



Ambedkar Times Weekly

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Ambedkar on the Intersectionality of Nationalism and Egalitarianism

Invited Editorial Article

Indian renaissance, freedom movement and the question of nationalism are deeply interconnected. Indian renaissance, in fact, provided base for the articulation of the narrative of freedom movement as well as the question of nationalism surrounded by multicultural ethos and socio-spiritual philosophical discourses of varied religions, faiths and sects that have flourished over centuries on the vast sub-continent size what traditionally and aptly been called Bharat. The vexed question of nationalism was not only debated along religious lines as it was in the case of political thought of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, Muhammad Iqbal and Muhammad Ali Jinnah; differences of opinions between the moderate and the extremist sections of the Indian National Congress further complicated its multi-corners contest. The seminal debate on Indian nationalism was equally sharpened by the political thoughts of Swami Vivekananda, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Sri Aurobindo, Bhai Parmananda, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, Keshav Valiram Hedgewar and Shyama Prasad Mookerjee. Apart from the mainstream political thinking, specifically from Hindu and Muslim perspectives, there exists, though less emphasised, a third perspective, informally designated as perspective from below. This perspective from below – Lower-caste-Bahujan perspective – had its roots in the social-egalitarian philosophy of Jyotirao Phule, DR. B.R. Ambedkar and E.V. Ramasamy Periyar. A closer reading of the narratives of various Adi movements of South India and Ad Dharm movement of Punjab, led by Babu Mangu Ram Muggowalia, provided yet another version of the Indian nationalism – somewhat more similar to that of the perspective from below. However, in the present article, we will confine ourselves only to the views of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar.

Dr B.R. Ambedkar was an iconoclastic social reformer who, at the very formative years of his career, realized what it meant to be an Untouchable and how a struggle against untouchability could be launched. The social-reform movement of the caste Hindus could not win him to its side because of his existential understanding of the horror of untouchability. The issue of untouchability, for social reformers, was a mere problem. This problem was exterior to them in the sense that it affected only the Untouchables but not them. They themselves had never experienced the sinister blows of un-

touchability. Though they were sympathetic to the cause of lower castes, they belonged to the camp that allegedly imposed this inhuman system of social segregation.

Dr Ambedkar's analysis of the origins of the untouchability and his action plans for its eradication were



different from the approach and practice of the caste Hindu social reformers. What distinguished him from the other social reformers was that he looked at the evil of untouchability from below, from a vantage point of the socially excluded and the oppressed. This perspective led him to think differently from the ones who belonged to the dominant stream of social and political thought of his time. His major works – *Castes in India: Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development*; *Annihilation of Caste*; *The Untouchables: Who Were They and Why They Became Untouchables?*; *Who Were the Shudras among others* – are testimony to this perspective and his independent, original and rational thinking. He smashed the mythological basis of

untouchability and laid bare its social and economic roots.

He built a strong case against the thesis of birth-based untouchability, which forced untouchability on those kept outside the caste system and made their life hell. He exhorted its victims to oppose it tooth and nail.

He said, "It is disgraceful to live at the cost of one's self respect. Self-respect is the most vital factor in life. Without it, man is a mere cipher. To live worthily with self-respect one has to overcome difficulties. It is out of hard and ceaseless struggle alone that one derives strength, confidence and recognition." He drew a distinction between merely living and living worthily. For living a worthy life, Ambedkar said, society must be based on liberty, equality and fraternity. For Ambedkar, social tyranny was more oppressive than political tyranny and "a reformer who defies society, is a much more courageous man than a politician, who defies government".

Ambedkar was of the kind who defied society. In the beginning

of his social-reform crusade, he tried to get respect and equality for the lower castes through reforms within the social set-up of Hinduism. He continued his struggle for empowerment of the lower castes

by seeking changes within the fold of Hinduism till 1935.

When he realized that the liberation of lower castes within Hinduism was impossible, his scathing criticism and tirade against Hinduism began. Ultimately, he became convinced that lower castes could seek empowerment only outside Hinduism, hence, his conversion to Buddhism. For Ambedkar, lower castes liberation was the foremost issue and he emphasized that lower castes themselves have to come forward for its realization. Thus, Ambedkar provided a subaltern perspective to see through the chameleon of Indian caste-ridden social set-up and the ways to guard the interests of the Lower castes.

Dr B.R. Ambedkar made strenuous efforts to transform the hierarchical structures of Indian society for the restoration of equal rights and justice to the oppressed lot by building a critique from within the structure of Indian society. His was not a theoretical attempt but a practical approach to the problems of untouchability. He tried to resolve this perennial problem of Indian society not by making appeals to the conscience of those who religiously practised untouchability or begging them to transform their outlook but by relentless struggle against the socio-religious and politico-economic structure, where he thought the roots of the untouchability lay. He concluded that until and unless the authority of the Dharmashastras, which provided divine sanction to the system of discrimination based on caste, was shaken, the eradication of untouchability could not be realized.

It is in this context that Dr Ambedkar's views on Indian nationalism needs special attention. His views on Indian nationalism are in



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Ambedkar on the Intersectionality of Nationalism and Egalitarianism

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stark opposition to the dominant discourse of nationalism represented by Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru; Hindu nationalism represented by Raja Rammohan Roy, B.G. Tilak, M.S. Golwalkar and Shyama Prasad Mukherjee; and Communist-secular-socialist nationalism represented by M.N. Roy, R. P. Dutt, T. Nagi Reddy and E.M.S. Namboodiripad. His views on Indian nationalism are not only distinct but also original. Hindu nationalism in essence aims at strengthening the brahmanical supremacy in post-colonial India. The communist-secular-social nationalism had the abolition of class as objective, but its ideologues, like that of the Hindu nationalism, also belonged to the upper-castes and were myopic to the question of ending the sufferings of the lower castes.

