free social order in which varied interests are consciously communicated and shared. The ideal society as visualised by Ambedkar was nothing but a democratic social order based on liberty, equality and fraternity.

Ambedkar rejected the view that caste system developed as a means to prevent the admixture of races. He categorically stated that existence of a population of pure race is only an illusion and that there has always been a mixing of different races in all parts of the world. Moreover, *caste system*

*came into being long after the different races of India had combined in blood and culture.*²³ Hence Ambedkar concludes that caste system does not demarcate a racial division, rather it has made only a social division, a division of the people of the same race. It is a bit contradictory to state that caste system is a 'division of the people of the same race' as it is against his earlier statement that 'there was no pure race that existed' and 'caste came into being after the mixing up of different races in India.' It seems that what he meant was that caste system has divided the population of India that possessed a cultural unity in the past. Accordingly he stated that 'caste has completely disorganised and demoralised the Hindus'.²⁴

For Ambedkar it is a fallacy that a 'Hindu society' existed. 'Hindu society is a myth', he asserts. What exists is a collection of castes. There was no 'Hindu consciousness' of a kind. In every Hindu the consciousness that existed was the consciousness of the caste. Even the very word 'Hindu' is a construction made by the foreigners. It was given by the Mohammedans to the natives for the purpose of distinguishing themselves. Etymologically, the word 'Hindu' does not exist in any Sanskrit work prior to the Mohammadan 'invasion', states Ambedkar.²⁵ Can one assume the recent focus on 'Hindutva' and 'Indianness' by the Hindu nationalists as an attempt to refute Ambedkar's idea of 'non existent Hindu consciousness'?

Emphasising the need for abolishing caste system and building up a democratic social order, Ambedkar affirms that caste is a threat to liberty, equality and fraternity. To him democracy is not simply a form of government. He conceived it as a mode of associated living of conjoint communicated

experience, (it) is essentially an attitude of respect and reverence towards fellow beings.²⁶ In order to achieve this social democracy, not simply the political democracy, Ambedkar felt the need to annihilate the caste, otherwise it is impossible to achieve this objective.

Ambedkar would have accepted a Hindu social order without caste. Abolition of caste, he considered, is a pertinent step in bringing about reform in the Hindu social order. He suggested inter-marriage as the 'real' means for breaking the caste system. As the caste is founded on endogamy the breach of endogamy norms through inter marriage may lead to eradication of caste based practices. He observed that caste has alienated people; the separatist feeling can be removed from their minds only by building the feeling of kinship; the feeling of being kith and kin can be created only through the fusion of blood, and the best social way of achieving this is inter marriage.

Annihilation of caste is not a physical act, for caste is not a physical entity. Caste is a state of mind; its destruction is possible only through rational changes. He said,

'Hindus observe caste not because they are inhuman or wrong headed. (But) because they are deeply religious. People are not wrong in observing caste ... what is wrong is their religion which has inculcated the notion of caste.'²⁷

What is responsible for the notion of caste, according to him, is the 'Shastras' on which the Hindu religion is built. Thus, the right measure to annihilate caste is to destroy the sanctity of the 'Shastras'. Because, *'the acts of the people are merely the results of their beliefs inculcated upon their*

*minds by the 'Shastras' and the people will not change their conduct until they cease to believe in the sanctity of the 'Shastras' on which their conduct is founded. The reformers who worked for the removal of untouchability, including Mahatma Gandhi, did not realise this, Ambedkar went on critically.*²⁸ He added that the efforts to agitate and organise inter caste dinners and inter caste marriages would not find any result unless the people are made free from slavery to 'Shastras' and until their minds are cleansed of the pernicious notion founded on the 'Shastras'. Once they are freed from the Shastras they will inter dine and inter marry by their own. Hence, Ambedkar emphasises that annihilation of caste or removal of untouchability is possible only when a free social order is established through social and religious reformation by replacing the 'Shastras' with the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity and social justice – in short democracy.

Who were the Shudras?

The Dalit movement under the leadership of Ambedkar during the late 1930s and the early 1940s was marked by the search for an alliance of the Dalits and the non-Brahmin workers and peasants in the fight against caste and economic exploitation. Ambedkar did see that the Shudras and the Untouchables had shared much in common as they were two major exploited classes and had many social disabilities. His attempt to forge an alliance with the Shudra leaders had not succeeded. However, during these days he dealt with the problems of the Shudras side by side with that of the depressed classes. A little later he brought about two monographs on the questions of Shudras and the Untouchables: 'Who Were Shudras?' (1946) and 'The

Untouchables' (1948). These works together can be considered as a memorable contribution in the early phase of Indian sociology.

Dedicated to the memory of Mahatma Jotiba Phule whom Ambedkar esteemed as the 'Greatest Shudra of Modern India', 'Who were Shudras?' expounds the status the Shudras held in the past and traces their route along which they were made to evolve themselves as the servile class in the Hindu social hierarchy. His inquiry on the Shudras is based on the following propositions:

- 1 The Shudras were one of the Aryan communities of the solar race.
- 2 There was a time when the Aryan society recognised only three varnas, namely Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaisyas.
- 3 The Shudras did not form a separate varna. They were part of the Kshatriya varna in the Indo-Aryan Society.
- 4 There was a continuous feud between the Shudra kings and the Brahmins in which the Brahmins were subjected to many tyrannies and indignities.
- 5 As a result of the hatred towards the Shudras generated by this tyrannies and suppressions, the Brahmins refused to perform the 'upanayana' of the Shudras.
- 6 Owing to the denial of Upanayana, the Shudras who were Kshatryas became degraded, fell below the rank of the vaishyas and thus came to form the fourth varna.

The system of Chaturvarnaya had placed the Shudras at the bottom of the social scale and subjected them to innumerable ignominies and disabilities

so as to prevent them from rising above the social status fixed for them. Repudiating the view that there were four varnas in the Indo Aryan society from the very beginning itself, Ambedkar argued with linguistic evidence that Shudras, as a varna, was not in existence in the early vedic period and their social status at that time was not the same as represented in the later vedic literature. It was the 'Purusha Sukta' doctrine of chaturvarnaya that established the dehumanised condition of the Shudras. The composition of the society in the early vedic age was class based, but this social division had never been a matter of dogma. Social mobility of the individual was possible till the 'Purusha Sukta' laid down the social gradation as fixed and permanent on an ascending scale of reverence and a descending scale of contempt. It fixed a permanent warrant of precedence among the different classes which neither the time nor the circumstance could alter.

The 'Purusha Sukta' is considered by Ambedkar as a fabrication forged by the Brahmins for serving their own purpose. He states that the Rig Veda, excluding the part of 'Purusha Sukta' mentions Brahmins, Kshatriya and Vaisya many times. The Brahmins are mentioned as a separate 'varna' fifteen times, Kshatriyas nine times, but the Shudras were not at all mentioned as a separate varna. Similarly, the Satapata and Taittiriya Brahmanas speak of only the creation of three varnas. Drawing on the interpretation of the vedas, attempted by Celebrooke, Max Muller and Max Weber, Ambedkar argues that the 'Purusha Sukta' is a later interpolation, an addition to the Rig Veda made at a later stage. Thus he concludes that there were only three varnas in the beginning and the Shudras were not in existence at the early stages of the Indo-Aryan society.

Aryan Race Theory : A Subjection of Asiatic Society

Ambedkar rejected not only the theory of 'Aryan invasion of India' but also the non Aryan black identity of the Shudras. He did not consider Aryans as a race at all. The theory of Aryan race and Aryan invasion of India, says Ambedkar, is a construction made by the Western theorists, based upon a gratuitous colonial assumption. 'The assumption is that the Indo Germanic people are the purest of the modern representatives of the original Aryan race, and their first home is assumed to have been somewhere in Europe.' This assumption had raised the question 'How could the Aryan speech have come to India?' which could only be answered 'rightly' within the colonial discourse. Hence the answer was that the Aryans must have come into India from outside. The necessity for inventing the theory of invasion' by the colonial theorists had then been taken up by the Indian (colonised) intellectuals, observed Ambedkar.²⁹

Ambedkar was very much aware of the general colonial tendency that characterised the colonised culture as inferior to that of the colonisers. Therefore, he could trace out the interests of the Western theorists in the construction of the 'theory of Aryan race'. This theory has its origin in the belief that the Aryans are a European race and as a European race it is superior to the Asiatic races. The invasion of India by the Aryans and the conquest of the Dasas and Dasyus by them were the inventions of the colonial writers to establish their presumed superiority of the Aryans that is, the Europeans.³⁰

Another assumption of this theory of Aryan race is that the European races were white and had a colour prejudice against the dark races. The Aryan

race, being a European race is assumed to have had upheld colour prejudice. The theory thus proceeded to find evidence for colour prejudices among the Aryans who came to India. The exponents of the Aryan race theory did find it in the Chaturvarnya, an institution established by the Indo - Aryans after they came to India, which these scholars found to have been based on 'varna' a word they equated with colour.

Ambedkar regarded the theory of the Aryan race as baseless and a perversion of scientific investigation. But what astounded him was that, despite the absurdity of the theory, it had been widely accepted in India, particularly by the Brahmin scholars. The acceptance of the theory - which was the result of an attempt to establish the superiority of the European race over the Asiatic races - by the Brahmins is a strange phenomena. It is the disposition of the Brahmins to consider non Brahmins as belonging to an inferior race that made them to accept this theory. It helped their claims to be based on 'scientific' evidence and allowed them to establish a kinship with the European races and share their arrogance and superiority. The argument that they, being Aryans were invaders and conquerers would have helped them, also to maintain and justify their overlordship over the non-Brahmins.

Ambedkar's analysis of the theory of the Aryan race concludes with the observation that existence of a separate and distinct Aryan race is only an inference; their common habitat is an inference from an inference; the theory of invasion is only a baseless European construction; neither the Aryan race were superior to the Asiatic races nor were the Europeans purely of a race of white complexion. Regarding the Indo Aryans, he concludes that there was

no knowledge of any race as the Aryan race in the Rig Vedic period, no evidence of any invasion of India by the Aryan race and conquering of the native people in the Vedas. There existed no racial distinction among the Aryans, Dasas and Dasyus; there was no colour prejudice among the Vedic Aryans and they were not distinct from the Dasas and Dasyus in terms of colour. Thus Ambedkar's analysis is conclusive in that the theory of the Aryan race was a construction in the colonial discourse that mooted the ideological subjection of the Asiatic society and that this construction became instrumental to the European conquest of the people of Asia and other continents. The hailing of this theory by the Indian upper caste intelligentsia reveals nothing but the ideological servility to the colonial domination and the 'Brahmanic will' to subject the non Brahmin masses of the country to slave-like submission.

The Shudras were Aryans: No less no more

Thus having rejected the non Aryan identity of the shudras that had been established on the basis of colonial constructions of the Aryan race and their invasion of India, Ambedkar asserts that the Shudras were Aryans, they belonged to the Kshatriya class and they have their ancestry in some of the powerful kings of ancient India. He attempted to prove these propositions based on a geneological analysis of the tribal kings (or kingdoms) depicted in the Mahabharata, Yaska's Nirukta, Rig Veda, Vishnu Purana and Aitereya Brahmana. He first located one Paijavana in the Shanti Parvam of the Mahabharata, who is described as a Shudra who used to give 'Dakshina' to the Brahmins for performing sacrifices. From Yaska's Nirukta, Ambedkar

found that Paijavana is another name of Sudas who is depicted as a mighty Kshatriya king. Drawing from Mahabharata and Aitereya Brahmana, he comes to the conclusion that Paijavana was a Shudra, and Sudas was a Kshatriya as well as a king. Ambedkar quotes Max Weber's observation on Mahabharata for additional support of his thesis :

'Here the remarkable tradition is recorded that Paijavana, i.e. Sudas who was so famous for his sacrifices and who is celebrated in the Rig Veda as the patron of Vishvamitra and enemy of Vashista was a Sudra'.³¹

Having thus identified Paijavana as a Shudra (Kshatriya) by chaining the biographical bits of the kings collected from the Hindu scriptures, Ambedkar establishes an Aryan identity for this Shudra king. His conclusion that the Shudras were Aryans is based on the premises : (a) Sudas belonged to the Bharata tribes and (b) the Bharatas were Aryans. From Rig Veda (vii.8.7) he deduces that the Bharatas were the descendants of Manu.³² But, he disregards the general belief of the Hindus that India is named 'Bharata Bhumi' after the "Dushyanti Bharatas", the Bharatas who descended from Dushyanta and Sakuntala and fought the epic war depicted in the Mahabharata. Ambedkar considers the Dushyanta Bharatas and the Rig Vedic Bharatas as separate tribes and he asserts that it is after the latter that India came to be named 'Bharata Bhumi'. As the Rig Vedic Bharatas were Aryans to which group Sudas belonged and as Paijavana was no one but Sudas, who was a Shudra king, Ambedkar concludes that the Shudras were Aryans and were within the class of Kshatriyas before becoming a distinct class under the name 'Shudras', the fourth varna.

He expounds further that it was due to a purposive degradation resulting from a violent conflict between the Shudras and the Brahmins that the former was outcasted and placed below the rank of the Kshatriyas and the Vaisyas, the second and third categories in the four fold Hindu social hierarchy. The conflicts that occurred between the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas in the ancient times were also the conflicts between the Brahmins and the Shudras, because 'many of the kings who fought war with Brahmins were Shudras and the Shudras of that time were in the Kshatriya class³³. Among these the war between the Sudas (the Shudra king) and the Vashishta (the Brahmin priest) is considered by Ambedkar as the direct evidence for the conflict between the Shudras and the Brahmins. The other kings (Harish Chandra, Ambarisha, Kalmashapada, Pururavas, Nahusha and Nimi), although they are not described as Shudras, were descendents from Ikshaku. Thus, Ambedkar describes the history of the conflicts between the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas as the history of a war between the Brahmins and the Shudras.

Ambedkar presumes that it was the Brahmins who became instrumental in the degradation of the Shudras from their Kshatriya status to the fourth varna in the Indo Aryan society. He focusses on the denial of Upanayana to the Shudras by the Brahmins as the principal cause of the degradation. Upanayana was the first step of a person's student life in the Chaturvarnya and was the door to the studies in Vedas, the only available formal source of knowledge at that time. In the matter of Upanayana the early Indo Aryan Society treated all the three varnas on the same footing. There was no wearing of thread, 'Yajnopavita', during Upanayana ceremony in the ancient times, but it has become the most important item during modern times.

Ambedkar considered the denial of Upanayana as the denial of knowledge, learning and right to property. The rules laid down in the Purva Mimamsa' state that all property is meant primarily for the purpose of sacrifice and the right to property was dependent upon a person's capacity to sacrifice, which in turn was dependent upon Upanayana. Hence, only those who were entitled to Upanayana had the right to own property. Another rule in the same scripture insisted that a sacrifice must be accompanied by Veda mantras. Hence, a person who had not studied the Vedas was not competent to perform the sacrifices. As the study of Vedas was initiated with Upanayana, the denial of Upanayana was the closure of the door to knowledge and learning.

The denial of knowledge and right to property through the suspending of Upanayana to the Shudras gave birth to an unprecedented relationship in the Indo Aryan Society, observed Ambedkar. It made the Shudras look up to the higher classes as their superiors and also enabled the three higher varnas look down upon the Shudras as inferior.¹³⁴ Thus, he asserts that it was the stoppage of Upanayana, the deadly weapon invented by the Brahmins to avenge the Kshatriya kings that subjected them to innumerable ignominies, and thus marked the beginning of Shudradom in the Indo Aryan Society.

Ambedkar's theory regarding the origin of the Shudras involves some critical insights on the social formations in Ancient India. His observations on the existence of only three varnas and the strong antagonism between the Brahmins and Kshatriyas form only part of his theory. What is more important is that from a cultural perspective, he concludes that the conflict between the two higher varnas was primarily the result of an antagonism between the

forerunners of the Shudras who were the ruling class and the Brahmins who constituted the priestly class. He also asserts that the Shudras were one of the Aryan community. The characterisation of the Aryan race theory as a Western construction has surely provided new insights in to the anti-colonial discourse. The expositions on the Aryan race theory can have a significant place in post colonial theorisation. Ambedkar's findings also expose the ideology of colonial knowledge. One can even find an anticipation of the post colonial theories in his critic of the theory of the Aryan race and invasion. In 'Orientalism' (1978) Edward Said has described the features of the body of knowledge produced in the nineteenth century by colonial scholars and writers. The colonial discourse produced the Orient as a repository of Western knowledge, rather than as a society and culture functioning on its own terms. The Orient was produced in relation to the West and was described in terms of the way it differed from the West. Said argues that the colonised countries were described in such a way as to provide them a negative image, the image of an 'other' inferior culture. This was an attempt to produce a positive civilised image of the British society.³⁵

Nonetheless, Ambedkar's inference that the Shudras were formed as a result of the denial of Upanayana seems to have an over dependence on the cultural factors. It is cognisable that there were no restrictions in the early vedic period on performing Upanayana to all the varnas and only later was it denied to the Shudras. In fact, attributing entire cause for the origin of the Sudras to a particular cultural or religious practice and its denial to a particular group of people is an exaggeration of a singular aspect of historical realities of the social formations in ancient India.

The Origin of Untouchables

Many a scholar and social activist have discoursed on the scourge of 'untouchability' that marked dehumanisation of a section of the Indian society, which is appellated variously from ancient to modern times, by designating them as Chandalas, the Untouchables, Depressed Classes, Harijans or Scheduled Castes. But few of them examined thoroughly the social context that gave birth to this evil practice and its operation in establishing the identity of this subjected people. Ambedkar's 1948 work on this subject strives to deidentify the 'untouchables' from their age old imposed identity. This work entitled 'The Untouchables : Who are they and Why they Became Untouchables', which was a sequel to his treatise 'Who Were the Shudras' (1946), traces the 'root' cause of untouchability and the mechanism that subjected the Dalits to this social scourge.

Ambedkar identified three classes of people who were kept enslaved and demoralised in the Hindu social hegemony : (1) The Criminal Tribes, a mass of people who were taught to accept crime as an approved means of earning their livelihood, (2) The Aboriginal Tribes, a class of people who were left to live in full bloom of their primitive barbarism in the midst of 'civilisation' and (3) The Untouchables, the people who were treated as an entity which is beyond human intercourse and whose mere touch was considered enough to cause pollution. He considered these classes of people who were located outside the four fold varna system as having been produced as a result of the practice of Hinduism. Ambedkar's mapping of untouchability reveals that the very existence of these classes does not entitle the Hindu

civilisation to be characterised as a civilisation in the true sense. His theory on the origin of untouchability consists of the following major theses :

- 1 There is no racial difference between the caste Hindus and the untouchables. The Hindus were tribes men whereas the untouchables were the broken men who emerged from the alien tribes.
- 2 There is no racial or occupational basis for untouchability.
- 3 The root causes of untouchability are : (a) contempt and hatred towards the broken men (b) continued beef eating of the broken men even after it was given up by others.
- 4 'Untouchables' are distinct from 'impure'. These two groups came into being at two distinct historical junctures - the impure at the time of Dharma Sutras and the untouchables much later than 400 AD.

According to Ambedkar, the practice of untouchability in the sense of defilement, pollution, contamination and also the ways and means adopted to remove this defilement did exist in all the primitive and ancient societies including that of India. However, he makes a sharp distinction between the untouchability as observed in the Hindu and non-Hindu societies :

- 1 In the primitive society, defilement was temporary and it was observed during the occurrence of certain events like birth, initiation, puberty, marriage, cohabitation, death, contact with something which was regarded as sacred and profane or contact with certain persons. After the period of defilement was over and the purification ceremonies were performed, the individual was considered to have become pure and

associable. But among the Hindus, impurity was imposed hereditarily and permanently. The Hindus who touch the untouchables at any time was considered polluted, however, they could become pure again by undergoing purifying ceremonies. But there was nothing which could make the untouchables pure and associable. They are born impure, they live impure, they die as impure, they give birth to children who are born with the stigma of untouchability fixed on to them.

- 2 In non-Hindu societies, the defilement affected only the individuals or at the most those who are closely connected with them. But among the Hindus, untouchability was permanently imposed on a class of people.
- 3 The non-Hindus, though did isolate the affected individuals, never segregated them in separate quarters. But the Hindus had been divided into touchables and untouchables and while the former lived in the village proper the latter resided in its outskirts, the Ghetto.

This fundamental features of untouchability as practised by the Hindus, according to Ambedkar, were not marked just as a case of separation or stoppage of social intercourse for a temporary period. Rather, it was a territorial segregation equivalent to putting a class of people into a sort of cage.

Ambedkar's theory on untouchability is centred on the construct 'Broken Men', which he himself conceptualised as the segment of people segregated from the nomadic tribes, as a result of the tribal warfare in the primitive society. In the tribal wars the defeated tribal groups were not completely annihilated, rather they were broken into bits and later they became floating

populations consisting of groups of 'Broken' tribesmen roaming in all directions During the transition from the primitive nomadic society to a settled village community, there were two major groups of people in India: (1) the settled tribes who faced with the problems of finding a body of men who could do the work of watch and ward against the raiders belonging to the nomadic tribes, and (2) the Broken Men formed from the defeated tribes having the problems of finding patrons who could give them food and shelter. The problems of both the groups were settled through a mutual agreement which contracted the Broken Men to guard the settled tribes from outside attack by living outside the village, and the settled tribes consented to give food and shelter to the former. The Broken Men, in the course of history, became the untouchables and the settled tribes became divided into four varnas - the Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and Shudras - the basic classes of the Hindu social order.

