

Chapter III

Ambedkar and His Views on Society, Economy, and Polity – His Social Background and its Impact on His Thought Process – Emergence of Ambedkar as a Leader of the Depressed Classes and Construction of His Ideas for a Just Social Order.

I

It has been observed that the two important issues of social justice and economic equality occupied the pre-eminent position in the minds of the makers of modern India. It may be noted that these two issues were deliberately neglected during India's subjugation to foreign power. Infact any study of India's freedom struggle movement will show that attainment of Independence had been the immediate goal, but the establishment of an egalitarian society had been the ultimate vision of the leaders in the movement.

A brief reference to the situation immediately after Independence will make the picture clear. A newly Independent nation, that was India had to tackle two important tasks – the task of nation building and task of state building. The infant state was not in a position to revive the economy which was totally sheltered. Consequently the idea of having social justice was not in the minds of the leaders. An open society with so many social changes needed cohesion first, development afterwards.

At this critical juncture B.R. Ambedkar represented that United India where all segments of the society would be in a

position to have their share and would be able to play a 'very constructive role. Dr. Ambedkar realized that mere framing of a constitution with lofty ideals might not bring good to the people unless there is a social consciousness, general commitment and urge for emancipation of the society. His name is best known for the service he rendered in framing the constitution for free India, but it is commonly believed that the constitution that finally emerged was nothing but a document containing high ideals, which Dr. Ambedkar fought his life through to bring them into reality through his words and deeds. Ambedkar was a 'great personality. His personality and his qualities touched the standards of a great visionary statesman, an ideal constitutionalist, an exclusive creative thinker, a hard working individual, a courageous Indian who waged a relentless struggle against the denial of social justice and economic equality to the submerged Indians throughout the country.

Ambedkar come from a poor family belonging to one of the untouchable community in India. These untouchables formed the lowest strata of the Hindu society, and were exploited as untouchables by the upper caste Hindus. These untouchables were known by different names in different parts of the country, like outcastes, untouchables, atishudras, Namashudras etc.¹ They were marked by several social disabilities which crippled their whole being. Their very presence, or for that matter even their shadows were considered to be polluting by the upper caste Hindus. They were forced to follow a different pattern of living, eating and even dressing. They were forced to occupy the most dingy and dirty places, which were usually on the outskirts of the villages. Apart

from these rules made by the upper castes for the lower castes were added the denial and use of public wells, denial of admission in public schools where the children of the upper castes studied. Though they worshipped the same Hindu Gods, the doors of the temples were always closed for them! This was not all, in addition to these, they were illiterate, and were forced to follow their hereditary occupations. They were born as untouchables, lived and died as untouchables – dominated, unwanted, restricted and unattained! Unto this community was born the fourteenth child of Ramji Maloji Sakpal, Bhim Rao Ambedkar. The origin of untouchability is an outcome of the Hindu caste system. With the passage of time the Vedic Aryans divided themselves into four different groups according to their occupation, according to the theory of division of labour. Those who chose learning were considered as Brahmins, the ones who took up administration and governance were classified as Kshatriyas, those who restored to trade were termed as Vaishyas and those who served these three classes were termed as Shudras. With this division, the most ignorant and fallen person could claim himself a Brahmin, and an individual from the Shudra group, however intelligent was considered a low caste Hindu, and the result was that they were labeled as untouchables. But this system did not go unchallenged and from generation to generation men came forward and dismantled this set up. Buddha threw this system apart, by embracing the untouchables into his teachings, Ramanuja threw open the doors and gates of temples for these people as well; following them were the saints of the Bhakticult like Kabir and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.² This change was caught up by the social

revival of Ram Mohun Roy. In relation to these social outbursts the name of Shri Sayajirao Gaekwad of Baroda should not go unmentioned, as he started the schools for the untouchables in 1883. Maharashtra was another place where the problems in the political and social fields were numerous. But it faced the courage of social reformers and political agitators. Tilak was one such agitator who spoke for the situation. Such was the situation of the Maharashtra on the eve of the birth of Dr. Ambedkar.