Dr Ambedkar's conception of nationalism articulated and synthesized the national perceptions and aspirations of the downtrodden. It constructed an anti-Hindu and anti-brahmanical discourse of Indian nationalism. It aimed at establishing a

casteless and classless society where no one would be discriminated against on the basis of birth and occupation. Within the lower castes-bahujan framework of Indian nationalism, Ambedkar built a critique of pre-colonial Brahmanism and the asymmetrical social set-up, the graded caste system, that was central to it, under which the higher up you belonged in the caste hierarchy the more unproductive and exploitative you were.

Ambedkar's understanding of the question of the identity and existence of the nation was based on his incisive analysis of the oppressive character of Brahmanism that pervaded a society built around the caste system. Since the dominant Hindu discourse of Indian nationalism remained indifferent towards removal of the caste system; and the economic analysis of the communist secular socialist school also failed to highlight the issue of caste in its mechanical interpretation of class, Ambedkar – himself an Untouchable and victim of untouchability – formulated his own framework from the

perspective of the Untouchables for the understanding of the system of caste and untouchability. The foundations of lower castes-bahujan nationalism lie in this framework developed by Ambedkar. It aimed at restructuring Indian society into a casteless and classless society – an egalitarian Sangha. Annihilation of caste was its central theme. Caste for Ambedkar was nothing but Brahmanism incarnate. He wrote, "Brahmanism is the poison which has spoilt Hinduism." Ambedkar realized that any form of nationalism whose roots were steeped in Hinduism could not bring relief to lower castes. Any discourse of nationalism bereft of annihilation of caste was just not acceptable to him. The agenda of annihilation of caste was so important to him that it became a central point of his struggle against colonial rule. In the first Round Table Conference, he minced no words in criticizing the British government for its failure to undo untouchability.

Swaraj without extinction of caste had no meaning for Ambedkar. In his undelivered speech to the Jat-

Pat Todak Mandal of Lahore, he said, "In the fight for swaraj you fight with the whole nation on your side. In this, you have to fight against the whole nation and that too your own. But it is more important than swaraj. There is no use having swaraj, if you cannot defend it. More important than the question of defending swaraj is the question of defending Hindus under the swaraj. In my opinion, only when the Hindu society becomes a casteless society that it can hope to have strength enough to defend itself. Without such internal strength, swaraj for Hindus may turn out to be only a step towards slavery." Thus, it was Ambedkar's subaltern perspective, which distinguished his conception of swaraj from that of the protagonists of the various shades of the national freedom movement. In his editorial in the Bahishkrit Bharat, Ambedkar wrote on 29 July 1927, "If Tilak had been born among the Untouchables, he would not have raised the slogan 'Swaraj is my birthright', but he would have raised the slogan 'Annihilation of untouchability is my birthright'."

Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia's Contributions towards the Emancipation and Empowerment of Lower Castes

Prem K. Chumber
Editor-In-Chief:

Ambedkar Times (English) & Desh Doaba (Punjabi)
Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia was one of the pioneers of Scheduled Castes struggle who worked deeply for the annihilation of the oppressive caste system. Through his innovative methods of struggle and exceptional organisational capabilities, he brought forth the hidden strength of his fellow community inmates for their liberation and socio-cultural as well as economic empowerment. He began his struggle towards upward social mobility while working for his livelihood and struggling for the liberation of his motherland - as a part of the Gadhar movement - in the US at the same time when Dr B.R. Ambedkar was studying there for higher education on a fellowship from Maharaja of Baroda and preparing himself for a larger struggle against the system of caste and untouchability back home. After returning to his home town in Doaba Punjab in 1925, after spending 16 years abroad, Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia saw to his surprise that the social setup as he experienced 16 years before leaving for the US did not change at all. It remained intact and still stared into eyes with its poisonous fangs of social oppression. It was also the time when the Adi movements in South India were building up pressure against caste structures. It was also the time Dr B.R. Ambedkar was also preparing himself to launch his lifelong struggle for the annihilation of caste from the Indian society.

In Punjab, Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia took Ad Dharm movement to the door steps of his people and built a formidable grassroots Dalit movement



leading to social consciousness among the so-called lowest of the low castes people of the hierarchical society. A time came when Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia extended full support to the struggle of Dr B.R. Ambedkar during his tirade against M.K. Gandhi's opposition to the demand of Communal Award for the Scheduled Castes during London Round Table Conferences and later on after the grant of the his fast unto death by against it.

Dr Ambedkar and Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia remained thoroughly involved in their respective struggles for Dalit emancipation and empowerment till their last breath and let behind them a rich legacy of Dalit consciousness and struggle. Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia lived almost two and a half decades more after the passing away of Babasaheb Dr B.R. Ambedkar on December 6, 1956. He came forward once again to re-lead the Ad Dharm movement started by his namesake Mr. Mangu Ram Jaspal in the 1970s. He gave his people their forgotten heroes, Sants, cultural heritage and separate religion (Ad Dharm). Under his able leadership the SCs of Punjab contested twice the Provincial elections before Independence and won almost all the reserved 8 seats for the SCs.

Read more <http://www.ambedkar-times.com>

What is first, Economic progress or conversion? I will prefer conversion to economic reform. Untouchability is a permanent obstacle in your path of progress. And unless you remove it, your path cannot be smooth and without conversion, this hurdle cannot be removed. - Dr. BR Ambedkar

FINAL ADOPTION OF INDIAN CONSTITUTION NOVEMBER 26, 1949

November 26, 1949 is a very historic day when the constitution of Free India was finally adopted by the Constituent Assembly making India a sovereign, democratic Republic, effective January 26th, 1950.

