CHAPTER 3
MINORITIES IN INDIA:
THE DALIT PROBLEMATIQUE IN AMBEDKAR’S THOUGHT

Introduction

In the previous chapter, we saw how Ambedkar’s commitment to Democracy and Social justice, results in a conception of minorities that is novel and unique. According to Ambedkar, the social and economic status of a group, along with its numerical strength, within a society determines whether it is a minority or not. Another important dimension of his thought is its pragmatism. Ambedkar strongly believed that Ideas should not just be theoretically sound but also must be effective in practice. Having looked at his ideas in a theoretical and abstract manner, we will, in this chapter, look at how he employs them in the real politique.

One of his important claims is that Dalits constitute the “real” minority of this country. Not are they the real minority; they are also a “unique” minority, in the Indian political scenario. Therefore, we will attempt at understanding, his interpretation and understanding of Dalits and their social and political predicament. We will here observe why Dalits constitute a unique minority, unlike any other in the world; and also why and how they need special political safeguards against the (Hindu) majority. Ambedkar believed that Dalits and their interests were grossly sidelined by the Indian National Congress. Therefore, he strongly criticises the Congress and its politics. For this purpose, we will look at the arguments he furnishes to justify his claim in his important writings like “What Congress and Gandhi have Done to the Untouchables.”

The next important point is that Ambedkar intervenes decisively in the discourse of Indian nationalism lead by the Congress under Gandhi. His intervention in the process is manifold. In his popular book, Pakistan or Partition of India he depicts the complexity of the problems involved for the forthcoming, post-colonial, nation. The first, and major,
problem is the problem of Pakistan, or the demand of the Muslim League for a separate nation. In this book, he takes extreme pains to describe and define what a nation is and what the essential ingredients are that go into the creation of a nation. Linked to this is the big question of whether India is a Nation or not? What are its strengths; what are the major obstacles that prevent it from becoming a nation; and how to overcome them? Since communalism and communal deadlock are major problems, the question of how the problems of the Muslims and other communal problems are to be resolved by the Indian leadership has to be answered. Hence, we will look at his critique of the Indian national movement; as well as the methods and means Ambedkar suggests through which these problems must be tackled. For this purpose, we need to have a deeper understanding of his idea of nationalism.

The previous chapter argued that Ambedkar, like David Miller who attempts to show the link between Nationalism and Social Justice, believed “Nationalism” could provide a strong sense of common feeling that is essential for furthering Social Justice. In this chapter, we will look at this issue of reconciling social justice with nationality both theoretically and contextually – particularly, Ambedkar’s insights on, how it needs to be addressed in post-colonial countries like India. Next, we will move onto the problem of Hindu majoritarianism as it exists in India. We will deal with Ambedkar’s critique of it; his arguments for its causes and his remedies for it. His major argument is that Hindu majoritarianism is a direct result of the misinterpretation of the basic principle of Democracy, the rule of majority. In the previous chapter, we saw Ambedkar’s reading of this rule within the values of Democracy. In this chapter, we will see how Ambedkar deals with this rule, as it is used or misused by the Hindu politicians to deny rights and safeguards to minorities. Since, Dalits constitute a minority; their problem is similar to other religious minorities. At the same time, their uniqueness demands special safeguards that go beyond the safeguards that are recommended for other minorities. For this purpose, we will engage thoroughly with these texts, especially “States and Minorities.” Another important insight that Ambedkar gives in relation to nationalism is that a proper handling of minorities is very important for the unity and integrity of a nation, without which a nation can easily fall prey to separatist tendencies. “One is that
minorities are an explosive force which, if it erupts, can blow up the whole fabric of the state. The history of Europe bears ample and appalling testimony to this fact.”

One of the proposals that he puts forward in “States and Minorities,” is the demand for Reservations. Ambedkar deals, at length, with this issue of Reservations in both this text and other texts, which is important to look into. He furnishes and provides insightful arguments on the issue of reservations. These arguments, this chapter attempts to prove, are very helpful to the modern debates; and in particular for disadvantaged minorities. One of the important arguments that Ambedkar provides is that the Governing Class — in the Indian context, the Brahmins and other higher castes — oppose reservation, not on any principled politics, but with narrow-minded, self-centered politics. He argues that the Governing Class wants to occupy administrative and other crucial jobs, more than in proportion to its population, in the name of efficiency or merit. Another argument that he gives is that the best way the Governing Class can be stopped from appropriating all the important jobs is through reservations. Reservations like separate electorates are a means to enhance effective representation to minorities, not affirmative action programs that are based on valuing diversity and sentiments of benevolence. Therefore, in a separate section, we will deal with the issue of reservations and issues linked with it, such as the issues of Representation, differential or preferential treatment for Dalits and for other groups that are in need of it.

Background

In order to understand the significance of Ambedkar’s thought on minorities, we need to locate it in its historical context of pre-independent India; the resulting debates that emerged; the way this problem was posed and perceived by his contemporaries; and, the way Ambedkar perceived this problem. To begin with, no big stalwart of Indian politics, except Ambedkar and Jinnah, believed that there was a problem of minorities in India. These other leaders would get away with explanations that it was a ploy of the British to divide Indians. From the 1930s onwards, Indian leaders were sure that India was going to

win freedom from British domination. This forced them to develop a vision for the future—a process that simultaneously created insecurity for some sections of Indian society. The Muslim League, headed by Jinnah, was in the forefront in articulating and questioning the status of Muslims in a Hindu-dominated independent India. Ambedkar, with his own bitter experience of the failure of many of his emancipation struggles, began to suspect the political project of the (Hindu-dominated) Indian National Congress. His politics began by taking the same line of argument as that of Jinnah, and with the demand for separate electorates for untouchables. Ambedkar (along with Jinnah, Periyar), expressed his distrust in the majoritarian politics of the Congress. But, finally, with the granting of separate electorates to Muslims but not to Untouchables, due to Gandhi’s famous fast and the resultant Poona Pact, Ambedkar’s strategy and line of attack takes a radical deviation from that of Jinnah. Jinnah’s (later) solution to the problem of Muslim minority is to argue that the Muslims constitute and demand a separate nation. This option was not available for Ambedkar.

Ambedkar, as it is obvious, is left with the only option of securing the interests of Untouchables, by ensuring that they are not left behind in the nation-building process. At the same time, Ambedkar seriously begins to engage, both intellectually and politically, in resolving the problem of Minorities in a Democratic setup. He begins to condemn the then political stalwarts like Gandhi, Nehru, Bose and others, for ignoring and undermining the interests of the Untouchables, and much more vehemently, the paternalistic attitude of Gandhi towards Untouchables. He even criticizes Jinnah for his sectarianism and the strategy he was using to solve this problem. For the minority, that Ambedkar represents, this freedom from the British meant nothing; they would still have to face oppression by the Caste Hindus in their daily life. The Untouchable’s condition would be further exacerbated under the casteist Hindus. This situation of “internal colonialism” had to be avoided at all costs, for Ambedkar.

Ambedkar also knew that India was about to adopt a Democratic form of government, in which the principle of “majority rule” would translate into the rule of the Hindu majority. Thus, he ponders on the available means that can limit this “majority principle,” and
protect the interests of minorities that would also be conducive in protecting the special interests of the Untouchables. To understand his overall political philosophy, let us begin with understanding some of the basic concepts of Ambedkar, like nationalism, nation, community, etc.

**On Nation, Nationality and Nationalism**

To begin with, we can say that Ambedkar's ideas about Nation and Nationalism are largely, but not entirely, influenced by Earnest Renan's concept of a Nation. In his important work *Pakistan or Partition of India* he often quotes from the famous essay, written in 1882 by Renan, “What is a nation?” both to assess whether Hindus and Muslims together, or Muslims alone, constitute a nation or not. He would completely agree with Renan who wrote,

> "...the moral consciousness which we call a nation is created by a great assemblage of men with warm hearts and healthy minds. And as long this moral consciousness can prove its strength by the sacrifices demanded from the individual for the benefit of the community, it is justifiable and has the right to exist. If doubts arise concerning its frontiers, let the population in dispute be consulted, for surely they have a right to say in the matter. This will bring a smile to the lips of the transcendental politicians, those infallible beings who spend their lives in self-deception and who, from the summit of their superior principles, cast a pitying eye upon our common places." ²

Apart from this, Ambedkar undertakes the task of elucidating the complexities that are involved in issues concerning Nation and Nationalism. He sites numerous examples for this purpose. Popular among them are the Irish, Quebec, and Czech-Slovak issues. Other than this, in his writing concerned with the critique of Indian nationalism, he spells out, what he believes a nation ought to be, ideally. There are, thus, two aspects to it: one, dealing with his ideal of Nationalism, and the other dealing with his critique of it in practice, particularly in the Indian context.

Before going into the issue, we need to be clear about certain terms like Nation, Nationality, Nationalism and Community in the writings of Ambedkar. Ambedkar takes great care in clarifying and differentiating, these vague and elusive terms. Let us first

look at the difference between Nationality and Nationalism. Classifying them as psychological states, he writes,

"First, there is a difference between Nationality and Nationalism. They are two different psychological states of the human mind. Nationality means "consciousness of kind, awareness of the existence of ties of kinship." Nationalism means "the desire for a separate national existence for those who are bound by this tie of kinship." 3

Notice the phrases he employs to explain what he means by Nationality, "feeling of oneness"; "conscious of kind"; or "awareness of "the existence of ties of kinship." In another context he writes,

"Nationality is a social feeling. It is a feeling of a corporate sentiment of oneness which makes those who are charged with it feel that they are kith and kin. This national feeling is a double-edged feeling. It is at once a feeling of fellowship for one's own kith and kin and anti-fellowship for those who are not one's own kith and kin. It is a feeling of "consciousness of kind" which on the one hand binds together those who have it, so strongly that it over-rides all differences arising out of economic conflicts or social gradations and, on the other, severs them from those who are not their kind. It is a longing not to belong to any other group. This is the essence of what is called a nationality." 4

If we notice, the phrase "consciousness of kind" is an often-repeated phrase by Ambedkar; we encountered it in the previous chapter, when discussing on Ambedkar's concept of Fraternity. We have also seen that Ambedkar's commitment to this value is an indirect expression of the idea of valuing the sense of community. Hence, nationality is a mode in which this sense of community, or fraternity, can be expressed. We will come back to this aspect in a short while. Next, we notice that difference between nationalism and nationality. What sets apart Nationalism from the feeling of nationality is the "desire for a separate national existence." This means, when a group or a community is not willing to live along with other communities but wishes to have a separate existence, it develops into a nation, and this particular desire for separate existence is called nationalism. He thereby introduces along Renan's, lines a forward-looking argument.

Ambedkar, commenting on the distinction between a "community" and a "nation" writes,

3 BAWS, Vol. 9, p. 31.
4 Ibid.
"A community, however different from and however opposed to other communities, major or minor, is one with the rest in the matter of the ultimate destiny of all. A nation, on the other hand is not only different from other components of the state but it believes in and cherishes a different destiny totally antagonistic to the destiny entertained by their component elements in the state. The differences appear to me so profound that speaking for myself I would not hesitate to adopt it as a test to distinguish a community from a nation. A people who, not withstanding their difference accept a common destiny for themselves as well as for their opponents are a community. A people who are not only different from the rest but who refuse to accept for themselves the same destiny, which others do are a nation."

Here we observe, the essential difference that lies between a community and nation is the question of "destiny." Though both community and nation tend to differentiate themselves from other communities, a nation has an additional feature of not willing to share the same destiny with other communities. In other words, a nation is a community which has "the will to have a nation", or "the desire for a separate national existence." In the Indian context, Ambedkar argues, the Muslims have the features of a nation but, had not yet (then) become a nation. Their demand for Pakistan makes them into a nation; while, Dalits, Christians and other communities are willing to share a common destiny with the majority Hindu community, thereby, they do not constitute different Nations. Ambedkar writes,

"It is this acceptance or non-acceptance of a common destiny which alone can explain why the untouchables, the Christians and the Pareses are in relation to the Hindus only communities, and why the Muslims are a nation."

David Miller, a modern political theorist who defends nationalism, provides justifications for nationalism gives a strikingly similar definition of nation. He writes, "A nation, we may say, is a community of people who recognize that they are distinct from other communities and wish to control their own affairs." Miller, here, adds another important feature of nationalism- self-determination. The "wish to control their own affairs" or "self-rule" are a desire for self-determination; an essential aspect of nationalism.

Another, important forward-looking argument that Ambedkar picks up from Renan is the idea of forgetting past injustices. Ambedkar quotes Renan thus,

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5 BAWS, Vol. 8, pp. 335-36.
6 Ibid., p. 335.
"Forgetting, I would even go so far as to say, historical error, is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation, which is why progress in historical studies often constitutes a danger for [the principle of] nationality. Indeed, historical enquiry brings in light deeds of violence which took place at the origin of all political formations, even those whose consequences have been all together beneficial. Unity is always affected by means of brutality." 

Ambedkar uses this argument to prove the fact that Muslims and Hindus are not willing to "obliterate their past." It can be inferred, indirectly, that Ambedkar again endorses Renan’s argument of nationalism as both forward- and backward-looking sentiment, which can only be developed by "forgetting acts of past violence."

Coming back to the distinction between Nationality and Nationalism, we can infer from the above distinction between community and nation that the feeling for a sense of community or fraternity is nationality, but with the same feeling with an additional feeling for a different destiny means nationalism. The difference between a community and nationality is that the earlier one is an ontological category while nationality is a state of mind, which a community can have. In the same way, the difference between nation and nationalism is that the latter is a state of mind, while the earlier one is an entity. While not all Nationalisms can exist without nationality, the opposite is not true. He writes,

"Secondly, it is true that there cannot be nationalism without the feeling of nationality being in existence. But, it is important to bear in mind that the converse is not always true. The feeling of nationality may be present and yet the feeling of nationalism may be absent. That is to say, nationality does not in all cases produce nationalism. For nationality to flame to nationalism two conditions must exist. First, there must arise the "will to live as a nation." Nationalism is the dynamic expression of that desire." 