The Aryans, Dravidians and Untouchables

The two significant positions held by Ambedkar in his theory of untouchability are the rejection of the non-Aryan identity of the untouchables and the assertion that the untouchables were not originally untouchables in the Indo-Aryan Society. He had already rejected the theory of the Aryan race and Aryan invasion of Dasas and Dasyus.³⁶ He characterised the theory as a construction of the colonial scholars in order to create the impression that the western 'races' were superior to the Asiatic people.

To Ambedkar the Aryans, Dravidians, Dasas and Nagas were merely different names of the same people. He asserted that the Aryans were not a homogenous population, nor were they a people of a single race. He observes:

'Dasa is a Sanskritised form of the Indo-Iranian word 'Dahaka'; Dahaka was the name of the king of the Nagas. Consequently the Aryans called the Nagas after the name of their king 'Dahaka', which in its Sanskrit form became 'Dasas', a generic name applied to all the Nagas.³⁷

The Nagas were in no way an aboriginal or uncivilised people. Drawing from the Rig Veda and some of the ninth century inscriptions and records like Devagiri record of the Kadamba king Krishna Varna, the Royakota grant, Pallava inscriptions etc., Ambedkar argues that the Nagas were a very ancient people and had a very close association by inter-marriage with the royal families of India, for instance the Pallavas, Guptas, Kadambas, Cholas and Bhaumins. Not only did the Naga people occupy a high cultural level, but they were also the rulers of a good part of India. The dynasties of Satavahana and Khutu Kula Satakarini are considered by him as of the Naga origin.³⁸

Ambedkar identifies the Dravidians with the Nagas who, he considered, occupied the whole India in a remote past. He says that the word 'Dravida' is the Sanskritised form of the word 'Tamil' which when imported became 'Damita' in Sanskrit and later on 'Damilla' and 'Dravida'. The word 'Dravida' denotes the language of the people and not their race. The Dravida was not confined to South India alone rather it was the language of the whole of India and was spoken from Kashmir to Cape Camorin. The Nagas in North India gave up Dravida language which was their mother tongue and adopted Sanskrit in its place. But the Nagas in the South India retained Tamil or Dravida as their mother tongue and did not adopt Sanskrit the language of

the Aryans. Consequently, the application of the name 'Dravida' to the Nagas of North India was avoided, but it became imperative to designate the Nagas of the south as 'Dravidians' in view of their being the only people who spoke the Dravida language after the Nagas of the north abandoned it.³⁹

Ambedkar affirms that the Aryans were a heterogenous population and they do not represent a specific or pure race. Their racial identity is the same as that of the Dravidians. And the Dravidians were not a stock of people confined to South India alone and having a racial identity which is different from the racial groupings of the people of North India. Ambedkar's assertions, however, reveal a kind of invasion in the past. The giving up of the 'mother tongue' Tamil or Dravida and adoption of Sanskrit by the Nagas of North India are critical in the sense that they pose an internal contradiction to his findings that derecognise the physical invasion of Dasas and Dasyas or the Nagas or Dravidians, by the Aryans.

Religious Interdictions as the Basis of Untouchability

Ambedkar's theory of untouchability is marked by his rejection of the racial and occupational basis of this social stigma. He had already repudiated the theory of racial difference and division of labour as the mainspring of the origin of the Shudra varna and their social degradation. A race, he defined, is a body of people possessing certain typical traits which are hereditary. The traits like pigmentation which decides the colour of skin, eyes and hair, and the stature vary according to climate and habitat, consequently they cannot be accepted as tests for determining the race of the people. The only stable trait acceptable to the test of anthropometry in deciding the race is the shape

of the human head, which is measured with respect to two indices - Cephalic and Facial indices. These indicate the breadth of the head above the ears and the correlation between the proportions of the head and the form of the face, respectively.

Besides, Ambedkar considers the study of totems and their distribution among different tribal communities of ancient India would serve as good a test as anthropometry for determining the race. He asserts the 'Kula' and 'Gotra' of the Hindus as the equivalents of the totem of the primitive society. He observes :

The Hindu society is still in tribal organisation with the family at its base observing the rules of exogamy based on 'kula' and 'gotra' : caste and sub castes are social organisations which are imposed on the tribal organisation and the rule of endogamy enjoined by them does not do away with the rule of exogamy enjoined by the tribal organisations of 'kula' and 'gotra'. The 'kula' and 'gotra' are nothing but the exogamous groups of families with a common totem of animate or inanimate objects.⁴⁰

Applying the anthropometric and ethnological tests. Ambedkar arrives at the conclusion that the untouchables do not belong to a race different from that of the Aryans and the Davidians. He draws evidence from the anthropometric analysis of the Indian people by Ghurye to substantiate his thesis, which reveals that :

- 1 The nasal index of the Chuhra (the untouchables) of the Punjab is the same as that of the Brahmin of United Provinces.
- 2 The nasal index of the Chamars (the untouchables) of Bihar is not very much different from that of the Brahmins of Bihar.

- 3 The nasal index of the Holeya (an untouchable) of Canarese is far higher than that of the Brahmins of Karnataka.
- 4 The nasal index of the Cheruman (an untouchable lower than the Pariah) of Tamil Nadu is the same as that of the Brahmins of the Tamil Nadu.

Similarly, based on the findings of the ethnological studies conducted by Risley and Rose that had been appended to the Census Report 1901, Ambedkar states that the Marathas and the Mahars of Maharashtra are of the same 'kula' and the Jats and the Chamars of Punjab have the same 'Gotra'. Thus, he asserts that the Brahmins, the other upper castes and the untouchables are Aryans, and they are a people of the same race designated by different names such as Nagas and Dravidians.⁴¹

Ambedkar situates the origin of untouchability within the problematics of the food taboos and the conflicts between the Buddhist and Brahminic orders. Unlike his theory of caste and the theory of origin of the Shudras, which he built purely on cultural analysis, his expositions on untouchability involves an explication of the political chemistry of ancient India. He considers the contempt of the Brahmins towards the Buddhists and the habit of beef eating of the Broken Men as the root causes of untouchability. It was outside his cognition to regard the Brahmins as superior to the untouchables. In fact, the imposition of impurity which decided the social interaction was not a one sided phenomenon. Rather, both Brahmins and untouchables considered each other as impure, he observes. The reason for this mutual imposition of impurity was the Broken Men's embracing of Buddhism. Buddhism as a religious movement emerged in opposition to the Brahmanic hegemony and

religious practices. Even after Buddhism as an antithesis to Braminism lost its vigour the Broken Men continued to live as Buddhists. This led to the Brahmanic contempt towards the Broken Men whom the former kept away from being involved in any social intercourse. Thus, the conflict of the Brahmins with the Buddhists and the Broken Men prepared the ground for the birth of untouchability and untouchables.

Ambedkar correlates beef eating with the practice of untouchability. He focussed on the food (meat) related taboos that prevailed among the Hindus. There was a time when both Brahmins and non Brahmins ate not only flesh but also beef. But, when the taboos on meat eating came into practice the Hindus were divided into two categories : Mansaharis (flesh eaters) and Shakaharis (vegetarians). Ambedkar categorised the Mansahari Hindus into those who do not eat cow's flesh and those who eat it. Thus, the food taboo has created three categories of Hindus. The vegetarians, those who eat flesh but not cow's flesh and those who eat flash including cow's flesh. Ambedkar finds these three groups as corresponding to the Brahmins, the non-Brahmins and the untouchables; the first two categories constituted the touchables. The touchables whether they are vegetarians or flesh eaters were united in their objection to eat cow's flesh. They considered eating of cow fleh as non human and suspended social interourse with the beef eaters.

Brahmins' abandoning of beef eating and turning to be vegetarians was a mechanism adopted to counter the influence of Buddhism which vehemently opposed Yajna that involved sacrifice of innumerable number of cattle. The Buddhist objection to Yajna had taken a strong hold on the minds of the

common masses, particularly because they being agriculturists, animals including cows played a crucial role in their economy. Moreover, the spread of Buddhism had undermined the power and prestige of the Brahmins at the Royal courts as well as in the society at large. Hence, the only way left for the Brahmins to regain their lost power and authority against the Buddhists was to give up Yajna as a form of worship and to put an end to the practice of sacrificing. But, mere abandonment of animal sacrifice could have only put them on the same foot as the Buddhists. Thus, it was a necessity for them to find a means to establish their supremacy over the Buddhists. The powerful means was to go a step further that is, not only to give up animal sacrifice but also to become vegetarians.

Ambedkar theorises untouchability as the result of the breach of religious interdiction against the eating of the sacred animal of the Hindus, namely the cow. By making cow a sacred animal and by declaring beef eating as a sacrilege, the Brahmins who had been the priests could project beef eating as an offence against religion. The non-Brahmins simply imitated the Brahmins by giving up beef eating to get religious approval from the priestly class. The Broken Men being guilty of sacrilege necessarily had to push themselves out of the pale of society. They could not imitate the Brahmins and the non-Brahmins, as the flesh of the cow, especially flesh of the dead cow was their principal means of sustenance, without which they would starve. They had to depend on the settled community for food. Moreover, carrying the dead cow had become an obligation for them. Once the cow became sacred and the Broken Men continued to eat beef there was no other fate left for them, except to be treated unfit for association, as untouchables.⁴²

Ambedkar asserts that religion being a united system of beliefs and practices is inseparable not only from the sacred things but from the society as well. Things sacred are always associated with interdictions, otherwise called 'taboos'. Further, religious interdictions exist in multiple forms and the most notable one is the interdiction on contact, which is based on the principle that the profane should never touch the sacred. As the untouchables are considered profane they cannot touch the sacreds of the Hindus. The interesting observation is that a contact need not be always a touch. It can be a look, thus the sight of certain things is forbidden to the profane. Hence, the untouchables should not see the Hindu gods or come in the way of the upper castes. A contact can occur through words also, as for pronouncing words breath has to be spread out; so the profane was forbidden to address the sacred things or to utter them. Therefore, the shudras and the untouchables were not allowed to learn vedas.

An exceptionally intimate contact is the one resulting from the absorption of food. Hence, comes the interdiction against eating the sacred animals or vegetables. The interdictions relating to the sacred things are beyond discussion and questioning as these are binding to everybody. They are obligatory and their breach is more than a crime. The cow, living or dead, was made sacred by the Brahmins and beef eating was declared a sacrilege. Any one who treated the cow disrespectfully was guilty of sin and unfit for association. Hence, once the cow became sacred and the Broken Man continued eating beef they became unfit for association with the Hindus, and hence they turned to be the untouchables.

Dating Untouchability

Ambedkar refutes the view that untouchability was in practice from the very ancient period dated to the time of the Rig Veda. According to him untouchability did not exist even in 200 AD, but it had emerged by 600 AD. Analysing the Rig Veda, Dharma Sutras and Smritis to discern the etymological meaning of the terms 'Antya', 'Antyaja', 'Antyavasin' and 'Bahya' that are considered by the traditional Sanskrit scholars as parallel to the term 'untouchables', Ambedkar asserts that these words refer only to the classes of people who were treated as impure and not to the untouchables in the modern sense of the term. He makes the distinction between the 'impure' and the 'untouchables' by drawing from the ancient literature. The untouchables pollutes all the Hindus, whereas the impure pollutes only Brahmins, the priests. Moreover, the touch of the impure causes pollution only on the ceremonial occasions, but the touch of the untouchables causes pollution at all times. Thus, Ambedkar concludes that untouchability did not exist neither during the vedic period nor at the time of Dharma Sutras or Smritis.

Based on the findings of Bhuler and Daphtary, Ambedkar dates Manu Smirit as written in the second century A.D.⁴³ He does not consider Fah-Hian's accounts (400 AD) of the Chandalas being treated as outcastes to be a conclusive evidence of the practice of untouchability. He claims that the Chandalas were the hereditary enemies of the Brahmins and they were treated as impure by the Brahmins only. However, he finds a clear evidence of untouchability in the accounts of Yuan Chwan who came to India in 629 A.D. But, he fixes the approximate date of untouchability to the fourth century A.D.. Since Ambedkar presumes that the origin of untouchability was

intimately connected with the ban on cow killing and beef eating by the Hindus, (which he asserts, based on the findings of D.R. Bhandarkar), he argues that it came to be enforced only during the period of the Gupta kings.⁴⁴ Hence he concludes with confidence that 'untouchability was born some time about 400 AD. It was born out of the struggle for supremacy between Buddhism and Brahminism, which had crucial influence in the moulding up of the history of India; however, a close study of this critical transition has been woefully neglected by students of Indian history.'⁴⁵

The delineation of Ambedkar's theory of untouchability reveals that he does not figure the untouchables as a part of the Hindu community, but as a people with a distinct identity of their own. Neither does he consider the untouchables as inferior to the Brahmins or the other upper caste Hindus nor does he regard them as non-Aryans who are traditionally treated as an inferior race compared to the Aryans. He does not ruminates the Indians to form a monolithic population representing a race, creed, religion, region or language, which is superior or inferior to any other class of people. This theorisation has a correspondence with the position he had upheld on the question of depressed classes in his testimony given before the Simon Commission (1929) and his stand on the untouchables which he reiterated in the Round Table Conferences (1930-32). On these two occasions he had maintained the position that the untouchables is a separate community, and hence they require special treatment as a minority in the constitutional matters. In his theory of untouchability he asserts that the untouchables were the Broken Men who, though they share the racial identity with the Hindus, had never been in the fold of the Hindu society. Their existence marked a social contract' with the

Hindus in the beginning and a strong antagonism in the later ages, but never were they a part of the Hindu society.

His critic of Hindu philosophy and religion has revealed that the Hindu social order can never be rebuilt on the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity, as long as the Sastras remain to be its guiding force. Nor would the marginalised sections, the dalits and the backward classes, be able to reach the national frontline or even get social justice until the Brahmanic hegemony is conked out and the caste system is broken down. This conviction does reflect in his theorisation on the debasement of the Shudras as well as the untouchables. Both these classes, he asserts are not inferior to the Brahmin either racially or culturally. Hence, he found a natural and potential ally of the Dalits in the non-Brahmin Backward classes. Such a coming together of the Dalits and Backward classes was the greatest ambition of Ambedkar for which he devoted his whole life, particularly during the late 1930s and early 1940s. Thus, the dynamics of a political chemistry (the unity of the Dalits and the Backward classes) based on a synthetic social chemistry (the shared dehumanised status of the untouchables and the Shudras) can be explicitly seen in the evolution of the thoughts of Ambedkar as well as the Ambedkar Movement.

Note:

- 1 *Writings and speeches*, Vol.3, p.6.
- 2 *Ibid*, p.25.
- 3 *Ibid*, p.72-4.
- 4 *Ibid*, p.74.

- 5 Ibid, p.76.
- 6 Ibid p.31.
- 7 Ibid,p.96.
- 8 Ibid, p.101.
- 9 Editor's note,*Writings and speeches* Vol.3
- 10 *Writings and Speeches* Vol.1, p.9.
- 11 *ibid.*
- 12 Ibid, p.11
- 13 Ibid
- 14 Ibid
- 15 Ibid p.14.
- 16 Ibid p.18.
- 17 Ibid
- 18 *Writings and speeches, Vol.3, p.142.*
- 19 Ibid, p.141.
- 20 *Writings and speeches, Vol.1, p.44.*
- 21 *Writings and Speeches, Vol.1, P.47.*
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Ibid,p.48.
- 24 Ibid,p.50.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 Ibid p.68.

- 28 Ibid.
- 29 Ibid, 78.
- 30 Ibid, p.79.
- 31 Ibid, p.122.
- 32 *Writings and Speeches*, Vol.7, p.129.
- 33 Ibid, pp.141-155.
- 34 Ibid, p.171.
- 35 Said, E. (1978) *Orientalism*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, p.20.
- 36 Who were the Shudras, in *Writings and speeches*, Vol.7.
- 37 *Writings and Speeches*, vol.7, p. 292.
- 38 Ibid, p.294.
- 39 Ibid, p.300.
- 40 Ibid, p. 303-304.
- 41 Ibid, p.302-303.
- 42 Ibid, p.350-353.
- 43 Ibid, p.373
- 44 Ibid, p. 379
- 45 Ibid

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Chapter 8
THE ACTIVIST EDUCATIONIST

- Educator of the masses
- Education : The responsibility of the govt.
- Countering the communal disparity in educational advancement
- Education of the depressed classes under the British regime
- Higher education and Dalits' progress
- Educational protection for Dalits
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THE ACTIVIST EDUCATIONIST

The impact of Ambedkar and his movement on the construction of modernity in India is unquestionable. Ambedkar movement has traversed all the tangled pathways of reinterpretation of the crucial role the Dalits would have to play in the progress of the nation in all domains of development and modernisation. There is no doubt in that it was his life and struggle that was instrumental to the confidence and strength so far attained by this oppressed people. Moreover his leadership has influenced not only the texture but also the conceptual foundation and operational style of the Dalit Movement all over the country. This enthusiasm and the modified outlook created by Ambedkar have resulted in the Dalit Movement paying increased attention in all aspect of development of the community in the modern social and political arena. Thus, the role of human rights in constituting and maintaining social relations, the role to be played by the common man in bringing about modernity and post modernity in the country, the role played by modern knowledge in determining power balance of a nation, etc. became topics of concern for the Dalits. Perhaps, the key influence Ambedkar exerted, other than these in the social and political arena, would be the one which is so explicitly visible in the educational upliftment attained by the Dalits and other downtrodden people. The present chapter seeks to elucidate the contribution made by Dr. Ambedkar for the education of the depressed classes.

Educator of the Masses

Education of the masses is a pre-requisite of any social change. Ambedkar's project of educating the Dalit masses began when he started the

fortnightly 'Mook Nayak' in 1920. Without the print media, the only available means of mass communication at that time, no social reformer could have reached the audience he/she had to address. But publication and maintaining a printed journal was a stupendous task for the grooming Ambedkar, the leader of the Dalit masses. The 'Mook Nayak' could not last long because of paucity of funds. He started the paper 'Bahishkrit Bharat' in 1927; side by side with this there was the 'Samata'. In 1930 he started the journal 'Janata' which he had to rejuvenate under the new name 'Prabudha Bharat'. Through these publications he attempted to educate and prepare the Dalits for a social revolution. However, due to various factors including lack of funds, professional expertise, and low readership, the periodicals could not become a stable and effective weapon for the social change he desired. But the most significant factor was that the audience he had to address formed the vast illiterate corpus of the Indian population. As a result, his messages put through these publications reached only a very limited number of people.

Having got educated in the egalitarian sunshine of the West and having been influenced by the teachings of the Buddha, Ambedkar did realise the value and power of education. But to open the doors knowledge before the people who were historically closed away from the social intercourse in an internally locked up social hierarchy was a herculian task. At the same time without relying on the formal means of education it was not even possible to make them at least literate. Thus the Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha (1924) which heralded his public life, focussed on promoting education and culture among the depressed classes by opening hostels, libraries, social centres and classes or study circles. In January, 1925 the Sabha opened a hostel at Sholapur for

the students of the untouchable classes. A free reading room and a hockey club were started in Bombay in the same year. A monthly magazine 'Saraswati Vilas' was edited by students under the guidance and direction of the Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha. In June 1928 two more hostels were established in Bombay. Followed by this Ambedkar founded the Depressed Classes Education Society an organisation meant to solely concentrate on the educational upliftment of the Dalits. In response to the appeal of the society, the then Government of Bombay opened five hostels for the benefit of the scheduled caste students and entrusted their management to the Society. As the government grant of Rs.9000/- per annum was inadequate Ambedkar had to try hard to raise funds from various sources, including the charitable institutions and local bodies.

Ambedkar realised that without enlightening his people with knowledge it would not be possible for him to prepare them for a social revolution. But he did also know that without recouring to the formal means of education knowledge would not reach the masses, particularly the down trodden people. The spread of knowledge, he asserts, depends upon two requisites, formal education and literacy. Without formal education it is not possible to transmit all the resources and achievements of a complex society. The accumulated thought and experience cannot be made accessible to the young if they are left to pick up their training in informal association with others. The young generation will not be exposed to new perceptions, their horizon will not be widened and they will remain ignorant slaves of their routine work.¹ Thus, Ambedkar argues that literacy mission and formal education should go hand in hand.