II

Dr. Ambedkar was born in a Mahar Caste, their ancestral village was Ambavade, in a small town in Ratnagiri District in Maharashtra. Ambedkar's family background was conducive for a development of confidence and self respect, as his father and grand father were both military men. Ramji Sakpal acquired high knowledge in English language, serving as the headmaster of a Military school, with the rank of Subedar – Major in the army. Therefore, this was an unusual advantage for his children. This opportunity gave Ambedkar the fame of being the first untouchable ever to attain a doctorate. Ramji Sakpal was a great admirer of Mahatma Phule, and he was actively involved in social affairs. The family belonged to the Kabir cult. Ramji Sakpal was the father of fourteen children, of whom Ambedkar was the youngest. He was born at Mhow, on the 14th April, 1891. Ambedkar's mother Bhimabai was a very pious and gentle lady who hailed from the Murbadkars, another untouchable Hindu community. They were of a rich background from the village of Murbad in the Thana district of Mumbai. She was a lady who had

deep knowledge in the teachings of Kabir and theology and hence she observed a religious life. At the early age of six Ambedkar lost his mother, and was under the care and guidance of his father, brothers and an aunt who had a lot of knowledge in practical life. This family observed a very pious life, which was devoted to God's spiritual hymns and prayers. Ramji Sakpal read to his children the great epics, drilling into their minds divine inspiration and helping them to understand motive the force behind every strong personality. Since they resided in the military headquarters, they were surrounded by the stern and strict discipline of military life. Ramji Sakpal was not only a spiritual man, but a practical man who worked hard for the worldly betterment of his children. He was a master of Marathi Language, letting the command of the language flow to his pupils and children. He also had a good hold of English language which served as the key to guide his children. This hard working man took great interest in the social problems of the day. In 1892 he took great interest in fighting against the banning of recruitment of the Mahars in the Indian army by the British government. Such a man of wisdom, courage, practical knowledge guided Ambedkar till the last days of his life. Therefore Ambedkar was at an advantage in comparison to his fellow beings, under the curse of untouchability.³

III

Ambedkar completed his primary education and high school education along with his elder brother at Satara. At his school he had already felt the sting of untouchability. He cultivated a spirit of patience and enduring pain in the school of experience. He

suffered when he learned that his very presence had the power to pollute animals as well as men and what astonished him was that he had the ability to pollute even non-living things like a bullock-cart! Yet another shock was when he learnt that his hairs defiled the purity of a barber's razor! ⁴ He slowly came to understand that he belonged to a family where nothing in the society – be it natural or man-made belonged to him! These were the cruel disabilities that an untouchable faced and which left irremovable stains on Bhim's young mind. These insulting and irrational rules made by the upper caste Hindus must have engendered in him an ever lasting hatred for Hinduism.

A Brahmin teacher in the High school however had a great liking for Ambedkar. It was his daily routine to drop a little amount of his lunch into Ambedkar's hands during recess. The original surname of Bhim's father was Sakpal, and Bhim drew his surname Ambavadekar from his native village Ambavade. The teacher was so much attracted to little Bhim that he changed his surname from Ambavadekar to his own surname Ambedkar in all the school records.⁵ Ambedkar remembered this teacher whose kindness and humane nature took him off his feet. But amidst this sudden love and kindness, there always existed the untouchable rules of the High Caste Hindus. He and his brother were usually given one corner in the classroom and the teachers did not even touch their notebooks nor came near them in the fear of getting polluted. And when they were thirsty somebody would pour water into their mouth keeping a wide distance between them. Years passed by and Bhim developed a passion for reading. Changes took place when Ramji Sakpal shifted his family to Mumbai and

Bhim got admission in the Government Elphinstone High School. But although a government school, this institution was not free from the hurdles of casteism. One day he was called upon the blackboard to solve an arithmetic problem, and there was a sudden uproar in the class, and the reason was that the children of the upper caste Hindus used to keep their lunch boxes behind the blackboard.⁶ He received the most deepest cut of untouchability in school, which he remembered all his life. He was forced not to study Sanskrit by the Brahmin teachers because it was held by the upper casts, that Sanskrit was the key to the Vedas and an untouchable did not have the right to have the Vedic knowledge he studied Sanskrit partly by himself and partly with the help of some pandits. With these great hurdles, he managed with patience and courage to pass his matriculation in 1907, which was an uncommon achievement for an untouchable. This event, was celebrated by this community, where his personality attracted a well-known Marathi writer Krishnaji Arjun Keluskar who presented him a copy of his new book, "Life of Gautama Buddha", which left behind irremovable prints on his young mind.⁷

Soon after this achievement he was greeted with yet another achievement of tying the knot with a girl of nine years. Ramu who was renamed Ramabai. She hailed from a good but poor family. Encouraged by his father's dream he then joined Elphinstone college in Mumbai Prof. Muller helped Ambedkar with books and clothes. The college hotel keeper who was a Brahmin never served him tea or water! He worked day and night with a lien to arm himself against the society in which he lived. It was during this period that the British govt. suppressed the rights of the Indians,

protests and appeals were not taken attention of, several social and political leaders and editors of newspapers were imprisoned and even deaths of some patriotic youths sent currents agitating the young mind of Ambedkar. After his graduation Ambedkar took service in Baroda, despite his fathers' disapprovals. He was appointed to the post of a lieutenant in the Baroda State forces. During this service his father breathed his last on Feb.2, 1913, which was the most unfortunate day in Ambedkar's life.