For Ambedkar, Nationalism is the dynamic expression of the desire to live as a nation and to have a separate national existence. In other words, it is the issue of self-determination. However, that does not end the story. In order for this desire (to have a nation) to be fulfilled, a geographical territory to occupy, or a spiritual home, becomes essential. While commenting on the Muslim demand for Pakistan, he writes,

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8 Renan, n. 2.
9 BAWS, Vol. 8, p. 37.
10 Ibid., p. 39.
"Secondly, there must be a territory, which nationalism could occupy and make it a state, as well as a cultural home of the nation. Without such a territory, nationalism, to use Lord Acton’s phrase, would be a ‘soul as it were wandering in search of a body in which to begin life over again and dies out finding none.’ The Muslims have developed a "will to live as a nation." For them nature has found a territory which they can occupy and make it a state as well as a cultural home for the new-born Muslim nation."  

Apart from this, Ambedkar makes a distinction between territorial independence and cultural independence. He writes,

"Self-determination for a nationality may take the form of cultural independence or may take the form of territorial independence. Which form it can take must depend upon the territorial layout of the population. If a nationality lives in easily severable and contiguous areas, other things being equal, a case can be made out for territorial independence. But where owing to an inextricable intermingling the nationalities are so mixed up; that areas they occupy are not easily severable, then all that they can be entitled to in cultural independence. Territorial separation in a case like this is an impossibility. They are doomed to live together. The only other alternative they have is to migrate."  

In this statement, territorial independence is possible when groups exist in "easily severable and contiguous areas." However, in the case of intermingling of nationalities, the groups can be granted cultural independence. This difference between cultural and territorial independence is important because Ambedkar at different times, argues for two separate nations of Hindu and Musalman under one constitution; with equal status for both. He argues that two nations can exist under one constitution, with special safeguards for the minor nation. Apart from this, groups like Dalits who, he believes, are a distinct element in the Indian life but are not severable from the other groups need special constitutional treatment. We will look at this aspect when we deal with the issue of the problem of Dalits in this chapter. Linked with this is the question, what about communities, which do not constitute nations but are cultural minorities? Do they get or need the same safeguards in his scheme? Ambedkar’s reply is affirmative. He argues, in terms of safeguards that must be accorded to a community or a nation, there is no difference. He writes,

"... from the point of view of minority rights and safeguard this difference is unimportant. Whether the minority is a community or a nation, it is a minority and the safeguards for the protection of a minor nation cannot be very different from the safeguards necessary for the protection of a minor community. The protection asked for

11 Ibid.  
12 Ibid.
is against the tyranny of the majority, and once the possibility of such a tyranny of the majority over a minority is established, it matters very little whether the minority driven to ask for safeguards is a community or as a nation.  

Once again, Ambedkar introduces an important insight of his. While here, Ambedkar, is commenting on the question of partition for Pakistan, yet, his arguments have an internally consistent line of argument, which can be applied to any other issue, related with representation, more particularly, on the question we just dealt with, whether a community has the right to the same safeguards as that of a nation. This argument is central to Ambedkar’s political thought on minorities, i.e., in dealing with the safeguards needed for other minority communities, importantly Dalits. He argues that they have the right to demand the same safeguards that are accorded to a minor nation. We will come back to this issue later in the chapter when we are discussing the issue of safeguards to Dalits as a minority. At the same time, this chapter argues, these ideas and explanations can be helpful in understanding the general problems related to nationalism, and more importantly the problem of Indian nationalism.

Whatever the modalities of dealing with minorities or minority nations, nationalism is a social fact; a social force that has to be dealt with and has to be reckoned with. Ambedkar writes,

“In whatever way the matter is put and howsoever ardently one may wish for the elimination of nationalism, the lesson to be drawn is quite clear, that nationalism is a fact which can neither be eluded nor denied. Whether one calls it an irrational instinct or positive hallucination, the fact remains that it is a potent force which has a dynamic power to disrupt empires.”

Ambedkar admits the fact of its “irrational instinct” or “positive hallucinations.” He argues that modern political leaders, thinkers and constitutional experts, must accept its power and learn to deal with it appropriately; or else, is a “potential force” that has a “dynamic power to disrupt empires.” Ambedkar, here, argues that a proper handling of minority nations or communities is very important for any Nation. If not, these suppressed nations or communities can be a great threat to integrity of a Nation. Having said this, Ambedkar argues, “Nationality is not such a sacrosanct and absolute principle

13 Ibid., p. 335.
14 BAWS, Vol. 8, p. 215.
as to give it the character of a categorical imperative, over-riding every other consideration.\(^{15}\)

Here, the nationality he is talking about is nationality as an ideology not as a value that Ambedkar refers to as, consciousness of kind. That is to say, "national sentiment" can both be a boon or a bane, depending on how and for what this feeling is put to use. Since, this argument is both central and characteristic to Ambedkar's thought, thereby needs further elaboration.

Nationality, for Ambedkar, like every other political value of his, is subservient to Democracy. He begins by tracing its historical development. He writes,

"What is \textit{de facto} and \textit{de jure} connotation of this principle of self-determination? The term self-determination has become current since the last few years. But it describes something which is much older. The idea underlying self-determination has developed along two different lines. During the 19\(^{th}\) century self-determination meant the right to establish a form of government in accordance with the wishes of the people. Secondly, self-determination has meant the right to obtain national independence from an alien race irrespective of the form of government. The agitation for Pakistan has reference to self-determination in its second aspect.\(^{16}\)

Being a committed democrat, Ambedkar defends the first line of argument for self-determination, though he strongly opposes the rule of one race over another. He criticises the Muslims for their inconsistency in their argument for self-determination or Pakistan. He writes,

"In the first place self-determination must be by the people. This point is too simple even to need mention. But it has become necessary to emphasize it. Both the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha seem to be playing fast and loose with the idea of self-determination. An area is claimed by the Muslim League for inclusion in Pakistan because the people of the area are Muslims. An area is also claimed for being included in Pakistan because the ruler of the area is a Muslim though the majority of the people of that area are non-Muslims. The Muslim League is claiming the benefit of self-determination in India. At the same time the League is opposed to self-determination being applied to Palestine. The League claims Kashmir as Muslim state because the majority of people are Muslims and also Hyderabad because the ruler is Muslim. In like manner the Hindu Mahasabha claims an area to be included in Hindustan because the people of the area are non-Muslims. It also comes forward to claim an area to be a part of Hindustan because the ruler is a Hindu though the majority of the people are Muslims. Such strange and conflicting claims are entirely due to the fact that either the parties to

\(^{15}\) Ibid.
\(^{16}\) Ibid., p. 371.
Pakistan, namely, the Hindus and the Muslims do not understand what self-determination means or are busy in perverting the principle of self-determination to enable them to justify themselves in carrying out the organized territorial loot in which they now seem to be engaged. India will be thrown into state of utter confusion whenever the question of reorganization of its territories comes up for consideration if people have no exact notions as to what self-determination involves and have not the honesty to stand by the principle and take the consequences whatever they may be. It is therefore, wise to emphasize what might be regardless too simple to require mention, namely, that self-determination is a determination by the people and by nobody else.17

In this lengthy statement, Ambedkar traces the contradiction in the Muslim argument. The underlying principle that it deviates from is that of self-determination being “determination by the people and by nobody else.” Ambedkar continues to argue that nationality or self-determination is essentially democratic and writes,

“History shows that the theory of nationality is imbedded in the democratic theory of the sovereignty of the will of the people. This means that the demand by a nationality for a national state does not require to be supported by any list of grievances. The will of the people is enough to justify it.”18

Important to nationality, and in fact for nationalism, is the “sovereignty of the will of the people.” To buttress this argument, Ambedkar’s quote of Lord Acton is worth reproducing here,

1In the old European system, the rights of nationalities were neither recognized by governments nor asserted by the people. The interest of the reigning families, not those of the nation, regulated the frontiers, and the administration was conducted generally without any reference to popular desires. Where all liberties were suppressed, the claims of national independence were necessarily ignored, and a princess, in the words of Fenelon, carried a monarchy in her wedding portion.

“Nationalities were at first listless. When they became conscious——

‘...they first rose against their conquerors in defense of their legitimate rulers. They refused because of the wrongs inflicted upon them by their rulers. The insurrections were provoked by particular grievances justified by definite complaints. Then came the French revolution which effected a complete change. It taught the people to regard their wishes and wants as the supreme criterion of their right to do what they liked to do with themselves. It proclaimed the idea of the sovereignty of the people uncontrolled by the past and uncontrolled by the existing state. This text taught by the French revolution became an accepted dogma of all liberal thinkers. Mill gives it his support. “One hardly knows,” says Mill, “what any division of the human race should be free to do, if not to

17 Ibid.
18 Ibid., p. 42.
Nationality, thence, is the wish to freedom and self-determination. For Ambedkar, like Renan, it [nationality] is both forward- and backward-looking. Self-determination by the people is essentially a demand for Democracy, for Ambedkar. In this sense, Democracy is an outgrowth of self-determination of the people. Nationality is, thus, linked to self-determination and Democracy. But for Ambedkar, this self-determination can also turn out to be undemocratic. If it does, then the result will be Nazism, Fascism, or any other form of dictatorship. To sum up, for Ambedkar, Nationality can be instrumental in furthering the values and goals of Democracy and, importantly, the value of Social Justice.

Nationalism and Social Justice

The previous chapter argued that Ambedkar is committed to Democracy and Social Justice; and showed how this Democracy meant upholding the political values of liberty, equality and fraternity and not just upholding these values but also upholding them equally. Justice lies in giving each value its due. We have also noticed that all these political values are interlinked; one cannot be realized without the other, particularly the values of Equality and Liberty. Now, the question emerges of how fraternity is related to the other two values, and vice versa. Fraternity, we argued, is Ambedkar’s term for community or “sense of community.” In the earlier section of this chapter, we noticed that Ambedkar defines a community as “consciousness of kind”, a “sense of kinship” or “awareness of the ties of kinship”, or “associated life.” Strikingly, even nationality is defined by the same terms. In fact, community and nationality are based on the same principle of fraternity and kinship. Ambedkar argues that nationality can be a great source for providing citizens of a country the needed cementing, or social bonding (fraternity) for an associated life. An associated life is one, which has the necessary social bonding that relates each and every individual to others in a harmonious and complementing manner. For Ambedkar, as David Miller, argues,

19 Ibid., p. 41.
"Nations are communities of obligation, in the sense that their members recognize duties to meet the basic needs and protect the basic interests of other members, however, they are also large and impersonal communities, so in order for these duties to be effectively discharged, they must be assigned and enforced." 20

And for Ambedkar, Nationality can help,

"...in fostering trust between the members of a political community. Where a shared national identity creates mutual trust, it becomes easier to agree on particular disputed issues – each side having more incentive to reach a compromise – and there is also a better chance of winning support for policies that aid one section of the community at the expense of others. Of course this argument can be turned on its head by those who favour a state with minimal responsibilities, if your aim is to disable the state from doing very much, you should prefer it to be multinational in character, so that each community will try to block policies that favour the others (this argument was advanced by Lord Acton (1907). But those for whom social justice is an important value, and those who place a premium on achieving political agreement by democratic means, will favour political communities that are held together by national solidarity." 21

Nationality, in this sense, can play a vital role in the realization of the Enlightenment’s other political values of liberty and equality, thereby promoting social justice. Without fraternity or national feeling, the citizens of a country become insensitive and indifferent to the injustices that happen to their fellow citizens. They also become callous to the pitiable and deplorable conditions in which their fellow brethren live. Ambedkar accuses the Brahmins and other upper castes in India of the same charge in relation to Dalits. Thus, we come to an important and insightful aspect of Ambedkar’s thought, the critique of nationality misused as an ideology by a dominant class to perpetuate their dominance and further their selfish ends, and particularly so, as seen in India.

**Nationality in Practice**

The same nationality that can foster social feeling of fraternity, or “consciousness of kind,” can also, in practice, be used as an ideology by some groups, to suppress the rights of people; more importantly the rights of minorities. By minorities, here, as we saw in the previous chapter, he means, not just religious minorities but also groups that are socially and economically backward. Nationality, thus, becomes an ideology for the dominant groups to misuse its “irrational instinct” and “positive hallucinations” for selfish ends.

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20 Miller, n. 7.
21 Ibid.
Ambedkar’s extensive writings on this pertinent problem of nationalism, needs a closer examination. Before going in to the issue, let us, first, look at his critique of the concept of nation, and the problems associated with it. He writes,

"I have no hesitation in saying that all these notions are fallacious and grossly misleading.

"...Not to make a distinction between the freedom of the country and the freedom of the people in the country is to allow oneself to be misled, if not deceived. For, words such as society, nation and country are just amorphous if not ambiguous terms. There is no gainsaying that “nation” though one word means many classes. Philosophically, it may be possible to consider a nation as a unit but sociologically it cannot but be regarded as consisting of many classes and the freedom of the nation, if it is to be a reality, must vouchsafe the freedom of the different classes comprised in it, particularly of those who are treated as the servile classes.”

Earlier in the chapter, we noticed, that while differentiating nation from community, Ambedkar defines a “nation” in political terms by calling it a “desire for separate national existence.” But, now, he draws our attention to its sociological aspect. He does not consider a Nation as one monolithic whole, but as comprising of many classes. A distinction is made between the “freedom of a country” and “freedom of the people.” That is to say, a country can be ruled by another country, therefore its freedom consists in the rejection of this rule and, simultaneously, by establishing a self-government in liberated country. Ambedkar though, is opposed to the domination of one nation over another; and he condemns it; and yet, to condemn this domination is not enough. True freedom, in fact, consists in rejection of the rule of one class over another. Since, a nation consists of many classes and, of these classes, some classes exist at the cost of exploiting others, freedom of a country is meaningless to, what he calls, the servile classes; in other words, where class domination exists freedom cannot exist. To use Sharad Patil’s words, Ambedkar seeks not just “national independence” but also “social independence.” Linked with this question is whether India is a nation or not, with its different classes, castes and minority nations.

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22 BAWS, Vol. 9, p. 444.
Is India a Nation?

Ambedkar, writing in the pre-independence period, holds the thesis that India is not a nation but has the potential of becoming one. It can become a nation provided it overcomes two major obstacles of caste and the Muslim nationality question. He argues that if we take class or caste distinction into consideration, then India is not a nation. The next argument that he gives is that if Muslims in India constitute a nation then again India is not a nation, but holds two nations in its lap. Sometimes, but rarely, he argues that due to multiplicity of languages, if India were not united by one language, there is a possibility of many nationalities. He writes,

“One language can unite people. Two languages are sure to divide people. This is an inexorable law. Culture is conserved by language. Since Indians wish to unite and develop a common culture it is the bounden duty of all Indians to own up Hindi as their language.