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CONSTITUTION: -

After it became certain that the British colonialism in India would end in India, British Cabinet Mission visited India with a specific mission to discuss with the representatives of British India and the Indian states to agree on the political framework for writing its constitution.

A Constituent Assembly was enacted with 389 Members (Reduced to 299 after the partition of India). The members of this August Assembly were dignified luminaries and experts in their respective fields.

Dr. B.R.AMBEDKAR AS CHAIRMAN OF DRAFTING COMMITTEE:-Dr. B.R.Ambedkar who had studied the constitutions of about 60 countries during his Academic career was considered to be a very wise intellectual and a constitutional expert to do full justice to this onerous responsibility of drafting. A committee of seven members was constituted with Babasaheb Dr. Ambedkar as its chairman.

When all the other 6 members of the drafting committee abstained from its meetings for their own reasons, the entire burden of writing the constitution fell on the shoulders of Babasaheb who had to handle it single-handedly in addition to his responsibilities and assignments as Law Minister of free India.

It almost took him three years to complete this stupendous and gigantic task of drafting the constitution of a nation with its complexities of diverse culture and other built-in social intricacies.

Dr. Ambedkar who was a seasoned statesman, politician and a nation builder welded the entire nation into one unified entity through his charismatic skills and exceptional knowledge of constitutional law.

His painstaking and pioneering work in the compilation of such a voluminous and a comprehensive treatise of jurisprudence will adorn the pages of history of India in particular and the world in general.

In his speeches in the constituent Assembly Dr.Ambedkar justified with his judicial skills and arguments each and every Article,Schedule and part of the constitution which was finally approved and adopted on this crucial day, November 26,1949. It heavily told upon Babasaheb's health and eyesight from which he never fully recovered.

DR. Ambedkar who himself was a victim of social discriminations and carping humiliations of untouchability during his entire life, stood like a rock and fought for the rights of the socially and economically neglected sections of Indian society. He proved that it is the worth and not the birth of an individual which judges his place in society.

According to one of his famous quotations "The system of untouchability is enough evidence of the inherent antagonism between the Hindus and the untouchables".

Even today there are some elements in our

society who cannot digest the distinguished capabilities of Babasaheb and keep on criticizing his talents and contributions in writing such a marvelous piece of legislation, based on liberty,equality and fraternity for all. His efforts for the dignity, liberation and empowerment of women can never be forgotten and will be written in golden letters in history.

I again congratulate everybody for this historic day of 26th, November, 1949 which has immortalized the accomplishments of Babasaheb as a patriot and savior of the voiceless for which he has been admired as one of the most luminous stars in the galaxy of human intelligentsia.

It was my proud privilege and honor to meet this noble soul in person on many occasions in 1955-56 in New Delhi and I will carry those memories as a holy relic through the rest of my life.

I also appreciate and am grateful to Mr. Prem Chumber Editor-in-Chief Ambedkar Times and Desh Doaba (Weeklies) for his initiative to entertain these lines to the esteemed columns of his publications.



O.P. Balley
Founder Member and
Ex- Chairman
Shri Guru Ravidass Sabha,
Pittsburg (California)



Mr. Manish, Consul General of India, Vancouver
invites you
on the occasion of

The Constitution Day of India Celebrations

to commemorate the adoption of the Constitution of India on 26th November 1949 by the Constituent Assembly

On

Saturday, 26 November 2022 at 1100 hrs

at

Shri Guru Ravidass Sabha
7271, Gilley Avenue Burnaby (B.C)V5J 4W9

(In association with Chetna Association of Canada and Shri Guru Ravidass Sabha, Vancouver)

RSVP

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Space by Ambedkar Times

November 26 – Constitution Day



Ramesh Chander
Ambassador - I.F.S. (Retired)
91-99885-10940

We observe November 26 as the Constitution Day, the day on which our Constitution was finally “adopted, enacted and given to ourselves” by the Constituent Assembly in 1949. The Constitution Day is an important milestone in the journey of India which “We the people of India” embarked on with Independence from the British colonial rule on 15 August, 1947 which is observed as the Independence Day. The new Constitution came into operation on January 26, 1950 which we observe as the Republic Day. Long seven decades have passed ever since we had a robust

passed. He, referring to historical facts, said, “...not only India has once before lost her independence, but she lost it by the infidelity and treachery of some of her own people.” In this context, he further said “Will history repeat itself? It is this thought which fills me with anxiety. This anxiety is deepened by the realization of the fact that in addition to our old enemies in the form of castes and creeds we are going to have many political parties with diverse and opposing political creeds. Will Indian place the country above their creed or will they place creed above country? I do not

olence and unconstitutional means resulting in ‘Grammar of Anarchy’ as cautioned by him, “If we wish to maintain democracy not merely in form, but also in fact, what must we do? The first thing in my judgment we must do is to hold fast to constitutional methods of achieving our social and economic objectives. It means we must abandon the bloody methods of revolution. It means that we must abandon the method of civil disobedience, non-cooperation and satyagraha. When there was no way left for constitutional methods for achieving economic and social objec-

wisdom which we would ignore at our own peril. The third thing he warned against was ‘hero worship’ in democracy and said, ““There is nothing wrong in being grateful to great men who have rendered life-long services to the coun-

constitutional frame work given to us by our founding fathers to redeem our pledge of ‘tryst with destiny’ as visualized by PM Jawaharlal Nehru in his Independence Day address to the nation on the midnight of August 14, 1947. The Objectives Resolution of the Constituent Assembly to make the constitution and above all the role and contribution of Babasaheb B.R. Ambedkar as Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Constituent Assembly could deliver in giving us one of the best constitutions of the world which met the challenges before the country like ‘India that is Bharat’ - a diversified and multi racial and multi-cultural society. It kept us on rails. It is a matter of great satisfaction that, with these constitutional arrangements, India has come a long way in its development and progress. One may say that It has arrived but still to reach. Still a long way to go in this interesting but challenging journey before we fully realize and redeem the solemn pledges which we voluntarily took on our Independence. It could be done ‘substantially’ in the words of PM Jawaharlal Nehru, if we could transform our ‘political democracy, stipulated in the constitution, into a social and economic democracy’ as rightly visualized by none other than the father of the Constitution of India, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar.