After the death of his father he had no intentions of going back to Baroda and the Maharaja of Baroda offered a scholarship for higher education in USA. This offer came as an uncommon opportunity for an untouchable. Life in a foreign land was a totally new experience for Ambedkar. Here there were no bars for an untouchable. His friends and his colleagues moved about freely with him – he could eat, talk, sit, share and even have a hair-cut in a status of equality! This status of equality and freedom enlarged his mental thinking, opening up new horizons in his constructive mind. He then slowly began to grasp the ills of the Hindu society which was reflected in his discovery that a better society can be cherished only if we base the society on education, education of both the sexes. In education he found the remedy against the seed of helplessness. While in the states, Ambedkar was and somehow deeply impressed with the American constitution and was more attracted to the fourteenth Amendment of the constitution which dealt with the freedom of the blacks.⁸ He was also influenced by Booker T. Washington who was a great reformer and educator of the Negroes in America. He had opened the doors of education to the Negroes. After a successful career at the Columbia University

where he completed his Master's degree, he decided to move to London for further knowledge. He got himself admitted to the Grays Inn for Law and study of Economics to the London school of Economics and Political Science. He was then appointed for the post of a professor in Sydenham College, Mumbai. Professorship also did not bring him very good results as the curse of untouchability followed him like a shadow. Some professors agitated to his drinking water from the same pot reserved for other staff members!

IV

Dr. Ambedkar returned from London after receiving D.Sc. and barrister-at-law in 1923. By this time he had sharpened his mind with accurate knowledge and experience. He automatically became the spokesperson of the downtrodden. He now survived to work for the development of his style of leadership. When he came to the forefront the dynamic leadership of Lokmanya Tilak had ended and Gandhi had taken over as an all India leader. Savakar was also released and hired in Ratnagiri, which was Ambedkar's nature village. Efforts to do away with untouchability had begun a long time back, but Ambedkar kept himself away from these programmes as he wanted to do something in his own way. He initiated his work by opening an institution of education for the untouchables. During the years, he tried to organize the downtrodden in their struggle for emancipation. He moved from place to place holding meetings and conferences. While Gandhi was building up his leadership among the Indian masses,

Ambedkar was building up his leadership among the untouchables in his own way. Ambedkar's first attack was the use of public tanks and well by the untouchables, and he freed the public tank at Mahad for the untouchables. His next step was burning of the Manusmriti which codified and legalized the Hindu practice of untouchability.

Ambedkar's leadership among the untouchables brought him into conflict with Gandhi.⁹ This conflict mainly revolved around the issue of the separate versus the joint electorates which were to be granted to the untouchables in the new legislative reforms. At the same time the two had built up their leadership in their own ways, and it was natural for their egos to clash with one another. However Ambedkar was forced to give up his demand for his men for separate electorates. But however a large number of seats for his men in the legislature, were granted. Another controversy between the two emerged on the on the issue of temple entry, Dr. Ambedkar fought on this issue as a means for attaining equality; he was not begging for entry into temples, where even dogs were allowed but not an outcaste! The real objective was to remove the four varnas on which the whole doctrine of; inequality rested. On the other hand Gandhi who was in favour of the removal of untouchability was not ready to abolish the Varna system, and considered it as an unremovable doctrine!¹⁰ Due to these controversies Ambedkar also thought on the lines of moving out of the Hindu system altogether. He again realized that untouchability was not only restricted to this area and it was a difficult task to change traditions and customs, and also that religion alone could not wipe away the problems of poverty and starvation! Further

over attention on the religious aspect would lead to diversion of the economic problems. He realized that there were two fundamental tools – the right to political power and the right to education. He taught his men to systematically use both these, and taught them to be alert about law making processes and should them how it could be controlled through noting, i.e. they were eligible to change the law processes and also that he urged them to take up to education in order to understand things. He gave his own example that an untouchable could have a better occupational and economic status, only through education. He worked day and night to prepare his followers psychologically and to fight for their social, political and economic rights.

