

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL IDEAS OF DR. B R AMBEDKAR

3.1 Introduction

Social and political philosophies deals with human actions and they are grounded at social level enquiries towards explaining and interpreting social facts, provide the critique of the explanations and interpretations¹.

Political thought is the sum total of ideas on matters relating to politics, state and government as expressed by the thinkers. It is historical in nature because it is described as history. It aims to analyze, examine and evaluate issues that have universal concern and are of interest to the thinkers².

Political ideology explains our social reality, interprets it in a certain way, evolves a set of interrelated principles, contests the nature of the political system and prescribes appropriate action. Thus, political ideas are explanatory or interpretative as well as normative³.

Political ideas are related to politics but they are also related to the history. Thus, understanding political ideas in its historical context is essential to understand the same in real sense. Political ideas of a thinker emerge after taking into account the age of his times and thus political philosophy of a thinker can only be understood in its historical context. A text without a context is a structure without a base and thus Machiavelli is better understood in the context of renaissance, Hobbes and Locke in the background of English Civil War and Marx in the light of growing capitalism of western society⁴.

Political ideas thrive on political issues of contemporary society. Such issues can be 'Social Justice', 'Feminism', 'Cultural identities', 'Environmentalism' etc⁵. In order to develop a framework for understanding political ideas, understanding essential ingredients of political thoughts would be of great help. Political thought is about politics in so far as it makes it as its subject matter, it is history in so far as it represents an age, it is theory so far as it examines on the concepts it works on and it is philosophy in so far as it speculates on political terms and categories.⁶

Bhargava and Acharya (2008) described 'Liberty, Equality, Justice, Rights, Democracy, Citizenship, State, Gender, Civil society' as the concepts of political theory and 'Liberalism, Socialism, Nationalism' as political ideologies, 'Secularism, Affirmative action' as the political arguments⁷.

Social philosophy encompasses political philosophy also. The issues which are taken up for study in political philosophy can fall within the scope of social philosophy. For example, such concepts as state, nation, sovereignty, authority, government, justice and rights, which are studied in the domain of political philosophy, are also found to be discussed in the context of social philosophy. However, some of the concepts like nature of human actions, values, social facts, social laws and social explanations are not generally discussed in the field of political philosophy. However, the distinction between the scope of social philosophy and that of political philosophy is more a matter of convention than a matter of rigorous definition⁸.

3.2 B. R. Ambedkar: His Social Ideas

As discussed in the previous chapter, Ambedkar's life was shaped and influenced by his bitter and degrading personal experiences as untouchables. It was this which led him to search of the origin of untouchability. His quest of knowing the roots of social evils can be seen in his writings of "*The Untouchables*", "*The Shudra, Who were they and how they come to be the fourth varna of Indo-Aryan society*", "*Caste in India, its mechanism, genesis and development*", "*Hindu Social Order: Its essential principles*", "*Philosophy of Hinduism*" and "*Annihilation of Caste*". His social ideas were shaped during his formative years and matured in his later stages of life but it

remained focus on the desire for the uplift of the down-trodden, which found expression in all his social ideas.

3.2.1 Explaining and Interpreting Existing Social Order

Ambedkar made a comprehensive enquiry about the then existing Hindu social order and argued that the 'Hindu Social Order' had the sanction of Hindu religion. In his works that included "*Philosophy of Hinduism*", "*Hindu Social Order; Its essential principles*" and "*Annihilation of Caste*", he attempted at explaining, interpreting and criticizing the Hindu Social Order and came up with his own normative ideas of an alternative system of society which was to be based on justice.⁹

For Ambedkar, the existing social order was formed on the basis of Hindu religious norms and these were deeply rooted in the system of Hindu Chaturvarna (or four classes). In his essay "*Hindu Social Order: Its essential principles*", he mentioned that human rights did not find any place in the social order and the social order was based primarily on class or varna and not on individuals. He explained that originally there were four *varnas*: "Brahmins (Priest)", "Khastriya (Warriors)", "Vaishyas (Traders)" and "Shudras (Servants)", later untouchables were added as the fifth class (Panchama)¹⁰. However, he maintained that the social order was not limited to five divisions only; these got further divided into sub-class or sub-castes resulting into hundreds and thousands of them.

In the same essay he analysed the position of an individual in relation to the society and stated that:

"The unit of Hindu society is not the individual Brahmin or the individual Khastriya or the individual Shudra or the individual Panchama. Even the family is not regarded by the Hindu Social Order as the unit of society except for the purpose of marriage and inheritance. The unit of Hindu society is the class or varna."¹¹

From the above position of individual in the Hindu society, he forwarded his argument that:

"...there is no room for individual merit and no consideration of individual justice. If the individual has a privilege it is not because it is due to him personally. The privilege goes with the class and if he is found to enjoy it, it is because he belongs to that class. Contra wise, if an individual is suffering from a wrong, it is not because by his conduct he deserves it. The disability is the disability imposed upon the class and if he is found to be labouring under it, it is because he belongs to that class".¹²

While summarizing the centrality of the philosophy of Hinduism, Ambedkar observed that the Hindu Social Order neither put "Society at centre" nor it accepted 'individual at centre' and thus the Hindu social order failed the test of either justice or utility. He commented that:

"The centre of the ideal (of Hindu social order) is neither individual nor society, It is a class, it is a class of supermen called Brahmins....It holds that to be right and good the act must serve the interest of a class of supermen, namely the Brahmin. Anything which serves the interest of this class is alone entitled to be called good."¹³

His writings and speeches revealed that he listed three basic principles on which the existing social order was grounded upon.

Ambedkar also examined the religious texts to understand the reason behind class division and he found that the class system was able to survive so long because of religious sanctity. According to religious texts, different classes 'were created from the different parts of the Divine body' and thus 'it must be Divine will that they should remain separate and distinct'¹⁴. He was also of the view that in such a social framework there was no distinction between legal and moral aspects of the society and thus what was treated morally as right and good, there was legal sanction for that too¹⁵.