Education: The Responsibility of the Government

Ambedkar's writings and speeches stress the point that the Government of India being responsible for the creation of a welfare state should act as the mechanism for supervising and controlling the contradictions in the evolving modern civic society of India. In a welfare state, social control is characteristically pursued by maintaining extensive systems of highly trained experts. Indeed, the battalions of trainers and educators form one of the main pillars of support for the welfare state and they are to be guardians of normality². Education is seen as a means of leading all sections of the nation, with limited capital, towards greater nobility and of enhancing the moral and cultural value of each individual.³ Ambedkar very rightly pointed out that the majority of the Indian population, especially the section of his interest, that is the Dalits, are illiterate and hence the government should take up the responsibility of imparting education to the masses. In 1927, while participating in the discussion on grants for education at the Bombay Legislative Council, he said that the purpose of the Department of Education is to moralise and socialise the people. He emphasised :

"Education is something which ought to be brought within the reach of everyone. Education Department is not a department which can be treated on the basis of 'quid pro quo'. Education ought to be cheapened in all possible ways and to the greatest possible extent."⁴

Hence, he urged the legislature to enhance the expenditure on education in commensurate with the increase in the number of pupils. He also demanded

that the government should spend on education the same amount that it receives from the people in the form of excise revenue.⁵

As a member of the Bombay Provincial Assembly, Ambedkar worked hard inside the house to open all the doors of education to the depressed classes. He was concerned about the problem of drop outs at the primary level of education, which affected more virulently the depressed classes. He brought into the notice of the Assembly that of 'every hundred children that enter the primary school only eighteen reach the fourth standard, while the rest of them relapse into the state of illiteracy.'⁶ He found that almost all the children of the depressed classes who enter the school could not complete their primary education due to various reasons. In that circumstance he asserted:

The object of primary education is to see that every child that enters the portals of a primary school does leave it only at a stage when it become literate and continues to be literate throughout the rest of its life.⁷

He urged the education minister of the Bombay Presidency to spend more money on education particularly for primary education. Though he did not suggest much as to how dropping out could be checked, he was confident that by spending more money on primary education and by making primary education sound, increased entry and retention of pupils from the lower strata could be ensured. He also opposed commercialisation of education. He pointed out that out of the total expenditure incurred on education at different levels in the Bombay presidency, much of the money was collected from the students

in the form of fees. He considered education as an essential service to be rendered by the government to the people and not as a source of revenue.

Countering the Communal Disparity in Educational Advancement

Disparity in the educational progress of different classes was another question which Ambedkar brought to light. He observed that the differential treatment pursued by the British Government was the sole cause of this problem. He found that the Brahmins and Muhamadans were most benefited by the differential treatment and that the depressed classes whose educational development had been assessed to be almost zero were the least benefited.

Therefore, he demanded that the favour shown towards the education of the Mohammedans by the British government should be extended to the depressed classes also in the same way. The British Government had issued instructions in 1885 based on the Report of the Education Commission of 1882 to improve the education of the Mohammadan Community.⁸ The Government had emphasised the appointment of special inspecting staff to look to the educational needs of the Mohammadans and to bring home to the community the necessity for education. This was the special favour that Ambedkar was referring to.

In India, as the different communities are unequal in their status and progress, Ambedkar wanted the government to adopt the principle of inequality to bring these communities to the level of 'equality'. To those who argue for following the principle of equality in a rigid fashion without looking into the historical realities of the social and educational progress of different

communities, Ambedkar said that this view reflects the indifference and neglect by the government as well as the society towards the people who had already been subjected to inequality by unfair means. He further implicated that the British Government had already applied the principle of inequality by providing special facilities and incentives to the Mohammadans in the matter of education. But it may be pointed out that he did not keep any grudge against the educational advancement of the Mohammadans. All that he wanted was that the principle of favoured treatment must be applied to the educational progress of the depressed classes also. He argued so because they had already been handicapped economically and socially in a manner in which no other community was handicapped. Therefore, he said 'if the favoured treatment is to be given to those who deserve it and need it most, then the backward classes deserve more attention of the Government than do the Mohammadans.'

Ambedkar strongly opposed the Bombay Legislative Council's decision to transfer the responsibility of education to local bodies. He found that the transfer of educational responsibility from the provincial government to the local bodies had practically curtailed the educational prosperity of the masses, particularly of the depressed classes. He also said that the members of the local bodies were too uneducated to realise that education is a right as well as a necessity. He feared that with only one representative of the depressed classes in the local bodies of ten members, their educational interests would not be taken care of. The strong bias of the upper castes against the depressed classes would not allow the local bodies to spread education among these people. Therefore, Ambedkar wanted the provincial government to implement the educational programmes directly. But as the educational responsibility

had already been transferred to the authority of the local bodies, he urged the government to employ some inspecting agency under its direct control to see that the depressed classes are not neglected by the local bodies.

On the scholarship allocation for the Backward Communities, Ambedkar insisted that the amount in the budget should be allocated as specified and distinct sums to each community included under 'Backward Classes'. By this suggestion he was certainly aiming at ensuring the amount allocated for a community in the Backward Classes (eg. the untouchables) to be spent for that community only.

He had also observed that the scholarship money given to the parents of the depressed class students were never used for the education of their children, because they were too poor and too ignorant to understand that the money given by the government was really meant for the education of their children. The scholarship was looked upon by many parents as an aid to meet their domestic expenses. Hence, Ambedkar urged the government to utilise this money for promoting hostels for the backward class students. The hostels, he thought, would wean the children from the evil surroundings in which they grow up and would provide effective inspection of their studies.

Education of Depressed Classes Under the British Regime

The Hindu social order in general and the Hindu system of education in particular were not in favour of the educational development of the depressed classes. Even under the Peshwa's rule the depressed classes were entirely outside the pale of education. Hence the only source of formal schooling open before them was the English education. But the British policy of education,

which held the field from 1813, put the sole emphasis on the education of the upper castes, in the hope that education would filter down to the lower castes. But this never happened. Even after Woods Despatch (1854) under which the Government of India had assumed the responsibility for educating the masses, the depressed classes were denied admission to government schools, for fear of annoying the upper castes. These observations made Ambedkar to critically analyse the British policy on education of the depressed classes. This analysis is contained in his statement on the status of education of the depressed classes, submitted on behalf of the Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha to the Simon Commission on 29th May, 1928.

Ambedkar classified the status of education of the depressed classes under four periods. During the period between 1813 and 1854 he noticed a complete neglect of the education of the depressed classes. He found that the British had been silent on the question of promoting education among the native population and on the spreading of knowledge among the people of India, till the year 1813. It was then that the British parliament laid down to set apart one lakh rupees for the revival and improvement of literature and for the encouragement of education among the native people of India. But even after this, there was no systematic effort to place the education of the natives upon a firm and organised footing, till 1823. When a systematic effort was initiated in that year, it was disappointing to the depressed classes, for education was reserved for the higher castes. Ambedkar noted that the first school for depressed classes was opened only in 1855.

The years between 1854 and 1882 witnessed the most discriminative

stand of the British in the matter of education. During this period, the filtration theory of education was firmly held by the British administration. The Despatch of the Court of Directors of the year 1854 states :

Education and civilisation may descend from the higher to the inferior classes, and if so communicated may impart new vigour to the community, but they will never ascend from the lower classes to those above them : they can only, if imparted solely to the lower classes, lead to general convulsion, of which foreigners would be the first victim.⁹

The British administration was interested in the education of the higher castes only. Even though, later, the British government reiterated its responsibility of mass education and opened schools for the depressed classes, these did not benefit them, because the students from these classes were not allowed to take admission in these schools due to the organised countering by the upper castes Hindus. Commenting on this, Ambedkar remarked that although the British Government in India had affirmed in principle the depressed classes would never be excluded from schools in practice they carefully avoided any positive action in that direction.

During the period 1882-1923 the problem still existed in the form of greater disparity in the educational advancement of different communities. Ambedkar reviewed the educational status of the depressed classes in the Bombay Presidency as follows: (i) In the matter of population they occupied a position as high as second. But in the matter of education they occupied a status which was not only least but was also the last. (2) The Mohammadans of the Presidency had made enormous strides in education, so much so that

within a short span of 30 years they had not only surpassed the level of other communities such as the Intermediate Hindus and the Backward Classes, but had also come close to the Brahmins and allied castes. Ambedkar attributed this disparity to the unequal treatment pursued by the British government. On the one hand, the British followed a policy of filtration in education by which they concentrated on the education of the upper castes, and on the other, based on the recommendations of the Hunter Commission (1881-82), special care was given to the education of the Mohammadans.

Ambedkar strongly criticised the Hunter Commission for its ignoring the educational needs of the depressed classes while favouring the Muslims. The only recommendations made by Hunter, which had some bearing on the education of the depressed classes were : (a) The statement 'No body be refused admission to a government college or school on the ground of caste' and (b) 'establishment of special schools or classes for children of low castes in places where there are a sufficient number of such children to form a separate school or classes and where the schools already maintained from public funds do not sufficiently provide for their education'. Ambedkar considered these two recommendations as futile in view of the condition prevailing at that time. There was no enforcement in practice to uphold the principle of non-exclusion of the depressed classes in the educational institutions. Similarly, the opening of separate schools for the depressed classes was hardly possible, because additional expense for the same was not acceptable to a government that considered primary education as a 'task'. Besides, in rural areas the Backward Classes were seldom found to be living in the same locality in large numbers.¹⁰

The neglect of education of the depressed classes continued in the years that followed. Ambedkar said, 'once the Hunter Commission had thrown the depressed classes into the background they remained there and the government never paid any attention to them.'¹¹ He noted that there was not a single word to say about the Backward Classes in an important resolution adopted on 21st February, 1913 by the Department of Education, Government of India. In the resolution the British was emphatic about the educational needs of the 'Domiciled Community' and the 'Mohammadan Community'. Ambedkar pointed out this as a criminal neglect on the part of the Government of India with regard to the educational needs of the depressed classes.

Again, Ambedkar analysed the British policy of education during the period from 1923 and after in the context of the critical effects of the Reform Act 1921, on the educational prospects of the depressed classes. Under the Act, education was made a transferred subject in the charge of a minister and a rapid advancement in education was expected. But, Ambedkar observed that the reforms did not give any benefit to the Backward Classes; with the reforms the Backward Classes fell from the purgatory to the hell. The situation did not change even after introducing the Compulsory Primary Education Act 1923. The Act did nothing to change the primary education from being voluntary to being compulsory. The system remained voluntary just as it was before the implementation of the Act. There was neither an indication of any obligation on the part of the Government to make primary education compulsory nor was there any time frame to achieve this goal, observed Ambedkar.

Another major policy decision taken during this period was the transfer of the control and management of Primary Education from the Provincial Government to the local bodies. Ambedkar regarded this change as detrimental not only to the educational interests of the Backward Classes but also to the progress of education in general at that historical juncture. He observed that the vital necessity of education had not been realised by all classes of the population. The school board would be drawn from the educated villagers who, having been brought up in the tradition in which education was considered as the concern of the Brahmins, would be indifferent to make it compulsory for all sections of the society. Moreover, the attitude of the higher castes was against the extension of elementary education to the lower castes.

Thus, Ambedkar was quite sure that under the local school boards the educational progress of the depressed classes, which had already been neglected by the British administration, would only get retarded. The objection of the higher castes against the education of the lower castes, says Ambedkar, was meant to check the advancement of the depressed classes as well as their efforts to overcome the age old servility. As there was no adequate representation of the depressed classes in the local bodies, he could foresee the consequences of the transfer of educational control to the local bodies, on their educational prospects. Accordingly he demanded ¹² :

- 1 to abolish the compulsory primary education Act and the transfer of Primary Education to the School Boards.
- 2 to make compulsory primary education obligatory on the part of the government and to strictly enforce admission to primary schools.

- 3 to extend the recommendations of the Hunter Commission regarding education of the Mohamedans to that of the depressed classes also, and
- 4 to ensure the entry of the depressed classes in to the public services.

Ambedkar's critic of the educational policy under the British regime with regard to the educational needs of the depressed classes reveals that he had a strong conviction on the role of education in the emancipation of the downtrodden masses. He was truly concerned also about the nature of the values and attitudes that would be developed in the people by the colonial education. But, for a population which had been put outside the boundaries of education and not exposed even to the world of letters, an opportunity for primary education itself was emancipatory. His efforts were not simply to make the masses literate and leave them on their way. He wanted them to acquire as much education as possible, which in turn would liberate them internally as well as socially. Hence he considered that the colonial education, which was the only available source of formal education for the Dalit masses, can act as a potential instrument that could deconstruct the Hindu social order and thus could bring to effect liberty, equality, fraternity and social justice in the society, at large.

Higher Education and Dalits' Progress

Ambedkar considered education also as a source of social status and power. He was concerned not only with the epistemological value of education but he also did emphasise its utilitarian prospects for improving the social conditions and status of the depressed classes. Therefore, his educational proposal was to make available the best possible education for the depressed

classes. In the early 1940s he began to give more importance to higher education, particularly science and technical education of the depressed classes. As a member of the Viceroy's Executive Council he submitted a memorandum to the British Governor General, on the grievances of the scheduled castes in which he emphasised the need for providing education to the depressed classes in science and engineering and also for extending facilities for taking up studies in foreign universities.

He firmly held that advanced education has the potential to change the social conditions of the depressed classes by placing them in good public service positions. He pointed out in the memorandum submitted to the Governor General :

The welfare of the scheduled castes depend entirely upon a sympathetic public service and that the public service if it is to be sympathetic must be representative of the elements in the national life of the country, and particularly of the scheduled castes.¹³

But he was fully aware that the representation of the scheduled castes in the ministerial posts alone, even if in large numbers, would be of no consequence in the matter of overall enhancement of their social status. Though it would provide a career for the educated youths, it would not affect the conditions of the scheduled castes at large. Thus he asserted : *The status and conditions of the scheduled castes will be improved only when the representatives of scheduled castes come to occupy executive posts as distinguished from the ministerial posts.*¹⁴

Ambedkar considered executive posts in government services as strategic positions from which a new direction can be given to the planning and implementation of Government policies. But as the attainment of executive posts required higher levels of education, such posts would be open only to those who acquire advanced education. Therefore, Ambedkar strove hard for providing advanced education for the depressed classes. It was with this aim that he founded the People's Education Society in 1945, which not only worked for utilising the government grants for higher education of the depressed classes but also established many institutions for advanced education.

By this time, Ambedkar had been emphasising the education of the depressed classes in science and technology, a field in which they still had to make their progress. If his early efforts for the education of the depressed classes were focussed on their literacy and formal education or their access to the schools, in the 1940s he stressed the need for their education at higher levels. He thought that education in Arts and Law could not be of much value for the scheduled castes, either to the graduates or to the people.¹⁵ What according to him would help the depressed classes was the education in science and technology. For, he asserted that it would open the gateway for them to enter the strategic posts in the public services, from where a new direction could be given to the government to plan programmes for the development of the depressed classes.

Educational Protection for Dalits

But, under the condition that was prevailing at that time, venues for the

field of advanced education in science and technology would never be opened to the depressed classes, without the assistance of the government. Technical education was too costly for them to afford. Therefore, Ambedkar proposed to the Bombay provincial government to allocate a good amount (Rs.2 lakhs) for the scholarship of the scheduled caste students undergoing science and technology courses in the Universities or training institutions in India as well as in the foreign universities. He said 'the scheduled caste students would be glad to take advantage of these scholarships even if they are required to refund the sum received by them when they are employed. Or, they may be made to serve the government for a term on a comparatively lower scale of pay. The two other proposals for scientific and technical education of the depressed classes were, provision for scheduled caste students in the schools of mines run by the government and representation of the scheduled castes on the Central Advisory Board of Education.

In order to ensure admission of scheduled caste students in technical and higher education institutions, Ambedkar urged the government to reserve one fourth of the total number of seats for those scheduled caste candidates who have acquired a minimum standard of education required for admission. He also suggested for grant of freeships and scholarships for the scheduled caste students. Regarding the function of the Central Advisory Board of Education, he suggested that the Board should study with special interest, the educational problems of the scheduled castes with a view of frame recommendations and to give advice to the central and provincial governments in this connection.

For raising the economic status of the scheduled castes, Ambedkar regarded technical education as more important than general education. But, as technical education was too costly to be afforded by them he found the government as the only agency which could help the depressed classes to acquire technical skills. Therefore, he proposed a system of apprenticeship for them in the undertakings controlled by the government, such as Printing Presses and Railway Workshops.

Ambedkar urged the University of Bombay to take care of the special needs of the depressed class students. He said that in the name of making the examinations of a high standard, the University had closed down the doors of higher education to the backward communities. He asserted that the system of simultaneous examination would keep the Backward communities away from the portals of university education. The students of these communities are not able to pass in all the papers at one shot due to deprivations inherent in their peculiar social condition. He said that the system of simultaneous examination is advantageous for the students whose parents are rich, for those who can spare time to attend the colleges during the day time and hence can devote their whole time to education only. But the poverty-stricken parents require their children to earn during the day time to add to the meagre earnings of the family, in order to make both ends meet.¹⁶ So he urged the University to be mindful of the economic conditions of the Backward Communities and to have a rethinking about the system of simultaneous examinations which he considered 'absolutely unjustifiable and absurd.'

He also demanded for provision of fee concession for the candidates from the Backward Communities, who appear for university examinations. The economically poor communities, he said, require certain special concessions from the government in order to rise themselves to the same level on which the other communities are. He added that if the university cannot understand and appreciate this, it can never be the guardian of the interests of the Backward Classes at all. In order to achieve this objective, he suggested to provide representation for the Backward Classes in the University Senate, so that the needs of these communities could be projected and the facilities necessary for them could be recommended.

Thus, he appealed the government to make education at the school as well as at higher levels affordable to the Backward Communities by all possible means. As already indicated the scholarship money given to the depressed class students was not being used by their parents, to meet their education. Ambedkar urged the government of the Bombay Presidency to utilise this money for promoting hostels for the students of these classes.

Reservation in the Government Service

Government service and education are inseparably linked to each other. The utilitarian value of education for the development of the socio economic conditions of the depressed classes was rightly upheld by Ambedkar. As already seen, he gave much importance to the entry of depressed classes in the government service for their general upliftment. He found that the candidates from the upper castes dominated the service sector, particularly the key administrative and executive posts. The indianisation movement which

took a vigorous form in the first quarter of the 20th century had not opened up chances for appointment of the depressed class candidates, especially in the case of higher posts in the public service. Ambedkar believed that unless and until the depressed classes enter the executive posts they could not do much for their social and economic progress.

In the memorandum on various grievances of the scheduled castes, submitted to the Governor General in 1942, he presented the comparative position of different communities in the Indian Civil Service. Out of the 1056 Civil Servants in 1942, Muslims numbered 109. The number of Sikhs who constituted 1.3 per cent of the total population was 11. But there was only one member from the scheduled castes even though they formed 13.5 per cent of India's total population at that time. Their position in central services also was not better. He, therefore, demanded the government to treat the scheduled castes as a minority and to reserve 13.5 per cent of the total vacancies for them, in proportion to their population. He also demanded raising the upper age limit by three years, reducing the examination fees to one fourth and appointing a scheduled caste officer to supervise the implementation of the provisions in this regard. Another demand was for the appointment of a person from scheduled castes in the Federal Public Service Commission. This demand was made on the basis of Ambedkar's finding that the Commission had already been communalised with the appointment of Hindu and Muslim members.

In 1943, the Government of India reserved $8\frac{2}{3}$ per cent of the vacancies in public service for the scheduled castes. The ratio was raised to 12.5 per

cent in 1946 and to 16.66 per cent in 1970. The scheduled tribes, after the constitution came into force, were given the benefit of 5 per cent reservation in direct recruitment, which was raised to 7.5 per cent in 1970.

The justification for the protective discrimination in the matter of education and employment of the depressed classes is quite clear. The creation and implementation of the constitutional provision for this affirmative action can be seen based on a threefold rationale. Drawing from the theories of affirmative action elucidated separately by Francis and Crisby, we can attribute the rationale for protective discrimination in India to three concepts. These are 'compensation' which takes care of previous discrimination, 'correction' which pertains to the alteration of present discrimination and 'diversification' which is concerned with the importance of creating a multicultural society.¹⁷ These three rationales are distinct but interrelated as past, present and future - oriented reasons for implementing affirmative action, says Tierney. He has explained the ideas behind the affirmative action in two ways: Process and outcome. When procedures that ensure equal treatment is absent, there exists process based discrimination. When we look at results and find none having been achieved we notice outcome based discrimination. The process based discrimination can be identified by tracing the structures which have generated unfair outcomes. The assumption is that if we change the process, then discrimination will be eliminated or at least reduced.¹⁸

Ambedkar's expositions on the Hindu social order have helped in tracing the structures that reproduced discriminatory social relations and thus generated unfair outcomes with regard to the depressed classes. In ancient

India knowledge and education had been denied to the untouchables, and the penalty for defiance in this respect was savage. The position did not change in the medieval period too. The theory of filtration projected by the British in the case of education benefitted only the upper castes, particularly the Brahmins. The appointment in the public services were also dominated by the caste Hindus. It was under this background that Ambedkar's suggestion for protective discrimination for the depressed classes got crystallised. Affirmative action for the educational advancement as well as economic development of the depressed classes was considered by him as essential, as they had been rendered weak in their social inheritance as well as endowments.

On University Education

It may be noted that Ambedkar had served in the field of higher education as a teacher, professor or academician for several years during his overwhelming public life which he devoted primarily for the emancipation of the Dalits. Having obtained higher educational degrees from the renowned universities in USA and UK it was not difficult for him to become a Professor or the Head of a leading educational institution in the country. His academic career began as a professor of Political Economy in the Sydenham College of Commerce, Bombay, in the year 1918. He was professor at the Government Law College, Bombay in 1934, and Principal of the same college in 1935, From 1935 to 1937 he was a member of the academic council and syndicate of the University of Bombay. He had also served as a fellow in the faculty of Arts and Law of the University, between 1933 and 1950. This multifarious experiences enabled him to look at University education from the point of

view of an academician and social activist. It enabled him also to place the educational demands of the Dalits in high level bodies of the University as well as in the legislature.