As I said that because of the constitution, India is on rails. But we cannot afford the luxury of lowering our guard as yet. Of late, fissiparous elements with divisive agenda appear to be raising their head which is posing a real danger to the very edifice – ‘sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic republic’ of our polity could come under threat. It would be a serious threat against which Babasaheb Ambedkar spoke very candidly in his last speech in the Constituent Assembly on November 25, 1949 before the constitution was finally



know. But this much is certain that if the parties place creed above country, our independence will be put in jeopardy a second time and probably be lost forever. This eventuality we must all resolutely guard against. We must be determined to defend our independence with the last drop of our blood.” Dr. Ambedkar was a visionary. His warnings, given 70 years ago, are as true and relevant as these were then, if we look at the Kisan Andolan, many movements opposing the duly formulated administration through vi-

tives, there was a great deal of justification for unconstitutional methods. But where constitutional methods are open, there can be no justification for these unconstitutional methods. These methods are nothing but the Grammar of Anarchy and the sooner they are abandoned, the better for us.” I am not oblivious of the fact that I have succumbed to the temptation of quoting Dr. Ambedkar excessively to make my point. But it made my job easy as the utterances coming from the horse’s mouth are gems of

try. But there are limits to gratefulness, as has been well said by the Irish Patriot Daniel O’Connell, no man can be grateful at the cost of his honour, no woman can be grateful at the cost of her chastity and no nation can be grateful at the cost of its liberty.

This caution is far more necessary in the case of India than in the case of any other country. For in India, Bhakti or what may be called the path of devotion or hero-worship, plays a part in its politics unequalled in magnitude by the part it plays in the politics of any other country in the world. Bhakti in religion may be a road to the salvation of the soul. But in politics, Bhakti or hero-worship is a sure road to degradation and to eventual dictatorship.”

While we observe the Constitution Day, we must do self-introspection, keeping the above warnings of the chief architect of the constitution, if we intend to remain on track. My humble suggestion in this regard is that the epoch making November 25, 1949 speech of Babasaheb Ambedkar should be included in college curricula for students so that younger generation understands the constitution and challenges before the country. Our political parties and politicians should learn and understand the situation in its right perspective rather than pursuing narrow agendas for short term gains.

With this while I take this opportunity to greet my countrymen on the Constitution Day of India, I would recall the poetic warning of Allama Iqbal:

Chupa Kar Asteen Mein Bijliyan
Rakhi Hain Gardoon Ne
Anadil Bagh Ke Ghafil Na Baithen
Ashiyon Mein
(The sky has kept thunderbolts concealed up its sleeve
Garden’s nightingales should not slumber in their nests)

EWS Reservation – A Cursory Analysis



Ramesh Chander
Ambassador - I.F.S. (Retired)
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The issue of reservation to the Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) of the society was recently in news and generated obvious debate and heat in the corridors of justice and power, news rooms, social outfits etc. It would happen to be, to my mind, a 'game changer' issue in the country; particularly with regard to the socio-economic fabric of the society on one hand and socio-political polarization of the polity on the other in the years to come. My take on the issue is not that of an expert or academic but that of a layman as a concerned common citizen of India that is Bharat.

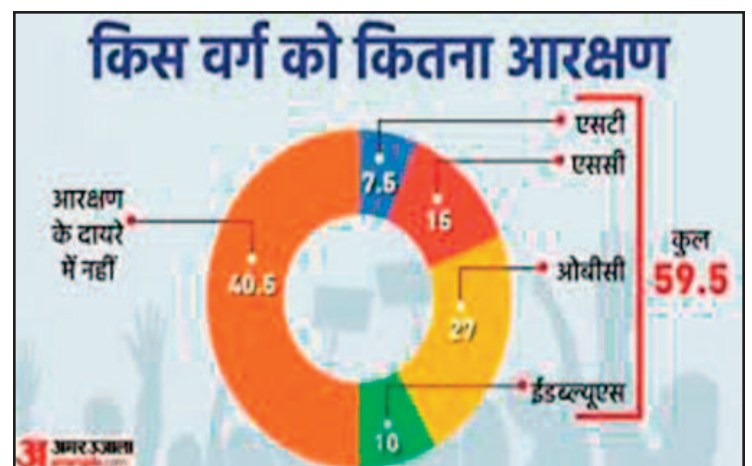
As we all know for centuries together, all most every avenue and opportunity was reserved for the socially and economically privileged upper crust of the society in the parlance of so called 'Manuwadi'

head with the arrival of the likes of Joytiba Phule, Periyar E.V. Ramasamy, Bheem Rao Ambedkar among others in the contemporary times in the early 19th century amidst liberal and democratic approaches of British rulers. Babasaheb Ambedkar underlined and flagged the social depression, oppression and systemic discrimination of depressed classes in the relevant fora including the Round Table Conferences held in London in early 1930s which resulted in the Ramsey MacDonald Communal Award of 1932 granting separate electorates to the depressed classes and recognized their distinct identity from the Hindus. Mahatma Gandhi, other Hindu leaders and the Congress Party woke up and vehemently opposed the separate electorates to the depressed classes as demanded by Babasaheb Ambedkar and granted in

of India. I took the liberty of giving these details to call the bluff of the so called 'main stream' of the Hindu society or the 'General Category' who never get tired of shouting from the roof tops that dalits were given 'Reservation' by the act of 'magnanimity' and their own 'volition'. Nobody gave Reservations to dalits on a platter. They got these concessions with the relentless struggle of Babasaheb Ambedkar and his associates.