Dr. Ambedkar as an intellectual grew up under the influence of oriental as well as western traditions, engulfing the ideas on freedom of thought and expression. He never could tolerate a totalitarian ideology. He also feared communism least his followers would embrace this ideology on account of achieving equality.¹¹ It has been pointed out that Dr. Ambedkar was a believer of state socialism, as pointed out by Dhananjay Keer (Keer, p.389). In addition to equality and freedom he also believed in fraternity, which was more or less of the religious type. The final outcome of his philosophy rested on Buddhism. The three principles of Buddhism which touched and influenced him most ever – Prajna, i.e. understanding as against superstition; Karuna, i.e. Love and Samata, i.e. equality.¹² with these influences and teachings of Lord Buddha. Buddhism became the keystone of his analysis of Hinduism. The principles of Buddhism which appeared to challenge the hard notions of brahmanical Hinduism affected

Ambedkar a great deal. His admiration for Mahatma Jotirba Phule was deep rooted one as the latter at one time had been India's one of the greatest social reformers who was a crusader against Brahminism and casteism.

The position in and around education was still worse. It was a unique feature of the Hindu society prohibiting the mass of its people from acquiring knowledge. This was only observed in the Hindu society that education was restricted to the priesting class. Education and knowledge was an affair of the Brahmins only and others had no right to touch this sphere. All these observations as made by Ambedkar left us the weak basis of the Hindu society. He questioned every kind of humiliation that a Dalit had to undergo. He accumulated all his analysis in books, which were written to being forward his ideas an equality and social justice. During this process he also sought to discover alternative theories with the help of his vast knowledge and sharp analytical mind. His knowledge was too vast that we do not get his egalitarian thoughts accumulated in any of his works. Instead they are scattered in his numerous writings, especially from his writings on the exploitation of the Dalits.

With a detailed analysis and deep study of Hinduism, he concluded that the untouchables occupied a 'weak and low status' only because they were a part of the Hindu society. Hinduism and the Hindu society had given him the worse psychological trauma that being born a Hindu, he favoured Buddhism. The most important event in his life, from the point of religion was his renunciation from Hinduism.¹³ As against the Hindu society, in his article "Buddha and the future of his Religion", in the Mahabodhi

Society Journal, 1950, he mentions that – 1. A society must have either the sanction of law or the sanction of morality to hold it together. Without either, the society is sure to go into pieces; 2. Religion, if it is to survive, must be in consonance with reason, another name for science; 3. It is not enough for religion to consist of moral code, but its moral code must recognize the fundamental tenants of liberty, equality and fraternity; 4. Religion must not signify or make a virtue out of poverty. All these requirements, Ambedkar discovered in Buddhism and in order to propagate these fundamental principles that embraced Buddhism were written down in his book “The Buddha and His Dhamma”.¹⁴ He was bold enough to proclaim “what is called religion by the Hindus is nothing but a multitude of commands and prohibitions”. He was most discontented with the system of Chaturvarnya, which sanctified inequality and untouchability. He again denied that the Vedas were the final and the sacred doctrines which were infallible. Ambedkar was of the idea that everything in life was infallible, including the Vedas and that everything should be subjected to examination and re-examination if progress was to be achieved.

Ambedkar found in Buddhism a rational idea that centered around the whole philosophy. The scientific law of cause and effect in Buddhism attracted him very much. The religion holds that every event has a cause, and the cause is the result of human action. Buddhism wholly rejects supernaturalism.¹⁵ Hinduism on the other hand shuts the doors of man’s inquiry into the cause of events. It vested the authority of learning and interpretations only to the Brahmins’. This was one of the vital reasons for the

numerous distortions in Hinduism. Another massive attack, he launches against Hinduism is found in his "Riddles in Hinduism – An Exposition to Enlightenment of the Masses", but unfortunately which remained unpublished during his lifetime. This book contained the exposition of the Brahmanic theology. It arrived to awaken the Hindu masses against the hazardous situations created by the Brahmins. He struggled to make the common masses aware that the Hindu society needed a change and that change could be brought about only if they changed their minds from the traditions of the Brahmins; if only they could start thinking by themselves, for themselves. The most poisonous teachings of this Brahmanic theology was the infallibility of the Vedas, and this should be destroyed from the very root, if India was to progress. It was because the Vedas made the Brahmins the lords of the earth, and they preached its sanctity and infallibility. Ambedkar put his words and deeds together to free the Hindu minds from this dogma, and he proclaimed that without the liberation of the masses from the ideas propagated by the Brahmins, India had no future.