Ambedkar was very much concerned with the style of functioning of the University of Bombay. He found that the University had been reduced in to an organisation for conducting examinations. During a discussion on the Bombay University Act Amendment Bill (1927) in the Bombay Legislative Council, he said 'the University cannot succeed in promoting research or in promoting higher education, if it makes the examination system be all and end all of its existence.'¹⁹ The aim of University education, he stated in a written response to a questionnaire of the University Reform Committee, is not to fill the minds of the students with facts or theories. Instead, it should help students to develop their own individuality and should stimulate them to involve in intellectual pursuits. Rather, it should be scientific, detached and impartial in character, it should accustom the students to the critical study of the leading authorities with occasional reference to first hand sources of information, impart in their mind a standard of thoroughness and give them a sense of difficulty as well as the value of reinterpreting at truth.²⁰

Further, emphasising the need for developing critical mindedness, he said that the students need to be trained such that they should be able to distinguish between what may fairly be called a matter of fact and what is merely a matter of opinion and also to distinguish issues among themselves and to look at each question on its own merits, instead of trying to connect them with some cherished theory. Moreover, young scholars should be willing

to consider fairly the position held by others, even if they can not agree with them. Also they should examine a suggested idea or argument in terms of its consequences, that are critically weighted on the basis of evidence, before accepting or rejecting it.

Ambedkar points out that the failure in realising these aims and functions of University education can be attributed partly to the style of instruction, partly to the study habits of pupils and partly to the nature of education received prior to the entry to the universities. However, the main causes of the failure, according to him, lies in the administrative and educational machinery of the University. He asserted :

Before a University can be in a position to fulfil the aims and functions of the University Education it must be so organised that it becomes essentially a place of learning, where a cooperation of scholars labour in comradeship for the training of men and the advancement and diffusion of knowledge.²¹

He went on to point out that a purely examining university that does not concern itself with inculcating the love for learning cannot achieve this objective unless it focuses on teaching and research side by side. He categorically stated that '*where research is divorced from teaching research must suffer*'

The standard of university education depends upon the standing of the teaching staff engaged in imparting education, observes Ambedkar. In order to maintain the standard of university education at a high level, he says that

the universities and colleges have not only to appoint the most qualified persons as teachers but also regulate their grades, tenure, pay and promotion in such a manner as to open up a better career to the best and most qualified member of the staff. He urged that the academic staff need to be rewarded by considering their depth of scholarship and ability and not by their length of service. The element of friction among the members of the staff, particularly between the juniors and seniors, leads to spoil the free and friendly cooperation which is indispensable to promote the intellectual life of any educational institution.²²

The deteriorating teacher - student relationship has ever been a concern for the educationists and educational practitioners. Ambedkar also has referred to this pathology in the light of the teacher - pupil relation that existed during his time. He observed :

Professors in the government colleges by reason of their being the servants of the (British) Government have lost the confidence of their students. The students instead of regarding their professors as their intellectual leaders regard them as the agents of the Government and professors receiving no response from their students drudge on without kindling their interest and winning their allegiance.²³

It is not difficult to see that the attitude of the students towards their teachers at that juncture of history reflects nothing but the anger of India against the British colonial rule, which had been ignited by the independence movement. But what Ambedkar stresses is that the contradiction between the interests of students and teachers would affect the learning environment

of any educational institution. Hence establishing a cordial relationship between the teacher and the taught should be considered on a prerequisite for maintaining high standards of education in the schools, colleges and universities. He considered teacher as a model for students not only for shaping their mind and personality but also for enabling them to contribute something original to their respective fields.

Organisation of Teaching and Research in the University

The universities in India under the British rule were established primarily as examining bodies. In the Incorporation Act of 1857 no provision was made for allowing the universities to undertake the teaching function. It was the Act of 1904 that described the Universities for the first time as being incorporated for the purpose, among others, of making provision for the instruction of students. The Universities Commission of 1902 had recommended that the universities might justify their existence as teaching bodies by making provision for advanced courses of study.²⁴ Ambedkar observed that this recommendation had resulted in the separation of the undergraduate teaching from the post graduate teaching.

Ambedkar was totally opposed to any sharp division between post graduate and under graduate teaching. He considered such a separation as the separation of teaching from research, and if research is divorced from teaching, the research would suffer. Emphasising that the university teachers should take part in the teaching of the under graduates from the beginning of their university career, he quotes from the observations of the Commissioners of 1911 on University Education in London :

'It is only by coming into contact with the junior students that a teacher can direct their minds to his own conception of his subject, and train them in his own methods and hence obtain the double advantage of selecting the best men for research and getting the best work out of them.'²⁵

Hence he emphasised that the Universities must undertake the training of the undergraduates in order to build up the structure of a sound system of post graduate work.

Further, he argued that if a university intends to take up the direct responsibility for teaching at the post graduate level, it would place the university staff in antithesis and in apposition to the college staff who feel that their status is much inferior to that of their university counterparts. Ambedkar also pointed out that the establishment of a distinct university professoriate for post graduate work was a sheer waste of the resources which could be avoided by a proper husbanding of the resources of the colleges. Thus he suggested with regard to the reorganisation of the Bombay University to pool up the teaching and library resources of different colleges in the Bombay city so as to produce a strong specialised profesoriate that could deal with undergraduate and post graduate work at the same time and thus obviate the wastage in University resources.²⁶

Regarding the duration of studies, Ambedkar suggested that post graduate courses should be of four years in the case of social sciences, with two stages of two years each. At the end of the first stage the candidate should be entitled to M.A. degree with only one subject as the major area of

study, and at the second stage the candidate should be entitled for the Ph.D. degree. Evaluation at the M.A. level should be based on written examination accompanied by an essay of about 75 typed written pages, that could be cited as an evidence for the student's ability to gather ideas from original sources and to comment upon them. The test for Ph.D. degree would include production of a thesis of a respectable size, worthy of publication to be followed by an oral examination. He said that the thesis would embody the results of investigations of the candidate in a particular field lying within the scope of the major area of study at the M.A. degree. Beside this, the candidate has to appear for an oral examination in two subjects of minor interests which are allied to the major subjects.

The University Organisation

Ambedkar preferred the university to be a centralised institution with colleges or departments of studies at close proximity. He ruled out the model in which a university was to be composed of affiliated colleges. But he was aware that such new universities cannot be set up all on a sudden. He also knew that where a number of institutions of collegiate status have already come into existence they cannot be lightly abolished in order to promote the idea of centralised institution. Hence he suggested that in the establishment of a centralised university neither the standard of the university nor the independence of colleges be sacrificed; administratively the colleges may remain independent, educationally they could become an integral part of the University. He wanted the Bombay University to be instituted after the model of Oxford and Cambridge where the university was the colleges and the

colleges formed the university.²⁷ He wanted the future universities to be shaped themselves into centralised institutions and the constituent colleges to be independent in their organisation but at the same time be licenced by the University to provide university education. He also suggested a system of inter - collegiate or inter-departmental teaching to remove the wastage, duplication and dissipation of resources by the constituent colleges.

Responding to the questionnaire which sought expert views on the reform problems of the Bombay University, Ambedkar urged the University Reforms Committee to transform the university into a teaching University. Till that time the university was functioning primarily as an examining organisation, rather than as a teaching university. He proposed to constitute various faculties as the first step in reforming the university. In this regard, he suggested a scheme of inter collegiate teaching between the colleges situated in the Bombay city and to group the several studies pursued in these colleges to form different departments. He also suggested to group together certain branches of knowledge, based on their similarities, to form specific faculties which, he argued, would suit the needs of the students as well as those of teachers. Therefore, Ambedkar suggested that the Departments in the new University of Bombay should be grouped into faculties and the faculties should be made the basis of the University organisation. He recommended that a faculty should consist, either wholly or mainly of the Professors and Assistant Professors of the subjects coming within the faculty, together with such other teachers and officers appointed by the University and coopted by the faculty. The Vice-Chancellor should be an ex-officio member of every faculty.

He maintained that the faculties should be the constituent bodies of the University with the power to make regulations to :

- i) appoint committees consisting of the faculty together with other persons to act as Boards of Studies and for other purposes.
- ii) determine generally the conditions for the award of degrees, diplomas and other distinctions within the purview of the faculty.
- iii) determine generally the courses of study to be pursued by students of the University in the subjects within the purview of the faculty.
- iv) determine the method and manner of teaching and examination with regard to the subjects within the purview of the faculty.

Thus, Ambedkar considered faculties as the basic academic and educational bodies of the University.

According to him the Senate as the supreme governing body of the University should be a comparatively large body, mostly non professional in character but it should include representatives of graduates and teachers also. This body with representatives from different strata of the society can serve as a channel linking the University and the community in general and can also support the University with greater authority and success; the whole community would feel interested in the success of the University.²⁸ Ambedkar held that the teachers in the University require no more representation on the Senate other than that of the Deans of the Faculties. The rest of the Senate should be composed of persons in the political or commercial world who interested in education and hence might be able to render the University substantial service.

The function of the Senate, he categorically stated, is not to control the education, its content and method, but to keep the university in touch with all the varied requirements of the community. Accordingly, the chief function of the Senate would be to pass legislation to :

1. make statutes affecting the governance of the University and pass resolutions.
- 2 confer all honorary degrees
- 3 approve of the admission of constituent colleges or University departments.
- 4 institute any new degree, diploma or certificate courses and
- 5 decide disputes between faculties.

Ambedkar considered the Syndicate as the central executive of the University. As the supreme executive, the Syndicate should have the custody and use of the common seal, the management of the whole revenue and property of the University and authority for the conduct of all the affairs of the University which include all the financial matters, appointment of staff and related matters, admission of students, maintenance and supervision of buildings and other infrastructural facilities etc.

Ambedkar's scheme of organisation of these three bodies - Senate, Syndicate and Faculties - is primarily based on the principle of separation of powers. *The centre of legislature power is the Senate. The centre of executive power is the Syndicate and the centre of academic power is the Faculty.*²⁹ Apart from these three bodies, Ambedkar proposed a fourth one also to

coordinate the faculties on the one hand and to coordinate faculties and syndicate on the other. This body, named 'Academic Council' should hold certain advisory and executive functions. The executive functions of the council would include the determination of regulations and matters relating to the quorum of the faculty meeting, the duties and powers of Advisory and other Boards, the qualification, means and steps for awarding degrees and distinctions, the affiliation and disaffiliation of colleges, the tenure of fellowships, scholarships and other aids, discipline of the students under the jurisdiction of the University, removal of the students from the University membership and withdrawal of degrees diplomas, certificates, or distinctions subject to the approval of the Senate. The advisory functions of the Academic Council makes the Syndicate obligatory to get reports from the Council to decide on the matters related to (i) the organisation, improvement and extension of university education, (ii) issue of general directions to the faculties or review of any action of any faculty or any committee or Board or Faculty, other than the election of an officer or representative of the body concerned and (iii) appointment of the teaching staff.

Ambedkar asserted that no university can function if it is cut off from the community. The importance of nurturing the needs of a pluralistic society is imperative for any University in India. This presumption is reflected in Ambedkar's assertion that the university has to cater to the cultural heritage of different communities.³⁰ The best way to link the university with the community is to allow the community to have a say in the decisions of the university. He avowed:

If a university as a corporation of learning is to serve the community then its constitution must provide (a) for a body which will keep it in touch with all varied requirements of the community, (b) for a body which will give the university a statesman - like guidance in the provision and accommodation of means to ends so as to bring about a working compromise between the possible misconceptions of the public and the possibly too narrow outlook of the scholars, and (c) for a body of scholars engaged in the work of teaching to give an authoritative direction to the academic business of the university.³¹

These three bodies correspond to the Senate, Syndicates and Faculties respectively of the modern universities. However, Ambedkar's vision of these bodies was entirely different from the ones existing in the university at present, in terms of their character and composition.

Ambedkar was against the recruitment of university teachers by the government. He found such appointments as a hindrance in raising the standards of university education, because, he considered the Director of Public Instruction or the Secretary to Government who usually made the selection were most incompetent for this task by way of expertise. Similarly the appointments in the private colleges were mostly in the hands of the heads of the colleges and they too were incapable of making proper choice. Hence, he insisted that the responsibility of appointment of all teachers of the university be placed in the hands of the university itself, it being done through the Academic Council. At least the university should have an effective

voice in their appointment. Accordingly, he proposed that the collegiate branch of the Educational Service should be separated from the Administrative Branch and should be placed under the university with proper safeguards.³² He was also against governments interference in the academic affairs of the university; he asserted that academic affairs should be entirely the responsibility of faculties. However, he agreed that the government shall have some control over the legislative and administrative affairs of the university, but that too by means of nominations to the court and the Senate of the University.

Ambedkar was more concerned with the standard of university education. The only means of maintaining the standard of education, according to him, is the rigid exclusion of students who are unfit for university studies and the existence of highly qualified and productive teachers, working in adequately equipped department. Standard of education cannot be improved through a rigid system of examination only unless the standards of the teachers and the taught are properly maintained. *The power to control teaching is more important than the power to test*, he asserted. A university cannot become a teaching university unless its academic affairs, i.e., teaching research and examination are left to the uncontrolled discretion of those engaged in academic. At the same time it will be fatal to the standard of university education if the university reposed such a large trust in a body of teachers in whose calibre it has no confidence. Ambedkar, therefore, proposed that the university should have the power of purse over the colleges. That is, all government grants to the colleges should be made through the university, so that the university will have a voice in the appointment of the teaching staff and in equipping the libraries and laboratories.³³

People's Education Society

Ambedkar established the People's Education Society in 1945, which was a pioneering step in the history of higher education of the backward section of the country's population. The society was founded with a view to use the government grants in a lasting way for the higher education of the Dalits. The Government of India had sanctioned Rs.3 lakhs during 1943-44 for awarding scholarships to eligible scheduled caste students for studies abroad and in India. Ambedkar found that the money had not properly been used for the education of the Scheduled castes.

One of the aims incorporated in the constitution of the People's Education Society is to 'provide facilities for education of the poor.' The society is running a number of educational institutions in Maharashtra. The colleges established during the life time of Ambedkar include the Siddharat College of Arts and Science, Bombay (1946), Milind College of Science, Aurangabad (1950), Siddharat College of Commerce and Economics, Bombay (1953) and Siddharat College of Law, Bombay (1956). The institutions started by the society after the death of Ambedkar are : Dr Ambedkar's College of Commerce, Aurangabad (1960), Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar College of Arts and Science, Aurangabad (1962), Siddharat Institute of Commerce Bombay (1965), Siddharat College of Mass Communication and Media Bombay (1965), and Siddharat Institute of Industry and Law, Aurangabad (1968).

In addition to these institutions the society has been running three high schools : Siddharat Night High School, Bombay (1955), The Milind Multipurpose High School, Aurangabad (1955) and Matoshri Ramabai

Ambedkar High School, Aurangabad (1959). Apart from the hostels attached to different colleges the society runs two hostels at Pandharpur and Dapoli which are named respectively as 'The Gadge Maharaj Backward Classes Hostel' and 'Matoshri Ramabai Ambedkar Vidyarthi Ashram'. The society is also giving financial assistance to several hostels situated in the states of Maharashtra, Karnataka and Gujrat.

The society has started a Buddhist centre at Aurangabad, which seeks to facilitate the interest of foreign and other tourists and to meet the needs of a large number of students taking interest in Pali. The society has also opened a research centre at Rajagriha, Bombay to undertake studies on the problems of the Dalits and to spread the teachings of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar. The centre has a well equipped library, a secretarium of the personal belongings of Ambedkar, a section devoted to literature on Buddhism and another devoted to the literature for the comparative study of religions. The Society brings about publications on Ambedkarism, Buddhism and other subjects.

The Siddharat College of Arts and Science started by Ambedkar in 1946 has been functioning as a workingmen's college since its inception. Ambedkar was keenly aware that many students used to discontinue their studies and take employment to meet their family obligations, this leading to the wastage of their capabilities. To enable such students, many of whom still happen to be earning hands, to take advantages of higher education, the evening courses of the college are much beneficial. During 1955-66 about 29,292 students were on its rolls. The college affiliated to the Bombay University, is one of the foremost educational institutions in the country with a brilliant record of achievement in all spheres of educational practice.

Ambedkar had found that the drop outs at the high school stage of education was fatal for the students of the down trodden communities. Most of these students discontinued their studies in the high school classes due to economic hardships. They had been forced to cut short their educational career to take up some employment to give financial support to their parents. The starting of a night high school in 1947 by Ambedkar was a step to meet this awesome condition of the depressed class students. The Siddharat Night High School provides education to a number of children from different communities, who desire to continue their education without giving up their efforts to do some employment during the day time to support their family. The school was taken over by the People's Education Society in 1955.

The Society offers a number of scholarships and freeships to the deserving students studying in its various institutions. During the period 1955-66 itself it had provided such facilities amounting to about Rs.6,28,131 in terms of money. Besides these scholarships, the Society allocates a good sum every year specifically for scholarships to the scheduled caste students studying in its colleges. The students studying at the schools and colleges of the society are not only from the scheduled castes and other backward classes, but also from all sections of the society. The achievements of the students of these institutions in the examinations of the School Boards as well as Universities have been creditable. For instance, many of the students of

Siddharat College, Bombay received gold medals in various subjects. The number of first divisioners in intermediate, degree and post graduate examinations have been quite large. All these speaks much about the valuable service the society has been rendering in the field of education, particularly for the educational development of the Dalits and other depressed classes.

Note:

- 1 *Writings and Speches*, Volume 3, p.41.
- 2 Beck,U. (1994) *The reinvention of politics : Towards a theory of reflective modernisation*, Cambridge : Polity Press.
- 3 Kivinen, O & Rinne, R. (1998) State, governmentality and education: The Nordaic experience, *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 19(1), pp.39-52.
- 4 *Writings and speeches*,Volume 2,p.40.
- 5 Ibid,p.39.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Ibid, p.42.
- 9 Ibid, p.417.
- 10 Ibid,p.424.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Ibid,p.427
- 13 *Writings and Speeches*, Volume 10, p.426.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Ibid

- 16 *Writings and Speeches*, Volume 2, p.51.
- 17 Cited in Tierney, W.G., (1997) *The Parameters of Affirmative Action : Equality and Excellence in the Academy. Review of Educational Research*, 2. 165-196.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 *Writings and Speeches*, Vol.2, p.45
- 20 Ibid, p.296
- 21 Ibid, p.297.
- 22 Ibid, p.303
- 23 Ibid, p.304
- 24 Ibid, p.298.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 Ibid p.301
- 27 Ibid
- 28 Ibid, p.307
- 29 Ibid p.309-310
- 30 Ibid. p.297.
- 31 Ibid p.305-306.
- 32 Ibid,p.305.
- 33 Ibid.

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AS AN
EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL REFORMER**

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Chapter 9
AMBEDKAR, EDUCATION, POWER
AND MODERNITY

- Educate, agitate, organise
- Education, power and politics
- Education and construction of modernity

AMBEDKAR, EDUCATION, POWER AND MODERNITY

Ambedkar is popularly characterised as the author of the Indian constitution but his effort to deconstruct the Hindu social order had been more significant. Limiting this contribution only to his service in the authorship of the constitution, however, is a crude simplification that fails to acknowledge his extraordinary complexity as an activist, educator, revolutionary and thinker whose range of interests cannot be appreciated without considering the body of literature he has produced on different subjects and the social and political intervention he has made in the construction of modern India. His objective was to emancipate the Dalits from the age old domination of caste Hindus and to rebuild the Indian society based on the principles of liberty, equality, fraternity and justice. His well quoted declaration 'though I am born a Hindu I will not die a Hindu' and his final conversion to the Buddhism reflect his disentanglement with Hinduism and his determination to reform the caste ridden Indian social order. His social reform project was founded on the mutually related entities of education, politics and power. Though he did not discourse on the epistemological concerns of education, he placed it at the centre of the social change or reconstruction. To him politics was nothing but the instrument to effect social change, and real power he conceived as the power to control and transform anything.

Ambedkar's educational relevance lies in the fact that he identified knowledge and power as the critical elements in the construction of modernity in India. He did also recognise a more general concern by which the

constitution of the individual under the conditions of modernity was considered by him as the overarching concern of his emancipatory project. The general ingredients of his narratives and social actions are well known. Right upto his conversion to Buddhism he was interested mainly in describing the way the Hindu social order is constituted and the need to annihilate the caste system and its structures not only for the emancipation of the Dalits from their age old servility but also for the progress of the country in general. His narrative about the social change places power/knowledge at the centre of social control and transformation.

Educate, Agitate, Organise

Ambedkar's project of educating the Dalits began when he started the fortnightly 'Mook Nayak' in 1920. His mission and vision were revealed through publications of various magazines and journals, representations to government and related bodies for passing of legislatives helpful to promote the education of the depressed classes. It finally culminated in the establishment of schools, colleges, hostels and other educational institutions under the aegis of the People's Education Society established in 1945. However, it is demeaning to isolate his educational goals from that of his social objectives. What he wanted to achieve was the emancipation of the depressed classes, which was common to his varied, but inseparable projects – social and educational. Speaking on the occasion of the foundation of the Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha, the organisation which heralded his public life as the leader of the Dalits, Ambedkar declared that the motto of the organisation would be 'Educate, Agitate and Organise.' He clarified the objectives :

In order to bring about the uplift of outcastes it is first necessary to awaken them. Any community before it can progress must develop a consciousness. As someone has put it, while the poor are certainly handicapped by their poverty, the real obstacle in their path is their inertia and their indifference! To overcome this inertia and indifference it is necessary they should become charged with resentment of injustice of their own condition. Without it, they cannot get rid of the factors that obstruct their progress. And even this is not enough; while on the one hand the obstruction must be removed, one must also simultaneously promote conditions which will ensure their prosperity.¹

The triumvirate 'Educate, Agitate, Organise' formed not simply the slogan of the Bahiskrit Hitakarini Sabha; in fact it embodied the ideological basis of Ambedkar movement itself. It also denotes the epistemology of his social project, as it provides a context against which the rules and standards for the formulation of knowledge about the society and the individual could be determined. It also provides the means to investigate distinctions and categories that organise perceptions, ways of responding to the world and the conceptions of 'self'. The slogan can also be used locate the primary position given to schooling as the most significant mechanism by which power relations are established, reproduced and perpetuated in the society.