The first principle was the 'principle of graded inequality', this principle, the fundamental one, divided the society both vertically and horizontally. As per this

principle the society was made hierarchical with Brahmins occupying the top rank followed by Khashtriya, Vaishya, Shudra and Ati-Shudra or Untouchables. The principle of gradation had spiritual, moral and legal sanction and thus there was no sphere of life which was not regulated by this principle. He also observed that this principle had encompassed human life in all spheres including social, political and economic realm¹⁶.

He commented that:

*"Nowhere has society consecrated its occupations- the ways of getting a living. Economic activity has always remained outside the sanctity of religion. Feudalism with its gradation, with its lords, villains and serfs, was purely social in character. There was nothing scared about it. The Hindus are only people in the world whose social relations are consecrated by religion and made scared, eternal and inviolate"*¹⁷.

Graded inequality was also accompanied by hierarchical and graded entitlements to various rights to different classes. The entitlements increased in ascending order from Untouchables to Brahmins. In this hierarchical arrangement, rights and privileges of one class became disabilities or denial of rights to the lower class particularly for untouchables¹⁸.

Thorat (2008) described it as the phenomenon of 'fixation of rights' where it left no scope of individual capabilities, choices and inclinations. In other societies, economic stratifications existed but there was freedom to move from one occupation to another. Such free mobility prevented social isolation and exclusion. Prevention of such mobility hindered establishment of a free social order¹⁹.

The second principle that Ambedkar put forward in interpreting Hindu Social Order was that the varnas were based on occupations and since the varnas had Divine sanction, each class has to follow the work assigned to his or her class. Individuals had no choice to change his occupation and punishments were given for violating the principle of occupation²⁰.

The caste system provided the mechanism to maintain the order of the society through social and economic penalties. The instruments of social and economic boycott were the main forms of penalties laid down against violating the codes of the system²¹.

Since, a shudra could not undertake jobs other than serving higher castes; the upward mobility in social and economic realm was severely restricted. Finally, he observed that the assignment of class was not based on individual merit, it was decided by birth²².

Denial of equal access to education is another core feature of the caste system. In Ambedkar's view, the concept of formal education in Hindu social order was quite narrow. Formal education was confined to the study of religious scriptures like Veda in schools which were established for this purpose. The state never held itself responsible for opening establishments for study of arts and sciences that concerns life of merchants and artisan. In the absence of a formal educational system, each class managed to transmit its progeny the ways of doing things it was traditionally engaged in doing. Thus, illiteracy became an inherent part of the class or caste system. Fixation of rights within a class and graded inequality resulted in denial of rights to education and opportunities to develop human capabilities²³.

In this context, Ambedkar criticised Manu saying that: '*Manu is the only divine law giver who has denied the common man the right to knowledge*'²⁴.

Thus, these three principles completely disregard individual's ability or merit and thus exhibit an 'unjust' society where mobility is severely restricted in all spheres of human life. Such a society, Ambedkar argued can not be an 'ideal society' and thus he felt that the existing social order needs attention. He not only suggested the total annihilation of caste or caste based society, his point of contention was to form an 'ideal or just society that would be classless or casteless'²⁵.

Ambedkar's vision of a just society was based on two essential principles:

"The first is that the individual is an end in itself and the aim and object of the society is the growth of the individual and the development of his personality. Society is not above the individual and if the individual has to subordinate himself to society, it is because such subordination is for his betterment and only to the extent necessary. The second essential is that the terms associated life between the members of society must be regarded by the consideration founded on liberty, equality and fraternity."²⁶

Here one can find the paradigm shift in his vision of an ideal society. Whereas in the prevailing society, there was no place of individual's merit, Ambedkar advocated for a society where individual was the prime concern. Moreover, there was a marked deviation in the concept of relationship among individuals. Whereas, in the existing society, the relationships were fixed or pre-determined and based on class, in his 'ideal society' he argued that these relationships ought to be based on liberty, equality and fraternity.

Ambedkar wanted to justify the order of any society based on 'the test of justice' and 'the test of utility'. It was this judgemental analysis that led him to discard the then contemporary Hindu society. In his essay "*Philosophy of Hinduism*", he stated that 'the norm or the criterion for judging right and wrong in the modern society is justice' and justice 'is simply another name for liberty, equality and fraternity'²⁷.

In his essay on the "Hindu Social Order: Its Essential Principles", he has divided liberty into two categories namely 'civil liberty' and 'political liberty'. The first category, 'civil liberty' according to Ambedkar referred to three basic liberties: liberty of movement, liberty of speech (including liberty of thought, reading and discussion) and liberty of action. The second category, 'political liberty' consisted the right of the individual to share in the framing of laws and in the making and unmaking of governments²⁸.

However as per Ambedkar liberty must be accompanied by three social conditions: social equality, economic equality and education for all. All these liberties were restricted to a particular class in the Hindu social order and thus a new social order was needed for human liberty²⁹.

While acknowledging the fact that all human beings might not be equal with regard to physical strength, in material wealth or mental capacity, but still human beings possessed in degree and kind fundamental characteristics that was common to humanity. Emphasis must be placed on the term 'moral' because no rational component of moral equality was ever disputed. While explaining the importance of moral equality, Ambedkar explained:

*"Why is Equality essential? The best exposition of the subject is by Prof. Beard in his essay on 'Freedom in Political Thought' and I shall do no more than quote him. Says Prof. Beard: — '...It (moral equality) is asserted against inequalities in physical strength, talents, industry, and wealth. It denied that superior physical strength has a moral right to kill, eat, or oppress human beings merely because it is superior. To talents and wealth, the ideal of moral equality makes a similar denial of right. And indeed few can imagine themselves to have superior physical strength; talents and wealth will withhold from inferiors all moral rights. In such circumstances government and wealth would go to superior physical strength; while virtue and talents would serve the brute man, as accomplished Greek slaves served the whims, passions and desires to Roman conquerors. When the last bitter word of criticism has been uttered against the ideal of moral equality, there remains something in it which all, except things, must accept and in practice do accept, despite their sheers and protests. A society without any respect for human personalities is a band of robbers'."*³⁰

In his essay on "Philosophy of Hinduism", Ambedkar explained the meaning of 'fraternity'. He said:

"There are two factors prevalent in Society. Individualism and Fraternity, fraternity is another name for fellow feeling. It consists in a sentiment which leads an individual to identify himself with the goods of others whereby the good of

others becomes to him a thing naturally and necessarily to be attended to like any of the physical conditions of our existence.³¹

In his other essay on “*The Hindu Social Order: Its Essential Principles*”, while discussing as one of the key essentials of a just society or free society for a free social order, he stated:

“Fraternity is the name for the disposition of an individual to treat men as the object of reverence and love and desire to be in unity with the fellow beings. Fraternity strengthens socialites and gives to each individual a stringer personal interest in practically consulting the welfare of others.³²”

In his essay, “Annihilation of Caste”, he commented:

“An ideal society should be mobile, should be full of channels for conveying a change taking place in one part to other parts. In an ideal society there should be many interests consciously communicated and shared. There should be varied and free points of contact with other modes of association. In other words there must be social endosmosis.³³”

3.2.3 Prescriptions for Forming a Just Society

Ambedkar’s interpretation of the Hindu social order as a system of governance in general was based on three inter-related elements: Unequal and hierarchical division of social and economic rights across classes; fixed rights in a particular class and sustainability of such system through instruments of social and economic penalties and moral and legal justifications with Divine sanction³⁴. Varna system or class system was the basis of contemporary Hindu social order and he believed that it was the very system of class division which was responsible for all the evils of the society.

On the other hand, he had a clear vision of an ideal or just society based on liberty, equality and fraternity. Since, the contemporary caste based society had religious

sanction in it thus making it infallible; it would not be possible to break caste without annihilating the religious notions on what the caste system was founded³⁵.

He classified social reforms into various categories. Of which he felt that religious reforms are difficult to bring forth. He stated:

“Social reforms fall into different species. There is a species of reform, which does not relate to the religious notion of people but is purely secular in character. There is also a species of reform, which relates to the religious notions of people. Of such a species of reform, there are two varieties. In one, the reform accords with the principles of the religion and merely invites people, who have departed from it, to revert to them and to follow them. The second is a reform which not only touches the religious principles but is diametrically opposed to those principles and invites people to depart from and to discard their authority and to act contrary to those principles.”³⁶

Thus, Ambedkar wanted to formulate a new doctrinal basis for Hindu religion in consonance with liberty, equality and fraternity. He stressed on a paradigm shift in interpretation of religious texts and considerable scrapping and chipping off the ore they contain, which were instrumental in formulating principles against fraternity or fellow feelings³⁷.

In this context, Ambedkar gave examples of Sikh and Muslim religions and advocated the principle of ‘associated mode of life’ as the basis for establishment of a just society. As per him, the contemporary Hindu social order denied three basic rights: ‘physical weapon’ (by denying right of military service), ‘political weapon’ (denial of political power to protect them) and ‘moral weapon’ (denial of right to get educated)³⁸.

Ambedkar then proceeded arguing that in order to make available these three rights to the people of depressed class, a new social order based on justice would be necessary. For the establishment of such a new social order, a complete change in the fundamental notions of life would also be necessary. He looked into the three practical possibilities for the same: ‘Annihilation of caste system’, ‘introduction of

inter-caste dining' and 'inter-caste marriage'^{39,40}. He himself attended such dinners and marriages whenever he got an opportunity⁴¹.

About inter-caste marriage, he said:

*"Fusion of blood can alone create the feeling of being kith and kin and unless this feeling of kinship, of being kindered, becomes paramount, the separatist feeling- the feeling of being aliens, created by Caste will not vanish. Among the Hindu, inter-marriage must necessarily be a factor of greater force in social life than it need be in the life of non-Hindu. Where society is already well-knit by other ties, marriage is an ordinary incident of life. But where society cut asunder marriage as a binding force becomes a matter of urgent necessity. The real remedy for breaking caste is inter-marriage. Nothing else will serve as the solvent of caste."*⁴²

Ambedkar was a practical reformer who after taking stock of the whole situation came to the conclusion that very little could be achieved in the practical field in the effort of abolition of caste system. Since, the high caste Hindus, especially the Brahmins did not stand to gain from such efforts but much to lose, the remedies would elicit little or no result. Under this circumstance, he argued that it would be necessary for the Depressed Classes to empower and emancipate themselves through various means.⁴³

Proposing a more practical approach he stated:

*"The depressed classes (should) think that the surest way of their elevation lies in higher education, higher employment and better ways of earning a living. Once they become well placed in the scheme of social life, they would become respectable and once they become respectable, the religious outlook of the orthodox is sure to undergo changes and if this did not happen it could do no injury to their material interests."*⁴⁴

Ambedkar prescribed three pronged approach for social upliftment of Depressed Class. He suggested that 'education, organization and agitation' were the key elements needed for the same. Ambedkar believed that the mental lethargy, the reconciliation with social norms and satisfaction from present were the impediments

in the mind of the depressed class from being emancipated and empowered. Thus, he stated that the social evils could be destroyed through knowledge and education could be the only means to achieve it. Education might not destroy the class system but it might help to dissolve the boundaries of caste and class in the lower strata of Indian society. Besides, formal educations, he also put equal emphasis on informal education as a prime enablers for drive against caste and untouchability⁴⁵.

3.3 B. R Ambedkar: His Political Ideas

Ambedkar's political philosophy was closely related to the most immediate and accumulated issues of human life and essentially in accordance with the fact of society.⁴⁶ Thus, in order to understand political ideas of Ambedkar, it would be necessary to understand his thoughts about interrelations of State, Government, Society and Individuals. It would also be necessary to deliberate about the concepts, ideologies of political theory and political arguments as put forward by Ambedkar.

3.3.1 Ideas on State, Government, Rights and Democracy

Ambedkar was a great admirer of Parliamentary system of Government. According to him, there are three inherent characteristics of the system. Firstly, free and fair elections from time to time. Secondly, in the form of government no single individual can presume the authority that he knows everything and that he can make the laws and carry the government. The laws are to be made by the representatives of the people. Finally, the elected representatives, the legislatures and ministers must have the confidence of the people renewed in themselves at given periodicity⁴⁷.