In his book "Annihilation of caste", Ambedkar has thought of remedies to outdo the caste system. He pointed that the task should begin with the abolition of sub-castes, but this was not the sure remedy. Another remedy would be dining together with the inter-castes. Ambedkar himself was not satisfied with this remedy, because he knew that the sting of casteism would not be so easily wiped off! He then thought that the fusion of blood would be in a way, a helpful remedy and: he suggested inter-caste marriages. He said caste will receive a setback only when commonality, viz. inter-dining and inter-marriage would be operative in everyday

life. In relation to this he raises of fundamental question as to why a large majority of Hindus do not accept this idea?

According to him this is so because it goes against the fundamentals of the Brahmanic dogmas. Hindus observe this caste system, because Hindhism follows the basic principles of casteism. The only strong remedy is to destroy the sacredness of the Shastras. He regretfully announced that Hinduism breded inequality in all its forms and facets.

In his "Philosophy of Hinduism", Ambedkar has successfully applied the test of justice as well as utility to judge Hinduism. Justice, according to him revolves around the fulcrum of liberty, equality and fraternity. Hinduism according to 'him, breeds inequality due to the system of Varna-Vyavastha, which has its basis on the system of rank and gradation. He points out that in the Manu, slavery is justified which is confined to the Shudras only. The Shudras could be the slaves for the other three castes i.e. Brahmins, Kshatriyas and the Vaishyas, but these classes could never be the slaves of the Sudras! Another eye-catching feature of the Manu was inequality of Punishments, for the same offence. The punishment depended upon the caste of an individual – the higher the caste, lesser the punishment, lower the caste, more severe the punishment, for the same offence. Since Hinduism gives place to inequality, therefore it neither has place for liberty to flourish. Along with the absence of virtues like equality and liberty, Hinduism also denies its people economic security. Hinduism denies freedom of occupation, and again according to the Manu, an individual's occupation is highly dependent upon his birth. The Shudras are born only to serve the higher classes and the

service they render should be their highest goal in life. Regarding knowledge, Hinduism maintained strict codes for the Vedic knowledge. Manus directs the upper three classes to study the Vedas, and the Brahmins had the authority to teach the Vedas. The Shudras had no right to learn the Vedic knowledge, nor letter the Vedas, and he was even barred from listening to the Vedas! This resulted in mass illiteracy and ignorance, as there was a direct link between reading, writing and a study of the Vedas. Ambedkar assaulted that the ancient world might have been quality of refusing to shoulder the responsibility of education of the masses. But there has never been a society guilty of closing to generality of its people the study of books of its religion. ¹⁶.

The spirit of fraternity obviously could not be expected in the Hindu society, where such a wide gap existed between man and man. Thus he analysed Hinduism from the point of justice and concluded that "Hinduism was inimical to equality, antagonistic to Liberty and opposed to fraternity".¹⁷.

V

Ambedkar, an impassioned advocate of the downtrodden struggled to transform an illiterate and disabled mass into an important factor in the Indian political power structure. He stood up against a rigorous caste-ridden society, which existed with a hatred for the untouchables. The better personal experiences and the situation of the downtrodden gave him the strength to strengthen and transform the Hindu society on the basis of equality, liberty as well as fraternity. To begin with, one would

have to examine Ambedkar's critique of the Hindu socio-religious system. His critique of the Hinduism was based on an extensive study of the Hindu religious literature. He used the philosophy of justice in order to judge the philosophy of Hinduism. For him, justice was the foundation for a moral order. Justice stood for equality, equality in terms of proportion. Equity signified equality, and if all men are equal, they have the same essence; this common essence entitles them to common rights and equal liberty. In a total framework, justice meant liberty, equality and fraternity. He pointed out that the four varnas in the Hindu social system was the root cause of all happenings, in other words of inequality. 'This inequality had seeped in every aspect of the Hindu social order. Rule of law in the Hindu society did not mean equality before law or in the eyes of law. Its basis was found in the discrimination based on varna. Punishment was in no way related to the offence, i.e. higher the caste, lesser the punishment and lower the caste, harder the punishment. The roots of inequality was strongly embedded in the Hindu philosophy.

With this, economic independence created an environment where liberty could never exist – and if it ever existed it existed on the basis of the four varnas, where liberty existed only for the upper caste Hindus.

Ambedkar was not at all satisfied with the British Raj and in his work "Administration and Finance of the East India Company", he has given us a clear picture of how India had been used to increase the wealth of Britain, resulting in a thorough disbalance of her economy. He pointed out that the untouchables could not improve themselves in anyway under the British Raj.