The word 'education' in the trio-slogan of action implies not merely the

education provided by an external agency for constructing knowledge required for governing the establishment. It rather connotes a deschooling of the minds which get mechanically schooled in tune with the tradition. The Hindu education was structured through principles of classification that emerged from a myriad of historical practices that legitimised inequality as the basis of social relations. Schooling in this 'Brahminic tradition' produced the individual in the context of the historically constructed way of reasoning which was primarily based on the principle of inclusion/exclusion. Therefore, the use of the word education in the triumvirate does not stand alone, it embodies a range of values, priorities and disposition about how one should 'see' and 'act' in the society/world.

Ambedkar wanted the Dalits first to be awakened so that, they should become aware of their own social realities, the elements that prevent their progress. The centuries old dehumanisation had made them perceive their lowliness as natural and as the result of the will of god. It is only through education, the education that arouse their consciousness, that they would get awakened. To be educated, here, is not to become disciplined according to the established regimen of remembering and forgetting, of assuming identities normalised through discursive practices and of accepting a history of the predictable Hindu Mythology. Education should develop the consciousness that enable one to see how one is constituted as an abstract entity, scientifically reasoned and socially identified. Once this consciousness arises, the individual becomes a sentient being. But consciousness is not only cognitive and emotional, it is volitional also.² It is cognitive when it gives knowledge or information, that is appreciated or apprehended. It is emotional when it exists

in certain subjective states characterised either by pleasurable or painful tones; emotional consciousness produces feelings. Consciousness in its volitional stage makes an individual to wilfully exert himself/herself for the attainment of some end. Volitional consciousness gives rise to what we call will or activity.

All the functions of a sentient being are performed by the individual as a result of consciousness (or education). The 'educated self' involves institutionally validated and credentialled individuality that is very different from what historically preceded it. Thus, there is no fixed meaning for the phrase, 'being educated'; a person once educated may become diseducated if he/she does not develop the consciousness about how he/she is reconstituted in the changed context. By this discursive construction the self reflection and self consciousness, the 'educated' self annuls the distinction between the personal and the social. Therefore, Ambedkar wanted the Dalits to develop consciousness and thus become educated or self reasoned of their conditions and to act upon accordingly to emancipate themselves.

The knowledge of the constituted self is a central concern in Ambedkar's agenda for social reform. Any social action should seek to understand how the rules of reason by which practices for change and classifications and distinctions among groups of people are structured and constructed. Ambedkar's notion of progress are inscribed in his social theories that by themselves become the doctrines of 'reason' that historically deploy power. He outlined the pre requisites of a social revolution in one of his incomplete literary projects as :

(1) The existence of a sense of wrong (2) capacity to know that one is suffering from a wrong and (3) availability of arms.³ The first two conditions can be fulfilled only if the people are educated. Unless and until they are educated they will not develop the consciousness of the existence of some wrong in their social condition, that is, the awareness of the elements that prevent their progress. This consciousness alone can enable them to engage in actions meant to set right things that had been wrongly settled; otherwise they will be always in the state of inertia. There is a continual need to remind them that they have to understand their own conditions and through the process of agitation they have to unpack the framework within which they are constituted. This conviction is different from the assumption that liberation will be achieved by overthrowing previous regimes. Ambedkar had realised that education is the only instrument which can charge the people with resentment of the injustice of their own conditions and thus to overcome their inertia and indifference, without which they cannot get rid of the factors that obstruct their progress.

Ambedkar found that the Shudras and the untouchables of his time were also denied opportunities to rise to knowledge and power, by which a possibility of a rebellion against the social order was prevented effectively. He said, a social order that allows right to education and permission to use arms cannot prevent the occurrence of a rebellion by those who suffer wrongs.⁴ He continued that the Hindu social order did not resort to the use of force and violence to check a possible revolution within it, instead,

it has fixed the social status of the lower orders for all generations to come. Their economic status is also fixed.

There being no disparity between the two, there is no possibility of a grievance growing up. It has denied education to the lower orders. The result is that no one is conscious that his low condition is a ground for grievance. If there is any consciousness it is that no one is responsible for the low condition. It is the result of the fate.⁵

Thus, having found that every possibility of social upheaval within the Hindu social order had been prevented effectively, Ambedkar exhorted his followers to realise their social realities. All his efforts then concentrated on educating the Dalits. He urged the government that the road to education must be open to all – males as well as females. He affirmed that only an educated self can get charged or agitated to respond to the wrongs effectively. Truly education can arouse people's emotional consciousness and prudence and thus inscribe their social and political rationalities and thereby enable them formulate ends and means to overcome the obstructions that infringed upon their progress. Ambedkar viewed that the traditional policy on education of the Dalits had been planned as a safeguard for the 'Brahminic power'. That tradition was an attempt to transmit the practices of the Varna system, which were intertwined with the belief on hereditary occupation. It had been propagated as a precondition for an individual to exist as a member of the prevailing social order. Ambedkar who could see through the cunningness of this indirect strategy meant for transmitting the Brahminic ideas and practices without any change, urged the need for breaking this static political establishment in order to ensure the progress of the depressed classes.

It is obvious that the 'agitation' with the trio slogan of action does not call for a destructive end leading to anarchy. It aims for an awakening from within. For instance, education can empower the Dalits to perceive that their untouchable identity and demoralised social status had been established by the operation of a variety of forces or elements that had been deeply embedded in the Brahminic discourse, and that these forces had been keeping the down trodden people permanently at the lowest rung of the social hierarchy using the indirect but effective means of denial of knowledge/power. Ambedkar said,

A deprivation of a man's freedom by an open and direct way is a preferable form of enslavement. It makes the slaves conscious of his enslavement and to become conscious of slavery is the first and most important step in the battle for freedom. But if a man is deprived of his liberty indirectly he has no consciousness of his enslavement.⁶

The Dalits were told that they are free citizens and have all the rights of the citizens, but the rope is kept entightened in such a way as to leave no opportunity to realise the ideal. Ambedkar characterised this condition as one in which enslavement is imposed on a group without making them conscious of their enslavement. It is real though it is indirect. It is enduring because it is unconscious.⁷ Therefore, the means to charge the Dalits with resentment of the injustice of their condition is to make them aware of this indirect slavery established by the Brahminic discourse.

Ambedkar criss-crossed many pathways in his project for the emancipation of the Dalits, focussing on the social, educational and political rights of the depressed classes. But what concerned him politically always concerned him socially and educationally also. His movement in its early years was concentrated on equal rights of the Dalits within the Hindu social order. But soon he realised that the problem of the untouchables was not a simple social problem like that of dowry, child marriage or widow marriage. He perceived it essentially as a political problem, the solution of which required a minority liberty and equality of opportunity. He was also certain that this was not easy at the hands of a hostile majority that not only believed in the denial of liberty and equal opportunity to the minority but also conspired to enforce its policy on the minority.⁸ It is this fundamental conviction that provoked Ambedkar to start his movement.

Ambedkar disregarded the charge that the Dalit movement would only promote separatism. He strongly refuted the argument that the political recognition of the untouchables as a separate element and that granting them constitutional safeguards would retard the social unity of India, by creating a sense of separation between the untouchables and the Hindus, as feared by Mahatma Gandhi. He found this argument as an artifice of the Indian governing class to fudge the Dalits from getting the constitutional safeguards. Ambedkar identified the governing class in India with the Brahmin - Vaisya (Bania) combine and viewed the Congress as its political organisation. He said that the Brahmins had forged an alliance with the Kshatriyas to become the ruling class in the ancient and medieval times. But in the modern times they shifted the alliance to Vaisyas, the trading class, as money had become important than the sword.⁹

In the wake of India's independence Ambedkar asserted that existence of a governing class is inconsistent with the philosophy of democracy and self government. The self government and democracy would become real not only by a constitution based on adult suffrage coming into existence; it should also be ensured that the governing class cannot use its existing power to capture the government that emerges after the election.¹⁰ He remarks that the servile classes in India, which was comprised of the shudras and the untouchables or the backward classes and the Dalits, cannot succeed in ousting the governing class from their seat of authority with adult suffrage alone. They require other safeguards also to achieve this end. It is indispensable to destroy the power of the governing class for safeguarding the interests of the servile classes, because the former would refuse to admit the political demands of the latter, observed Ambedkar.¹¹ Accordingly he characterised the 'Fight For Freedom' led by the Congress as a struggle of the governing class for the freedom to rule the servile class; what it wanted was the freedom for the master race to rule the subject race.

Ambedkar had realised that none other than the organised actions of the servile classes could become instrumental in destroying or weaken the power of the governing class. But organisation of the servile classes was not easy, as they had been denied knowledge/power for centuries. Only an educated people can agitate and lead social actions for their political end. However, he never advocated the path of blood shed to achieve this goal, rather he recommended constitutional means, in tune with the philosophy of democracy. Class war was not his means; reform through education, agitation and organised action was the way he emphasised. He perceived knowledge

as power and hence advocated spread of education so that power be developed among the servile classes. He believed that in this manner knowledge/ education would intervene in their social life. Thus his conception of power gives attention to its productive dimension also. The slogan 'Educate, Agitate and Organise' thus envisages a total revision and reconstruction of one's 'self' by developing in the individual the ability to think, feel and act, at the same time.

Education, Power and Politics

Ambedkar's historical philosophy inquires into the condition under which India would develop into a modern welfare state. His concern was, how the Dalits and the marginalised people would be constituted in the power relation in the emerging Indian modernity. This concern, which is reflected in his politics of identity, traverse all his social theorisations and actions. Through multiple modes of critical inquiry he sought to understand the various forms in which power operates. For instance, he tried to find out how dehumanisation or debasement of Dalits was deliberately brought about by the higher classes. Also, he thought of ways of interrogating the evidences and postulates governing the existing social order, of shaking up habits and traditions, of ways of acting and thinking, of dispelling common place beliefs, and of taking a new measure of rules and institutions. Ambedkar did not treat knowledge as a part of the epiphenomena through which social practices are formed, rather he viewed it as a material element in the social life. He conceived education as a social practice that generates action and participation.

It seems that Ambedkar was deeply influenced by the philosophy of

consciousness which refers to a legacy of the social thoughts that underlined his contemporary world of social and educational theories. There are two different theoretical forms, namely the critical and liberal traditions, that stand remarkably noticed. These traditions, constructed within a particular doctrinal view of enlightenment, held two assumptions about knowledge.¹²

1. The systematic knowledge as the motor by which 'reason' could direct social action and guarantee future betterment in society. This reason was applied by specific sets of actors who are identified through the acquisition of knowledge.
2. Disciplinary knowledge has a subject. The assumption of 'actors' as the subject of theory identifies the actors who form the source of change.

Ambedkar held that change premised on identifying the subject who gave direction to change, either by locating the origin of repressive elements or structures that prevented progress or groups that would bring about a redemptive society. Accordingly, he identified the caste and the Brahminic philosophy underlying the inequalitarian social system as the impediment in the social reconstruction and progress of the downtrodden people in India. The group that would bring about social redemption is the servile classes comprising both the shudras and the untouchables.

In liberal thoughts, progress is obtained through managing social change, whereas in critical Hegelian thoughts it is obtained through identifying social contradiction. While liberalism tends to place greater emphasis on the role played by individuals and the phenomenology of the subject in social change, critical traditions focus on the objectively constituted and constituting

subjects. The strategies to overcome the repressive elements of society are embedded in the descriptions of contradictions that the researcher (or the social reformer) describes ¹³. Ambedkar's strategies to overcome the repressive elements and structures of the society are embedded in his theoretical expositions of the Hindu social order and philosophy and in the social and educational actions he pursued for the uplift of the Dalits and other marginalised sections in India. This strategy is best reflected in his trio slogan of action 'Educate Agitate and Organise'.

Like Marxists he held that redemptive progress is inscribed in assumptions about contradictions and dialectics, that is, the critical interrogations of social conditions will produce a new synthesis from the identified contradictions. Though he rejected the view that economic interpretation of history is the only explanation of history and the view that the proletariat had been progressively pauperised, he found some residue of fire as remains of Karl Marx, which is small but very important : ¹⁴

- 1 The function of philosophy is to reconstruct the world and not to waste its time in explaining the origin of the world.
- 2 There is a conflict of interest between class and class.
- 3 Private ownership of property brings power to one class and sorrow to another through exploitation.
- 4 It is necessary for the good of society that the sorrow be removed by the abolition of private property.

Thus, in essence Ambedkar held that a 'communist' social order should

be brought about for the removal of inequity in the society. He envisaged a free social order in which the individual can develop to the fullest possible and such a society should be established not through violence and dictatorship of the proletariat but by the means adopted by the Buddha, that is, 'to convert a man by changing his moral disposition to follow the (right) path voluntarily'.¹⁵

Ambedkar did not hold any norm or ideal as universal and fixed, rather he asserted that change in the ideals, values and institutions are imperative for effecting social reform and progress. He said :

Ideas as norms are good and are necessary. Neither a society nor an individual can do with out a norm. But a norm must change with changes in time and circumstances. No norm can be permanently fixed. There must always be room for revaluation of the values of our norm. The possibility of revaluing values remains open only when the institution is not invested with sacredness. Sacredness prevents revaluation of its values. Once sacred, always sacred.¹⁶

Ambedkar placed the individual at the focus of the society and considered the aim and object of the society as the growth of the individual and development of his/her personality. The principle of associated life between the members of the society must be regarded to have been founded on liberty, equality and fraternity. The prime element that prevented the progress of the people in the Hindu social order was caste, observed Ambedkar. Caste as the

determinant of social relationship occupied the central position in the society, which in turn resulted in the emergence of the system of 'graded inequality'. Hence it gave no room for democratic social relationship founded on the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity. The ideal centre of the social philosophy was a class of people, the priestly class, rather than the society or the individual. Thus annihilation of caste and structures of caste became the primary concern for Ambedkar to achieve the goal of social progress and emancipation of the individual and that of reconstitution of the 'self' in the emerging modernity.

In some critical junctures, Ambedkar identifies power with 'power over', with power as domination. Thus, he finds no space for any possibility of liberty, equality and fraternity in the Hindu social order unless and until the caste is annihilated. There is no escape from power to freedom. Hence, the only means for the down trodden people to enjoy liberty and social equality is to become the subject (actor) of power. But the power which is to be achieved should positively be through joint collective enterprise, through acting in concert and together, rather than through dominance which is incompatible with democracy. This conviction has drawn the focus of his political epistemology to the power/knowledge regime. However, abolition of power system does not seem to be an agenda of Ambedkar's project. Rather, he concentrated, particularly in the later years of his movement, on the decentering of the subject of powers which in itself formed a strategy to understand how the subject is constituted within a field that relates knowledge and power. This does not deny that Ambedkar was seeking to change the social order but it emphasises the fact that he gave historical specificity to

the systems of ideas that enclose and intern reason and the reasonable person. He wanted the power/knowledge to be used for the welfare of the people - the liberation of the Dalits. So he shared power with the very people whom he had placed on the 'other' side of his boundary, and while doing so turned many things in favour of his political goals. But, when once he realised that he had reached the limit in using the power to effect change in the system from within, he came out of that paradigm to seek the 'real' means of power.

Ambedkar's educational projects and political agenda reveal that power/knowledge has a constructive role in the development of social life. He rightly perceived the relation between knowledge, power and social change. In India knowledge has ever been a celebrated category or source of power. But this source of power was denied to three categories of people, the shudras, the women and the untouchables. The priestly class, the Brahmins, continued to dominate the field of education. As the construction of knowledge was a prerogative of the priestly class and the rules and standards of people's life were laid down in the scriptures, the Brahmins formed the actual governing class in India. Even during the British regime the Brahminic domination did not get troubled, because the principle of social division remained the same, it being graded inequality. Operating in this socio-political problematics, Ambedkar set the agenda to educate the Dalit masses as his priority, in order to open their eyes to the social realities and to organise their power for their own emancipation.

The study of power within the philosophy of consciousness identifies the actors who control and in whose benefit existing arrangements work.

The actors, as wielders of power give attention to questions like which groups are favoured in decision making and how decisions distribute values to produce a context of domination and subordination- the rulers and the ruled. Power in this landscape is 'something' that people own, and that ownership can be redistributed among groups to challenge inequities.¹⁷ Ambedkar observed that power and knowledge are interlinked and that both have been possessed completely by the upper castes, particularly the Brahmins, in the Hindu social order. The knowledge constructed by the priestly class was instrumental in perpetuating the domination of the upper castes over the shudras and the untouchables. Accordingly he expounded the origin and mechanism of the domination and subjugation in the Hindu society. He perceived that every society includes groups, social interests and forces that have been historically formed and whose practices dominate and repress other groups. This occurs due to the concentration of power with certain groups. However, power/knowledge, which forms the critical aspect of the cultural capital of a nation, if properly redistributed based on the principle of equality, can make a shift in the power relation in the society. He found that many interest groups are operating in India, but he perceived the Hindu society as essentially a dichotomous entity in which there are the oppressors (the Brahmins and other upper castes) and the oppressed (the shudras and the untouchables). The upper castes dominate while the servile classes possess social righteousness but not power. Moreover, Ambedkar conceived power/knowledge as having a constructive role in the society, but this role cannot be fulfilled if it is concentrated at certain points or groups. Because of the productive quality of knowledge/power, the nature of its distribution would

determine the nature of the social life of the people of a society. As such, only a proper rechanneling of knowledge/power can bring about progress among the servile classes. Hence, he demanded the redistribution of power in establishing a self government in India. Only with such a redistribution of power/knowledge, he held, the Dalits could progress educationally, socially, economically and culturally.

Education and Construction of Modernity

It is undoubtful that Ambedkar had a direct interest in education, even apart from his efforts to establish various educational institution for the Dalits, from the perspective of social change in India. Though his domain of action was primarily social reconstruction, he was an activist educationist too. Ambedkar discovered something really simple, the centrality of education in the construction of modernity in India. Even while he was actively engaged in the deconstruction of the Brahminic philosophy and hegemony in the Indian society, Ambedkar was equally or even more strongly concerned with the emancipation of the Dalits for which he had realised education as a powerful instrument.

Ambedkar's interest in education, however, was much more direct and pragmatic than of a theoretical immersion in the epistemological concerns of its 'discipline'. For, what is education at all, if it is not the way the individual is constituted through the realities of the social relations? Ambedkar's way of seeing through the Hindu social order suggests that he had adopted a critical, rather a very radical approach in analysing the philosophy of Hinduism, the under currents of the Hindu social order and its implications on the life of the

down trodden people. If we collate his educational intervention to his social reform project, he will appear to be a great destroyer of the established upper caste hegemony or, in the most literal sense, a deconstructionist of Hindu Imperialism.

Ambedkar as an activist educationist and as one who emphasised the centrality of power/knowledge in the construction of modernity in India and in the emancipation of the dalits, was fundamentally interested in the reconstruction of Indian society based on the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity. Therefore, he focused on the construction of the 'self' through different learning processes to which the individual had to be exposed in order that he would work for the establishment of a new order. He realised that the Hindu society, founded on graded inequality and hereditary social status and occupation, was a stumbling block in the construction of modernity in India. He had convinced himself that social reform was a pre requisite for the progress of India. Even the political sovereignty of the country to be successful in its real sense, he asserted that the reconstruction of the society should precede the political change. Accordingly, he derived his interest in education from the insight that a cultural awakening is a prerequisite for establishing modernity.

It is difficult or even discordant to fix the exact origin of modernity in term of time in the historical discontinuity. But modernity is often considered as historic epoch that came into being in the last quarter of the eighteenth century as an aftermath of the Enlightenment.¹⁸ Some of the critical beliefs of modernity are: 'belief in the universality of autonomous human reason,

belief in the inevitability of historical progress, the conviction that the world would become a better place when it is grounded in the objective knowledge accumulated through the natural methods of science.¹⁹ Through modernity, 'progress' becomes accepted as merely a function of time, and modernism rejects the past in the name of the future. The use of scientific perspective has been wide spread during the age of modernity, by which the 'natural underlying rules' of society have been sought for new insights have been created and immutable belief in every field of science has been generated.²⁰

Ambedkar upheld the notion of the rationally autonomous individual, as it has been central to the liberal conception of the purpose of education. He realised the instrumentality of education as a process of liberation from the domination and indoctrination or domestication which formed the bases of the discursive practice in the Hindu social order. Ambedkar was very clear about what he had to reject, namely the Hindu religion, the established social order and the utopian project of the Indian Marxists. He was also clear about what had to be reinstated, a free social order based on liberty, equality, fraternity and justice. The two hundred years' colonial rule had only strengthened and reinvigorated or reproduced the existing social relations that kept the Dalits in a dehumanised condition. However, he could see the potential of education to empower the Dalits, to open their eyes to the causes of their degradation and to prepare them for social reconstruction. In short, Ambedkar saw education as an instrument for the creation of modernity in India, by which human being are made subject of knowledge, who could embrace proper cultural mode.