“Any Indian who does not accept this proposal, as part and parcel of a linguistic state has no right to be an Indian. He may be a hundred percent Maharashtrian, a hundred percent Tamil or a hundred percent Gujarathi, but he cannot be an Indian in the real sense of the word except in a geographical sense. If my suggestion is not accepted India will then cease to be India. It will be a collection of different nationalities engaged in rivalries and wars against one another.”

Indirectly, he argues that India with its many languages does not constitute a nation. However, by adopting a single national language they can become one. Language and a nation are deeply linked, because “culture is conserved in a language.” From this, it can be further deduced that he holds the thesis of one nation and one culture. In this regard, he departs from Renan’s thesis that a nation and a single language are not necessarily related and which Ambedkar quotes in his famous “Pakistan or Partition of India”. Ambedkar quotes Renan thus,

“Language invites re-union; it does not force it. The United States and England, Spanish America and Spain speak the same languages and do not form single nations. On the contrary, Switzerland which owes her stability to the fact that she was founded by the assent of her several parts counts three or four languages. In man there is something superior to language - will. The will of Switzerland to be united, in spite of the variety of her language, is a much more important fact than a similarity of language, often obtained by persecution.”

24 BAWs, Vol. 1, p. 146.
25 BAWs, Vol. 1, p. 34.
In this comment, Renan is clear that language does not have enough force to unite two or more people into becoming a nation. On the contrary, the will to be a nation is the only force that can unite a people. Ambedkar agrees with Renan on the relationship between will and a nation; but the existence of many languages can create major hurdles in becoming one nation. The reason being, many languages mean many cultures. Ambedkar, thus, believes that a single common culture is necessary to the forming of a nation, otherwise a will to live together as a nation cannot surpass cultural difference to the becoming of a nation. Coming back to issue of whether India is a nation or not, Ambedkar, comments about the Anglo-Indian's claim that India is not a nation, and the Hindu reaction. Ambedkar writes,

"Whether India is a nation or not, has been the subject matter of controversy between the Anglo-Indians and the Hindu politicians ever since the Indian National Congress was founded. The Anglo-Indians were never tired of proclaiming that India was not a nation, that “Indians” was only another name for the people of India. In the words of one Anglo-Indian “to know India was to forget that there is such a thing as India.” The Hindu politicians and patriots have been, on the other hand, equally persistent in their assertion that India is a nation. That the Anglo-Indians were right in their repudiation cannot be gainsaid. Even Dr. Tagore, the national poet of Bengal, agrees with them. But, the Hindus have never yielded on the point even to Dr. Tagore.”

Commenting on why the Hindus feel the need to assert that they are a nation, Ambedkar writes,

"That was because of two reasons. Firstly, the Hindu felt ashamed that India was not a nation. In a world where nationality and nationalism were deemed to be special virtues in a people, it was quite natural for the Hindus to feel, to use the language of Mr. H. G. Wells, that it would be as improper for India to be without a nationality as it would be for a man to be without his clothes in a crowded assembly. Secondly, he had realized that nationalism has a most intimate connection with the claim for self-government. He knew that by the end of the 19th century, it had become an accepted principle that the people, who constituted a nation, were entitled on that account of self-government and that any patriot, who asked for self-government for his people, had to prove that they are nation. The Hindu for these reasons never stopped to examine whether India was or was not a nation in fact. He never cared to reason whether nationality was merely a question of calling a people a nation or was a question of the people being a nation. He knew one thing, namely, that if he was to succeed in his demand for self-government for India, he must maintain, even if he had could not prove it, that India was a nation.”

The main reason that the Hindus claim to be a nation is because they feel “ashamed” of the fact that India was not a nation, especially in a world where nationality and

26 Ibid, Vol. 8, p. 29.
27 Ibid.
nationalism are considered “special virtues.” The second reason is that nationality is linked to self-determination and self-government. Of how the Hindus, through various means are arguing and propagating this myth that they are and were a nation Ambedkar writes,

“In this assertion, he [the Hindu] was never contradicted by any Indian. The thesis was so agreeable that even serious Indian students of history come forward to write propagandist literature in support of it, no doubt out of patriotic motives. The Hindu social reformers, who knew that this was dangerous delusion, could not openly contradict this thesis. For, anyone who questioned it was at once called a tool of the British bureaucracy and enemy of the country. The Hindu politician was able to propagate his view for a long time. His opponent, the Anglo-Indian, had ceased to reply to him. His propaganda had almost succeeded. When it was about to succeed comes this declaration of the Muslim League, this rift in the lute.”

The Hindus, Ambedkar says, were almost successful in their propaganda that they were a nation, but the Muslim League’s demand for a separate national home sounded the death knell of the propaganda, or as Ambedkar puts it caused “a rift in the lute.” The reason for this is simple, because if the Muslims are, or claim to be, a nation then India is not a nation but, at least, two nations.

Especially since it did not come from the Anglo-Indian, it was a deadlier blow. It destroyed the work which the Hindu politician had done for years. If the Muslims in India are a separate nation, then, of course Indian is not a nation. This assertion cut the whole ground from under the feet of the Hindu politicians. In Pakistan or Partition of India, he claims that Muslims have the features and traits to become a nation but are not yet (in 1946) a nation. The same judgment is made about India.

The next objection he makes to the Hindu assertion that India is a nation, is that of caste as a great hindrance to the national sentiment. It is important to note, that it is Caste not Class that is a major hindrance to Hindu nation. In some of his anthropological and sociological writings, he talks at length that Caste is a great barrier to the “fellow feeling” or “consciousness of kind” that is essential to nationality. In his “Thoughts on Linguistic States,” he says, “the caste is a nation but the rule of one caste over another may not be

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28 Ibid. p. 30.
admitted to be the same as the rule of one nation over another." He defines Caste as an enclosed class. It is an enclosed class because, it is endogamous in its nature unlike Class, and it avoids contact with other castes. The members of the same caste have, like a nation a double-edged feeling, a fellow feeling or "consciousness of kind" towards the members of the same caste and an antagonistic feeling toward other castes. In this sense, each caste acts like a nation unto itself. Ambedkar argues, just like the rule of one nation over another is imperialism and is unjust, so is the rule of one caste over another. Therefore, Ambedkar argues until Caste exists, India cannot be properly called a nation in the true sense. To see which are the castes that are the "ruling castes", let us move on to understanding this phenomenon in India. Ambedkar employs simple criteria for determining a ruling caste and a ruled caste. He writes, "Exclusion from political power is the essence of the distinction between a ruling race and a subject race." 

Ambedkar’s basic terminology for class distinctions in the Indian context is in terms of the governing classes and the servile classes. Among the "governing classes" come, most prominently, the Brahmins followed by other upper castes Hindus; and among the servile classes come the Shudras and the untouchables. Commenting on the high caste Hindus, he writes,

"For, it is they who guide the Hindu masses and form Hindu opinion. Unfortunately, the high castes Hindus are bad as leaders. They have a trait of character which often lead the Hindus to disaster. This trait is formed by their acquisitive instinct and aversion to share with others the good things of life. They have a monopoly of education and wealth, and with wealth and education they have captured the state. To keep this monopoly to themselves has been the ambition and goal of their life. Charged with this selfish idea of class domination, they make every move to exclude the lower classes of Hindus from wealth, education and power, the surest and the most effective being the preparation of scriptures, inculcating upon the minds of the lower classes of Hindus the teaching that their duty in life is only to serve the higher classes. In keeping this monopoly in their own hands and excluding the lower classes from any share in it, the high caste Hindus have succeeded for a long time and beyond measure. It is only recently that the lower classes Hindus rose in revolt against this monopoly by starting the non-brahmin parties in Madras, the Bombay presidency and the C.P. Still the high caste Hindus have successfully maintained their privileged position. This attitude of keeping education, wealth and power as a close preserve for themselves and refusing to share it, with the lower classes of Hindus, is sought to be extended by them to the Muslims. They want to

30 Ibid.
exclude the Muslims from places and power, as they have done to the lower class Hindus. This trait of the high castes Hindus is the key to the understanding of their politics.\textsuperscript{31}

In this comment, Ambedkar, effectively sums up his criticism of the governing classes and its partisan politics. He begins by delineating the nature of high caste Hindus, as having an "acquisitive instinct," and "aversion to share with other the good things of life." Their monopoly on education and wealth gives them the advantage to capture power and to perpetuate their domination. Ambedkar then moves on to discuss the class domination over lower classes. This is a constant theme in Ambedkar writings, particularly in writing concerned with minorities. In short, as we saw in the first chapter, this class or caste dominates over the lowers classes or castes by maintaining their hegemony over all major spheres of cultural and economic production. Keys to their dominance include education, wealth and power. Ambedkar draws our attention to these important sources of domination and later in the chapter we will see how his thought on reservations is linked with redistributing these three key resources. He also talks about the resistance from lower classes by their forming into various non-Brahmin parties to fight against the Brahmin dominated Congress Party. Lastly, and importantly, he also hints at their new goal of reducing the status of Muslims to that of lower classes, which they then (before Partition) had. The means through which this governing class maintains its hegemony is, through the Congress Party and its nationalistic rhetoric. To summarize, the governing class has two devious goals: a) to maintain its dominance over the lower classes and b) to reduce the status of the Muslims to that of lower classes again to dominate over them. The other means is ideological in nature. It uses the majority rule argument in the name of Democracy.

To deal with this, Ambedkar pitches his criticism at different levels. One, he criticizes the concept of nationality and the way it has been put to use in India. He criticizes the majoritarian argument, first, by defining what it means in a Democracy and two, how this argument is misused in the Indian context by the Hindu majority. In India, he blames the Hindu majority as a communal majority, and its tendency to misuse Democracy and the majority rule principle to promote its own interests, while suppressing the interests of

\textsuperscript{31} BAWS, Vol. 8, p. 123.
other minorities in the country. In his book *Pakistan or The Partition of India*, he quotes the Hindu Mahasabha leader, Sarvarkar, to depict the Hindu argument and its misuse of majority principle. In this quote, Sarvarkar writes,

"when once the Hindu Mahasabha not only accepts but maintains the principles of “one man one vote” and the public services to go by merit alone added to the fundamental rights and obligations to be shared by all citizens alike irrespective of any distinction of Race and Religion...any further mention of minority rights is on the principle not only unnecessary but self-contradictory. Because it again introduces a consciousness of majority and minority on Communal basis. But as practical politics requires it and as the Hindu sanghanist want to relieve our non-Hindu countrymen of even a ghost of suspicion, we are prepared to emphasize that the legitimate rights of minorities with regard to their Religion, Culture, and Language will be expressly guaranteed, on one condition only that the equal rights of the majority also must not in any case be encroached upon or abrogated. Every minority may have separate schools to train up their children in their own tongue, their own religious or cultural institutions and can receive government help also for these, but always in proportion to the taxes they pay into the common exchequer. The same principle must of course hold good in case of majority too."

**BAWS, Vol. 8, p. 138**

In this statement, Savarkar is clearly objecting to any “mention of minority rights” because he thinks it is “self-contradictory” and “unnecessary.” “Unnecessary,” because there are “fundamental rights and obligations” that are given to minorities equal to the majority. Democracy, as he interprets, stands for “one man one vote.” In the previous chapter, we have seen the objection made by Ambedkar and the need for the modern theorist to go beyond this principle of equality by substituting it with the principle of equity. Another important argument made by Savarkar, also representing the governing class interests, is the principle of merit for the public services. Later in the chapter, we will look at Ambedkar’s objection to the use of principle of merit in detail.

In another statement, Savarkar writes,

"The Moslem minority in India will have the right to be treated as equal citizens, enjoying equal protection and civic rights in proportion to their population. The Hindu majority will not encroach on the legitimate rights of any non-Hindu minority. But in no case can the Hindu majority resign its right which as a majority it is entitled to exercise under any democratic and legitimate constitution. The Moslem minority in particular has not obligated the Hindus by remaining in minority and therefore, they must remain satisfied with the status they occupy and with the legitimate share of civic and political rights that is their proportionate due. It would be simply preposterous to endow the Moslem minority with the rights of exercising a practical veto on the legitimate rights and privileges of the majority and call it as “sawarajya.” The Hindus do not want a change of
masters, are not going to struggle and fight and only to replace an Edward by an Aurangzeb simply because the latter happens to be born within Indian borders, but they want henceforth to be masters themselves in their own house, in their own land."33

In this comment, once again, Savarkar clearly states his opinion that the Hindu majority is not willing to give up, what he calls its, "legitimate and democratic right," i.e., the "rule of the majority"; or what Ambedkar calls the rule of "communal majority." We can sum up by saying that the Hindu Mahasabha's position at that time was opposed to any special safeguards to the minorities.

Next, what does the Congress say, with regard to safeguards for minorities? Commenting on the Congress position for safeguards to minorities in the future constitution of India, Ambedkar writes,

"The Congress on the other hand regards the freedom of India from British imperialism to be all and the end all of Indian nationalism. Nothing more, it thinks, is necessary for the welfare of the Indian people in a free India. As to the question of constitution for a free India, the Congress simply does not look upon it as a problem. Asked, what about the constitution of a free India? The Congress reply is that it will be a Democracy. What sort of Democracy would it be? The Congress answer is that it will be based on adult franchise. Will there be any other safeguards, besides adult suffrage for preventing the tyranny of a Hindu Communal Majority? The Congress reply is emphatically in the negative. Asked, why this opposition for safeguards? The Congress says that is a vivisection of the nation - an argument the picturesqueness of which is intended to cover its stupidity and which has its origin in the genius of Mr. Gandhi and for which the high class Hindus, who stand to lose by these safeguards, feel so grateful to him."34

Ambedkar blames the Congress for misusing the feeling of nationality for furthering communal and class interests, ignoring a large section of the oppressed and marginalized classes. He also criticizes the Congress's understanding of Democracy and refusal to provide safeguards to the prevention of the communal majority in the name of national unity. Ambedkar argues the reason why the Congress is unwilling to provide safeguards to minorities is because it is composed of Hindus themselves. We need to understand his criticism in-depth to understand the problem. His critique of the Congress is two fold. One, for its bias towards Hindus and, two, he criticises the Congress for its bias in favor of upper castes among Hindus. In short, the Indian national movement for, Ambedkar, was a humbug, which only promoted communal and class interests.