Here he set examples of the denial of the untouchables in the army; or even that the Britishers were not very happy to spread education among the depressed sections. This was not all, marks Ambedkar, with the appointment of the Hunter Commission, the Dalits were denied and discriminated on certain grounds, whereas the Muslims were given special treatment, socially, educationally as well as economically! Ambedkar was dissatisfied on the context that greater weightage was given to the Muslims on account of their political importance, which gave rise to communal dissatisfaction and strife. He was of the strong opinion that until this central problem of caste is not handled, it would be difficult to achieve an egalitarian state. He said that in a Hindu society, wherever you turn, caste would be the common factor, and in its most dissatisfying form! Reform of any kind was impossible until the caste factor was removed. His thinking was never satisfied with the British in settling religious, social, political problems nor did he conform to the policies of the congress leaders. He was away from the principles of Fabianism or for that matter Marxian socialist nor Gandhian. He sought for those remedies which were vital in re-structuring the Hindu society, and the upliftment of the downtrodden, the untouchable. He was far-sighted to understand that the Britishers would in no way help Ambedkar to free the untouchables from the shackles of the rigid Hindu society, and therefore he came to the conclusion that an alternative was the overall independence of India from the British Raj. Neither was it wise to fight for nationhood, nor a separate entity, because these untouchables neither had a common language, tradition, culture nor a common geographical location. What they had in common

was only the deprivation of progress – social, economic or political.

Thus, Ambedkar's analysis of the Hindu order highlighted its basis on inequality. He belonged to the revivalist school, influenced deeply by the principles of Buddhism which kept itself away from the Vedic dogmas having its basis on rational thinking. The knowledge which he had gathered for all these years, he used for the upliftment of the downtrodden. He had the courage to fight unshakably for his fellow beings. He did not believe in legislation nor force to create a new egalitarian society. He believed in the efficiency of legislation and worked to create a constitutional instrument to protect the fundamental rights of the depressed sections of the society, along with their economic and political interests. In order to make things easier he had already submitted memoranda's to the government from time to time. One of the major developments in the post independent India was that the constituent Assembly passed a provision legally abolishing untouchability on November, 29, 1949.

VI

The concept of 'equality' forms another pillar of Ambedkar's thought process. Infact his idea on equality can be well gathered from his criticism of the Hindu society. His ideas on equality and justice are not systematically enumerated in any of his works, instead they scatter themselves as 'jewels of thought' in his various writings.¹⁸ To begin with his mind was never satisfied with the British Raj, and proclaimed that England had used India

only for her gain. In his work: "Administration and Finance of the East India Company", he stated, "Apparently, the immenseness of India's contribution to England is as much astounding, as the nothingness of England's contribution to India".¹⁹ Under the British scheme, it was the dalits who suffered the most. In "The untouchables and Pas Britannica", (Vol.VII), Ambedkar has highlighted how the dalits had been refused service in the army, who had had helped them a long way in the Revolt of 1857. Regarding education, these sections of the people were denied, justice as it was a theory of the Britishers that if these people where armed with the weapon of education, knowledge would spread only among them, least they would be in an advantageous position than rest of the society. With the appointment of the Hunter Commission, the dalits were looked down upon and instead special treatment was accorded to the Muslims. Ambedkar was very much taken back by this act of the British government. The backward class never got the attention of the government and they continued to be discriminated in every sphere of life. His views on equality were his own construction and ideas which had a different vision from other versions on equality. It did not find any match with the congress ideologies of political advancement, neglecting socio-religious equality, nor did it find any resemblance to the Fabian concept neither the Marxian nor even the socialist and for that matter even the Gandhian perspective. His concept of equality revolved around the necessity for reconstruction of the Hindu society, as also for the upliftment of the untouchables. He was impressed by the ideas which gave impetus to the French Revolution, fourteenth amendment of the American constitution,

the Marxist and Buddhist thoughts on equality etc.... But however he did not fully subscribe to any particular ideology. He also disagreed with the ideas of the socialists, on the point that economic power was the only source of power for the society. There existed social equality, property, religious, culture and all these could be viewed as different forms of power and authority. He firmly assured that unless social issues, especially untouchability was tackled, it was impossible for India to see a bright tomorrow. He pointed out, "turn in any direction you like, caste is the monster that crosses your path. You cannot have political reform, you cannot have economic reform, unless you kill this monster".²⁰ He studied that so far as the untouchability syndrome existed, and as long as man remained isolated from man, social harmony could not be achieved. When men can communicate with each other and live in perfect social harmony, fraternity, another criteria for equality can be achieved. Fraternity is only another name for democracy, according to Ambedkar. He regards democracy more than a form of government. It should be regarded as a mode of living in association with others in free communication.