The writings and social programmes of Ambedkar reveal that he had a strong allegiance to the ideals of enlightenment, with its celebration of science, its unbridled faith in human reason, its belief in historical progress and its unshakable commitment to the values of emancipation, empowerment and rational autonomy. He characterised the Hindu theory of varnas (or classes), which established the social status of the individual on an ascending scale of privilege and on the descending order of contempt, as a fabrication by the priestly class which also happened to be the 'intellectual' class, their aim being to perpetuate their hegemony in the society. The Hindu scriptures he considered as the sources of irrational knowledge which became instrumental in constructing the individual suitable for the society that was built on the principle of graded inequality. The Hindu society he found to have neither reflected the values of a free society nor done anything to promote rational autonomy of the individual. The caste and its structures that operated on the Hindu social hierarchy, he considered as the chief forces that prevented the historical progress of the country. Hence Ambedkar completely rejected the Hindu social order as devoid of the potential for construction of objective knowledge, development of rational humans and the progress of the individual and the society.

Ambedkar did open a new phase of enlightenment in India, which recast and reconstituted a particular ideological strand, the ideology of the Dalit movement. That was so radical in its approach that it placed the people directly into the knowledge about social change, and convinced them of the need for challenging the reigning notions of theology and chances of birth as the arbiters of progress. It gave continuing attention to the subjects as well as the

subjected, who are included or excluded through the social practices related to the observance of untouchability. For Ambedkar, education was not simply a synonym of socialisation, rather he considered it as intertwined with power. Hence he conceived education, whether it be liberal or vocational, as a process of development and growth, a process of emancipation concerned with realising the potential of the 'self', needed for meeting the needs of the society with the individual at its centre. In short, Ambedkar contemplated education as an instrument of social change. Social reconstruction was his message, education was his means and politics was his practice. Thus, he exhorted the downtrodden people to educate, agitate and organise in order to bring about social change, progress and emancipation.

Note:

- 1 Gore, Op.cit.p. 84-85.
- 2 'The Buddha and his Dhamma', *Writings and Speeches*, Vol.11, p.263.
3. *Writings and Speeches*, Vol.3, p.126.
4. Ibid
5. Ibid.
- 6 *Writings and Speeches*, Vol.5 , p.15.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 *Writings and Speeches*,Vol.9, p.190.
- 9 Ibid, p.206.
- 10 Ibid, p.203.
- 11 Ibid, p.226.

- 12 Popkewitz, T.S. and Brennan, M. (1997) 'Re structuring social and political theory in education: Foucault and social epistemology of school practices', *Educational Theory*, 47,3, pp.287-313.
- 13 Ibid
- 14 Buddha or Karl Marx, *Writings and Speeches*, Vol.3, p.444.
- 15 Ibid, p.450.
- 16 Who were the Shudras, *Writings and Speeches*, Vol.7, p.31.
- 17 Popkewitz and Brennan, Op.cit.
- 18 Carr, W. (1997) 'Professing Education in a Post-Modern Age', *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 31,2, p.309-327.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Kelly, M., Davey, H. and Haigh, N. (1998) 'Reflections Concerning a Response to Post-Modernism,' *Curriculum Studies*, 6,2, pp.133-143.

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Chapter 10
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND
SUGGESTIONS

- Introduction
- Statement of the problem
- Objectives of the study
- Methodology in brief
- Major findings of the study
- Conclusion
- Educational implications
- Suggestions for further research

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Introduction

Education is not only a source of power but it is also an instrument of social change. It has always been functioning as an agent of social control in the interest of the ruling class. The native elites in India used education as an apparatus to subject the downtrodden people to slavery by constituting them in the lowest strata of the caste hierarchy. The colonial forces too used it to establish their imperial reign. In the ancient times, education was the prerogative of the priestly class. They controlled the social relations primarily through the construction of knowledge which was confined to the three higher varnas, the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas and the Vaishyas. The shudras, the unouchables and the women were completely denied access to the sacredness of knowledge which was equated to the learning of the vedas. Even during the medieval period and the beginning of the modern age, the social relations and production of knowledge remained under the control of Brahmanic discourses. The exclusive possession of knowledge/power by the upper castes remained undisturbed even during the colonial rule, resulting in the subjugation of the Dalits and throwing them to the abyss of moral degradation.

The colonial education, however, had opened the door of school before the Dalits in a hesitant way. It, though targeted to safeguard the colonial interest, paved the way for breaking the traditional norms to a limited extent. The English education opened a critic of the caste hegemonic social system prevalent in India and paved the way for several powerful social movements. Moreover, as feared by the British administrators themselves, it contributed

to the anti imperialistic struggles that led to the political liberation of the country. In this social location, Ambedkar and the Dalits had to confront two impending dominations, colonialism and the upper caste hegemony. Ambedkar visualised a free Indian society built on the principles of liberty, equality, fraternity and justice. He considered caste and its structures as the forces that prevented the country from achieving its historical progress. Discerning the reconstruction of the Indian society from a pluralistic perspective, he contemplated education as an instrument for the construction of modernity in India. He had no doubt in that such a reconstruction would enable the down-trodden groups of India to free themselves from their age-old fixation, as mere objects of knowledge, to the traditional values cunningly constructed and established by the Brahminic discourses. He held that thereby they could transform themselves into 'subject of knowledge' and thus become instrumental to bringing about changes in the static social order that has been prevailing in the country.

Ambedkarism is a living force in India and that force defines the ideology of the Dalit movements. But, Ambedkar as a thinker and ardent rebel against casteism is being subjected to a systematic dememorization. The discourse communities of power/knowledge in India, who would like very much to preserve their superiority as well as monopoly over knowledge have got united in their efforts to mistify the thoughts and social actions of this revolutionary of modern India. The academics and scholars have not yet shed their reluctance to have a dispassionate discourse on Ambedkar's life and struggle against casteism. Though his observations and message are still relevant for completing the unfinished social projects in India, the academies in the country

have ignored or discouraged scholarly studies on caste issues. At the same time, attempts are made outside the boundaries of academies to characterise him as a 'false god' to be ignored. What is truly demeaning is the effort to block any discussion on his observations on caste, society and religion, particularly Hinduism.

The survey of educational research in India published so far presents reports of the studies in education, on the thoughts of many thinkers and social reformers of both Indian and foreign origin. However, not a single study has yet been reported on the educational ideals of Dr. Ambedkar in any of the six survey reports available at present. Therefore, a study exploring the details regarding Ambedkar's life and struggles that would reveal his conception of social reconstruction as well as his contemplation of education as an instrument of emancipation of the downtrodden people in India was felt extremely significant.

Statement of the Problem

The problem for the present study was stated as '*Dr. B.R.Amedkar as an Educational and Social Reformer.*'

Objectives of the Study

1. To analyse and interpret Ambedkar's ideological reflection on social and political aspects and on their reformation, in the light of the characteristics of the social and political order that prevailed in India during his life time and before.
2. To assess the contribution made by Ambedkar as a social reformist, in

terms of the development of the down trodden classes in India and with special reference to the Ambedkar Movement.

3. To assess the services rendered by Ambedkar in his various official capacities, for the propagation and establishment of his messages.
4. To analyse and interpret Ambedkar's conception of education as power, as a tool for the development of the individual as well as the society and as an instrument for the emancipation of the deprived groups.
5. To trace the contribution made by Ambedkar for the development of education in general and for the education of the Dalits in particular.
6. To analyse and interpret the educational ideas and activities of Ambedkar in the light of his message, 'Educate, Agitate and Organise.
7. To establish meaningful linkages between Ambedkar's theories on social and political reformation and on education and its development.

Methodology in Brief

The present study adopted historical approach as the prime mode of investigation. The major focus of the study was to determine the social location of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and to present significant facts about his life, struggle and achievements that have influenced the social and educational progress of the Dalits and their movement in India. Content analysis within the perspective of historical research formed the principal method of investigation. However, as the problem crosscuts different disciplines and calls for the use of a complex, interconnected family of terms, concepts and assumptions, the insights of sociological and philosophical perspectives, wherever required,

were also utilised to enrich the methodology. The tenets of qualitative research have been followed while making the analysis and interpretation.

Sources of Data

Documentary data formed the major sources of information for the study. Both primary and secondary sources were used in this regard. The important primary sources were comprised of the writings and speeches of Ambedkar, Constituent Assembly Debates, home political files preserved in the National Archives, Ambedkar's letters-both published and unpublished and the Constitution of India. The secondary sources of the study included a wide range of materials like books, articles, papers, biographies etc. written by persons who had direct contact with Ambedkar. The works of the scholars and social scientists who have researched on Ambedkar and the Dalit movement were also used to enrich the observations of the investigator.

The Tool and Technique

Apart from the documentary sources of data the investigator gathered the views and observations of scholars and social activists who have done some work on Ambedkar movement or have involved in the Dalit social actions in India. This was done using an interview schedule which consisted of four open ended questions on Ambedkar's social and educational ideals and the movement led by him. The interview questions were finalised after thorough discussion with experts in the NCERT and those in the state or regional level who have established their authority in qualitative research.

The investigator also adopted the technique of field visit to collect relevant information on some of the educational institutions founded by Dr. Ambedkar.

These information were sought under different categories such as aims and objectives, functioning and achievements of these institutions.

Collection, Organisation and Analysis of Data

The documentary data were collected by visiting many institutions, organisations and libraries across the country. Information from primary and secondary sources were meticulously collected from these institutions. The interview schedule was administered both personally and by post. As the return from the mailed interview schedule was not appreciative, only the data gathered from face to face interview have been utilised. Through the field visit, information on the aims, functioning and achievement of two educational institutions and the Peoples Education Society founded by Ambedkar were collected with respect to the dimensions fixed for this purpose.

The data thus obtained from different sources were organised under the two major categories, namely the social thoughts and educational ideals of Ambedkar. Relevant sub-categories were also established under the major headings for the sake of precise organisation and ready retrieval of the data for analysis.

As part of the historical analysis, the literary sources were subjected to external and internal criticisms to fix the authenticity and validity of the data. The primary sources used for the study have been published by the state and central government departments or related agencies under the editorship of eminent and distinguished scholars and social scientists reputed in their concerned field. The acceptability of the material contained in the literary sources was decided upon, by examining how far they have been

used or quoted in standard work on related topics, by distinguished authors. The secondary sources utilised for the study were authored by scholars who have established authority in their own fields of work. The works have been found to be referred in many articles and other similar works. The data collected from these sources were also compared with the statements of other scholars.

Interpretation of Data

The data, after having tested for their authenticity and validity were subjected to interpretation in the light of the problem under investigation. This task involved a thorough examination of Ambedkar's conception of social and political issues as well as that of education. How he interrelated all these domains was also studied, with special stress on how he conceived education as an instrument for the emancipation of the Dalits. While drawing conclusions on this ground, his social location, protest movement and its ideological basis, his struggle to establish rights of the Dalits, and his educational projects for the uplift of the downtrodden people were studied in depth. And within this background, the philosophy underlying his trio slogan of action, 'Educate Agitate Organise' has also been subjected to exhumation.

The problem of the study was situated in the terrain of an emerging political chemistry of India where many conflicting ideologies were working to establish their own dominion. During Ambedkar's time the country was on its threshold of modernisation with different paradigms of progress clashing on the social, political, cultural and economic fronts. In this problematics, Ambedkar was faced with the critical question of identity of the Dalit

movement. The interpretation of the data was carried out by keeping in mind this historical location of the problem of the study. Thus, in the present study Ambedkar formed not only the object of inquiry. He has also been taken as one of the informants who speaks to us from the very social location of his life and struggle. Many comparisons have been attempted while making observations and interpretation, particularly with regard to his protest movement, his conceptions on various aspects of social reconstruction and his personality. While tracing the evolution of Ambedkarism and the positioning of Ambedkar in the politics of India a comparison has been attempted between the Ambedkar of his early years of social actions and the Ambedkar as the Dalits ideologue in the later phase of his life. His internalisation of various philosophical strands of his time has also been traced. The study has made the investigator convinced of the fact that the social and educational thoughts of Ambedkar cannot be studied in isolation with each other. The theoretical as well as enactive aspects of his social and educational involvement are so interrelated that they interact, mutually influence and supplement each other. This inter relationship also has been established as far as possible. In addition to this an attempt has been made to reconstruct the inner meanings conveyed by the information gathered, with a view to make the interpretation comprehensive and more meaningful.

Major Findings of the Study

The thoughts and actions of Ambedkar in relation to the social and educational arena of the country of his time are so comprehensive, innumerable and complex, that it would be rather difficult to merely enumerate

or enlist the major findings drawn by the investigator from the analysis made. However, in order to present the findings as precisely and abruptly as possible, these have been presented under 18 distinct aspects. Each of these aspects has been given a title, followed by a brief classification or explanation meant to elucidate the meaning conveyed by that title. The findings thus summarised are presented in the paragraphs that follow.

1. Spokesman of the Voiceless

Ambedkar was the first untouchable in India who rose in the national politics and made critical contribution in deciding the direction of the country's progress, particularly in safeguarding the interests of the downtrodden people who had been denied all social and human rights and had been thrown to the abyss of social degradation for centuries. Leading the protest movements of the Dalits for achieving their rights on one hand and participating in the government in various capacities, he raised the voice of the downtrodden masses on all fronts - religious, social, educational and economic. He placed the demands of the Dalits undeniably in the legislatures and other decision making bodies of both colonial and post independence governments in India. He wanted that the untouchables should have a share in the self government without which the freedom of the country would remain the freedom of the governing class to rule the servile class.

2. The Distinct Identity of the Dalits

The Dalits who formed the marginalised people in India were variously known as chandalas, untouchables, depressed classes, scheduled castes or harijans and have been discriminated for centuries. Ambedkar considered

this corpus of people as a special set who were located outside the fold of the Hindu religion and who constituted a distinct section in the Indian population in terms of history, society and culture. The Dalits have been outcastes and never have been in the four fold varna system of the Hindus. Ambedkar never agreed to the view that the Dalits had emerged from the shudras, the fourth varna. Rather, he considered them to be the 'Broken Men' who emerged out of the continuous feuds between the tribal groups as a result of which the defeated tribes were broken into segments that formed the untouchables who occupied the outskirts of the villages of the settled tribes in the course of history. The untouchables were not only outside the pale of Hinduism but were even denied the rights of human beings. Thus, Ambedkar located the Dalits as separate from the Hindus and other Indians, as a distinct group socially, politically and culturally. He firmly held the ideological position that the interests of the Dalits are not the same as those of the Hindus, Muslims, Christians and any other segment of the Indian population. Accordingly, he argued that they should be treated as a separate entity and should be provided adequate safeguards for their overall progress that had been obstructed historically by different forces in the society.

3. A new style of social criticism

Ambedkar struggled to free himself and the Dalits from the confines of the metaphysics of Hinduism. Although he seemed to have failed in his project for the collective emancipation of the Dalits, he did inaugurate a new phase of their struggle against the odds in the society, through a powerful critique of the foundation of the Hindu social order. Central to his critique of Hinduism

is the emphasis on the fragmentation of the Hindu social order, its graded inequality, hierarchy of castes, absolutism, and wholeness. This perspective arises as a result of Ambedkar's contention that there are no fixed immutable truths. Rather, truths exist as a matter of individual perspective and are in turn placed upon by social and cultural forces.¹ Ambedkar's multiplicity of style allows for truth to be embodied in a diverse range of assorted options and maxims. What is true about these is neither their mutually agreed upon fixity or absoluteness, nor their social importance; rather, what is more significant is the conviction with which the individual posits, invents and develops these truths, through his/her autonomy of reason.

Ambedkar recognises that truths/norms held by the masses exist because of social and cultural forces, that is, they are born of historical conditions. The social forces play heavily upon the acceptance of norms but they might become quite insignificant when they are intelligently tested by the individual. Social and cultural forces do not create the truths that are necessarily acceptable to the individual. As Dewey has pointed out the self affirming individual creates his or her own truths and then tests them against the predominant truths of the masses before accepting or rejecting them². Ambedkar argued that there can be no fixity of norms, norms should change with changes in time and circumstances. Nor did he value each and every truth as equal. He took upon himself the task of being a cultural critic of his age and juxtaposed the accepted truths with deviant ones in order to expose the truths for their contextual nature. In this way he rejected the truths established by the Hindu philosophy and knowledge system, and turned the truths in favour of the Dalits in order to overcome the upper caste domination.

Thus he brought to light the truths of the Dalits which had been so far mystified by the Hindu hegemonic socio-cultural truths, and tried to apply these to level the field of the national life. This levelling of the field allowed the Dalit truths to compete with other socially constructed ones and also strengthened the worthiness of the Dalits who had, for centuries, been remaining in a perpetual conflict with the social, cultural and historical forces that obstructed their progress.

4. Transvaluation of values

Ambedkar's criticism of the prevailing Hindu social order and culture is primarily an issue of morals. His particular concern is the state of the cultural decadence which, in his own terms, is traceable to the origin of untouchability and the establishment of the Brahminic hegemony which was forged through a counter revolution against Buddhism. Characteristically it is this tendency that Ambedkar wanted the Dalits to overcome through the Nietzschean 'will to power' or Foucauldian 'will to knowledge'. It was the same opposition to the creation of absolutes and idealisation of the real or the realisation of the ideal that provoked him to transvaluate values. He admitted no priori truths and no canonical valuations or fixed principles of justice.

Ambedkar insists that no norm can be permanently fixed and there must be room for revaluation of the values or norms. His resolute will and disbelief in a fixed and canonical ethic, together with his scorn of the Hindu doctrines and socio-cultural premises has led him to challenge the prevailing valuations in a hitherto novel manner. Because Ambedkar argues for an overcoming or revaluation of the dominant values, through a reversal of what is to be

considered good. He recognises a tendency in the Hindus to idealise the 'so called' real, which in most cases is full of inequities, and is very selfish, criminal, anti-social and perpetuating the inequity on the ground that whatever is once settled is settled for all times.³ One of Ambedkar's resolute goals is to champion the self-reasoned, overcoming individual. This points to the way to an overturning of the prevalent socio-cultural valuations that he considered hegemonic, decadent and lamentable. He considered education as a process that would assist the self-overcoming individual or the class to overcome hither-to accepted valuations, and would serve as a medium for the transmission of new values.

5. Religion as a transformative force

Ambedkar conceptualised religion as a collective force that is inseparable from the society and propounds an ideal scheme of governance aimed at making a democratic social order and as well as a moral order. The concept of religion, he considered as discursive in its nature, because it has passed through many stages with no fixed meaning. In the first phase, religion had been identified with magic, as it was unable to explain the natural phenomena like lightning, rain, flood etc. Then the religion turned to be derivative with beliefs, rituals, ceremonies, prayers and sacrifices, all of which centred around a super natural power. Later this power was identified with or called God or the Creator. This was followed by the belief that individual has a soul and the soul is eternal and answerable to God for human actions in the world. Thus the present day religion has come to being with belief in God, belief in the soul, worship of God, curing of the erring soul, propitiating God by prayers, ceremonies, sacrifices etc.⁴ But Ambedkar did not believe in such kind of a

religion, because it is concerned with revealing of the beginning of the things or exploring the origin of the world and therefore, the action of morality is casual and occasional, and hence not effective. He sought a religion which could reconstruct the world and could serve the social utility and justice for the individual.

Ambedkar asserted that the religion should function as a social force to provide an ideal scheme to be followed. The ideal may be non-existent in the sense that it is something which has been constructed but it would exist as real also, as it has full operative force which is inherent in every ideal.⁵ In short, religion should enable the society to realise the ideal. But the ideal is not an utopia, however, it can be considered as a negative utopia, as the ideals he insisted were the principles of liberty, equality, fraternity and justice.

Ambedkar could realise, both through his life experience and his exposition of the Hindu scriptures, that Hinduism did not give a positive result on the tests of utility and justice. He found no scope for liberty, equality, fraternity and justice in the Hindu religious order, as it had been founded on a theology which perpetuated graded inequality in all spheres of social life. The only religion that Ambedkar found suitable for the modern society is Buddha's Dhamma which he did not even consider as a 'religion' in the classical sense of the term, because the Dhamma did not place any supernatural force at its centre, did not believe in God, soul, sacrifices or the infallibility of the books of Dhamma itself.

6. Aryan race: A colonial construction

Ambedkar rejected the theory of the Aryan race, Aryan invasion of India and the non-Aryan identity of the untouchables. He did not consider the

Aryans as a race at all, rather they were a linguistic group. The Aryan race, according to Ambedkar is only a construction, based upon a gratuitous colonial assumption which had taken it for granted that the Indo Germanic people are the purest of the modern representatives of the original 'Aryan race' and that their first home had been some where in Europe. This assumption poses a possible question, 'how could the Aryan speech come to India' for which the answer was the theory of invasion. The colonial discourse characterised the colonised cultures as inferior to the western culture. Thus the theory constructed the Europeans as Aryans, and hence it argued that their culture is superior to the Asiatic culture. The theory of invasion of India by the Aryans and the conquest of the Dasas and Dasyus by them also had been constructed to establish the superiority of the Europeans.