33 Ibid., p. 139.
34 BAWS (What the Congress and Gandhi did to Untouchables), Vol. 9, p. 169.
For Ambedkar, the Congress is, first and foremost, a Hindu organisation parading itself, falsely, as a representative of all the groups in India. This is one of the constant themes running in Ambedkar’s numerous writings. Ambedkar commenting on the Congress writes,

“It is no use saying the Congress is not a Hindu body. A body which is Hindu in its composition is bound to reflect the Hindu mind and support Hindu aspirations. The only difference between the Congress and Hindu Mahasabha is that the latter is crude in its utterances and brutal in its actions while the Congress is politic and polite. Apart from this difference of fact, there is no other difference between Congress and the Hindu Maha Sabha.”

On another occasion, commenting about the communal nature of the Congress, Ambedkar writes,

“...the foreigner should have no difficulty in realising that if anybody is communal it is the Congress and not the Untouchables and that whatever the philosophical grounds advanced by the Congress the real motive of the Congress in opposing the demand for constitutional guarantees is to keep the political field a free pasture for the Hindu majority. He should be able to see, though the Congress does not openly say, so, how natural it is for the Congress to be communal. The Hindu communal Majority is the backbone of the Congress. It is made up of the Hindus and is fed by the Hindus. It is this majority, which constitutes the clientele of the Congress and the Congress therefore, is bound to protect the rights of its clients. If he (foreigner) realises this, he will not be deceived by the arguments of the Congress that it is opposing these demands in the name of nationalism. On the other hand, he will realise that the Congress is deceiving the world by using nationalism as a cloak for a free field for rank communalism.”

Apart from criticizing, the Congress for misusing the nationalism to deceive both the servile classes and the outside world, in this comment, the underlying argument that Ambedkar tries to draw our attention to is the fact that the composition of a group, party, institution or administration gets reflected in its ideology. Based on this fact, Ambedkar argues that the presence of every group is necessary to reflect a balanced and unbiased character. Because the Hindu communal majority is the backbone of the Congress, it is bound to protect it and reflects its ideology. Another trait of the Congress is that it is not

35 BAWS, Vol. 8, p. 47.
36 BAWS, Vol. 9, p. 172
willing to share power with other minority parties. Ambedkar comments on the nature of Congress politics,

"The Congress is not prepared to share power with a member of a community who does not owe allegiance to the Congress. Allegiance to the Congress is a condition precedent to sharing power. It seems to be the rule with the Congress that if allegiance to the Congress is not forthcoming from a community that community must be excluded from political power."\(^{37}\)

In order to exclude others, it pretends to be unaware of the distinction between ruler and ruled, a strategy, Ambedkar believes, that is frequently adopted by the Congress. Questioning this attitude, he writes,

"Similarly, it is no use saying that the Congress does not recognize the distinction between the ruler and the ruled. If this is so, the Congress must prove its bona fides by showing its readiness to recognize the other communities as free and equal partners. What is the test of such recognition? It seems to me that there can be only one - namely, agreeing to share power with the effective representative of the minority communities. Is the Congress prepared for it? Everyone knows the answer.

..."

"Exclusion from political power is the essence of the distinction between a ruling race and a subject race; and inasmuch as the Congress maintained this principle, it must be said that this distinction was enforced by the Congress while it was in the saddle. The Musalmans may well complain that they have already suffered enough and that this reduction to the position of a subject race is like the proverbial last straw."\(^{38}\)

Now we are prepared to move on to the second criticism: the criticism of the Indian National Congress as a party infested with upper castes. Ambedkar asks,

"... can there be any doubt that the Congress 'fight for freedom' is for the freedom of nobody except that of the governing class? Is there is any doubt that the Congress is the governing class and the governing class is the Congress?"

In a speech at Islampur, while talking to the Mahars (Dalits) of Maharashtra, Ambedkar says,

"How can you gain independence? The Congress movement revived Brahmanism which was dead. The Congressmen say that they are for the poor. But I have to tell you one thing. In the Congress along with Bhaiji (Brahmin) there is Shetji (trader). The Congress has included in itself the trader and still calls itself the champion of the poor. Marwaris and the Gujaratis, extorting exorbitant interest and extracting money from you by

\(^{37}\) BAWS, Vol. 8, p. 48

\(^{38}\) Ibid.
dishonestly taking your thumb impressions – all such people are to be found in the Congress ranks. It is said that they will bring about your welfare. The “kunbis” and the Marwaris are on as inimical terms as the mongoose and the serpent. Can there be any love between the elephant and the lion? One would not exist without devouring the other. This is attitude of the Brahmin and the trader. Had the Marwaris and Gujaratis remained independent they would have become the object of resentment of all people. But they have become safe on the payment of four annas (as the Congress subscription). They cannot bring about the food of the farmers. Remember, you Marathas, that they have gone in the council to rob the farmers.”

In the Congress, he comments, there is the domination of Brahmin and the trader class. Though the Congress claims to be the champion of the poor, it is in reality, bound to support these dominant classes. He also comments how this merchant class exploits the servile classes by extracting money dishonestly from the poor. Showing a fundamental class antagonism in the metaphors of “lion and the elephant” or “mongoose and serpent,” he argues that with the dominance of this class the poor cannot experience “true freedom.” In another context, he says, that this governing class is willing to compromise the Nationality that it professes to defend, if it turns out to its disadvantage. He writes,

“... the governing class in India has no intention of making any sacrifice not even on the altar of Indian freedom for which it is thirsting. Instead, the governing class is using every means to retain them. For this it is using two weapons. First is the weapon of nationalism.”

In the above comment, Ambedkar boldly claims that the first weapon of this governing class is Nationalism, and it is willing to using every means to retain domination. This comment was made by him in the context of the upper castes strategy to downplay and stigmatize the reservation issue.

To recapitulate, Ambedkar criticises the role of Hindu organizations, both overt and covert, and their role in the national movement. He argues that these organizations want to misuse Nationalism, Democracy and its rule of majority, to perpetuate their dominance over minorities – whether religious or social minorities. He criticises these organisations as upper caste organizations or organizations infested with caste Hindus, who want to use nationalism and Democracy to maintain domination over both Muslims and other

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40 BAWP (Plea to the Foreigner), Vol. 9, p. 226.
religious groups, and also at the same time to maintain their superior position over the servile classes. Earlier, we saw that Ambedkar is in principle, not opposed to nationalism or Democracy but he is opposed to their misinterpretation and misuse by dominant groups. For this reason, he takes pains to explain what nationalism or Democracy mean, both in principle and how they have to be realized in practice. He also takes up the task of criticizing those groups in showing how they depart from the ideal and for what purposes.

We will now move on to his criticism of how the Hindus are using the “rule of majority” argument in the name of Democracy to deny rights to minorities and establish Hindu dominance.

The Problem of Minorities in the Indian Context

The first and foremost thing that must be kept in mind with regard to Ambedkar is that his criticism of concepts like Nation, Nationalism, “rule of majority” are not to reject them but to interpret them with principles. This is to say, Ambedkar, in principle, stands for the “rule of majority,” and Nationalism as form, political value, of fraternity, both essential to Democracy. Since, we dealt with idea of nationalism both ideally and its practice in India. We will look at this “rule of majority” and its misuse of it by the Hindu in practice. Let Ambedkar speak for himself,
strictly opposed to “absolute majority.” By relative majority, means a majority which is not absolute; which changes after every fixed tenure; which does not represent any particular communal group; and which is not fixed. A relative majority is democratic, or is in tune with democracy because Democracy stands for “rule of people” but not rule of one group of people over another. It is opposed to any permanent rule of any individual, group, class, party, etc. It believes in sharing of power among all its citizens rather than monopolizing it by any particular individual, group or community. Democracy stands for deliberation, for which there is a need for a party in opposition, and this opposition party must be a force that can keep a check on the ruling party. On the other hand, an “absolute majority” is undemocratic. It is against the principal tenants and philosophy of Democracy. In this case, “absolute majority” is nothing but a “communal majority.” By “communal majority” what Ambedkar refers to is a majority that is formed by the largest communal group in the nation or country. In other words, by its sheer strength of numbers a numerical majority can get into power through democratic means but remains in reality and in spirit against Democracy. As Savarkar says in the earlier section, “in no case can the Hindu majority resign its right which as a majority it is entitled to exercise under any democratic and legitimate constitution.” Ambedkar has such comments in mind when he criticises the argument for the “rule of majority.”

Ambedkar states that the Hindu majority insists on this “rule of majority,” because the majority wants to establish its own claim to population ratio so that it may always remain as a majority no matter what the weightage that was given to it. In short, this is what both the Congress and Hindu Mahasabha want in the name of Democracy. We saw in the last chapter how Ambedkar, commenting on the nature of majority in India, had said that while a communal majority might be destroyed, it could not be transformed.

Ambedkar proposes another rule, which is equally important and democratic. He calls it the “rule of unanimity.” He writes,

“The Hindu does not seem to be aware of the fact that there is another rule, which is also operative in fields where important disputes between individual and nations arise and that rule is a rule of unanimity. If he will take the trouble to examine the position he will realize that such a rule is not a fiction, but it does exist. Let him take the jury system. In the jury trial the principle is unanimity. The decision is binding upon the judge only if the
verdict of the jury is unanimous. Let me take another illustration that of the League of Nations. The rule was a rule of unanimity. It is obvious that if the ‘principle of unanimity’ was accepted by the Hindus as a rule of decision in the legislature and in the executive there would be no such thing as a communal problem in India.\(^{42}\)

Here, we come across another important insight of Ambedkar’s in relation to the minority problem, of an alternative to the “rule of majority.” This implies that “rule of majority” is in principle, not central to the democratic process, but that it can be replaced by another rule if it better suits the proper functioning of Democracy. In India, Ambedkar argues that if this rule of unanimity is adopted in place of the “rule of majority” it can help in solving the communal problem of India. He also writes that even if this principle of majority rule is abandoned, the Hindus have nothing to lose. He writes,

> “The abandonment of the principle of majority rule in politics cannot affect the Hindus very much in other walks of life. As an element of social life they will remain a majority. They will have the monopoly of the property, which they have. My proposals do not ask the Hindus to accept the principle of unanimity. My proposals do not ask the Hindus to abandon the principle of majority rule; all I am asking them is to be satisfied with a relative majority. Is it too much for them to concede this?”\(^{43}\)

As said in the beginning of this section, Ambedkar criticises these concepts and principles not to reject them but to interpret them in their true spirit, so that they are not misused either due to misunderstanding or malicious intent.

**Dalits as a Unique Minority**

Ambedkar argues that Dalits constitute a unique minority in India and cannot be treated on par with other minorities. He writes,

> “The problem of Untouchability is a formidable one for the untouchables to face. The untouchables are surrounded by a vast mass of Hindu population which is hostile to them and which is not ashamed of committing any inequity or atrocity against them.”\(^{44}\)

They need special safeguards that are sensitive to their needs. To establish this, he deals with many objections that are leveled against this argument. The first objection is the one


\(^{44}\) BAWS, Vol. 1 (States and Minorities), p. 414.
that challenges Ambedkar’s position fundamentally. According to it, Dalits are not a minority but are a part of the Hindu majority. Gandhi is a proponent of this argument. The next argument is pitched a bit higher. It argues that Dalits are a minority but there is nothing unique or distinctive above them. Commenting about these arguments, and what he proposes, Ambedkar writes,

“The view that Scheduled Castes are not a minority is a new dispensation issued on behalf of the High and Mighty Hindu Majority which the Scheduled Castes are asked to submit to. The spokesmen of the Majority have not cared to define its scope and its meaning. Anyone with a fresh and free mind, reading it as a general proposition, would be justified in saying that it is capable of double interpretation. I interpret it to mean that the Scheduled Castes are more than a minority and that any protection given to the citizens and to the minorities will not be adequate for the Scheduled castes. In other words it means that their social, economic and educational condition is so much worse than that of the citizen and other minorities that in addition to protection they would get as citizens and as minorities, the Scheduled castes would require special safeguards against the tyranny and discrimination of the majority.”

The central argument in this comment is that they are “more than a minority,” which means that they are a minority plus more. He argues thus because that there is another clever argument against him saying that since Dalits are not a minority they do not need the safeguards that are accorded to a minority. Dealing with this attack Ambedkar says,

“The other interpretation is that the Scheduled Castes differ from a minority and therefore they are not entitled to the protection which can be claimed by a minority. This interpretation appears to be such unmitigated nonsense that no sane man need pay any attention to it. The scheduled castes must be excused if they ignore it. Those who accept my interpretation of the view that the Scheduled Castes are a minority will, I am sure, you will agree with me that I am justified in demanding for the Scheduled Castes, all the benefit of the fundamental rights of citizens, all the benefit of the Provisions for the protection of the minorities and in addition special safeguards.”

Part of the blame for why Dalits are not recognized as unique minority Ambedkar lays at the door of the British for the way they have dealt with the problem of minorities. Criticizing the unprincipled British attitude towards solving the communal or minority problem, Ambedkar in his short piece “Communal Deadlock and a Way to Solve It,” writes,

“Whenever a community grows powerful and demands certain political advantages, concessions are made to it to win its goodwill. There is no judicial examination to its

46 BAWS (States and Minorities), Vol.1, p. 383.
claim; no judgment on merits. The result is that there are no limits to demands and there are no limits to concessions. A start is made with a demand for separate electorate for a community irrespective of the fact whether it is a minority or majority. That is granted. A demand is made for separate electorate representation on a population basis. That is conceded. Next, a claim is made for weightage in representation. That is granted. It is followed by a demand for statutory majority over other minorities with the right for the majority to retain separate electorate. This is granted. This is followed by a demand that the majority rule of another community is intolerable, and therefore without prejudice to its rights to maintain majority rule over other minorities, the majority of the offending community should be reduced to equality. Nothing can be more absurd than this policy of eternal appeasement. It is a policy of limitless demand followed by endless appeasement.