Gandhi and Ambedkar both had concern for the untouchables, but they widely differed in their perspectives, while finding out solutions for the dejected class. Gandhi kept high the Vedic ideals in order to push India into an egalitarian society, whereas Ambedkar wanted to move far away from the vedic customs and traditions. Gandhi was of the view that the Chaturvarna was an unremovable doctrine of Hinduism and the Hindu society, whereas Ambedkar boldly apprehends that the

varna system, which forms the basis of Hinduism breeds inequality, and nothing else. Since Gandhi centered all his philosophy on non violence, he approached the problem of the untouchables applying the theory of 'self purification'. On the other hand, Ambedkar applied the theory of 'self-respect', with its basis on self-help, education and self organization. Gandhi was of the view that the law of the varna only taught man to earn his living. Therefore, there was nothing like inequality here. Nothing was too high, nor too low. He said that the caste system and untouchability should go, but the varna system should remain. Ambedkar, on the other hand asserted that varna gave birth to caste. Gandhi did not give much emphasis on the working of legislations to meet social needs, whereas Ambedkar gave utmost emphasis to the effect of law. In this context he framed a constitutional system to bring into reality his India, where liberty, equality and fraternity played the leading role. His vision of India was "all citizens would be equal before law: they have equal civic rights, equal access to all institutions, conveniences and amenities maintained by or for the public, they possess equal opportunities to settle or reside in any part of India, to hold any public office, or exercise any trade or calling".²¹

Along with this wide vision, he even gave room for economic equality, where agriculture would be treated as an industry, an industry which would be collectively owned by the state. Land would be distributed among the villagers without any distinction on the basis of caste. There would be no landlordism, no tenant and no landless labourer. To maintain equality, this was an important measure, according to him : in order to bring his

scheme into the limelight he pleaded for the safeguards of the minorities. It was not easy to fight against the age-old traditions, upheld by the Hindu society, or for that matter the rules and laws of denial of the depressed class, during the British Raj. Ambedkar should truly be worshipped as one of the great Indian heroes who fought relentlessly against injustices given to the depressed sections. He had a dauntless courage as he had himself sprung from among the untouchables, and he never broke down under strong pressures of any kind. He had dreamt of a mission in life and he did succeed in achieving his mission.

VII

Ambedkar, holds the key to the understanding of modern India, our problems and our problems and our necessities. Therefore it is wise on our part that we study him from the aspects. In order to understand his egalitarian state, his economic reforms and ideas hold a strong position in his thought process. Being a professional economist, he was deeply interested in the discipline. Infact he held economics very close to his heart. He felt the need of this discipline in order to understand the problems of India and the Indian masses. His economic ideas proved fruitful in the old days and are useful carrying its relevance even today.

Agriculture, which was the chief source of Indian economy, then, as is today, the economic problems mostly centered on it. This was one of the main reasons for him to focus his attention on Indian agriculture. The main problem of Indian agriculture lay in the wrong system of land distribution. His main attention was

focused on the nature of distribution of land, especially their fragmentation and unproductive structures. He argued that the pressure of population on land was very high. People cultivated a small piece of land, with more or less no profit, depending on it as a means to their livelihood. If the society had given something more, they would not depend on these small holdings. Indian agriculture lacked the capacity to produce high earnings, leading to inefficient use of resources, labour and superfluous employment which generally resulted in low agricultural productivity. He suggested the remedy in consolidation of holdings – He suggested industrialization, which would “facilitate consolidation... It lessens the premium on land. It must precede consolidation. It is a barrier against future sub-division and fragmentation”.²²

In 1937, Ambedkar introduced a Bill, seeking the abolition of the ‘Khoti System’: Under this system existed a superior land holder, and a tenant. It somewhat resembled the Zamindari system. This system gave way to a superior – subordinate relation, where, the superior usually strained the tenants, and they demanded the abolition of this unjust system, and Ambedkar too felt it important to abolish this system. By introducing this Bill, Ambedkar sought to establish a direct link between the tillers of the land and the government. The Bill also carried the provision for paying reasonable compensation to the land holder. Agriculture was to be made a state industry, where the state should divide the land into standard size, giving it to the villagers for cultivation, on the principles of collective farming. He felt the necessity to change the economic structure of India, in order to achieve an egalitarian

society. He assured the need to take changing steps to reform the Indian economy.