However, he was aware of the pitfalls of the Parliamentary democracy. Parliamentary democracy, Ambedkar wrote, made not even a nodding acquaintance with economic equality. *"It failed to realize the significance of equality and did not even endeavour to strike a balance between liberty and equality, with the result the liberty swallowed equality and thus left a progeny of inequalities"*⁴⁸.

However, Ambedkar saw no alternative to political democracy and therefore firmly believed in it as an appropriate form of political organization, but at the same time he emphasised the need to strengthen the social and economic foundation for a smooth functioning of democracy, which he saw as the tissues and fibres of political democracy by making socialism as a part of the constitution. Thus, his concept of state socialism is constitutional state socialism with parliamentary democracy. He therefore advocated for a political-economic framework, namely, constitutional state socialism with parliamentary democracy. This combination was necessary to ensure that social and economic organizations would be more egalitarian and consequently, the parliamentary democracy would become more meaningful to the under privileged⁴⁹.

He wanted people to develop democracy as a state of mind, a style of social life which assured them work and security, proper facility for education and human rights for all. Volunteerism claimed an important place in Ambedkar's concept of democracy. The state should not have any control on every aspect of human life. He said that no law should be made abridging the freedom of speech, of the press, of association and of assembly except for consideration of public order and morality. He stressed upon the need of all kinds of freedom so that people may keep themselves in larger liberty.

According to Ambedkar, political democracy is based on four premises: i) individual is an end in himself, ii) individual has certain inalienable rights which must be guaranteed to him constitutionally, iii) individual shall not be required to forego any of his constitutional rights as a condition precedent to the receipt of a privilege, iv) state shall not delegate power to individual to govern others.

Ambedkar believed firmly in the idea that democracy requires the functioning of a moral order of the society. He felt that democracy can not be achieved through free government or enacting laws only because there are vast sphere of social life where laws could only become success if the society has enough morality to do so⁵⁰.

Speaking about Democracy for India, he stated that (1938):

*"I am no believer in democracy as an ideal to be pursued in all circumstances and all times. In this country we have a democracy but it is a democracy which has ceased to exercise its intelligence. It has bound itself hand and foot to one organization and only one. It is not prepared to sit in judgement over the doings or the thinking of this organization. I consider it the greatest malaise, a disease and a sickness. It has affected all our people. Democracy must learn that its safety lies in having more than one opinion regarding the solution of a particular problem, and in order that people may be ready to advice with their opinion, democracy must learn to give a respectful hearing to all who are worth listening to."*⁵¹

Ambedkar subscribed to a political order informed with rights, democracy and socialism. He employed socialism to critique an order based merely on rights, while socialism without a commitment to rights would tend to authoritarianism. A good society can not be but democracy- a democracy informed with rights and socialism. In constructing the relation across them Ambedkar laid great stress on human agency and a strong state⁵².

Ambedkar favoured the functional theory of the state. He accepted the notion of the state as a legal and constitutional creature. He also held a general view that the state is not only the source of law but also a creature of law. The state was a legal and constitutional system that represented the principle of equality. As a liberal he believed that the individual was the unit of political process however, he himself contradicted by saying that the significant unit in any society is not the individual but the group. For instance his advocacy of communal representation and reservation was in principle a negation of the notion of the individual as the basic unit of political system. He holds the liberal notion of the state where the state represents the collective will of the society through law and hence becomes legitimized⁵³.

Ambedkar envisaged the state as a very important organisation as it discharges various important functions which are important for the civilised and democratic life of the citizens in a society where lawlessness and disorder prevail. The aims of state organization are many and varied. First of all, it is to maintain the right to every subject to life, liberty and pursuit of happiness and to free speech and free exercise of religion. The second function is to remove social, political and economic inequality by providing better opportunities to the under privileged classes. Here the state

becomes positive organization for the protection of the downtrodden. Thirdly, the state is to make possible for every subject enjoyment of freedom from want and fear. Lastly, it has to provide against internal disorder and external aggression⁵⁴.

Ambedkar's political thought is essentially in accord with the facts of the society. He did not consider the state to be an isolated and self-sustaining entity. He related it with voluntary organization where there exist inter-relation between man, society and state. To him true freedom of human being is not merely political; it is also social, economic, intellectual and spiritual. He endeavoured to reach balance between the central authority of state and the liberty of the individual. He regarded state as a means to establish good relations between man and man, society and societies. The state is not an end by itself, but it is a means for furtherance of human ends in the interests of better future society.

Ambedkar's idea of a federal state attaches more importance to institutional means for the solution of human affairs. It has adopted a middle way between centralization and decentralization of power and authority for the reasons that – 'there is a clear division of government power between the centre and state governments, each government is independent of the other in its own field and the constitution established an independent judiciary to settle disputes between the union and the states with respect to the divisions of power'. His concept of federalism means the state is a federation in normalcy but unitary in emergency.⁵⁵

Despite his emphasis on legal remedies, Ambedkar was conscious that rights are not protected by law alone but by the moral and social conscience of society. If social conscience is such that it is prepared to recognise the rights which law chooses to enact, right will be safe and secure. But if the Fundamental Rights are opposed by the community, no Law, no Parliament and no Judiciary can guarantee them in real sense of the world⁵⁶.

He maintained that even then the state is not above the society⁵⁷. In his opinion, state is not an isolated self-sufficient entity in fact he relates state to the voluntary organization. He did not regard state as an organism like Green, Hegel and Rousseau. He accepted the state as a human organization and because it was human

organization, it had to serve the interests of man and society as a servant and not as a master. He had reasons to believe the inter-relatedness of man, society and state⁵⁸.

To Ambedkar, any scheme of political relationship must take into consideration the basic plan of social relation. The social structure has a profound effect on the political structure. In his opinion man is behind all the laws of human society. To Ambedkar society is more important than the state. The state is duty bound to provide protection against internal disorder and foreign aggression. He did not consider state to be absolute. He said that no state is ever a single society and inclusive and permitting body of thought and action. He wanted that a state should be stable and the people should abide by the laws it makes for the well-being of the society. To him government is based on obedience to authority, a willingness on part of his people to obey the authority of state is an important factor⁵⁹.