"Frankly, I don’t blame the community that indulges in this strategy. It indulges in it because it has found that it pays, it pursues it because there are no principles to fix the limits and it believes that more could be legitimately asked and would be easily given. On the other hand, there is a community economically poor, socially degraded, educationally backward and which is exploited, oppressed, and tyrannized without shame and without remorse, disowned by society, unowned by government and which has no security for protection and no guarantee of justice, fair play and equal opportunity. Such a community is told it can have no safeguards, not because it has no case for safeguards but only because the bully on whom the bill of rights is presented thinks that because the community is not politically organized to have sanctions behind its demand he can successfully bluff."\(^\text{47}\)

The British have not followed any principle while handling different communities; and that this omission is one of the prime reasons that the communal problem is not solved, is the principle argument of Ambedkar. Instead, they have been cowing down the weaker groups, and yielding to the pressures of powerful groups. The powerful groups that he has in mind are the Muslims and the Hindus; the weaker group he refers to is Dalits. In this sense, he blames the British for not adequately dealing with the problem of Dalits. (Later, we will see what Ambedkar has to say on the British attitude towards the Dalits.) He also does not blame the groups for indulging in such practices but instead blames the British for encouraging such unprincipled politics. Due to such politics, the British were not able to solve the communal deadlock. In fact, they have created it. Commenting more on the negative effect of such unprincipled politics, he writes,

"all this differential treatment is due to the fact that there are no principles which are accepted as authoritative and binding on those who are parties to the Communal Question. The absence of principle has another deleterious effect. It has made impossible for public opinion to play its part. The public only know methods and notes that one method has failed and why another is said to be likely to succeed. The result is that the public, instead of being mobilized to force obstinate and recalcitrant parties to see sense

\(^{47}\) BAWS (Communal Deadlock and a Way to Solve It), Vol. 1, p. 367.
Here, is yet another insight from Ambedkar on the way politics is played in front of the public eye. This insight of his can be applied to understand the way in which the Congress and the Hindu upper castes cheat the public, particularly, on the issue of reservations and other important issues relating to minorities. Coming back to communal problem, the way the debate and discussion is held in front of the public is unprincipled and misleading to the people. Apart from this, and more importantly, he argues that there should be some principle with which the minority or communal problem has to be solved.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, he again repeats that when dealing with a minority, first, we should assess the social and economic status of the group. Based on this, we should provide adequate safeguards keeping its needs and political context in mind. If we use this criterion, Dalits would be the community that is a true minority and need the most safeguards. Because, Dalits are a minority which is, as Ambedkar says above, “a community economically poor, social degraded, educationally backward and which is exploited, oppressed, and tyrannized without shame and without remorse, disowned by society, un-owned by government and which has no security for protection and no guarantee of justice, fair play and equal opportunity.” Ambedkar in this excellent phrase depicts the Dalit predicament. Ambedkar, in the sub-committee of the Round Table Conference, points out the differences of depressed classes from that of other minorities. He gives three reasons:

1. Civic disabilities by the British government.
2. Social persecution and segregation by the Hindus. Social boycott.
3. Economic dependence on the Hindus.

**Civic Disabilities under the British**

Ambedkar dedicated a whole manuscript on this topic of Dalits and the British under the title, “The Untouchables and Pax Britannica.” In this piece, he restricts his aim to asking the following questions, what have the British done for the Untouchables? What did the

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British do when they became rulers to emancipate and elevate the Untouchables? Of these questions, the second one he asks aims at a more particular question: What did the British Government do to secure to the Untouchables adequate representation in the Public services of the Country? His reply is in the negative – the British have done nothing significant. In the armed forces, initially, Dalits were heavily recruited and used to establish and retain the British conquest of India. From the Battle of Plassey in 1757 to the battle of Koreagaon in 1818, the British used Dalits to win their wars including these two strategic battles that established their supremacy. In the battle of Plassey, the men who fought with Robert Clive were Dusads, who are a Dalit community. In the battle of Koreagaon, it was the Mahars who sided with the British. Even in the mutiny of 1857, the armies, which crushed it, were the Bengal Army, Bombay Army, and Madras Army that are mostly drawn from the Dalits. However, after the major wars ended the Untouchables were denied the recruitment into the Armed services. Ambedkar writes, "Nothing can be more ungrateful than this exclusion of the Untouchables from the Army."49 Before understanding this treason of the British, we need to understand Ambedkar's explanation as to why the Untouchables sided with the British. Ambedkar writes,

"There are many who look upon this conduct of the Untouchables in joining the British as an act of gross treason. Treason or no treason, this act of the Untouchables was quite natural. History abounds with illustrations showing how one section of people in a country show sympathy with an invader, in the hope that the newcomer will release them from the oppressions of their countrymen. Let those who blame the untouchables read the following manifesto issued by the English laboring Classes... was the attitude of the Untouchables in any way singular? After all, the tyranny under which the English Labor lived was nothing as compared with the tyranny under which the Untouchables lived and if the English workmen had good ground[s] to welcome a foreign invader the Untouchable had one hundred."50

In this comment, Ambedkar argues that Untouchables sided with the British because they hoped that they would get liberated from their immediate oppression. He calls it a fact of history. Even the laboring classes of England showed this tendency. We will come back to this important issue of Dalits and their cooperation with the British against the casteist Hindus and dominant Muslim. For now, we can end this debate by saying that any

49 BAWs, Vol. 12, p. 87.
50 BAWs, Vol. 12. p. 86.
oppressed group can take help from the invading group if it promises them some relief from the oppression. Coming back to the issue of British backstabbing of untouchables by barring them from recruitment from the armed forces, Ambedkar writes, “Strange as it may appear, the answer is that the British Government has since about 1890 placed a ban on the recruitment of the Untouchables in the Indian army.”\(^{51}\) The British exclude the untouchables with a new form of recruitment. Ambedkar asks, “Why did the British commit an act which appears to be an act of treachery and bad faith?” It is because of the new policy that is based on the principle of “class composition” as against the old “principle of a mixed regiment.” Under this new principle,

> “the Indian Army was organized on the principle of class regiment or the class squadron or company system. This means, in the first case, that the whole regiment is composed of one class (or caste) and in the second case, that every squadron or company is formed entirely of one class. The old principle of recruiting was to make the best men available, no matter what his race or religion was. Under the new principle, race of the man became a more important factor than his physique or his intellect. For the purposes of recruitment, the different castes and communities of India are divided into categories, those belonging to the martial races and those belonging to the non-martial races. The non-martial races are excluded from military service. Only the cases and communities which are included in the category of martial races are drawn upon for feeding the Army.”\(^{52}\)

Ambedkar holds that none of the reasons that the British give are tenable. He says,

> “In my opinion the real reason for the exclusion of Untouchables from the Army is their Untouchability. Untouchables were welcome to the Army so long as their entry did not create a problem. It was no problem in the early part of the British history, because the touchable were out of the British Army. They continued to be outside the British Army so long as there were Indian rulers. When, after the Indian Mutiny, the Race of Indian rulers shriveled, the Hindus began to enter the British Army which was already filled with the Untouchables, there arose a problem — a problem of adjusting the relative position of the two groups — touchable and untouchables — and the British, who always, in cases of conflict between justice and convenience, prefer convenience, solved the problem by just turning out the Untouchables and without allowing any sense of gratitude to come in their way.”\(^{53}\)

After commenting on the unfortunate fate of Dalits in the armed services, he moves one to show how they are treated in regard to the civil services. Unlike Armed forces, “civil services require a high degree of education from the entrant.” And Untouchables are the

\(^{51}\) BAWS, Vol. 12, p. 87.  
\(^{52}\) BAWS, Vol. 12, p. 91.  
\(^{53}\) Ibid, p. 89.
most "uneducated part of India's population." In this sense, the civil service has been virtually closed to them.

"It is only recently, that there have been among them men, who have taken University degrees. What has been their fate? It is no exaggeration to say that they are begging from door to door. Two things have come in the way of their securing an entry in the Civil services. Firstly, the British Government refused to give them any preference. Not that the British Government did not recognize the principle of giving preference to communities which were not sufficiently represented in the Civil Services. For instance, the British Government has definitely recognized that the Mohammedans should get preference provided he has minimum qualification. That, this principle has been acted upon in their case, is evident from the nominations, which the Government of India has made to the I.C.S. since the year when the Government took over power to fill certain places in the I.C.S. by nomination." 54

Here again, Dalits were discriminated. Nomination for the Muslim candidates with minimum qualification but not for Dalits has ensured their lack of representation. The other important reason why Dalits were not able to get in to services, Ambedkar points out, is due to the fact of the High Caste Hindus. Describing a caste Hindu's attitude he writes,

"A caste Hindu by his very makeup is incapable of showing any consideration to an untouchable candidate. His sympathies make him look first to his family, then to his relation, then to his friends and then to members of his caste. Within this wide circle, he is sure to find a candidate for the vacancy. It is very seldom that he is required to travel beyond the limits of his caste." 55

To this comment Ambedkar adds a note, which says,

"that this is the principle on which vacancies are filled is too well known to be disputed. In fact it is so well established that if one were to know the caste of the Head of the Department, one could tell of what caste is the personnel of the Department." 56

He then describes the fate of untouchables in the police service. Here again their Untouchability becomes an important obstacle for the British in recruiting them. Next, he then moves on to describe their fate in the education sector. In education, Dalits faced serious discrimination from the British. After discussing at length about the British policies for furthering education in India from 1813 to 1854, Ambedkar comes to the

54 BAWS, Vol. 12, p. 90.
55 Ibid.
56 Ibid.
problem of depressed classes. He writes, "...the British Government deliberately ruled that education was to be a preserve for the higher classes." He quotes extensively from reports submitted by various committees. Since, they run into numerous pages and due to limited space in this chapter, we cannot deal in detail with all the citings that Ambedkar makes. Ambedkar also claims that the British were also unduly favorable to Muslims, when all that the Muslims received, the untouchables too were in need of in matters of education. We can sum up by saying that Dalits were heavily discriminated against in terms of education policies, and that they did not benefit from any scheme of the British.

After, discussing all the disabilities that untouchables had to face under the British, Ambedkar moves on to look at what they have done to eradicate Caste and Untouchability. He writes,

"Caste and Untouchability are the two great social evils in India. Caste has disabled the whole Hindu Society. Untouchability has suppressed a large class of people. Yet the British Government has completely ignored the two evils. One may search in vain the Indian code to find any law dealing with Caste or with Untouchability." He writes further,

"Yet the British Government has gone on as though these two evils did not exist at all. Indeed it is most extraordinary thing to note that although Legislative Bodies were established in India in 1861 and have been passing laws on every social question and discussing public questions, yet except on two occasions the Untouchables were not even mentioned."

Thus, with this discussion of the British insensitivity towards the Dalit problem, we can conclude by saying that the British did not ameliorate the condition of the Dalit; in fact, they sustained it. Ambedkar sums up thus,

"The result was that Untouchable has remained what he was before the British, namely an Untouchable. He was a citizen but he was not given the rights of a citizen. He paid taxes out of which schools were maintained but his children could not be admitted into those schools. He paid taxes out which wells were built but he had no right to take water from them. He paid taxes out of which roads were built. But he had no right to use them. He paid taxes for the keep of the state. But he himself was not entitled to hold offices in the state. He was subject but not a citizen. He stood mostly in need of office to protect

57 Ibid, p. 95.  
58 Ibid, p. 132.  
59 Ibid.
himself. Owing to his poverty he should been exempted from all taxes. All this was reversed. The untouchable was taxed to pay for the education of the touchable. The untouchable was taxed to pay for the water supply of the touchable. The untouchable was taxed to pay for the salary for the touchables in office." 60

But, before the conclusion, it must be said that Dalits benefited under the British in one way. They gained in “equality in the eye of the law.” The principle of equality before law has been of special benefit to the Untouchables for the simple reason that he never had it before the ages of the British. Moreover, it has served as a “great disinfectant.” It has cleansed the air and the untouchable is permitted to breathe the air of freedom. Now, we will move on to the next reason why they are a specially disadvantaged minority in Ambedkar’s view.

Social Persecution, Segregation and Boycotting by Hindus

The next feature that differentiates them in comparison with other minorities is the practice of Untouchability itself. Untouchability, in practice, is the attitude of touch-me-not-ism practiced, not by Untouchables, but by the higher castes. For analogy, comparing the Untouchable condition with that of the Jew, Ambedkar writes,

“They are punished not because they do not want to mix. They are punished because they want to be one with the Hindus. In other words, though the problem of the Jews and of the untouchables is similar in nature—inasmuch as the problem is created by others—it is essentially different. The Jew’s case is one of the voluntary isolation. The case of the untouchables is that of compulsory segregation. Untouchability is an infliction and not a choice.” 61

Ambedkar in this comment, clearly elucidates the character of the untouchable situation by calling it an “infliction not a choice.” This touch me-not-ism exists in various forms. In his piece “states and minorities,” he clearly discusses these various forms of social boycotting. He writes,

“...social boycott is always held over the heads of the Untouchables by the Caste Hindus as a sword of Damocles. Only the Untouchables know what a terrible weapon it is in the hands of the Hindus. Its effects and forms are well described in the Report made by a committee appointed by the Government of Bombay in 1928 to investigate the grievances of the Depressed Classes and from which the following extracts are made. It illuminates

60 Ibid.
the situation in a manner so simple that everybody can understand what tyranny the Hindus a able to practice upon the Untouchables."\(^62\)

The committee said,

"Although we have recommended various remedies to secure to the Depressed Classes their rights to all public utilities we fear that there will be difficulties in the way of their exercising them for a long time to come. The first difficulty is the fear of open violence against them by the orthodox classes. It must be noted that the Depressed Classes form a small minority in every village, opposed to which is a great majority of the orthodox who are bent on protecting their interests and dignity from any supposed invasion by the Depressed Classes at any cost. The danger of prosecution by the Police has put a limitation upon the use of violence by the orthodox classes and consequently such cases are rare."\(^63\)

The next finding of the committee is the economic dependence of Untouchables on the caste Hindus. It says,

"The second difficulty arises from the economic position in which the Depressed Classes are found today the Depressed Classes have no economic independence in most parts of the Presidency. Some cultivate the lands of the orthodox classes as their tenants at will. Other live on their earnings as farm laborers employed by the orthodox classes and the rest subsist on the food or grain given to them by the orthodox classes in lieu of services rendered to them as village servants. We have heard of numerous instances where the orthodox classes have used their economic power as a weapon against those depressed classes in their village when the latter have dared to exercise their rights, and have evicted them from their land, and stopped their employment and discontinued their remuneration as village servants. This boycott is often planned on such an extensive scale as to include the prevention of the Depressed Classes from using the commonly used paths and the stoppage of sale of the necessaries of life by the village bani a. According to the evidence, sometimes small causes suffice for the proclamation of a social boycott against the Depressed Classes of their rights to use the common well, but cases have been by no means rare where a stringent boycott has been proclaimed simply because a Depressed class man has put on the sacred thread, has brought a piece of land, has put on good clothes or ornaments, or has carried a marriage procession with a bridegroom on the horse through the public street."\(^64\)

The first differentiating thing about Dalits in comparison with other minorities is that they lack economic independence. They are dependent on their oppressors for livelihood. They work as farm laborers for the orthodox classes. This dependence has been used by upper classes to crush any rebellion against them. The next weapon that is used against them is that of social boycott, just because a Dalit bought a piece of land, wore good clothing or had a marriage procession. For these acts, they are persecuted, sometimes

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\(^{63}\) Ibid.