He gave a clear picture of the economic structure which he figured to be included in the constitution. He planned to place the basic industries under state control. Art. II, Section II, Clause IV of his proposal declares –

- 1) The industries which are key industries or which may be declared to be key industries shall be owned and run by the state;
- 2) That industries which are not the key industries but which are basic industries shall be owned by the state and shall be run by the state or by corporations established by the state;
- 3) That Insurance shall be a monopoly of the state and that the state shall compel every adult citizen to take out a life insurance policy commensurate with his wages as may be prescribed by the legislature;
- 4) That agriculture shall be a state industry;
- 5) That the state shall acquire the subsisting rights in such industries, insurance and agricultural land hold by private individuals, whether as owners, tenants or mortgages and pay them compensation in form of debenture equal to the value of his or her right in the land. Provided that in recovering the value of land, plant or security no account shall be taken of any rise therein, due to the emergence of any potential or unearned value or any value for compulsory acquisition;

- 6) The debenture holder nor the transferee and inheritable property but neither the debenture holder nor the transferee from the original holder nor his heir shall be entitled to claim the return of the land or interest in any industrial concern acquired by the state or be entitled to deal with it in anyway;
- 7) The debenture holder shall be entitled to interest on his debenture at such rate as may be defined by law, to be paid by the state in cash or in kind as the state may see fit;
- 8) Agriculture industry shall be organized on the following basis :
 - 1) The state shall divide the land acquired into forms of standard size and let out the forms for cultivation to residents of village as tenants (made up of group of families to cultivate on the following conditions:
 - a) The farm shall be cultivated as a collective farm;
 - b) The farm shall be cultivated in accordance with rules and directions issued by the government;
 - c) The tenants shall share among themselves, in the manner prescribed, the produce of the farm left after the payment of the charges properly reliable on the farm;
 - 2) The land shall be let out to villagers without distinction of caste or creed and in such a manner that there will be no landlord, no tenant and no landless labourer;

- 3) It shall be the obligation of the state to finance the cultivation of the collective farms by the supply of water, draught animals, implements, manure, seeds etc.
- 4) The state shall be entitled:
 - (a) To levy the following charges on the produce of the farm : (1) a portion for land revenue
 - (2) a portion to pay the debenture – holders;
 - (3) a portion to pay for the use of capital goods supplied.
 - (b) To prescribe penalties against tenants who break the conditions of tenancy or willfully neglect to make the best use of means of cultivation offered by the state or otherwise act prejudicially to the scheme of collective farming.
- 5) The scheme shall be brought into operation as easily as possible but in no case shall the period extend beyond the tenth year from the date of the constitution covering into operation.²³

Ambedkar while framing his scheme of state socialism had in mind two major objectives i.e. bringing about economic equality and ensuring its legal basis by constitutional means, making his scheme unalterable by any act of the legislature or executive.²⁴ He therefore gave a clear picture of the economic structure to be included in the constitution (Art. II, SecII; Clause IV). To quote him : “.....The main purpose behind the clause is to put an obligation on the state to plan the economic life of the people on lines which would lead to the highest point of productivity without

closing every avenue to private enterprise and also provide for the equitable distribution of wealth.”²⁵.

Ambedkar's ideas on social reconstruction in the post-colonial situation of India have been best reflected in his efforts to develop a socialist and secular constitution based on some of the fundamental principles of western constitutionalism. A look into the framing of the Constitution of India amply proves that Ambedkar's own perception of an egalitarian society inspired him to situate an individual in relation to the state where the individual world, in all practical senses, get adequate opportunities to express himself in the fullest sense of the term. The constitutional scheme guarantying individual rights is an elaborate mechanism for the protection of individual liberty and dignity. The whole secularization ethos underlying the Constitution can be explained with reference to Ambedkar's notion of man, society and the emancipation of man from all kinds of artificially created barriers.

Notes and References

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3. **Ibid**, p. 11.
4. **Ibid**, p. 14.
5. K. C. Yadav (ed), **From Periphery to Centre Stage, Ambedkar, Ambedkarism and Dalit Future**, p. 25.
6. Dhananjay Keer, **Dr. Ambedkar, Life and Mission**, Popular Prakashan, Mumbai, p. 18.
7. **Ibid**, p. 22.
8. **Ibid**, p. 31.
9. K. C. Yadav. (ed) **From Periphery to Centre Stage, Ambedkar, Ambedkarism and Dalit Future**, p. 57.
10. Dhananjay Keer, **Dr. Ambedkar, Life and Mission, Popular Prakashan**, Mumbai, p. 59.
11. **Ibid**, p. 389.
12. **Ibid**, p. 487, **B. R. Ambedkar, What Congress and Gandhi have done to the untouchables?**, Bombay, 1945, pp. 40 – 41.
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20. **Ibid**, p. 47.
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23. **Ibid**, pp. 14 – 16.
24. **Ibid**, p. 31.
25. **Ibid**, pp. 30 – 31.