With this background, let us come to the current issue of Reservation to the EWS. The concept of Reservation, as stipulated in the Constitution, recognizes socially and educationally marginalized communities and the facilities and additional weightage to them is given to 'Empower' them as an 'affirmative action' by the state with a view to built

poses of EWS, the income limit is 8 lakh. This fully justifies the thumb rule "Show me the face and I will show you the rule". Kindly permit me to make a humble suggestion to empower the so called EWS in the 'General Category' that is the socially privileged. There should be at least 75% Reservation for the EWS in all the posts of 'Safai Karamcharis' including Gutter and Sewerage cleaners not only for the upper crusts of the caste ridden society but also the OBCs as caste bias and discrimination is also gener-



system. The outcastes (untouchables) and the Shudras (backward castes) were kept at the receiving end both by will and design by the privileged upper castes. Nobody raised any question of merit, poverty, equality and justice, Human considerations, we often tend to quote from our scriptures, were totally missing in dealing with the socially discarded and oppressed masses. The main stream of the society must have some introspection and realize the pain of this historic injustice amounting to dreadful cruelty meted out to the under-privileged. There is no need to go deep into the past and mention about the 'Eklavyas' and 'Shambukas' of ancient times. Let us come straight to the Bhakti Movement of the 15th century – Kabir, Ravidass, Chokha Mela, Tuka Ram and the founder of Sikhism the great Guru Nanak came on the scene and stood for the human rights of the underprivileged, the first step to undo the injustice, meted out to the socially neglected and discriminated segments of the society on the basis of caste system ordained by the Chatur Varna of Hindus. The Sikh Gurus and Guru Granth Sahib, the holy scripture of the Sikhs, and the establishment of the Khalsa Panth by the 10th Guru of the Sikhs, Guru Govind Singh followed by the social reforms of Narayana Guru in South India, Arya Samaj of Swami Daya Nand in North India, inter alia, played appreciable role in leveling the society one way or the other and definitely with some visible success. The situation came to



the Communal Award. It was a turning point in the process of rights of the socially marginalized. Ambedkar was holding the fort representing dalits. Mahatma Gandhi resorted to his usual tactic of 'Satyagraha' and started his 'fast unto death' in Yerawada Jail in Pune (then Poona). Frankly, it was a sheer political blackmail as some political analysts see. The entire Hindu leadership led by Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress Party came together and appealed to Ambedkar to save the life of Mahatma Gandhi. Being a true nationalist to the core, Babasaheb, reluctantly, succumbed to the tremendous processor and wily designs of Mahatma Gandhi and signed some arrangements under the Poona Pact of 1932 to ensure due representation of dalits not only in the legislatures but also in services and educational institutions which later came to be called 'Reservations' first in 1935 and subsequently in the Constitution

bridges and fill the vacuum for social cohesion and equitable order. Reservations are not given to fill the economic gap for poverty amelioration. It is a fallacy being spread by the vested interests for electoral gains by polarizing the society – socially depressed Vs socially privileged, a dangerous and mischievous scheme of things. Who does not know that India is a poor country with millions of families living 'Below Poverty Line (BPL)'? By government's own admission, more than 80 crores of our fellow citizens are being fed by the government under various schemes. In this scenario, where is the question of Reservations for the EWS? Moreover, is it not true that most of BPL families belong to Scheduled Castes/Tribes and Muslim communities? There is another lacuna which underlines the illogical approach of the government; the annual income for claiming scholarships by an SC student is two lakh but for the pur-

ally practiced by them too. It would be instrumental in bringing about the so called 'spiritual experience' to the higher echelons of the society. Why the 'spiritual experience' be reserved only for the dalits?

All said and done, now let us revert to the ground reality. Reservations for the SCs and STs and also the OBCs are not a permanent provision and should not be so. There should be no hesitation in studying, assessing and retaining or modifying or abolishing these provisions with due, free and fair procedure, if required. But the upper castes and privileged or so called 'General Category' supported and encouraged by the vested political interests who are only interested in polarizing the society for electoral considerations are not interested in addressing the issue head-on. All political parties and social outfits like RSS and SGPC among others, willingly or otherwise, support reservations and keep on extending these temporary provisions even apart 75 years of independence. It seems there is no 'political and social will' to integrate the socially and educationally weaker sections with the main stream of the society to realize the lofty ideals of 'Equality and Fraternity' stipulated in the constitution. In this scenario, Reservations for SCs, STs and OBCs will remain as the society at large is still not ready to embrace the marginalized sections of the society because of historical compulsions of Manuwadi social system. It seems that Reservations

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Views of Baba Sahib Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar on Parliamentary Democracy

Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (1891-1956) was born in an untouchable Mahar family in Mhow in present day Madhya Pradesh. After his graduation from Bombay University, he received, the patronage of Maharaja Sivaji Rao Gaekward III of Baroda, enabling him to study at Columbia University from 1913 to 1916. Ambedkar was a victim of caste discrimination. Discrimination followed wherever he went. After coming back from the US, Ambedkar was appointed as the Defence secretary to the King of Baroda. Even, there also he had to face the humiliation for being an 'Untouchable'. With the help of the former Bombay Governor Lord Sydenham, Ambedkar obtained the job as a professor of political economy at the Sydenham College of Commerce and Economics in Bombay. In order to continue his further studies, in 1920 he went to England at his own expenses. There he was awarded honor of D.Sc. by the London University. Ambedkar also spent few months at the University of Bonn, Germany, to study economics. On 8 June, 1927, he was awarded a Doctorate by the University of Columbia.