\(^{64}\) Ibid.
boycotted and sometimes punished. All this social oppression is not faced by other minorities in India. In this sense, Ambedkar argues, that they are a “unique” and the “real minority” in the country. He says,

“I will at once say that the way in which the position of the depressed classes differs from the position of the other minority communities in India is this: in the first place the depressed classes are not entitled under present circumstances to certain civic rights which the other minorities by law enjoy. In other words in the existing situation the depressed classes suffer from what are called civic disabilities. I will give you just one or two illustrations.”

Even Gandhi, who strongly opposed Ambedkar in the round table conferences and other places on the position that Dalits constitute a distinct element in the Indian Hindu social, also believed that Dalits constitute the real minority in the Country. Ambedkar refers to this,

“Following this test, Mr. Gandhi in an editorial under the heading ‘the fiction of majority’ in the Harijan dated 1st October 1939 has given his opinion that the scheduled castes are the only real minority in India.”

We can conclude this section by saying that Dalits constitute the real minority in India, according to Ambedkar. The next, important task before us is to understand Ambedkar’s views, regarding Dalits and their participation in the freedom struggle. Earlier in the chapter, we discussed Ambedkar’s views regarding freedom; the distinction between freedom of the country and freedom of the people. We also saw that his opinions of the Indian National Congress, where he believes that the Congress is not fighting for the freedom of the people but only of the country. If this happens there is going to be only a superficial change, by replacing British rule with that of Brahmin rule. Ambedkar says that if the two are to be compared, the latter is the worst. Of Brahmin rule, he says characteristically, “The rule which deprives men of their human qualities is oppressive.” Let us look at his views in-depth regarding this issue.

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65 BAWS (Ambedkar at the Round Table Conferences), p. 530.
66 Ibid, p. 422.
Dalits and the Indian National Movement.

In the preceding sections, we observed how the British backstabbed the Untouchables; and earlier in this chapter, we noted how Ambedkar distrusts the Congress and its politics by calling it a Brahmin organization, which wants to deny any special safeguards and rights to Untouchables. For this particular reason, Ambedkar does not trust the British or the Congress in their promises that they will ensure the safety of Dalits in Independent India. He furnishes strong arguments for his distrust of the Congress. He refers to the American black experience after the Civil War, to show that no dominant majority can be trusted. In America, Blacks were heavily used, just as the Dalits were used by the British, to win the famous American freedom struggle against the British, but after the success of the wars, they were sidelined and not given equal status. Replying to why untouchables were not co-operating with the Congress, he says,

"Because, they are afraid that if this freedom is achieved it will enable the Hindu majority one again to enslave them. Why not remove this fear if it can be done at so small cost, namely, by an agreement in advance?"\(^67\)

In this comment, it is clear that Ambedkar wants an assurance from the Congress in advance that Dalits will be given enough safeguards against the tyranny of the Hindu majority. He now comes to show the example of the American blacks after the civil war, and says,

"The second reason is founded in experience. The untouchables say that the experience of the world does not justify the hope that when the "fight to freedom" ends, the stronger elements have shown the generosity to give security to the weaker elements."\(^68\)

Many examples of this betrayal could be cited. The most notorious one relates to the betrayal of the blacks in the United States after the civil war. He quotes Herbert Aptheker,

"What happened to the Negroes after the civil war was over? In the first flush of victory, the Republicans, who waged the war for saving the Union and obtained the help of the Negroes to win it, carried the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution. Under it the Negroes ceased to be slaves in the legal sense of the term. But did the Negroes get any right to participate in the government as voters or officials?"\(^69\)

\(^{67}\) BAWS, Vol. 9, p. 173.
\(^{68}\) Ibid.
\(^{69}\) Ibid.
The whites in the south had no intention of admitting the Negroes to equal citizenship. Disfranchisement of the Negro provides space. It was undertaken as solemn duty both by the state governments of the south as well as by the whites of the southern states. To evade the Fifteenth Amendment, the state governments spent their ingenuity in framing franchise laws which denied the Negroes the rights to vote on grounds other than race or color. Most of them decided upon the grandfather clause which effectively excluded the Negroes but fully included the whites. On the people's side the process was carried out by the Ku Klux Klan.

From this comment of his, it is evident that the whites backstabbed the blacks after they were used in the civil war. The blacks were denied equal rights and equal citizenship. This fate, he argues, must not be repeated in the case of Dalits. Dalits in order to oppose the transfer of power to the Congress, raised slogans that they are opposed to Hindu Raj. In one of his political campaigns, while talking to Mahars, Ambedkar shows his greater disgust for Brahmin rule in comparison to British rule. He writes,

"But what was the result of the Congress movement? The fact is regrettable and shameful to you Marathas that the specter of Brahmanism which was dying has been revived today and has become oppressive to all. Today in the legislature the number of Brahmins is twenty-seven. The posts of authority are eleven of which six are in the hands of Brahmins, and three ministers are Brahmins. From 1919 to 1938, no minister was a Brahmin, which has now been avenged by that community. Fifty percent of the posts in India have been usurped by the Brahmins. The posts of prime-ministers have also been usurped by them. I would tolerate a rule of foreigners but I do not want this Brahmin rule. This ascendancy of the Brahmin community causes me great pain. The rule which deprives men of their human qualities is oppressive. The house maybe lost, money looted, I would not mind even if foreigners did anything more than this. But this rule of Brahmins is bad, thousand times worse than the English rule."

Ambedkar clarifying, the Untouchable position that they are not in favor of British rule either, and the reasons for their slogans against Brahmin or Hindu rule, writes,

"Translated in the language of political science, what do these slogans mean? They mean that the untouchables are not opposed to freedom from British imperialism. But they

70 The grandfather clause is so-called because it restricted the right to vote to a person whose grandfather had enjoyed it.
71 BAWS, Vol. 9, p. 75.
72 Ambedkar, n. 39.
refuse to be content with mere freedom from British imperialism. What is insisted upon is that free India is not enough. Free India should be made safe for Democracy. Starting with this aim, they say that on account of the peculiar social formation in India there are minority communities pitted against a Hindu communal majority, that if no provisions are made in the constitution to cut the fangs of the Hindu communal majority, India will not be safe for Democracy. The untouchables therefore insist on devising a constitution which will take note of the special circumstances of India and contain safeguards which will prevent the Hindu communal majority in Indian society from getting possession of political power to suppress and oppress the untouchables and which will directly invest the untouchables with at least a modicum of political power to prevent their suppression and exploitation, and to enable them at least to hold their own, in their struggle for existence against the communal majority. In short, what the untouchables want are safeguards in the constitution itself which will prevent the tyranny of a Hindu communal majority from coming into being.  

The first point that he makes clear is that Untouchables “are not opposed to freedom from the British imperialism.” But, at the same time, they are opposed to transfer of the power to Brahmins; or replacement of British rule by Brahmin rule. Ambedkar argues that the upper caste Hindus are using the “majority rule” argument to benefit from two sides, one with the Hindu communal majority that they are going to deny rights to religious minorities and non-religious minorities (Dalits); and two, at the same time, to maintain domination over the lower class Hindus. For this reason, they argue freedom is not enough or as we saw earlier “freedom of the country” is different from “freedom of the people.” To ensure the latter, we need to understand the specific problems of the people in the country; importantly which classes/ castes are dominant and which are dominated. After identifying them, special measures must be taken to cut the fangs of the dominant group. These special measures include the special safeguards to the oppressed groups enshrined within the constitution of the country. Ambedkar spells out what is and has been the fundamental guiding principle of his politics. His aim is to free India from British imperialism and more importantly to make Free India safe for Democracy. Keeping the social formation in mind, which western political philosophers have ignored, a system must be devised, wherein measures must be taken to ensure political power to Untouchables, and to prevent the suppression and exploitation of these by the communal majority. In the preceding chapter, we discussed how for Ambedkar, getting political power is the only means for getting liberated from age-old oppression. Next, he picks up the issue of adult franchise that is offered by the Congress. The Congress, and some

73 BAWS, Vol. 9, p. 169.
western observers on India, criticized Dalits for not being content with "adult franchise" and, argued, that there is no need for any special safeguard. To this Ambedkar replies,

"It is propounded by Western writers on Politics that all that is necessary for the realization of self-government is the existence among a people of what Grote called 'constitutional morality.' By constitutional morality is meant habits of 'paramount reverence for the form of the constitution, enforcing obedience to the authorities acting under and within those forms, yet combined with the habit of open speech, of action subject only to definite legal control, and unrestrained censure of those very authorities as to all their public acts combined, too, with a perfect confidence in the bosom of every citizen, admits the bitterness of party contest, that the forms of constitution will be not less sacred in the eyes of his opponents than his own'."\(^{74}\)

If in a populace these habits are present, then according to western writers on politics, self-government can be a reality and nothing further need be considered. Similarly, western writers on Democracy believe that what is necessary for the realization of the ideal of Democracy, namely, government by the people, of the people and for the people, is the establishment of universal adult suffrage. Other means have been suggested such as recall, plebiscite and short parliaments and in some countries they have been brought into operation. But in a majority of countries nothing more than adult suffrage is deemed to be necessary.

After a brief criticism on the assumptions of western political philosophers, where they argue that the existence of "constitutional morality" is enough for efficient functioning of Democracy; he responds to this assumption, once again pointing out that the existing political situation must be taken into consideration. And if the populace of the country already have habits of constitutional morality, then "self-government can be a reality, and nothing further need be considered"; which implies that if the populace lacks this morality then additional measures are needed. The same argument also applies to the issue of adult suffrage. Thus, "in a majority of countries nothing more than adult suffrage is deemed to necessary." But, in India, Ambedkar, is apprehensive about the existence of "constitutional morality," as is reflected in his distrust for Congress and Hindu communal majority. He argues that adult suffrage is a necessary condition but is not enough, and there is a need to go beyond just this "adult suffrage." We can end this

\(^{74}\) *Ibid*, p. 443.
particular discussion by saying that Ambedkar strongly argues that Political theorists who apply principles of political theory to other societies must first study the nature and composition of that society. In this process, they must identify who are the powerful groups and which are groups that this power is exercised on; understand the economic conditions and then apply the theories on that society. This is very important, particularly in case of Democracy. If this is not done these theories will be appropriated by the dominant groups, as they did with democratic principles of rule of majority and adult suffrage, and then misused against the spirit of Democracy. We will now move back to the previous discussion on the question of the uniqueness of Dalits, as a minority.

According to T. K. Oomen, Untouchables are not culturally and regionally situated. Being outside the caste structure, they are "perennial minorities" wherever they exist. Sociologically speaking, we now come across other features of Dalits. Dalits are not one homogeneous group; they are divided both culturally and geographically. By culturally, here, we mean they are linguistically divided. Dalits belonging to different regions also speak the language that is spoken in that particular area. As there are many languages in India, there are Dalits who speak that language, with some exceptions. Even within the same linguistic group of Dalits, they are further divided into smaller groups mostly known for their occupation and social status. However, what unites them all over India is that they all have gone through the same experience all through the ages. Ambedkar comments,

"As I visualize the situation in India that will result from the new constitution, I find there will be certain provinces in which some communities, will be in majority, but in all the provinces the depressed classes, whom I represent, will be in a minority. They will be a minority in every province."\(^{75}\)

In this sense, Dalits are a minority in every area they exist. Thus, there is a need for some special safeguard by an authority, which is neutral to the groups. He further adds to the above comment as,

"I cannot understand how we can at this state (sic) permit the provincial majorities to have complete uninterrupted and undiluted sway over the destinies of these poor people, without any right of appeal being given to the latter in regard to maladministration or

\(^{75}\) BAWS, Vol. 2, p. 517.
neglect of their interests. There must be some authority somewhere, over and above the provincial government, which will be in a position to intervene and rescue them from any adverse position in which they may be placed by the provincial majorities. For redress of these wrongs, which are matters of daily occurrence, the untouchables have to call to the aid of the administration.”

Now the question emerges as to what can makes Dalits one group. As Renan argued, not common historical heritage but, mostly, common suffering is that which unites people into a nation. Ambedkar though, would not claim that Dalits are a separate nation, because they do not desire a separate national existence; but, regarding safeguards, he believes Dalits, or any other community, deserve the same safeguards as that of a minor nation. As we saw earlier in the chapter, for Ambedkar “... once the possibility of ... a tyranny of the majority over a minority is established, it matters very little whether the minority driven to ask for safeguards is a community or as a nation.”

Therefore, Dalits deserve the same safeguards as that of a minor nation. Earlier, while discussing the difference between territorial and cultural independence, we noticed the distinction between severable and non-severable communities for the cultural majority. Groups, which are severable, can claim territorial independence, while groups, which are not severable from others, need an alternative arrangement. One of the devices for ensuring representation of this group is that of Separate Electorates. We saw in the previous chapter how for Ambedkar, separate Electorates are a way of ensuring effective representation for minorities. We also pointed out the question for separate or joint electorate is not a matter of principle but of finding the effective means of representation. In his piece, “States and Minorities,” Ambedkar discusses the importance of and the means of ensuring effective representation for Dalits. Before that he proposes, what he calls guarantees, or minimum representation for Dalits. Referring to their right to minimum quantum of representation in the Legislature in clause 1(a) (1) says,

“The Scheduled castes shall have minimum representation in the Legislature – Union and State – and if there be a group constitution then in the group legislature equal to the ratio of their population to the total population, provided that no other minority is allowed to claim more representation than what is due to it on the basis of its population.”

76 ibid, p. 513.
Referring to the Poona Pact, which was signed between him and Gandhi, he explains this clause, he comments,

"The proportion set out in the Pact was fixed out of the balance of seats which remained after (i) the share of the other communities has been taken out; (ii) after weightage to other communities had been allotted, and (iii) after seats had been allocated to special interests." 78

In the Poona Pact, the proportion of seats was fixed, after weightage had been allotted to other communities, including special interests. This type of allocation, Ambedkar explains, has resulted in great injustice for Dalits. The reason being,

"the loss due to seats taken out as a weightage and seats given to special interests ought not to have been thrown upon the Scheduled Castes. The allotment of those seats had already been made by the Communal award long before the Poona Pact. It was therefore, not possible then to rectify this injustice." 79

Another injustice that has happened to Scheduled Castes is, in relation "to their right to share in weightage." Now, he shifts his concentration on weightage, in clause 1(a) (iii) "where it becomes necessary to reduce a huge communal majority to reasonable dimension and it shall come out of the share of the majority" but in "no case shall it be at the cost of another minority community." 80 Further, sub clause (iv) reads as such, weightage carved out from the share of the majority shall not be assigned to one community only. But the small shall be divided among all minority communities equally or in inverse proportion to their economic position, social status, and educational advance.