He commented:

"In creating, moulding, expanding and knitting together political communities, what is more important than force is obedience. The willingness to obey and comply with the sanctions of a government depends upon certain psychological attributes of the individual citizens and groups."⁶⁰

To Ambedkar Law is not only a legal function, it also regulates the life of whole society and nation. Law keeps within limits all men irrespective of caste, colour and creed. All citizens should be equal before law and possess equal civic rights. His faith in individual liberty and dignity leads him to the rule of law. He preferred law to ensure that citizen is not deprived of life, liberty and property without due process of law and to ensure that no one is denied jurisdiction for equal protection under law⁶¹.

According to him there existed in Indian society a tendency to subordinate the individual to the claims of group and caste. Freedom was curtailed by both the society and state, though some individuals on the basis of their group or caste prestige were free to express their opinion. To him state would continue to co-exist along with individuals, groups or society and it should play an important role in establishing good relations between man and man, society and society. The state is not an end in itself, but only a means for furtherance of human ends to create a better future

society. He wanted the central government to act as a powerful curb on the provincial majority to safeguard the minorities from the tyranny of the majority. State exists only to prevent injustice, tyranny and oppression and he prescribes that no state should invade the fundamental rights of man. He feels the need of constitutional morality.⁶²

Ambedkar regarded rights as natural and inherent in the individual. He had a strong faith in the separation of the government's power and of the allocation of functions to various departments. He built his theory of social and political organization around his central concept of the individual and his rights. To him, the state exists only to prevent injustice, tyranny and oppression. The state has to serve the people. He wanted that no state should violate the fundamental rights of man. He opposed to all kinds of discrimination on the ground of race, caste and creed. He held that society can do nothing without some organized power. He stressed the need not only of a constitutionalism in its formal basis, but also of constitutional morality and some conventions for the practical success of a constitution, He wished a good, moral government to protect the rights of the people in all their legitimate functions, He fought for the rights and rebelled against communal absolutism⁶³.

Ambedkar wanted that both government and state must be organized on human considerations so that humanity may not suffer long. He believed in rejuvenation of social ideals and political values. His actions were characterised by a sincerity of purpose and a sense of responsibility, a concern for human welfare which constitute the essence of his democratic Government and state. He believed in the value and worth of individual in society, the touchstone of all true functions of the state⁶⁴.

Ambedkar was a practical politician regarding the relations between society, government and state. His approach was realistic and based on practical politics. To him, the state and government become intelligible concepts only in relation to the actual condition of the society. A state should protect its citizens against external aggression, maintain law and order against internal disturbance and guarantee to its subjects minimum standards of administration and welfare⁶⁵.

Ambedkar believed that nobody can redress the grievances of Depressed Class nor could they remove it themselves unless they get political power in their hand. He further suggested that in the government, the men in power will not be afraid to amend the social and economic code of life which is the necessity of the hour. Such kind of government can be formed only through the Swaraj government⁶⁶.

To Ambedkar, an individual is an end in itself. An individual has certain inalienable rights which must be guaranteed to him by the Constitution. He further added that the individual shall not be required to relinquish any of his constitutional rights as a condition-precedent to the receipt of a privilege. The state shall not delegate powers to private persons to govern others. However, to Ambedkar, rights are nothing if they are not accompanied by remedies. He criticised those constitutional lawyers who assumed that '*the enactment of Fundamental Rights is enough to safeguard their liberty and nothing more is called for.*' Remedies against invasion of Fundamental Rights are needed and must be provided into the constitution, he argued⁶⁷.

He argued that democracy cannot be achieved without State Socialism⁶⁸. He advocated for a secular state, with liberty of conscience and belief to all people and religious toleration⁶⁹.

Like Utilitarian thinkers who justify the existence of state based on the principle of utility on its citizen, Ambedkar forwarded similar view. He advocated that the purpose of the state is to promote general welfare. The state, he regarded, is a necessary institution to safeguard the individuals and general security of individuals in a society. Stability of state is, therefore, essential to secure liberty of an individual in a society. He also emphasised the role of constitution for redress of public grievances⁷⁰.

3.3.2 Ideas on Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, Social Justice and Civil Society

Ambedkar believed that a well-structured social order is the necessary condition for a democratic free state. The purpose of the state, as appears to Ambedkar, is to lay 'stress upon the idea that every individual should aim to promote happiness.' He felt

that social well being would be the final outcome of the Government and these could be measured by degree of fostering of virtue and intelligence at all levels of individuals⁷¹.

He summarised the delivery mechanism of justice stating that ‘in fact social justice is the end, judicial justice is the means, the legislative and executive operations are human engineering and together the three branches of government have to work in the country so that the constitution may fulfil its purpose.’⁷²

Ambedkar’s ideas on justice are closely linked up with his concept of democracy both as a form of government and a “mode of associated life”. He considered democracy as ‘a historical movement’. He defined democracy as a form and method of government whereby revolutionary changes in the economic and social life of the people are brought about without bloodshed. In other words to him democracy was a way of life and a political method for ensuring justice for all.

Ambedkar also rejected Gandhi’s Sarvodaya theory of social justice which associated both religion and the welfare of citizens. Whereas Gandhi took Varnashrama Vyavastha as the natural principle of a society, Ambedkar rejected the principle as it was based on the help of God in sustaining the spirit of the social justice and it justified the doctrine of social inequality as God’s will. He could not believe the efficacy of any system that has no relevance to the welfare of the Depressed Classes⁷³.

In order to form an ideal society, Ambedkar recognised the two essential principles: the first being that Individual is the final end. For this the aim of society should support growth of an individual and development of his personality. The society should not be above the individual and if in any case the individual has to subordinate himself to society, it should be for his betterment or due to necessity. The next principle is that all members in society must be treated on liberty, equality and fraternity⁷⁴.

Individual, as per Ambedkar, is politically constituted as a creature of the society whom society has structurally slotted it in a group. Liberty and Equality are ensured

through the laws that are to be given not only to the isolated, atomistic individual but also to the socially operative groups, whether caste or classes. To him an ideal society is the one where difference in groups is abolished and individuals are made to relate to the state in an authentic manner so that their real worth is not negated or distorted through unjust mediation. Unlike Marx, Ambedkar did not see the possibility of statelessness, he advocated castelessness in society⁷⁵.