Again, Ambedkar rejected the assumption that there existed a colour prejudice among the Aryans who came to India. This assumption he attributed to the scholastic error in reading and equating the word 'Varna' with 'colour'. He regarded the theory of the Aryan race as baseless and a perversion of scientific investigation. The existence of an Aryan race is only an inference, their common habitat is an inference from an inference, the theory of invasion is only a baseless European construction. The acceptance of Aryans as a race in India exposes the disposition of the elite intelligentsia in the country and their subjectivity to the colonial knowledge. It was meant to provide some 'scientific' base to their claim that the upper castes are superior to the shudras and the untouchables, and to allow them to establish a kinship with the Europeans and share their arrogance and superiority. It would also help them even by considering the Aryas as invaders and conquerors of the non Aryans,

in maintaining and justifying their overlordship over the servile classes. In recent times this propensity has been revealed in the theorisation within the discourse of cultural nationalism which not only assumes 'Aryan race' as a reality, but even attempts to establish that the original home of the Aryans was no other country than India. India was once the country or land which the Indians (Sindhus) inhabited. But, the cultural nationalist theorisation has the potential to turn the Indians as the people who inhabited 'Hindustan' or 'Hindu'stan.

7. Caste as an artificial chopping of the society that prevented progress

Ambedkar considered caste as a unique system on which the Hindu society was constructed. For him the genesis of caste was an artificial chopping off of the people into fixed and definite units, each one being prevented from fusing into another, by insisting on the custom of endogamy. He identified the origin of caste with the origin of endogamy. The Indian society was primarily exogamous as there was a tendency for all groups to be in close contact with one another and to assimilate and amalgamate and thus consolidate into a homogenous society. This tendency, he observes, has been counteracted by the superimposition of endogamy over the exogamy, which resulted in the excommunication of different cultural groups in the society. Ambedkar's cultural analysis reveals that the modern castes have evolved from the varna system not as a result of the economic division, though it involves also the economic exploitation of lower casts by the upper castes. Rather, the caste came into existence through the process of self-enclosing by the varnas, which was initiated as a cultural artifice by the hegemonic priestly class to perpetuate

their domination. The other varnas had to follow the priestly class as the process of enclosing involves the process of exclusion or 'othering', which in a sense made other classes into self-enclosed or exclosed castes. The enclosing around the endogamy can be seen as a discursive mechanism as it decided what kind of relations must be established among different social groups. It prohibited social intercourse between different classes by preventing intermarriage, interdining etc. and made each social group an island resulting in the chopping of a larger cultural unit into segments.

The multiplicity or spread of caste as seen in the present form was due to the infection of imitation, observed Amedkar. The lower castes simply imitated the upper castes, as the propensity to imitate was conditioned by the status and prestige the preiestedly class enjoyed in the society. The cast cannot exist singularly, because, as the process of its genesis and the mechanism of its proleferation are pre-determined it can exist only with in plural numbers, asserted Ambedkar. In other words, while turning into a caste, the Brahmin class created the non Brahmin castes too, that is, while enclosing themselves they were closing others out.

Ambedkar perceived caste system as a regressive force in the course of the economic and social progress of India. Through concepts like endogamy, fixity of occupation and birth as the arbiter of social status it denied freedom to the individual. As the industrial development depended on the availability of free labourers, the hereditary occupation and bounded labour has to give way for individual's freedom in choosing his/her livelihood. In other words, social and occupational mobility is a prerequisite for economic development.

Thus, the caste system not only prevented the upward mobility of the individual but it also stood in the way of economic progress. This is why Ambedkar emphasised the annihilation of the caste as the true way to free the individual from bounded occupation and to enable him/her to the industrial profession and thereby to ensure the social and economic progress of the country.

8. Untouchability: A religious artifice of the hegemonic class

Ambedkar's theory of untouchability marks his rejection of the race and occupation as the basis of this social scourge. He had also repudiated the theory of racial difference and division of labour while expounding the origin of the shudras and their social degradation. Ambedkar's cultural analysis of ancient India situates untouchability within the problematics of religious prohibitions which has been functioning as a discursive mechanism that obstructed what could be said, learnt or done by a large portion of the members or classes of the society. He pointed out this particular interdiction that produced the stigma of untouchability, put a category of people outside the pale of social intercourse for all the generations to come.

The religion is viewed by Ambedkar as a system of beliefs and practices that promulgated interdictions or taboos associated with certain sacred things. The most notable of the multiplicity of religious interdictions is the one on contact, which is based on the principle that the profane should never touch the sacred. The untouchables being considered as profane were under severe penalties from their access to the sacreds of the Hindus. The Hindus were even prohibited from seeing the untouchables, because a contact can take

place through a look. The untouchables were denied access to the sacredness of the vedas also, for, the vedas would get polluted by the contact of the untouchables through their spoken words which are generated by the breath of individuals. The Hindus cannot consume the food cooked by the untouchables, because it would cause a more intimate contact of the profane through absorption of the food.

Ambedkar argued that beef eating and untouchability are intimately related. The interdiction on beef eating came into being as an artifice of the Brahmins, the priestly class, in countering the Buddhist ideals which strongly opposed the Yajna and animal sacrifices that resulted in the depletion of the cattle wealth. Like many other historians, he too points out that the people in ancient India including the Brahmins used to eat beef. The religious interdiction on beef eating then came into being as a mechanism to serve the interest of the class which abandoned eating of beef. Ambedkar explained that the untouchables have been 'Broken Men' who had been Buddhists and that Buddhism did not impose any prohibition on the food habit of the common people. The abandoning of beef eating by the upper castes and turning of the Brahmins as vegetarians was a malicious act of the Hindus to counter the Buddhists from getting social acceptability, observed Amedkar. He traced the origin of untouchability back to the period of the Guptas and not beyond 400 AD. This has a critical significance as the Gupta age is considered as the 'golden age' of India. Ambedkar's situating the origin of untouchability during the period of the Gupta reign suggests that the so-called 'golden age' of India, was only the golden age of Hinduism, because it witnessed the all time revival of Hinduism by engineering a 'counter revolution against Buddhism'.

The emergence of untouchability and its maintenance through the practice of religious interdictions on beef eating, and by the denial of knowledge, power as well as social and human rights to the untouchables embody a cultural artifice or a discursive mechanism adopted by the hegemonic class to perpetuate their domination.

9. The ideologue of protective discrimination

Ambedkar's position that the untouchables form a distinct social group distinguishable by its outcaste identity, historically identified subjectivity, social disabilities, lack of hereditary capital in terms of wealth, knowledge and power, and the unarbitrary choice of occupation was extremely radical. This interpretation among other things has become instrumental in establishing the system of affirmative action in favour of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in India. Ambedkar had emphasised the need for establishing minority status and adequate representation in the legislature for the depressed classes from the very beginning when he submitted a memorandum to the Simon Commission in 1928. This position he had been upheld through out his life and he had fought for their constitutional safeguards not only in the form of adult suffrage but also in terms of provision for reservation of seats in legislatures and local governing bodies, as well as in the educational institutions and government services. The constitutional provision for affirmative action can be seen as an effort to redress the effect of a stringent discrimination against the Dalits in the past, to make alteration in the present form of discrimination and to promote diversification leading to the creation of a pluralistic society.

The scheme of affirmative action suggested by Ambedkar is outcome-

directed or goal - oriented and direct. He fixed the target in terms of percentage and number. For instance, he urged the government to reserve definite percentage of vacancies in government services or seats in the educational institutions or constituencies of the legislatures for the depressed classes according to their proportion in the total population of the country. Ambedkar perceived that it is through such positive discrimination that the society can compensate the cultural or social capital which had been denied to the depressed classes for centuries due to the unequal distribution of knowledge and power. He held that for the development of all sections of society, a discriminative treatment is to be adopted in favour of the people who are weak in their social inheritance or endowment in order to bring them to the level of equality with other sections of the society. Treating them as equal to those in whose favour there is birth, education, family, name, business connection and inherited wealth and subjecting both these groups to an 'equal' treatment would only give advantage to the privileged and prevent the progress of the depressed classes.

10. Education of the masses is the responsibility of the government

Ambedkar regarded the government as the machinery of the welfare state accountable for the education of the people, particularly for their primary education, as education is the dynamic force leading to national development. Education in one sense is the means of cultivation of the moral and cultural values of the citizens, which in turn would enhance their social nobility with a limited capital. A large chunk of the Indian population, particularly the Dalits and the Backward Classes, had no access to educational facilities and hence

they had been thrown to the darkness of illiteracy. Ambedkar asserted that education of the masses was the responsibility of the government. Accordingly, he urged that education should be brought within the reach of everyone by making it as inexpensive as possible.

Participating in the Bombay Assembly discussion on educational matters, Ambedkar suggested to enhance the allotment on education in commensurate with the increase in the number of pupils and their educational requirements. He demanded the government to set aside a large proportion of the excise revenue collected from the people, for primary education. The object of primary education, he opined, should be to make children literate and enable them to continue to be literate through the rest of their life. This focus on literacy as the objective of primary education is much revealing. For, the value of education had never been recognised by the common people. They had been denied education through multiple ways - through social, political and cultural discriminations. Education was a luxury of the well to do members of the society; the caste system together with untouchability had denied social and educational rights to the Dalits. The British reign too pursued a policy of education based on a crude theory of filtration of knowledge from the upper castes down to the lowest strata of the society which they themselves knew was impracticable. The result of all these was the creation of almost total illiteracy among the Dalits.

Ambedkar's emphasis on literacy had still another dimension. The spread of knowledge depended upon literacy and formal education. Without formal education, transmission of the resources and achievements of a complex society are found to suffer. Ambedkar observed that the accumulated thoughts and experiences cannot be made accessible to the young in any indirect way

and they would never get it if they are left to pick up their training in informal association with others. The young generation should be exposed to new perceptions in order to widen their horizon. Hence he argued that literacy and formal education should go hand in hand under the coordinated efforts of the government.

11. Continued discrimination as the chief cause of the educational backwardness of the Dalits

Although education had always been a celebrated item of cultural resource in India, it had been denied to the Dalits from ancient to the modern times by imposing a purposive discrimination. The Hindu social order in general and the Hindu education system in particular kept the Dalits outside the boundaries of vedic knowledge. The medieval dynasties could not change the conditions of the Dalits, even though they had challenged the Hindu social order politically. The elite hegemony in education continued unabated during the colonial reign also. The British policy of education which held the field for about one and half centuries put emphasis only to the education of the upper castes, hoping that education would filter down to the lower strata of society. Though the colonial government reiterated its responsibility for the education of the masses and even opened schools for the depressed classes in a later stage it did not open the channel of education for the Dalits, due to the organised countering by the upper castes. The government, though it did not exclude the depressed classes from the schools, did nothing concretely to lift the social ban on their education.

Ambedkar drew the attention of the colonial government to the

discrimination pursued by them in the matter of the education of the Dalits. He observed that quantitatively the Dalits occupied the last and the least place in educational development in contrast to the Brahmins and allied castes who occupied a very high position on the educational graph, followed by the Mahammadens. Ambedkar attributed this disparity of educational growth among different communities, to the British policy of filteration of education which gave advantage to the upper caste, and to their purposeful favouring of the Muslims. Despite the adoption of the Compulsory Primary Education Act 1923, education remained to be as voluntary as it had been before and continued to be the luxury of the elites. There were no practical measures to implement the act by the government, nor was there any time frame to achieve this goal. Moreover, the transfer of the control and management of primary education from the provincial government to the local bodies was detrimental to the education of the depressed classes. The common belief that education is a preprogative of the Brahmins stood in the way of recognising the vital necessity of education for all. Under the local bodies, the bias against education of the Dalits became more operational, as there was no mechanism to ensure that the depressed classes were not excluded from schools. The education of the Dalits was thus left to chance. The social bias and governmental discrimination at the policy and implementation levels worked against the educational possibilities of the Dalits though that was high lighted by the social reformers of the time.

12. Higher education: A critical element of Dalits' progress

Ambedkar conceived education as an operational force in constituting the social life of the people, it being a source of social status and power.

More than the epistemological concerns of education he emphasised its material elements as a factor contributing to the improvement of the social conditions of the depressed classes. He did not want the Dalits to be confined to the boundaries of primary education. Of course, he did recognise the importance of universalisation of primary education in the specific context of India's backwardness, but he projected higher education of the Dalits as a significant object of his educational projects. Thus, not only did he establish many higher education centres but also presented his cause in the legislature and relevant government bodies.

Ambedkar firmly held that advanced education, particularly science and technical education, is a potential force in effecting changes in the socio economic conditions of the Dalits by placing them in high position in the public services. He found that the welfare of the Dalits depended mainly upon a sympathetic public service. But he asserted that representation of the Dalits in the ministerial posts, even in large numbers, would be of no consequence on the overall enhancement of their social and economic status. It would only provide a career for the educated youth, but would not affect their conditions at large. The status and condition of the Dalits will improve only when they are represented in executive and administrative positions, observed Ambedkar. Because these positions could give strategic directions to government's policies, as well as planning and implementation of development programmes. Education, in general would help the Dalits to overcome their poverty by placing them in employment and by awakening their consciousness and thereby enabling them to perceive the real obstacles

in their path and to surpass their inertia and indifference and to get charged with resentment of injustice of their own condition. But, higher education would not only help them to remove the elements that obstruct their progress but also simultaneously enhance their status and the conditions that would lead them to prosperity.

13. Dalits require special educational safeguards

As has been seen afore a multiplicity of discriminative forces were operating against the social, economic, educational and political progress of the Dalits. The Dalits had been denied their social and political rights and had been placed outside the boundaries of knowledge from ancient through medieval to the modern times. The discriminative education policy pursued by the colonial government only affected their educational progress apathetically. Moreover, education had become a prerogative of the elites in terms of access and cost. The rules of prohibition imposed on the Dalits through untouchability not only resulted in their social boycott but had even denied them rights to lead a life as human beings. Operating on this problematics Ambedkar struggled hard to protect the social, political and educational rights of the depressed classes.

He demanded special safeguards for promoting education of the Dalits and urged the British government to extend the benefit of the discriminative favour adopted for the education of the Muslims, to the Dalits also. Ambedkar held the view that only such a discriminative approach with special provisions and incentives for the Dalits and backward classes can make good of the past social discrimination and bring all the communities to the level of 'equality'.

He insisted that the scholarship grant for the Backward classes including the Dalits be appropriated for each community separately. This suggestion was certainly aimed at ensuring the money allocated for the Dalits to be spent for them only. Establishment of separate hostels for the scheduled caste students was another proposal. He emphasised also the appointment of special inspecting staff to look to the educational needs of the Dalits and to motivate them to join educational institutions. For the higher education of the Dalits he proposed provision of scholarships for taking up studies in the universities in India as well as abroad.

In order to ensure admission of the scheduled caste students in technical and higher education institutions Ambedkar demanded reservation of one fourth of the total number of seats in these institutions for those scheduled caste candidates who have acquired a minimum standard of education required for admission. He also suggested freeship or scholarship for them. Further, he demanded that the Central Advisory Board of Education should study the educational problems of the scheduled castes as special interest group, frame recommendations and advise the central and state governments to take up measures to promote their education.

Ambedkar urged the universities to be mindful to the economic condition of the Backward Communities and to rethink about their simultaneous examination system, for it would keep the students away from the class rooms and ultimately away from the portals of university education itself. The students of these communities would not be able to pass in all papers at one shot because they would have to work and to earn in the day time to add to their

family earnings. He also demanded free concession for these students. Thus, Ambedkar appealed to the government to make school education as well as higher education a reality for the backward communities by all possible means; otherwise education of these classes would remain on the fence.

14. Universities are centres of scientific knowledge and cooperative learning

Ambedkar being a thinker of liberal critical tradition, emphasised the scientific nature of knowledge. Accordingly he perceived the universities as the sites of scientific knowledge, accountable to create an atmosphere of learning and research that would cultivate critical mindedness in students and teachers. The aim of university education, he asserted, is not merely to fill the minds of the students with facts or theories; it should bring out their own individuality and stimulate them to engage themselves in mental efforts. Rather it should be scientific, detached and impartial, should accustom the students to the critical study of the leading authorities, should impart in them a standard of thoroughness, and should give them a sense of value of reaching at truth. The students need to be so trained that they should be able to distinguish between what may fairly be a matter of fact or a mere matter of opinion, to distinguish between different issues and to look at separate questions each on its own merits with a critical mind. Instead of blindly agreeing with some accepted theory while analysing a problematic situation, they should exhibit the ability and willingness even to deviate from the treaded path and to critically evaluate theories and ideas before they are accepted or rejected on the basis of logical arguments and critical judgement.

The failure in realising the aims of university education he attributed partly to the spirit and method of the teacher, partly to the students and partly to the conditions antecedent to students' entrance to the university. But to him the main causes of the failure rest with the educational machinery – both academic and administrative. University should be essentially a place of cooperative learning where scholars labour in comradeship for training of the younger generation and for the advancement and diffusion of knowledge. A university cannot achieve its objectives unless it creates an atmosphere to inculcate the love for learning and is focused on teaching and research side by side. Ambedkar categorically stated that research in the university would suffer if it is divorced from teaching. The standard of the university education depends on the standing of the teaching staff, he remarked. Hence the universities and colleges have not only to appoint qualified persons, but at the same time the academic staff need to be rewarded by considering their depth of scholarship and not by their length of service. However, a collaborative, friction – free teaching learning culture is indispensable to promote the educational environment and the intellectual life of the universities.

15. University and the community

Ambedkar preferred universities to be centralised institutions with various departments of studies at close proximity, which, he thought would facilitate the teaching – learning process an interdepartmental endeavour and thus avoid the wastage of resources and promote the standard of university

education in a better and meaningful way. However, he emphasised the need to strengthen the relation between the university and the community. No university, he asserted, can function effectively if it is cut off from the community. The importance of nurturing the needs of the pluralistic society in India has become an inevitable function of universities. This presumption is reflected in Ambedkar's assertion that the university, an agency of higher education has to promote the knowledge and mutual interest in tune with the history and culture of different communities.⁶

The best way to link the university with the community is to allow the community to have a say in its functioning, Ambedkar asserted. If the university as a corporation of learning is to serve the community, its constitution must provide for (i) a body which will keep it in touch with all varied requirements of the community, (ii) a body which will give the university a statesman - like guidance for binging about a working compromise between the possible misconceptions of the public and the possibly too narrow outlook of the scholars and (iii) a body of the scholars engaged in the work of teaching to give authority to the academic business of the university. These three bodies correspond respectively to the Senate, Syndicate and Faculties of a university.

Ambedkar's scheme of organisation of the above three bodies is primarily based on the principle of segregation of powers. The centre of legislative power is the Senate, that of the executive power is the Syndicate and that of academic power is the Faculty. However, from the view point of community interest, he gave more importance to the Senate, it being the direct link between

the community and the university organisation. He perceived the Senate as the supreme governing body of the university mainly non professional in nature but with the representatives of graduates and teachers. The Senate with representatives from different strata of society can serve as a channel linking the university and the community as a whole, and can support the university, with greater authority and success as the whole community will be interested in its success. The function of the Senate, he categorically stated, is not to control the education, its content and method, but to keep the university in touch with all the varied requirements of the community.

16. People's Education Society: An alternative organisation for the education of the deprived

Ambedkar's establishment of the People's Education Society was a pioneering step in promoting Dalits' education. Though started with a view to utilise the government grants in a lasting way for the education of the Dalits, the society has taken up the aim of promoting the education of the poor by providing all possible facilities. The society has been running a number of institutions which include schools, colleges, research centres and hostels in Maharashtra. One of the striking features of these institutions is that they cater to the educational needs of the poorest section of the society. Ambedkar was keenly aware that many of the backward class students discontinued their studies to take up some kind of work to provide additional income for the sustenance of their family. The night schools and the evening courses in some of the colleges of the Society help many of such unfortunate students to continue their studies without giving up their efforts to do some employment during the day time to support their family.

Besides, the Society offers a number of scholarships and freeships to the deserving students studying in various institutions. The Society also appropriates a good sum towards the scholarships for the scheduled caste students studying in its colleges. Moreover, the Society not only runs its own students' hostels attached to its different colleges but also provides financial assistance to several hostels situated in the states of Maharashtra, Karnataka and Gujarat. Ambedkar thought that these special hostels for the depressed class students, would wean the children from the evil surroundings in which they grow up and would provide effective inspection of their studies especially in the context of untouchability. Thus, People's Education Society stands as an alternative agency for promoting education of the variously deprived sections of the society.

17. Educate Agitate Organise: The philosophy of Ambedkar movement

The object of Ambedkar movement was primarily the emancipation and progress of the Dalits, the dehumanised section of Indian population. Ambedkar put his message of social reconstruction through the triumvirate 'Educate Agitate Organise' which became the symbol of the movement he led for the liberation of his people. It denotes the epistemology of his project, as it provides a context against which the rules and standards governing knowledge about the society and the individual could be evaluated. The slogan also helps to see how Ambedkar perceived the complexities of power/knowledge in relation to social change.