Here, again, Ambedkar’s commitment to social justice becomes evident. Dalits get the most weightage because of the fact that they are the lowest in terms of these criteria. In the next sub-clause, he adds that there shall be not representation to special interests that were a result of the Communal award. As Ambedkar, himself, explains, as to how weightage has been given in this clause, he writes,

78 Ibid.
79 Ibid.
80 Ibid.
"As one can see the right to weightage has become a matter of double controversy. One controversy is between the majority and the minorities, the other is a matter of controversy between the different minorities." 81

Answering the question of why the majority insists on weightage be given on population ration, he writes,

"The first controversy relates to the principle of weightage. The majority insists that the minority has no right to representation in excess of the ratio of its population to the total population. Why this rule is insisted upon by the majority is difficult to understand. Is it because the majority wants to establish its own claim to population ratio so that it may always remain as and act as a majority? Or is it because of the fact that a minority no matter how much weightage was given to it must remain a minority and cannot alter the fact that the majority will always be able to impose its will upon it. The first ground leads to a complete negation of the basic conception of majority rule which if rightly understood means nothing more than a decision of the majority to which the minority has reconciled itself. This cannot be the intention of the majority. One must put a more charitable construction and assume that the argument on which the contention of the majority rests is the second and not the first. That a minority even with weightage will remain a minority has to be accepted in view of the insistence of a Communal Majority to remain a majority and to claim the privileges of a political majority which it is not. But surely there is a difference between a defeat which is complete rout and a defeat which is almost victory though not a victory. Cricketers know what difference there is between the defeat of a team by a few runs, a defeat by a few wickets and a defeat by one whole innings. The defeat by one whole innings is a complete frustration which a defeat by a few runs is not. Such a frustration when it comes about in the political life of a minority depresses and demoralizes and crushes the spirit of the minority. This must be avoided at any price. Looked at from this point of view there is no doubt that the rule or population-ration-representation insisted upon by the majority is wrong. What a minority needs is not more representation but effective representation." 82

In this long comment, after discussing the reasons why a majority insists on representation based on population ration, Ambedkar argues, that even after more weightage is given to a minority the minority will still be a minority and the majority will retain more privileges. He uses the analogy of Cricket to explain the degrees of frustration that minorities experience when denied their rights. If no weightage is given to a minority it results in complete frustration; "it depresses and demoralizes and crushes the spirit of the minority." This Ambedkar argues must be avoided at any cost. Then he adds, importantly, that what is needed is "not more representation but effective representation." Now, he begins to answer the question of what makes for effective representation.

81 BAWS, Vol. 1. p. 419.
82 Ibid.
"The effectiveness of representation depends upon its being enough to give the minority the sense of not being entirely overwhelmed by the majority. Representation according to population to a minority or to the minorities combined may be effective by reason of the fact that the population of a minority where there is only one of the combined minorities where there are many is large enough to secure effective minority representation. But there may be cases where the population of a minority or of the minorities combined is too small to secure such effective representation if the population ratio of a minority is taken as an inflexible standard to determine its quantum of representation. To insist upon such a standard is to make mockery of the protection to the minority which is the purpose behind the right to representation which is accepted as the legitimate claim of a minority. In such cases weightage which is another name for deduction from the quantum of representation which is due to the majority on the basis of its population becomes essential and the majority if it wishes to be fair and honest must concede it. There can therefore be no quarrel over the principle of weightage. On this footing, the controversy becomes restricted to the question, how is the magnitude of weightage to be determined? This obviously is a question of adjustment and not of principle."  

In this important comment of his, he sums up his argument for effective representation. The underlining argument is the answer to the question, "how is the magnitude of weightage to determined?" The answer is that it "is a question of adjustment not of principle." Ambedkar also insists upon not taking the population ratio of a minority as an inflexible standard. To insist upon a standard is "to make mockery of the protection to the minority which is the purpose behind the right of representation which is accepted as the legitimate claim of a minority."

Coming back to the issue of Dalits and their representation, Ambedkar argues, "there can be no manner of objection to the principle of weightage. The demand for a weightage is however a general demand of all the minorities and the Scheduled castes must join them in it where the majority is too big. What is however wrong with the existing weightage is unequal distribution among the various minorities. At present, some minorities have secured a lion’s share and some like the Untouchables have none. This wrong must be rectified by a distribution of the weightage on some intelligible principles."  

We discussed this intelligible principle in the previous chapter, in detail. This principle holds,

"...weightage taken from the majority should be distributed among the minorities in inverse proportion to their social standing, economic position and educational condition"

83 BAWS, Vol. 1, p. 420
84 Ibid.
so that a minority which is large and which has a better social educational and economic standing gets a lesser amount of weightage than a minority whose numbers are less and whose educational, economic and social position is inferior to that of the others.  

Thus, Ambedkar states that the guarantees that he is demanding for Dalits in his memorandum, is based on the principle of effective representation.

The next important issue related with Dalits as a minority is the issue of Joint or Separate electorates. In the second chapter, we saw that for Ambedkar the choice of nature of electorate is based not on principle but for achieving a given purpose. Effective representation is the sole purpose. In the memorandum, after dealing with the problem of quantum he deals with the method of election that is suitable for Dalit representation. For both local and legislative bodies he demands the same. He demands:

(a) The system of election introduced by the Poona Pact shall be abolished.
(b) In its place, the system of Separate Electorates shall be substituted.
(c) Franchise shall be adult franchise.
(d) The system of voting shall be cumulative.

The Poona Pact was signed between Gandhi and Ambedkar in 1932. Gandhi opposed the communal award, which granted separate electorates to Dalits on par with Muslims, thereby recognizing them as a distinct minority in the Indian society. Gandhi insisted upon the view that Dalits are a part of Hindus, opposing the view that Dalits constituted a separate element in the Hindu social life as argued by Ambedkar. We will deal with this issue in depth in the next chapter. As of now, it is sufficient to know that Gandhi opposed separate electorates for which he did a fast unto death. Forced by this fast, Ambedkar conceded to joint electorates, only to regret it later. By 1947, Ambedkar was convinced that separate electorates were the only realistic option left for Dalits. Within these fifteen years, Ambedkar closely observed the way in which elections were conducted and the way Congress managed to win elections with the help of joint electorates, without adequately representing Dalits. He also charts out the criticism that has been laid down over the years against separate electorates. He criticises the two-stage election system, which was divided into a primary and a final election. The problem with this type of

85 BAWS (Communal Deadlock and Way to Solve It), Vol. 1, pp. 373-74.
election is that it is expensive and cumbersome. At the same time, it does not achieve its purpose of getting effective representation for Dalits. Commenting on the primary election, he writes,

"it is only the qualifying election and determines who is entitled to stand in the final election on behalf of Scheduled Castes for the seats reserved to them. The final election is by a joint electorate in which both Caste Hindus and the Scheduled Castes can vote and the final result is determined by their joint vote...Firstly, it does not help the scheduled Castes to elect a man who is their ablest choice. As will be seen from Appendix III, the Scheduled Caste candidate who tops the poll in the Primary election tops the poll in Final election. Secondly, the Primary election is for the most part a fiction and not a fact. In the last primary elections, out of 151 seats reserved for the Scheduled Castes there were Primary elections only in 43. This is because it is impossible for the Scheduled to bear the expenses of two elections – Primary and Final. To retain such a system is worse than useless." 86

Next, he talks about Joint electorates. Things, he says, will be much worse in the Joint electorates. In a joint electorate, there will be no such two-tiered election, there will be common voting of Hindus and Dalits but seats will be reserved for Dalits. Ambedkar takes up a case study of elections that took place in February 1946. In this election, he argues,

"the 'scheduled castes candidates' have not only been elected by Hindu votes but what is more the Hindus have elected those Scheduled Castes candidates who had failed in the Primary election. This is a complete disfranchisement of the Scheduled Castes." 87

He then goes on to explain, why this is so, he writes, "the main reason is to be found in the enormous disparity between the voting strength of the Scheduled castes and the Caste Hindus." He says even the Simon Commission had a similar observation. The only alternative is that of separate electorates. Both Gandhi and the Hindus, as we observed, opposed separate electorates. Ambedkar examines the reasons that Hindus give, saying that these arguments "are based on mere prejudice." He lists out these arguments as follows:

"that the scheduled castes are not a minority;
that the scheduled castes are Hindus and therefore they cannot have separate electorates;
that separate electorates will perpetuate Untouchability;
that separate electorates are anti-national;

87 Ibid.
that separate electorates enables British imperialism to influence the communities having separate
electorates to act upon the interests of the country."\textsuperscript{88}

Since, we have dealt with the first two points in earlier sections and the second point
needs further discussion, we shall come back to it later; we will here deal only with the
remaining three arguments.

To the objection that separate electorates will lead to perpetuation of Untouchability, he
replies that it is confused. The first point he makes is that elections take place every five
years. Therefore, separate electorate that is conducted for only two days in every five
years will not make any difference to the Hindu-Dalit relations. He asks, "assuming that
there were separate electorates it is difficult to understand how one day devoted to
separate voting in the course of five years can make for greater separation that what
already exist.\textsuperscript{89} He further asks, "how can separate electorate for the untouchables
prevent inter-marriage or inter-dining being introduced between them and the Hindus?"
His answer is that because there is already separation that exists between them there is a
need of separate electorate. He asks, "assuming there were joint electorates, it is difficult
to understand how social solidarity between the Hindus and the Untouchables can be
promoted by their devoting one day for voting together when out of the rest of the five
years they are leading severally separate lives?\textsuperscript{90} Therefore, he says, "it is futile to say
that separate electorates with perpetuate separation between Dalits and Hindus."

The next charge that is put against separate electorate is that they are anti-national. We
have seen earlier in this chapter that Hindus, and in particular, the Brahmins, in order to
confuse and deny rights to minorities, use nationalism as an ideology. Here, in the
memoranda, he does not say this but gives a factual answer as such,

"To insist that separate electorates create anti-national spirit is contrary to experience. The
Sikhs have separate electorates. But no one can say that the Sikhs are anti-national. The
Muslims have had separate electorates...the Indian Christians have separate electorates.
Nonetheless a good lot of them have show their partiality to the Congress if they have not
been actually returned on the Congress ticket. Obviously, nationalisms and anti-

\textsuperscript{88} Ibid, p. 422.
\textsuperscript{89} Ibid. p. 423.
\textsuperscript{90} Ibid.
nationalisms have nothing to do with the electoral system. They are a result of extra electoral forces.”

These criticisms are based on his understanding of minorities, which we discussed in the previous chapter. For now, we need to underline the fact that Ambedkar’s understanding of the issue of separate or joint electorates is based on his experience with the previous elections; and is a direct result of his theory of minorities, which demands effective representation with a concern for social justice.

Effective representation for a minority is needed not just in legislative bodies but also in the executive and public services. The same principles that go in the distribution of seats in legislature are also applied in the executive. The last and the most important issue is that of ensuring representation of minorities in the public services.

Representation in Public Services

To begin with, let us look at Ambedkar’s Article II section V clause 3 in the memoranda titled “States and Minorities.” It says,

“The quantum of representation of the scheduled Castes in the services shall be as follows,
In the Union services – In proportion to the ration of their population to the total population in India or British India as the case may be.
In the state and group services – in proportion to their population in the state and union.
In the municipal and local board services – in proportion to their population in the Municipal and Local boards areas,
(a) Provided that no minority community is allowed to claim more than its population ration of representation in the services.
(b) Their rights to representation in the services shall not be curtailed except by conditions relating to minimum qualification, education, age, etc.
(c) The conditions prescribed for entry in services shall not abrogate any of the concessions given to the scheduled castes by the government of India in the resolutions of 1942 and 1945.
(d) The method of filling up the vacancies shall conform to the rules prescribed in the Government of India resolutions of 1942 and 1946.
(e) On every public services commission or a committee constituted for filling vacancies, the scheduled caste shall have at least one representative.”

This clause, it can be argued, is the final statement of Ambedkar on the issue of reservations for Dalits. In his explanation, he begins by clarifying that there is nothing

91 Ibid.
novel about this demand. It had already appeared in the Poona Pact in the form of clause 8. But it falls short of defining the quantum of representation and gaining a statutory status. Now the question immediately emerges: what is the justification for this reservation? What are its theoretical underpinnings? In this section, we will try to understand Ambedkar's arguments, and how important are they to his political philosophy.

Earlier in the chapter, we noticed that Ambedkar pinpoints the Brahmins as the "governing classes." And by governing class he means the class, which has a deciding power in all the major political decisions in the society. Using a Gramscian term, it has "hegemony" over the aspect of social life. Most importantly it dominates in the intellectual life of the country and uses this intellectual power to appropriate the essential resources of society to its own benefit. It also uses its power to perpetuate itself by sacrificing the interests of the whole society. Being a group that is has dominance over intellectual institutions such as Education, Religion, Media, Administration and other important civil society structures, it uses these structures to gain political power. This political power is in turn used to maintain economic dominance. Economic strength, further, helps to gain dominance over the former structures. In short, it is a vicious circle of dominance of one particular group over the large uneducated masses. Commenting on the this "governing class" Ambedkar writes,

"The Hindu society is so constituted that in that constitution the Brahmin class is sitting on the heads of all other classes. Without the Brahmin, no rite can take place, without the Brahmin no religious observance can take place. Without the Brahmin no religious function can take place. In this manner, the Brahmin community has been sitting on the heads of all the posts of authority and have also usurped the remaining jobs. In our Bombay Province, this epidemic of the ascendancy of Brahmins has spread to a great extent. But the situation is the same even in the whole of India. Wherever you may go, whether to the civil court or the district court, or any office, the judge is a Brahmin, the district judge is a Brahmin, the clerk is a Brahmin and the officer is a Brahmin. Everywhere the Brahmins predominate. Even when they are not more than four percent (of the total population) they have usurped all the jobs. When the other communities total of 96% the Brahmins get the best of all things while the rest have to languish in the sun."93

93 Ambedkar, n. 39.
In the above comment, Ambedkar excellently depicts the way in which the Brahmin class dominates over the social and political scene in India. Earlier, in the chapter we have seen the way in which this governing class uses Nationalism, as an ideology, and the “rule of majority” principle to deny effective representation to minorities. The way, in which, it talks of establishing “Hindu Raj” with the help of this particular principle of Democracy. We have also seen how this class misinterprets democracy to bluff the masses, as well as the foreigner. He comments that that this Brahmin class is the intellectual class and it has prostituted its intelligence to deny power to the servile classes, and at the same time, to justify the practice of Untouchability in the name of religious practices. It also uses this intelligence to deny justice to Untouchables. He writes,

“For no intellectual class has prostituted its intelligence for the sole purpose of inventing philosophy to keep its uneducated countrymen in a perpetual state of servility, ignorance and poverty as the Brahmins have done in India. Every Brahmin today believes in this philosophy of Brahminism propounded by his forefathers. He is an alien element in the Hindu society. The Brahmin vis-a-vis the Shudras and untouchables is as foreign as the German is to the French, as the Jew is to the Gentile or as the white is to the negro. There is a real gulf between him and the lower classes of Shudras and untouchable. He is not only alien to them but he is also hostile to them. In relationship with them, there is in him no room for conscience and no call for justice.”