Ambedkar is also one of the proponents of social justice in Modern India. He tried to achieve social justice and social democracy in terms of 'one man-one value'. He treated social justice as a true basis for patriotism and nationalism. He did not accept the theories of social justice as propounded by the Varna System, the Aristotelian Order, Plato's scheme and Gandhian Sarvodaya order and not even the proletarian socialism of Marx⁷⁶.

The contents of Ambedkar's concept of social justice included unity and equality of all human beings, equal worth of men and women, respect. His view on social justice was to remove man made inequalities of all shape through law, morality and public conscience⁷⁷.

Analysis of the writings of Ambedkar on the issue of social justice reveals that most of his writings basically revolve around the establishment of an 'ideal society'⁷⁸, a 'casteless society'⁷⁹ or a society based on the 'principle of justice'⁸⁰.

Liberty as a concept has been viewed variously by thinkers in various stages of the history of political thought. The term closest to Liberty in the Indian tradition is 'mukti', understood either as renunciation or as deliverance from the chain or rebirths; the initial understanding of mukti did not refer to freedom from social restrictions. Ideas of modern liberty entered colonial India through three different routes- colonial legal arrangements accompanied by tacit understandings of rights and freedom of individuals, institutional spread of western style education and intellectual influence of western social thinking. In western India, thinkers from lower caste groups began to use the ideas of social freedom to attack caste hierarchy, notably Jyotiba Phule and later B R Ambedkar⁸¹.

The concept of equality lies at the heart of normative political theory. However, the idea of equality can not be separated from parallel accounts of liberty, justice, rights and democracy, which are influenced and inspired by the concept of equality. Although, the concept of equality and politics of egalitarianism have justified the idea of a welfare state, the political struggles of identity groups are creating a new political phenomenon. The struggles for greater equality by women, dalits, and minorities are a pointer to the continuing relevance of the bases of the social equality⁸².

Ambedkar was of the view that the criterion for judging right and wrong in the modern society is justice and justice according to him is another name for Liberty, Equality and Fraternity⁸³. While discussing the meaning of Liberty he said that it should include social equality, economic equality and there must be knowledge (education) made available to all. All these social conditions were restricted to a particular class in the old social order but form an important part in the new social order⁸⁴.

Regarding equality he emphasised on the term moral equality as it asserts in ethical value, belief to be sustained and recognition of rights to be respected. As a 'society without any self respect for human personalities is a band of robbers. Regarding Fraternity he said that it strengthens socialites and gives to each individual a stronger personal interest in practically consulting the welfare of others⁸⁵.

The society as defined by him is more of a fundamental category in which both Politics and Economics intersected. According to him society was a collection of group entities, organically structured within and related to each other. The survival and progress of society was structurally dependent on the nature and function of these entities. His liberal predilections re-appear when he argues that a class society was ipso facto superior to a caste society as the latter brought stagnation, hierarchy and inequity. The class society opened up historical possibilities in the direction of greater liberty and equality⁸⁶.

Ambedkar rejected the Marxian methods for ending the exploitation of the untouchables. He regarded Marxist way of life as inferior to the Buddhist way. He admitted that economic factor play an important role in human relations but not to the

extent to which Marx accepts⁸⁷. According to him, Marx's philosophy was satisfying philosophy to the lower order; it was a direction not a dogma.⁸⁸ He also opposed the concept of totalitarianism of Marx as he preferred in a balance between the organizing power of the state and the deriving force of the free individuals⁸⁹.

Ambedkar's conception of freedom and justice is derived from the liberal version and tradition. The issue of human rights form the central basis of his own construction of 'freedom' and 'justice'. The figure of human rights is pre-eminent in many a text of Ambedkar's writings and speeches. But, given the horrible context of destitution, deprivation and disadvantage systematically haunting the depressed classes and given the context of a colonial state, Ambedkar thinking about justice, freedom and rights can be termed as innovative and remarkable.⁹⁰

Ambedkar concept of justice and equality can not be branded as Fabian or Marxian or Gandhian in nature. It was developed around those remedial measures which he thought essential for social reconstruction and vitalization of the Hindu society as also for the upliftment of the untouchables. One may notice that he derived his ideas from many sources notably the French Revolution, Declaration of the Rights of Man, Fourteenth Amendment of the American Constitution, Marxist and Buddhist egalitarian thought.

Ambedkar, throughout his entire articulation, sought to accord primary position to the civil society which he believed to be at the centre stage for ensuring justice and building a 'just society' based on equality and freedom. To Ambedkar, rights did not appear as "constraints and limits on the power of the state, rather, they emerge as legal entitlements casting corresponding obligations on the members of civil society. Ambedkar's strategy for essential justice was to innovate jural relations. According to him the state has a power coupled with duty to which the rights of the depressed classes correspond.⁹¹

3.3.3 Normative Ideas, Political Ideologies, Political arguments: B.R.

Ambedkar's Construction

The memorandum presented to the Constituent Assembly by Ambedkar could be termed as a small constitution for the protection of common citizenry and attempted to establish Social Democracy and State Socialism. Ambedkar suggested a dual strategy for adopting 'Inclusive Policy' referring to it as 'Safeguards against Economic Exploitation' and 'Safeguards against Social Discrimination and Isolation'. Ambedkar suggested separate remedies against social discrimination and remedies against economic exploitation. Number of measures is suggested as remedies against social discrimination, the focus of which is equal participation in multiple spheres. As a remedy against economic exploitation he proposed to adopt state socialism as a policy of the state as a general solution to the problem of economic exploitation⁹².

So far as the role of the state as a political organisation is concerned, a great similarity of attitude exists between Ambedkar and John Rawls (1921-2002). As they held the view that the state has a positive role in providing justice for every body in the society. Since there may be wide variations in the position or status of different sections of the people, it becomes imperative on the part of the state to make reasonable classification for providing justice to the people in the most disadvantaged strata of the society. Actually, this is the basic foundation of 'positive discrimination' or 'affirmative action'. Moreover what Rawls has advocated as the concept of 'distributive justice', can be very well inferred from the theoretical position that Ambedkar developed in relation to his concept of Justice.