He waged a relentless, life-long struggle to assert the rights of Dalits in social, political and economic spheres. Notable among the anti-caste protests and demonstrations, he organised was the public burning of a copy of the Manusmriti on 25th December, 1927. He represented India's untouchables in the round table conference in 1931. Ambedkar began to find ways to reach to the people and make them understand the drawbacks of the prevailing social evils. He launched a newspaper called "Mooknayak" (leader of the silent). In 1936, Ambedkar founded the Independent Labor Party. In the 1937 elections to the Central Legislative Assembly his party won 15 seats. Ambedkar oversaw the transformation of his political party into the All India Scheduled Castes Federation, although it performed poorly in the elections held in 1946 for the Constituent Assembly of India.

After independence, he played a pivotal role in the drafting of the Indian Constitution as Chairman of the Constitutional Drafting Committee. He was independent India's first law minister but resigned when confronted by the impossibility of reforming Hindu Personal Laws. The draft of the Hindu Code Bill he proposed sanctioned divorce and expanded the property rights of widows and daughters. The constituent assembly dragged its feet over it for four years (1947 to 1951) and then blocked it. In his resignation speech he said, "To leave inequality between class and class, between sex and sex, which is the soul of Hindu society, and to go on passing legislation relating to economic problems is to make

a farce of our Constitution." Tired, sick and politically isolated, he converted to Buddhism in 1956- a conversion he had been considering for over 20 years - two months before his death. He was posthumously awarded the Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian honour in 1990.

Ambedkar was one of the greatest builders of this nation. He devoted his entire life for securing the human rights for over 200 million Dalits, also referred to as untouchables. He was a man of versatile intellect, a great economist, constitutionalist, social reformist, a political thinker, a champion and a messiah of down-



trodden and above all a greatest humanist. All through his life Dr. Ambedkar strived to establish the basic principles- liberty, equality and fraternity in all walks of life. He being a revolutionary thinker, stressed on the empowerment of oppressed as one of the means of their emancipation from exploitation and injustice. His views on polity, social issues, economy and jurisprudence are contained in vast collection of his writings and speeches. His most famous writings are:

1. Annihilation of Caste
2. "Who were the Shudras?"
3. Riddles in Hinduism
4. The Buddha and his Dhamma
5. The Untouchables: Who were they and why they became untouchables?

His views on parliamentary democracy are available in his writing and speeches. According to Dr. Ambedkar, parliamentary government means government by discussion and not by fisticuffs. He defined democracy as a form and method of govern-

ment whereby revolutionary changes in the social and economic life of the people are brought about without bloodshed. In a speech delivered at D.A.V. College, Jalandhar, Punjab on 28th October, 1951, he listed three main things inherent in the parliamentary system of government. He said that parliamentary government means negation of hereditary rule. Whoever wants to rule must be elected by the people from time to time. Hereditary rule has no sanction in the parliamentary system of government. Secondly, any law, any measure applicable to the public life of the people must be based on the

advice of the people chosen by the people. The head of the state is only the titular head. The government of the country is carried out, though in his name, by the elected representatives of the people. Thirdly, the parliamentary system of government means that at a stated period, those who want to advise the head of the State must have the confidence of the people in themselves renewed. But according to him, the parliamentary system of

government is much more, than the government by discussion. There are two pillars on which it rests. These are fulcrums on which the mechanism works. These two pillars are existence of a functional opposition and free elections. While opposition is the key to a free political life, free and fair elections are necessary for the transfer of power from one section of the community to the other in a peaceful manner and without any bloodshed. According to him, big-businesses playing a great part in the political life of a country is antithetical to free and fair elections. In a speech delivered to the members of the Poona District Law Library on 22nd December 1952, Ambedkar said that the first condition precedent for the successful working of democracy is that there must be no glaring inequalities in a society. There must not be an oppressed class. There must not be a suppressed class. There must not be a class which has got all the privileges and a class which has got all

the burdens to carry. Such a thing, such a division, such an organisation of society has within itself the germs of a bloody revolution and perhaps, it would be impossible for democracy to cure them.



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Existence of a functional opposition and equality in law and administration are two other conditions precedent for democracy, according to Dr. Ambedkar. In his view, the fourth condition precedent for democracy is the observance of constitutional morality. Ambedkar's main concern was to privilege and legalise constitutional morality over the traditional, social morality of the caste system. Speaking in the Constituent Assembly on 4th November 1948, he said that "constitutional morality is not a natural sentiment. It has to be cultivated. We must realise that our people have yet to learn it. Democracy in India is only a top dressing on an Indian soil which is essentially undemocratic." This is one thing which he thought is very necessary in the working of democracy. He further said that "in the name of democracy there must be no tyranny of majority over the minority. The minority must always feel that, although the majority is carrying on the government, the minority is not being hurt or the minority is not being hit below the belt. He rightly thought that the democracy requires 'public conscience.' There is no doubt about it that, although there is injustice in every country, the injustice is not equally spread. There are some areas where the impact of injustice is very small; there are some against whom the impact of injustice is very great. And there are some who are absolutely crushed under the burden of injustice."