Education here implies an awakening of the self or consciousness which he considered indispensable for the individual to realise the condition in

which he/she is constituted. It rather connotes a deschooling of the minds which had been schooled in the traditional knowledge system. Schooling in the 'Brahminic tradition' produced the individual in the context of the historically constructed ways of reasoning which was primarily based as the principles of inclusion/exclusion. This has resulted in the creation of a social order built entirely on the rules of graded inequality. Therefore, the kind of education Ambedkar envisaged embodies a range of values, priorities and dispositions about how one should see and act in the society or world, not to reinterpret but to reconstruct it.

Education when it enables the individual to see his/her realities, results in an agitation. That is, it charges the individual with resentment of the injustice he/she is bound to suffer and thus drives him/her to actions to resettle what had been settled wrongly. Thus, to be educated is not to be disciplined according to the established regimen of remembering and forgetting; it is not assuming identities normalised through discursive practices and of the history of the predictable Hindu mythology. Education should develop the consciousness that enable the individual to see how he/she has been constituted in an abstract, unreasoned and socially identified manner suitable to the established order. Therefore, Ambedkar wanted the Dalits to become conscious or self reasoned about their conditions and to agitate against the established order through organisation of their political power. He perceived education as power and looked for this power to be developed among the Dalits and to enable them apply knowledge to intervene in social life. Thus Ambedkar's contemplation of education as an instrument of social change would enable the Dalits to have vision and revision and to act against the

forces that perpetuate their dehumanising conditions. In this sense, his trio-slogan of action, Educate Agitate Organise, with its focus on the faculties of thinking, feeling and acting of the social person, epitomises the philosophy underlying the Ambedkar movement.

18. Education as an instrument of construction of modernity

Ambedkar's social reconstruction project which inseparably is intertwined with awakening of the masses, emphasised the centrality of education in the construction of modernity in India. His engagement in the deconstruction of the inequalitarian Hindu social order and upper caste hegemony made him realise that education is a powerful instrument in the process of emancipation of the Dalits. Ambedkar's interest in education, however, was much more direct and pragmatic. He analysed the existing order so critically, rather very radically, that its implication on the life of the down trodden people was revealed to him in a very perceptible way. He was fundamentally interested in the reconstruction of the Indian society, based on the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity. He found that the caste system which was built upon the principles of graded inequality, endogamy and hereditary occupations and social status of the individual would act as a counter force obstructing the construction of modernity in India. Hence he had convinced himself that annihilation of caste was a pre-requisite for the progress of India, particularly the prosperity of the Dalits.

Ambedkar firmly projected development of a rationally autonomous individual as the spirit of his liberal conception regarding the purpose of education. He realised the instrumentality of education as a process of

liberation for the Dalits from the indoctrination, domestication and domination to which they had been subjected by the Hindu society. The colonial rule had only strengthened and reproduced the inequalitarian social relations that kept the Dalits in a dehumanised condition. Ambedkar employed education and organised social actions with a view to empower the Dalits, to awaken their consciousness about the forces that obstructed their progress and to prepare them for social reconstruction, which was aimed at creating a history of different modes by which human beings could be made the subjects of knowledge.

Ambedkar kept strong allegiance to the ideals of enlightenment, with its celebration of science, its unbridled faith in human reason, its belief in historical progress and its unshakable commitment to the values of emancipation, empowerment and rational autonomy. He found that the existing social order had been built on graded inequality and it neither reflected the values of a free society nor was bound to promote the rational autonomy of the individual. He considered the caste system as the most powerful force that prevented the progress of the country. Acting upon this problematic, Ambedkar movement opened up a new phase of enlightenment in India, which constituted the ideology of the Dalit movement. This ideology was so radical in its approach that it placed the people directly in to the knowledge about social reconstruction, and enabled them to challenge the reigning notions of theology and chances of birth as arbiters of the status of individual and social progress. It gave continuing attention to the subjects as well as the subjected who had been included or excluded respectively by the imposition of untouchability. For Ambedkar, education was not simply socialisation, rather

he perceived it as intertwined with power. Hence he contemplated education as a process of development and growth, a process of emancipation concerned with realising the potential of the individual in order to meet the needs of the society, necessitated by the forces of historical process, that is, to work for the creation of modernity. Social reconstruction was his message, education was his means and politics was his practice.

Conclusion

Ambedkar's life and struggle epitomise the war which is being fought for the emancipation and empowerment of the marginalised people in India. Ambedkar movement did open a new phase of social struggle in the country, which has been identified as the Dalit movement. In this perspective Ambedkarism is a living force which in its course of evolution placed the people directly into the knowledge about the social change antecedent to the development of modernity in India. It not only challenged the reigning notions that theology and chances of birth are the arbiters of progress but also gave continuing attention to the subjects or the subjected who had been included or excluded respectively, through the practice of a graded inequality in all spheres of life. The axiomatics of Ambedkarism accepted no knowledge as absolute or final. Hence he did not hold any value or norm as absolute, static or infallible. It rather argued for the transvaluation of the value system and rejected the traditional valuations which had been processed on the principle of graded inequality in contrast to the principles of liberty, equality and justice. The social epistemology of Ambedkarism stressed the moralisation or socialisation of the people in the context of the changes necessitated by the

historical forces. At the same time it contemplated education as an instrument of social change. Thus within the metaphysical perspective, education becomes a process of development and growth - liberal or vocational, a process of emancipation that seeks the fullest development of individuals' potential which is intimately related to the progress of the society.

Ambedkarism as a living force of the Dalit movement in India cannot confine itself within the boundaries of caste - class problematics. The new global perspectivism has added the dimensions of culture, gender, region and environment to social struggles. Ambedkar himself had abandoned his early strategy of fighting casteism from within the fold of Hinduism. Nor could mass conversion achieve the collective emancipation of the Dalits. Most of the demands raised by the Ambedkar movement for the uplift of the Dalits have been enshrined in the Constitution of India. All these signify the identity of the Ambedkar movement in the socio - political terrain of the country. But, at the same time atrocities on the Dalits, women and minorities are in ever increase. The very identity of the Dalits is in the process of a redefining. The majority politic does not want to alienate this one time untouchables, for they too have possessed the power of franchise, Thus many of the political rights have been conceded to the Dalits but they are still hesitant in many ways to delegate power and social rights. On the other hand, there are protectors who offer salvation for the Dalits right on this world itself. Thus being politically located or haunted, the Dalits again have to sort out the question of their identity, not within the discourse of religion, but again in the light of Ambedkarism.

Ambedkarism also leaves space for a rereading of the social relations, but not within the perspectivism of the enlightenment's emancipatory project. This is because what has been dominating the culture these years is the realisation that modernism too has failed to emancipate the Dalits collectively. In the new cultural configuration, the images of the 'social reformer' as someone who can provide rational answers to fundamental questions about what the society is and what, the position of the Dalits in it is can no longer be sustained for ever. The social activists of this age have to realise that the certainty with which the social reformers formulated their articulations has now been eradicated so fast and has become untraceable due to the process of mystification. The reformers of the present time do not find anything to reform, the role that the modernity allocated to them can no longer be played. For, the present age is not the age of reformers or reformation, rather it is the age of people, new formations, segmentation and discontinuity.

Educational Implications

As in the case of findings, the implications of these to contemporary education have been summarised under five major titles each of which has been elaborated in terms of the salient points to be taken care of for the implementation of the spirit indicated by the title. This discussion follows:

1. Diverse opportunities and universalisation of elementary education

Ambedkar's manifold style supports a view of diversity and argues for diverse opportunities for the individual. In terms of education, this can be viewed as diverse agencies or bodies educating diverse students studying diverse topics in diverse schools. This 'diversity perspective' also imply the

challenge that we have to educate an increasingly diverse student population with different histories, cultural perspectives, expectations, exposures, styles of learning and information processing abilities. The education system requires to meet this challenge with diverse modes of education. But the diversity perspectivism cannot ignore the fact that a large chunk of child the population of school going age are still outside the pale of formal education due to manifold reasons including social, cultural and economic restrictions. This has led to the development of the system of non formal education with the participation of the non governmental agencies, which works also for the literacy of the masses.

Ambedkar insisted that formal education and literacy should go hand in hand because spread of knowledge depends upon these two prerequisites. In this regard the Minimum Levels of Learning, DPEP, UNDP programmes and the recent Sarva Shiksha Abhyan are significant in ensuring primary education in terms of quantity and quality alike. But ensuring the education of all the children of school going age is still a task before the country. Now education has been recognised as a fundamental right of the citizen, but ensuring education for all requires much more concrete and effective strategies for successful implementation. The constitutional commitment to provide free and compulsory education to all children upto the age of 14 has become simply an institutional response included in vrious official documents during the past five decades. If this institutional response is to become a reality, committed efforts should be made to provide universal access to education with an obligation to not only universal enrolment but also universal retention

so as to arrest dropout of children from schools. All this require appropriation of a higher portion of the GDP for education. All these years the educationists and the social activists have been demanding allocation of at least 10% of the GDP as government's allotment for education. Ambedkar himself, as a member of the Bombay Legislative Council had demanded allocation of adequate money for education, particularly primary education.

Commending on the contemporary status of education Ambedkar asserted that object of primary education is to ensure that every child who enters the portals of primary school does leave it only at a stage when it becomes literate and continues to be literate throughout the rest of his/her life. To imply this observation to the current state of primary education in the country, the government have to ensure the opportunities of access to education for all irrespective of caste, creed, gender, region, religion etc. In order to achieve this objective, alternative education systems should be strengthened, side by side with the formal schooling. This is because the needs of the diverse student population cannot be adequately met, simply through the formal means of education, which has already become a difficult task for the government. This warrants the stake and participation of the community in education. The Panchayat Raj Institutions can function as a powerful agency to ensure the stake of the people in education, based on the principles of giving and receiving.

Elementary education should cater to the development of essential life skills and potentials for meeting the basic learning needs of all. It has its implication in curriculum development also, in order to identify the learning

needs and to make provision for the minimum essential facilities including competent and qualified teachers who can ensure proper transaction of the curriculum to help the children develop competencies require to cope up with the emerging diversity. Children at this initial stage need to be equipped with the attitudes and values suitable for the life in a pluralistic society. In order to achieve these objectives, well concerted efforts are required in all academic areas. But proper planning and an obligation and commitment for its implementation are necessary for the achievement of any project on universalisation of elementary education. Otherwise all the policy decisions in this regard would summarily remain as institutional responses waiting for getting reiterated during the forthcoming decades.

It may be interesting to note that Ambedkar could fore see all these contingencies more than six decades ago and that he had urged the government to take positive steps.

2. Plutralistic education

The perspectivism of diversity focuses on the pluralistic scenario of India which is characterised as having a multicultural, multilingual and multi-religious history. A pluralistic society upholds values and standards of behaviour of its members, which promote human well being. In such a society the youths should be taught not only about morality but also about the plurality, not merely of values but also of the nature of the significance attached to values. Ambedkar would argue that education should function as an agency to promote knowledge and mutual interest in and sympathy for the history and culture of different communities so as to nurture the needs of

the pluralistic society in India. If this goal is to be realised, our schools, colleges and universities cannot impart education that creates mythological discourse, legitimises the hierarchy of castes and preserves the structural relations between social groups based on the principle of graded inequality. Education should envisage not only a change in the structural relation between the individuals but it should also promote changes in the structural relation between social groups. This requires education appropriate for the plurality, which is aimed at developing in the youths a pluralistic attitude by engaging them in a much more active way with diversity.

Pluralistic education implies not just tolerance as reflected in our claim that our's is a society 'characterised as one of the longest surviving culture' in which various groups, each of which has its own way of life, live side by side, by practising tolerance and by seeing unity in diversity and diversity in unity. On the other hand, it should foster a cluster of discursive virtues and skills that are needed to practise values in daily life. The students have to acquire not only tolerance but the willingness and capacity to engage in arguments about the interpretation and solution of problems, to critically explore their own contribution, to allow others to point out weakness in them, to look for new aspects of the problem at hand, and to listen what others have to say,. Therefore, education in the context of India's pluralistic society should try to nurture the willingness, not only to tolerate, but also to welcome the experience that we never really knew before.

The pluralistic nature of the Indian society requires to bring home the need for adopting diverse pedagogical approaches. This need has been

emphasised as culture specific pedagogies in the NCERT's National Curriculum Framework For School Education, 2000. The document lays down that as there is no one universal way in which learners learn, there is strong need for looking into the specific cultural context in which a learner is placed. Pedagogy therefore should be culture specific. Instead of using one uniform, mechanistic way of teaching - learning, cultural practices such as story telling, dramatics, puppetry, folk play, community living etc. should become a strong basis of pedagogy. Cultural specificity should get embedded in the pedagogical practices to be evolved for the tribal, rural, urban and other ethnic groups and communities. This would lead to joyful learning and the involvement of school with the local people, their festivals, functions and life styles. But the aim is not to confine specific groups to their own boundaries, rather it is to provide experience traversing the multiple boundaries of culture.

3. The child as a critical thinker and constructor of knowledge

The critical thinking and construction of knowledge are intimately related. The social construction of knowledge has been a significant revealing of the socio-cultural theorisation of education. As the society constructs its own knowledge the individual is constituted in the society's knowledge. Education should enable the individual to know how he/she is constituted in the society. The individual has to become not simply an acquirer of the knowledge constructed by the society, rather he/she should also become a subject by constructing the knowledge. This requires the development of the critical mindedness of the individual. The term 'Critical', in socio - cultural

theorisation refers to a broad band of disciplined questioning of the ways in which power works through the discursive practices and performances of schooling. Ambedkar put stress on the development of critical thinking of the students. For him education is not merely to fill the minds of the students with facts or theories; it is more for developing their own individuality and for stimulating them to mental efforts. Rather, education should accustom the students to approach the facts critically and should impart in their minds a standard of thoroughness and urge them to internalise the value of trying hard to reach truth and thus to construct their own knowledge. The enhanced goals of education proposed in the national curriculum framework for school education also emphasises the child as a constructor of knowledge rather than imitator of the constructed knowledge, in tune with what Ambedkar had said decades ago.

Putting his perception into the perspective of pedagogy Ambedkar emphasised that the students need to be so trained to distinguish between the facts and opinion, to distinguish issues among themselves and to look at separate questions each on its own merits and without any predetermination. This emphasis on critical thinking of the students requires the teachers to relook on their teaching strategies so as to make them commensurate to accomplish the enhanced goals of school education. Development of critical thinking cannot be achieved through mere imitation or memorisation of the content; therefore the students should have opportunities to acquire knowledge through active involvement in the learning process. The learners should have autonomy for their own learning, opportunities for peer collaboration and support, occasions to generate problems that drive the curriculum, time for

self observation and evaluation and outlets for reflection. This would encourage the students to construct their own knowledge and gain new perspectives through personal experiences rather than following prescribed information. This perspectivism recognises the teacher as a facilitator of learning, a guide providing resources for learners and enabling them to decide how to learn and why to learn, rather than dictating what should be done by the students.

It should be pointed out that these implications arising out of the reflections made by Ambedkar are still relevant and unachieved, in spite of our claiming that India has developed into a scientifically and technologically advanced modern nation.

4. Linking cognition, emotion and volition

Ambedkar emphasised that education should enable the individual to develop his/her consciousness which allows the person to become a sentient being. All functions of a sentient being would be performed as a result of consciousness. Ambedkar represented consciousness as cognitive, emotional and volitional at the same time. It is cognitive when it processes information knowledge or events and appreciate or apprehend these. It is emotional when it exists in certain subjective states, characterised by either pleasurable or painful tones, that is, when emotional consciousness produces feelings. Consciousness in its volitional stage makes an individual exert himself/herself for the attainment of some end. Volitional consciousness gives rise to what we call will or activity. Consciousness with these three dimensions enables the individual to see how one is constituted as abstract, scientifically reasoned and socially identified at the same time.

If this triumvirate perception of consciousness is translated in educational terms, there comes the need to facilitate the growth of the learner by promoting the interface between cognition, emotion and action so as to enable the learner to see how he/she is constituted or reconstituted in the society and thus cope up with the rapid changes in all spheres of life. This requires fostering of inter personal and intra personal dealings, rather than mere training in the cognitive skills, though critical it may be. Curriculum planners and teachers have to realise that besides academic underdevelopment there can be another deficiency in the learner, that is the deficiency of emotional consciousness and skills. Cognitive development awakens the learners and enables them to see the obstacles in their path; while the emotional consciousness empower them from within to overcome their inertia and indifference and even the injustice of their own conditions. Without this emotional development individual cannot get rid of the factors that obstruct his/her progress and thereby promote the conditions which will ensure prosperity. Emotionality, though it might be counterproductive at times, can enable the persons to identify themselves with others so as to empathise with them and also to understand the relationships among individuals between individuals and groups and between the groups. The only thing is that the emotional consciousness has to be shaped properly in order to achieve these aim.

Education for promoting emotions has been recognised as an essential element of the educational process, in the new national curriculum framework for school education, with the optimism that it can provide information and direction and also facilitate the attainment of goals. It states that the emotional literacy programmes directly alter the levels of success, self esteem and the

same of well being of a person. Nurturance of emotional intelligence, therefore, becomes a prime concern for the makers of school curriculum. Curriculum has to provide learning experiences which help the learner to signify his/her thinking, feeling and will or action. The conception of consciousness as interlinking of three domains of personality development does not hold intelligence as a unitary concept but as a multiple attribute that encompasses the learner's total life and experience not only in the classroom but also in the society outside the school. This perspective of multiple intelligence also recognises the linguistic, critical or logical, mathematical, spatial, bodily, kinesthetic, musical and social skills of the learner as part of a composite personality. Educational institutions have to develop these varied abilities of the learner by providing suitable environment and experience. Schools can provide opportunities for the students to explore significant concepts, topics and issues and to think about them on their own in many ways. The teachers have to look for varying degrees of strength of learners and develop their multiple intelligence or abilities or skills to the optimum level.

Reorganising our educational programmes to meet these ends is one of the most crucial implications posed by Ambedkar's insistence on the interlinking of cognition, emotion and volition.

5. Professional development of teachers and creation of new organisations

Ambedkar's educational ideals have implication for enhancing the quality of education. The standard of education, he asserts, depends upon the standing of the teaching staff engaged in imparting education. In order to maintain the

quality of education, he argued that, the educational institutions should have the most qualified persons to carry out the task of teaching; their grades, tenure, pay and promotion should be regulated in such a manner as to open up a career to the best and the most qualified members of the teaching staff. He also emphasised that the educators need to be rewarded by considering their depth of scholarship and not by their length of service. This perspective calls for the professional development of the teachers at various levels of education. It is inherent that the pre-service training can only contribute to an initial competence to start a career as a teacher, it cannot meet the emerging professional needs of the practitioners. Hence, in order to raise the standards of education it is indispensable to go on providing in service training to the teachers.

The new challenges of education posed by the diversity of student population, the change required by the enhanced goals of schooling and the new organisational patterns require that teachers know their subject in depth and know how to teach them to the diverse learners. The teachers and other educators have not only to function well in the existing scenario but also to actually create new organisations that are centres of learning in their communities. Ambedkar would argue that the schools and colleges should act essentially as places of cooperative learning where teachers work in comradeship for helping the students in their learning, and for the advancement and diffusion of knowledge. The teachers must design learning environments that are sufficiently flexible to accommodate varying needs of learners and thus utilise the full array of tools currently available and the new tools as and when they emerge.

Further, the teachers need to view themselves and behave as members of a community working together for the benefit of its youths. The knowledge, skills, abilities and attitudes required by the new vision of education and roles of educators are simultaneously broad and deep. Like their students, the teachers too must become life long learners, with understanding that there will always be new things to learn. All this necessitate experiences for professional development the teachers, which would seek to develop not simply their content knowledge but also a very special and unique kind of knowledge, that would enable them to teach particular concepts or principles to the learners at different developmental levels. There are different agencies, from the national to the local levels, who organise inservice programmes for the professional development of the teachers. However, it is very significant that the educators have to create a new organisational culture by creating an atmosphere to inculcate the love for teaching and learning. In such settings, collaboration is critical; teachers should become co learners; cultures and environments for learning should replace the static and lifeless traditional classrooms.

In this context, it has to be pointed out that Ambedkar's insistence on teaching and research going hand in hand in colleges and universities is a coveted, but unfulfilled wish even after decades.

Suggestions for Further Research

- 1 Ambedkar conceived education as an instrument of social change and religion as a social force to reconstruct the world. In this context his conception of religion and its significance for education and social change can be studied in more details.
- 2 Production of an enlightened, emancipatory, democratised citizen was a

prime concern of Ambedkar's social project. In this light Ambedkar's democratic ideals and their importance for education can be investigated and a construct for a scheme of education in accordance with these ideals developed.

- 3 Ambedkar himself was instrumental in the establishment of People's Education Society as an alternative agency for education of the depressed classes. A study can be undertaken to exhume the philosophy, aims, functioning and achievement of the People's Education Society with regard to the education of the Dalits and the backward sections of the society.
- 4 Ambedkar was a strong advocate of affirmative action for the progress of the downtrodden people. Keeping this in mind the social and educational progress achieved by the Dalits in free India can be studied by using a multiple research design to ascertain the mechanism and effectiveness of implementation of affirmative action in India.

Note:

1. Dewey, J. (1944) *Democracy and Education*, New York: The Free Press, P. 87.
2. Ibid
3. Who were the Shudras, *Writings and Speeches* Vol. 7, P. 32.
4. Buddha and His Dharma, *Writings and Speeches* Vol. II, P.P. 315-325.
5. Philosophy of Hinduism, *Writings and Speeches*, Vol. 3, P. 23.

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