Ambedkar wanted education to disseminate among poor and underprivileged people. He was conscious about the backwardness of the underprivileged in the matter of education. For him, the primary aim of education was to initiate the citizen into the life of a larger community and to realise his potential as a citizen. He laid greater emphasis on practical education and economic opportunity than on the adult franchise. He wanted to solve the problem of education through Governmental efforts and agencies⁹³. He wanted to portray State and Government as agencies entrusted for social change, economic change and also to protect the Depressed Class and

suppressed minorities from the tyranny and opposition of a communal majority. Only then, he felt, the democracy, not only in form, but also in spirit can be realised⁹⁴.

Ambedkar was not a purely speculative and idealistic political philosopher, in the conventional sense, like Plato and Aristotle. Nevertheless, he developed his own social and political ideas, which were deeply rooted in real human problems and issues, and vital human affairs. His political philosophy attempted to bridge the gulf between theory and practice, materialism and spiritualism. Out of his sense of dejection with the inhuman treatment meted out to his community by the caste Hindus, his mission for the total emancipation of the underprivileged classes from the clutches of the privileged, his total engagement with the predicament of Indian society, evolved Ambedkar's political ideology⁹⁵.

Ambedkar placed man at the central position in his scheme of an egalitarian society and a democratic frame. To him,

“The soul of democracy is the doctrine of one man, one value; unfortunately, democracy has attempted to give effect to this doctrine only so far as the political structure was concerned, it has left the economic structure to take the shape given to it by those who are in the position to mould it. Time has come to take a bold step and define both the eco structure as well as the political structure by the law of the Constitution.”⁹⁶

The problem of discriminated groups was twofold to Ambedkar. He identified lack of access to economic resources like agricultural land, business and services, employment, education as the first problem to discriminated class. He related the continuation of discrimination in contemporary society as the second issue. Since, the problem is two fold, he suggested dual solution: one set of remedies for compensation of historical denial of economic rights in present and second set of remedies to provide safeguards against discrimination in present⁹⁷.

For overall development of discriminated groups, in addition to reservation, Ambedkar suggested suitable political and economic system to remove structural inequalities. He suggested a more radical remedy of equalization in the form of state

socialism in agriculture and industry to protect the deprived groups against economic exploitation. He observed:

“The main purpose behind this clause is to put an obligation on the state to plan the economic life of the people on the lines which would lead to highest point of productivity without closing every avenue to the private sector and provide for equitable distribution of wealth. The plan set out in the clause proposed state ownership in agriculture with collectivised method of cultivation and a modified form of State socialism in the field of industry. It places squarely on the shoulders of the state the obligation to supply capital necessary for agriculture as well as for industry”⁹⁸.

Ambedkar reiterated his position that the problems of underprivileged are rooted in the historical denial of basic human rights to them. Thus, he grounded the justification of remedies of the same in the framework of socialism and assertion of principles of equality in the political framework. In the context of untouchables, he adopted phased interventions. His initial efforts involved creating awareness among the British regarding the status of untouchables and demand for citizenship rights. In the second phase, he attempted assertion of rights with wide description and explanations in terms of political representations. In the third phase, extension of representation and participation in the sphere of education and employment can be seen. Finally, in fourth phase, he advocated a general framework for constitution based on principles of non-discrimination, legal safeguard, and responsibility of state to protect underprivileged and to take measures for their upliftment⁹⁹.

Ambedkar's 'Inclusive Policy' for upliftment of underprivileged has four components, which include creating an egalitarian economic structure which will provide a base for equal economic and social opportunities for the discriminated groups of the society, equal opportunity policy in terms of reservation for the discriminated groups with adequate legal safeguards against discriminations, participation of the discriminated groups in the governance through fair share in the legislature, executive and administration and finally putting responsibility on state to undertake such policies with a clear provision in the constitution and other statutory forms¹⁰⁰.

Ambedkar realised that Indian Social Order does not provide 'liberty, equality and fraternity' to all. The Indian Social Order, as per him, was based on graded inequality embodying deference upwards and contempt downwards. Such a consciousness is not merely extremely regulative but is deeply internalised. Socio-economic relations are deeply influenced by it. The constitutional and legal order and organised power of the state can provide measures to get ride such situation, however, he felt that any long term transformations can only be through social arrangements. Therefore, he advocated interventions in personal codes, spreading of educations and eventually principles of Buddhism¹⁰¹.

Ambedkar visualised that political power was the key to social progress of under privileged class. His concept of power is related to two major aspects: descriptive and normative. Ambedkar held the normative aspect to be very important in the process of human emancipation. He followed the normative aspects throughout his life. He imagined or positively identified comprehensive ideals like freedom, justice and equality with institutional arrangements like representative democracy with majority vote. He invested considerable faith in these institutional arrangements as a mechanism to empower the under privileged. In the context of the then contemporary society, he appreciated that human empowerment would depend on the development of political practices, institutions and belief¹⁰².

3.4 Summary and Conclusion

Ambedkar himself experienced humiliation and alienation during his childhood, schooling age and the age of youth. He faced many problems and hurdles in his life. He matured as a revolutionary against the contemporary social order and decided to fight against the prevailing caste rigidity in order to secure social justice and equality. Ambedkar strove to change the Indian social structure which was governed by the caste system and its rigid code of behaviour like endogamy and servitude of shudras and untouchables. He wanted to dissolve the system through assimilation and integration and thus he pleaded for inter-caste marriages in order to achieve unity, fraternity, social solidarity and national integration.

Ambedkar sought to solve the problem of social disharmony through socio-economic upliftment of Depressed Class. He wanted to incorporate legal safeguards in the Constitution of India and to bring regulatory reforms to bring equalities and to pave way for positive discriminations towards depressed classes including women. He was concerned about the inhuman and subservient position of Hindu women as a result of the inequalities ordained in the religious texts. He urged for a common code for the Hindu Community that would do away with the rules of Hindu law which were scattered in innumerable decisions of various High courts. His vision of common Hindu code was that it would enable inter-caste marriage, monogamy, and ensure economic rights to women through property rights. Through this common code, Ambedkar aimed at raising the status of Hindu women and preventing injustices inflicted on her. He also emphasized that in a secular state religion should not be allowed to govern all human activities and that personal laws should be divorced from religion¹⁰³.