He emphasised on the need for liberty of movement, liberty of speech and liberty of action and political liberty to choose his government for securing "unalienable rights such as life, liberty and pursuit of happiness. Political liberty is really a deduction from the principle of human personality and equality." Liberty and equality exist together. One without the other is absurd. Speaking at the All India Trade Union Workers Study Group at 17th September 1943 that causes for failure and discontent against parliamentary democracy in some countries "may be found either in wrong ideology or wrong organisation or both. Of erroneous ideologies which have been responsible for the failure of the parliamentary democracy, I have no

(Contd. on next page)

Views of Baba Sahib Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar on Parliamentary Democracy

(Continue from page 6)

doubt that the idea of freedom of contract is one of them. The idea began sanctified and was upheld in the name of liberty. Parliamentary democracy took no notice of economic inequalities and didn't care to examine the result of freedom of contract on the parties to the contract, in spite of the fact that they were unequal and their bargaining power. It did not mind if the freedom of contract gave the strong the opportunity to defraud the weak. The result is that the parliamentary democracy, while standing out as a protagonist of liberty, has continuously added to the economic wrongs of the poor, the downtrodden and the disinherited class."

"The second wrong ideology which has vitiated the parliamentary democracy is the failure to realise that political democracy cannot succeed where there is no social and economic democracy. Social and economic democracy are the tissue and fiber of a political democracy. The together the issue and the fiber, the greater the strength of the body. Parliamentary democracy developed a passion for liberty. It never made even a nodding acquaintance with equality. It failed to realise the significance of equality and did not even endeavour to strike a balance between liberty and equality, with the result that liberty swallowed equality and has made democracy a name and a farce."

He was against violence. A firm believer in the Buddhist doctrine of non-violence he asked his followers to 'agitate' for their rights in a peaceful manner. Violence undermines the spirit of democracy. He would have been the first to denounce Naxalism.

While addressing the constituent assembly on November 25, 1949, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar said India had known democracy in some form or other much before the British arrived. He used the example of Buddhist Bhikshu Sanghas and emphasized that their functioning was in many ways similar to a modern parliament. India lost this democratic system somewhere down the

line, he said, and while the constituent assembly was preparing India to be a democratic country once again, there was a possibility that India could lose its democracy a second time.

Ambedkar issued three warnings, and believed paying heed to them was critical to ensure our democratic institutions did not get subverted. Firstly, if we wish to maintain democracy not merely in form, but also in fact, what must we do?

"The first thing in my judgment we must do is to hold fast to constitutional methods of achieving our social and economic objectives. It means we must abandon the bloody methods of revolution. It means that we must abandon the method of civil disobedience, non-cooperation and Satyagraha. When there was no way left for constitutional methods for achieving economic and social objectives, there was a great deal of justification for unconstitutional methods. But where constitutional methods are open, there can be no justification for these unconstitutional methods. These methods are nothing but the Grammar of Anarchy and the sooner they are abandoned, the better for us. The second thing, he said, we must do is to observe the caution which John Stuart Mill has given to all who are interested in the maintenance of democracy, namely, not "to lay their liberties at the feet of even a great man, or to trust him with power which enable him to subvert their institutions". There is nothing wrong in being grateful to great men who have rendered life-long services to the country. But there are limits to gratefulness. As has been well said by the Irish Patriot Daniel O'Connell, no man can be grateful at the cost of his honour, no woman can be grateful at the cost of her chastity and no nation can be grateful at the cost of its liberty.

This caution is far more necessary in the case of India than in the case of any other country. For in India, Bhakti or what may be called the path of devotion or hero-worship, plays a part in its politics unequalled in magnitude by the part it plays in

the politics of any other country in the world. Bhakti in religion may be a road to the salvation of the soul. But in politics, Bhakti or hero-worship is a sure road to degradation and to eventual dictatorship.

The third thing we must do is not to be content with mere political democracy. We must make our political democracy a social democracy as well. Political democracy cannot last unless there lies at the base of it social democracy. What does social democracy mean? It means a way of life which recognizes liberty, equality and fraternity as the principles of life.

He said that "we are wanting in recognition of the principle of fraternity. What does fraternity mean? Fraternity means a sense of common brotherhood of all Indians-if Indians being one people. It is the principle which gives unity and solidarity to social life. It is a difficult thing to achieve. In India there are castes. The castes are anti-national. In the first place, they bring about separation in social life. They are anti-national also because they generate jealousy and antipathy between caste and caste. But we must overcome all these difficulties if we wish to become a nation in reality. For fraternity can be a fact only when there is a nation. Without fraternity equality and liberty will be no deeper than coats of paint."

He said that "there can be no gainsaying that political power in this country has too long been the monopoly of a few and the many are only beasts of burden, but also beasts of prey. This monopoly has not merely deprived them of their chance of betterment; it has sapped them of what may be called the significance of life. These down-trodden classes are tired of being governed. They are impatient to govern themselves. This urge for self-realization in the down-trodden classes must not be allowed to devolve into a class struggle or class war.

It would lead to a division of the House. That would indeed be a day of disaster. For, as has been well said by Abraham Lincoln, a House divided against itself cannot stand very long. Therefore the sooner room is

made for the realization of their aspiration, the better for the few, the better for the country, the better for the maintenance for its independence and the better for the continuance of its democratic structure. This can only be done by the establishment of equality and fraternity in all spheres of life. That is why I have laid so much stresses on them."

He further said that "Times are fast changing. People including our own are being moved by new ideologies. They are getting tired of Government by the people. They are prepared to have Governments for the people and are indifferent whether it is Government of the people and by the people.

If we wish to preserve the Constitution in which we have sought to enshrine the principle of Government of the people, for the people and by the people, let us resolve not to be tardy in the recognition of the evils that lie across our path and which induce people to prefer Government for the people to Government by the people, nor to be weak in our initiative to remove them. That is the only way to serve the country. I know of no better."

At the time of adoption of the Constitution, Dr Ambedkar warned: "On 26th of January 1950, we are going to enter into a life of contradictions. In politics we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequalities. In politics we will be recognising the principles of one man one vote and one vote one value. In our social and economic life, we shall, by reason of our social and economic structure, continue to deny the principle of one man one vote. How long shall we continue to live this life of contradictions? How long shall we continue to deny equality in our social and economic life? If we continue to deny it for long, we will do so only by putting our political democracy in peril. We must remove this contradiction at the earliest possible moment or else those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of our political democracy which this Assembly has so laboriously built up."

EWS Reservation – A cursory Analysis

(Continue from page 5)

for the EWS have been introduced by those vested interests who intend to 'Eat the cake and have it too'. Reservations are not the answer to address poverty and safeguard security and integrity of our country. Nevertheless, I may say with great reluctance, if Executive, Legislature and Judiciary feel in their better consideration that Reservations are the only answer, why don't we fix the quota for all on the basis of their share in the demography? As of now, 59.5% are fixed – 27% for OBCs, 15% for SCs, 7.5% for STs and 10% for EWS of General Category. What wrong has been done

by the remaining 40.5%? They should also have their share in the pie. I leave it here as 'Food for Thought'. It is a matter of great concern and worry that our judicial system has further compounded the issue; it seems to a layman like me. The Supreme Court in a majority judgment of 3:2 in a 5 judge bench has upheld the Reservation for EWSs. It would further divide the polity and the society. The national parties like BJP and Congress have welcomed the court decision, bereft of political and constitutional morality, just to appease the Hindu main stream of the society. The regional parties like

DMK, JDU, RJD among others, representing the lower strata of the society, have opposed the EWS Reservations. In an editorial, the Hindustan Times has rightly said, "With economic anxieties rising, reservations of various kinds are sure to emerge as political levers, straying even further from the lofty equality goals envisioned in the constitution." Reservations for EWSs are totally unwarranted and unjustifiable and would tend to further fragment the society. Temporary Reservations for the SCs, STs and OBCs would automatically end when a 'casteless' society is in place. Nobody is interested

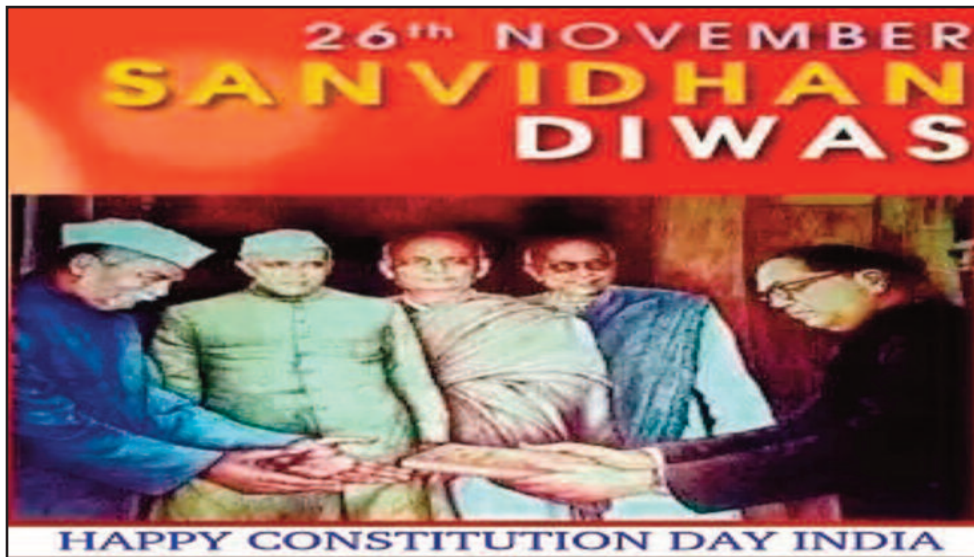
in becoming a second class citizen any more by sticking to caste based reservations.

But the governments, political parties and the society at large must act to empower the socially and educationally marginalized segments; the so called dalits. The sooner; the better.

I tend to fully agree with the observations of Hon'ble Judges Ravindra Bhat and U.U. Lalit who said in their dissenting notes, "This court has, for the first time in seven decades of the Republic, sanctioned avowedly exclusionary and discriminatory principle."

Indian society needs to examine Why caste discrimination still takes place: Desmond Tutu

South African Nobel Peace Prize laureate and anti-apartheid campaigner Archbishop Desmond Tutu told The Hindu that he had not heard of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. He was pleasantly surprised when informed that Dr. Ambedkar chaired the drafting committee of the Constitution of India. Asked why African leaders fighting apartheid had not paid enough attention to him unlike Mahatma Gandhi, Archbishop Tutu said: "We were involved in our struggle against the racial injustices in South Africa, and you were looking for allies who would be able to help change your own set up. So obviously there was need to link up with those who had influence and power in their



country." He hinted that it would be natural for an alliance to develop between Africans who struggled against injustice under apartheid regime and Dalits who are struggling against caste prejudices. "More of us should be concerned about it [caste discrimination] and perhaps be interrogating the other part of Indian society as to why they are allowing this to continue if it is an egalitarian society. I mean your Constitution says so." The Archbishop stressed that Indian society should be challenged about the situation of Dalits because it affects one's humanity.

With thanks "The Hindu" Posted at www.ambedkartimes.com November 25, 2014

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