According to Ambedkar, the Hindu social order is the root cause of various social evils perpetuated in various forms in the Indian society, For him, Hinduism is responsible for the abominable conditions of the down-trodden, especially of lower caste and women. The inequality in Hinduism is a religious doctrine adopted and conscientiously preached as a sacred dogma. The triumphant Brahmanism began its onslaught on both shudra and women in pursuit of the ideal of servility. He blamed Manu for treating women in more or less similar way as the shudra. Apart from restricting her from studying the Veda, Manu also prevented women from making sacrifices¹⁰⁴.

Ambedkar's vision of a just society was based upon three universal principles: Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, The united name for these trinity principles he used is 'justice'. In order to establish such a society, he favoured democracy. According to him:

"Democracy was not a form of a government; it was essentially a form of a society. It may not be necessary for a democratic society to be marked by unity, by community of purpose, by loyalty to public ends and by mutuality of sympathy. But

it does unmistakably involve two things. The first is an attitude of mind, an attitude of respect and equality towards their fellows. The second is a social organization free from rigid social barriers."¹⁰⁵

At the time of adoption of the Constitution of India on 26th January 1950, he elaborated the form of social and political democracy through the following statement:

*"We must make our political democracy a social democracy as well. Political democracy can not last unless there lies at the base of it, social democracy. What does social democracy mean? It means a way of life which recognises liberty, equality and fraternity as the principles of life. These principles of liberty, equality and fraternity are not to be treated as separate items in a trinity. They form a union of trinity in the sense that to divorce one from other is to defeat the very purpose of democracy."*¹⁰⁶

He further argued in the same statement that on the social plane, the Indian society was based on the principle of graded inequality and on the economic plane, the wealth was inequitably distributed. Thus, while in politics, Indian people might get equality, but in social and economic life, the inequality would continue. If such situation continued, the contradiction would blow up the structure of political democracy as well¹⁰⁷.

While he continued on with unceasing zeal his efforts to adequate legal safeguards for depressed classes, he did forget the fact that unless the affected people must engage themselves in the same war, the desired outcome could never be realised. He did not assume the role of their political leader; he was a leader in their social life as well. He tried to infuse not only in men but also women a new sense of self-respect instead of being reconciled with the social norms. He urged them to observe cleanliness, to send their children to school and told them to live with self-dignity and self-respect¹⁰⁸.

Individual freedom and common good are the dearest and the most precious things in Ambedkar's social and political ideas. To him social and political ideas embody social dynamism, because man is a political animal and a social being,

He attempted to bring modern philosophical thought to solve the political ills of men. He believed that what is political ideal for most Indians will become a social ideal for all. In his philosophy, he gave the highest place to fraternity. His political philosophy has a deep faith in fundamental human rights, in the equal rights of men and women, in the dignity of the individual, in the social and economic justice, in the promotion of social progress and better standards of life with peace and security in all spheres of human life. His political ideas are synthesis of idealism and realism, empiricism and rationalism, naturalism and humanism, materialism and spiritualism, individualism and socialism¹⁰⁹.

In his social and political ideas, Ambedkar stood for equality and justice in the realm of social, economic and political arena. He remarked that justice had always evoked ideas of equality, of proportion, of compensation. Equity signifies equality. Rules and regulations, right and righteousness are concerned with equality in value. If all men are equal, then all men are of the same essence, and the common essence entitles them of the same fundamental rights and equal liberty. It is in this spirit, he wanted rights of women¹¹⁰.

Ambedkar can be designated as a normative political theorist. A normative political theorist begins with assumptions that most people can endorse easily. Once, these assumptions are accepted, the thinker starts dealing with more contentious issues¹¹¹.

He wanted a society that is sufficiently honest and open minded to recognize its problems, sufficiently creative to conceive new solutions and to put them into effect¹¹². Society shall protect the individual's human right. Defining the relationship between an individual and society, he said:

“What should be the relation between a man and society? The modern social philosophers have postulated three answers to this question. Some have said that the ultimate goal of society is to achieve happiness for individuals. Some say the society exists for development for inherent qualities and energies of man and help him to develop himself. However, some claim that the chief object of social organization is not the development or happiness of the individual but the creation of an ideal

society. The concept of Hindu religion is however very different from all these concepts. There is no place for an individual in Hindu religion. The Hindu religion is constituted on a class concept. The Hindu religion does not teach how an individual should behave with another individual. A religion which does not recognise the individual is not personally acceptable to me. Although society is necessary for the individual, mere social welfare can not be the ultimate goal of religion. According to me individual welfare and progress (individual development) should be the real aim of the religion. Although the individual is the part of the society, the relation with society is not like the body and its organs, or the cart and its wheels.... unlike the drop of water that merges its existence with the ocean in which it drops, man does not loose his entity in the society in which he lives. Man's life is independent he is born not for the service of the society but for his self-development. For this reason alone, in developed countries one man can not enslave another. A religion in which an individual has no importance is not acceptable to me. The basic idea underlying a religion is to create an atmosphere for the spiritual development of an individual. If this is agreed upon it is clear that you can not develop yourself at all in the Hinduism. Three factors are required for the uplift of an individual; they are sympathy, equality and liberty."¹¹³

To Ambedkar society is an organization based on some human attitudes. It has certain essentials which contribute to form a real society. He holds that men do not become a society by living in physical proximity any more than a man ceases to be a member of a society by living so many miles away from other men. To Ambedkar men constitute a society because they have things they possess in common. The soul of his ideal society is social conscience¹¹⁴.

Ambedkar can be viewed as a synthesizer of many Indian trends of social and political ideas: Justice, Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, casteless-classless society etc. His life and struggle can be seen as the protest against the caste ridden, highly regimented Hindu society and to him this was the source of all injustices, discrimination and social exclusion.

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