Ambedkar says that this Hindu Raj is the worst thing that can happen to India, and must be avoided at any cost. Showing us the link between caste dominance and the Hindu majority rule, he writes,

“The political objection to Hindu Raj rests on various grounds. The first ground is that Hindu society is not a democratic society…. Are not the millions of Shudras and non-Brahmins or million of the untouchables, suffering Further, Ambedkar elaborately explains to us about the governing class, and the way it sabotages democracy for the worst consequences of the undemocratic character of Hindu society? Who benefits from education, from public service and from political reforms except the Hindu governing class – composed of the higher castes of the Hindus – which form not even 10 percent of the total population?”

Further, Ambedkar elaborately explains to us about the governing class, and the way it sabotages democracy for its own interests. He writes,

94 BAWS, Vol. 9, p. 470.
95 BAWS, Vol. 8, p. 356
"The main problems, which those desirous of establishing Democracy in India must face are (1) The position of the governing class of India, (2) the aims and objects of the governing class towards the servile classes, (3) the raison d’être of the demands of the servile classes for constitutional safeguards and (4) the relation of the governing class to the Congress." 96

The last aspect of the relation of the governing classes to the Congress has already been discussed. We will look therefore, at what he has to say regarding the first three aspects of the governing classes. He explains,

"Regarding the first point the argument is that the position of the governing classes in India is quite different from the position of the governing classes in other countries of the world. It is not easy to understand this difference, nor is it easy to state it in expressive terms. Perhaps the illustration of a bar and a hyphen may help to give a clear idea of what the difference is. Nobody can mistake the difference between a hyphen and a bar. A bar divides but does not link. A hyphen does both. It divides but it also links. In India, the governing classes and the servile classes are divided by a bar. In other countries, there exists between them only a hyphen. The resultant difference is a very crucial one. In other countries, there is a continuous replenishment of the governing class by the incorporation of others who do not belong to it, between who have reached the same elevation as the governing class. In India, the governing class is a closed corporation in which nobody, not in it, is admitted. In other countries, where the governing class is not a close preserve, where there is social endosmosis between it and the rest, there is a mental assimilation and accommodation which makes the governing class antagonistic in its composition and less antagonistic to the servile classes in its social philosophy. In other words, the governing class in countries outside India is not anti-social. It is only non-social. In India, where the governing class is a close corporation, tradition, social philosophy and social outlook which are antagonistic to the servile classes remain unbroken in their depth and their tenor and the distinction between master and slaves, between the privileged and the unprivileged continues for ever hard in substance and fast in color. In other words the governing class in India is not merely non-social. It is positively anti-social." 97

Ambedkar attempts here to explain the nature of the governing class by contrasting with governing classes of other countries. The first point he makes is that the difference cannot be explained easily, because in India the governing class is in fact a caste not a class. During his stay at the Colombia University for doctoral studies, Ambedkar presented a paper, "Castes in India" at an Anthropology seminar under Dr. Goldenweizer, in which he deals with the subject of the caste system and defines caste as an "enclosed class." 98 In an enclosed class, the membership is restricted to those who are born in it. Persons from other groups do not get membership, while in a class this is possible.

96 BAWS, Vol. 9, p. 481.
97 Ibid.
98 BAWS, Vol. 1, p. 15.
Therefore, in India a governing class is a “corporation in which nobody not in it is admitted.” It is for this reason the separation that exists between the governing class and the servile classes in India is stronger than in other countries. He explains this with the simile of the hyphen and bar. A class is similar to a hyphen, while a Caste acts like a bar. While in a class there is contumelious replenishment from other classes, in a caste the membership is fixed. The governing class, in this manner is separate from the servile classes. It is a society, where there is no social cooperation or social endosmosis between groups, which helps to strengthen the fabric of society. Thus, only people born in the caste are members and only they are able to maintain their supremacy over others. In other words it is a kind dictatorship of a group, which is fundamentally in contradiction to democracy. Therefore, the brahmin class is, Ambedkar argues, not just non-social but anti-social. The next important question is, how does this Brahmin caste maintain its Dominance? Why is it not challenged by other classes?

Commenting on the way the governing class allies with other upper castes to maintain its dominance, Ambedkar writes,

"It is of course impossible for the Brahmin to maintain their supremacy as a governing class without an ally to help them on account of their being numerically very small. Consequently, as history shows, the Brahmins have always had other classes as their allies to whom they were ready to accord the seats of a governing class provided they were prepared to work with them in subordinate co-operation. In ancient and medieval times, they made such an alliance with the kshatryas or the warrior classes and the two not merely ruled the masses, but rounded them down to atoms, pulverized them so to say – the Brahmin with his pen and the kshatrya with the sword. At present, Brahmins have made an alliance with the vaishya class called banias. The shifting of this alliance from the kshatrya to the bania is in the changed circumstances quite inevitable. In these days of commerce, money is more important than sword. That is one reason for this change in party alignment. The second reason is the need for money to run the political machine. Money can come only from and is in fact coming from the bania. If the bania is financing the Congress it is because he has realized – and Mr. Gandhi has taught him – that money invested in politics gives large dividends." 99

Ambedkar here tells us how the Brahmin class allies with the bania or merchant class to maintain its supremacy. In other words, the Brahmin class does not exist at the helm just by its own strength but with the support of other classes. Together, they become, in Ambedkar’s terms, the governing classes, while the classes which they govern are called

the servile classes. Shudras or the class which is not twice-born come next, and the Dalits or untouchables come under these classes. This is a very important insight of Ambedkar because he expounds that it is not just only one class but a group of classes but headed by the Brahmins who have dominance in Indian politics. Coming back to the issue of reservations, Ambedkar argues that there should be a check against this dominance of the upper castes so that the servile classes can benefit from freedom and democracy. Since, these classes are dominant in the administration, it is necessary to provide safeguards to the servile classes, particularly to untouchable minority against the monopolizing of administrative job by the Brahmin class. Showing us the way in which the administration of the state is in the hands of this Hindu governing class, and the way it discriminates against the untouchables, he writes,

"What is the character and composition of this administration? To be brief, the administration in India is completely in the hands of the Hindus. It is their monopoly. From the top to bottom it is controlled by them. There is no department which is not dominated by them. They dominate the police, the magistracy and the revenue services indeed any and every branch of the administration. The next point to remember is that the Hindus in the administration have the same positive anti-social and inimical attitude to the untouchables which the Hindus outside the administration have. Their one aim is to discriminate against the untouchables and to deny and deprive them not only of the benefits of law, but also the protection of law against tyranny and oppression. The result is that untouchables are placed between the Hindu population and the Hindu-ridden administration, the one committing wrong against them and the other protecting the wrongdoers, instead of helping the victims." 100

The administration, which is supposed to be neutral to all the classes or castes, is in fact deeply biased against untouchables and in favor of the Brahmins. The point he is making is that the composition of any institution reflects the ideology of the group that dominates in the institution. It is for this reason, Ambedkar argues that all groups, importantly, minorities, must be included into structures that regulate the crucial aspects of society. Why administration? Only administration, and the character of administration, Ambedkar believes ensures that the rights of the citizens, particularly the lower classes, are not violated. From the above comment it can be inferred that since the character of administration is Hindu in nature, minorities like Muslims, Christians and Dalits would be discriminated against perennially. Thus, safeguards are needed to ensure that jobs are not appropriated by Brahmin classes. Reservations in jobs for minorities are one such

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100 BAWS, Vol. 1, p. 414.
means to ensure effective representation of minorities in administration. Effective representation of all groups also transforms the character of administration to a much more egalitarian and a democratic form. Ambedkar says,

“As to the demand for reservation by the servile classes the reason behind it is to put a limit on the power of the governing classes to have control over the instrumentalities of government. The governing classes are bent on giving the reservations a bad name in order to be able to hang those who are insisting upon them. The real fact is that the reservations are only another name for what the Americans call checks and balances which every constitution must have, if Democracy is not to be overwhelmed by the enemies of Democracy. That the reservations demanded by the servile classes are different in form from the American sort of checks and balances does not alter their character. The forms of checks and balances must be determined by two considerations the first is the necessity of establishing a correlation between the political constitution and social institutions of the country if Democracy is to be real. As the social institutions of the countries differ in their form, the checks and balances in [their] political constitutions must also differ. For instance, where a country is ridden by the caste system, the checks and balances will have to be of a different sort from what they need to be in a country pervaded by a spirit of social Democracy. The second is the necessity of providing a firm [footing] to the servile classes against the possibility of their being [pushed] down by the governing classes by reason of their superior power. In some countries adult suffrage may be quite enough for the servile classes to hold their own against the governing classes. In India, unlike other countries the governing class is so omnipotent and omni-present that other remedies besides adult suffrage will be necessary to give adequate power to the servile classes to protect themselves against exploitation by the governing classes.”

In this comment, he clearly states that Reservations are only another name for safeguards, or what the Americans call checks and balances. Their primary aim is to keep a check on the Brahmin class, by limiting its power over “instrumentalities of government.” Another important point he makes is that the methods and means of limiting the power of the governing classes vary in different countries, keeping in mind the nature of the governing class and its relation to other classes. Therefore, there is no single method for all countries. Indian society, thus, needs reservations for Dalits and other minorities so that they are represented adequately in the administrative services; and which is their democratic right. Having said this Ambedkar argues, that the Brahmins are malicious enough to give reservations a bad name, because they tend to lose some jobs from these reservation policies. We will now look at what are the means through which the Brahmins stigmatize reservations for social and economic minorities.

101 BAWS, Vol. 9. p. 482
Stigmatizing Reservation

Ambedkar identifies three important arguments against the demand for reservation put forward by the Brahmins. The first argument says that reservations put forward are antinational. It says, given that, reservations are based on group identity or caste identity; they tend to exacerbate the caste differences that already exist, and are therefore antinational. The second argument is that reservations are a compromise on efficiency and merit. Commenting on the way the Brahmin class uses nationalism to oppose reservations, Ambedkar writes,

"... the governing class in India has no intention of making any sacrifice not even on the alter of Indian freedom for which it is thirsting. Instead, the governing class is using every means to retain them. For this, it is using two weapons. First is the weapon of nationalism. Whenever the servile classes ask for reservations in the legislatures, in the executive and in public services, the governing classes raise the cry of "nationalism in danger." 102

Claiming that this allegation by the Brahmins that reservations are opposed to nationalism, is based on false grounds; and, alternatively, arguing that if they are really are concerned for national unity they should support reservation, Ambedkar writes,

"What are these reservations for? To put it briefly they are intended to provide floorings below which the governing class will not be able to push down the servile classes in their struggle for existence. There is nothing sinister and nothing wrong in this demand for reservation. How does the governing class react to them? It loses no occasion to deprecate them and to ridicule them. People are led to believe that if they are to achieve national freedom, they must maintain unity, that all questions regarding reservations in the legislatures, executives and the public services are inimical to national unity and that, therefore, for anyone interested in national freedom it is a sin to support those who ask for such reservations. That is the attitude of governing class in India." 103

He sums up this argument as such,

"To put it briefly the governing class is aware that a political campaign based on class ideology and class conflict will toll its death knell. It knows that the most effective way of sidetracking the servile classes and fooling them is to play upon the sentiment of nationalism and national unity." 104

102 Ibid., p. 472
103 Ibid.
104 Ibid.
The next criticism that is pitched against reservations is the argument that they are against efficiency. He comments,

"The argument used by the governing classes to oppose the demand of the servile classes for reservation is based on the doctrine of efficiency. To give a patriotic look to the stand taken by the governing classes it is represented that what Indians must aim at is to maintain in India an efficient body politic and that this can be done only by insisting that every place of power and authority should be filled by none but the best man available. It is this argument which seems to impress the foreigner and which makes him a critic if not an adversary of the demand for reservation."\(^{105}\)

It is therefore necessary to examine the validity of the argument and the sincerity of those who use it. Ambedkar replies,

"Mere efficiency can never be accepted as a test. If it was accepted as the only test the result would be that the affairs of the French might well be run by the Germans, of Turks by the Russians and of Chinese by the Japanese. Those who hold out the theory of naked efficiency and nothing but efficiency as the test of good government should ask the French, the Turks and the Chinese as to what they have to say about it and how they like the result which follows from its application."\(^{106}\)

He further explains,

"Nobody will have any quarrel with the abstract principle that nothing should be done whereby the best shall be superseded by one who is only better and the better by one who is merely good and the good by one who is bad. But the argument completely fails to carry conviction when in practice one finds that having regard to the historical circumstances of India every time the "best man" is chosen he turns out to be a man from the governing class. This may be alright from the point of view of the governing class but can it be right from the point of view of the servile classes? Could the best "German" be the best for the French? Could the "best" Turk be the "best" for the "Greek? Could the "best Pole be regarded "best" for the Jews? There can hardly be any doubt as to the correct answer to these questions."\(^{107}\)

How can such a theory be applied to India where caste differences are equal to the difference between the French and Germans, Turks and Russians or Chinese and Japanese? The fact is that the governing class in India is blinded by self-interest, and is unmindful of the absurdity of the argument of naked efficiency; and being conscious that it has the power to convert its opinion into law does not bother what the servile classes have to say on the point.

\(^{105}\) Ibid. p. 476.  
\(^{106}\) Ibid.  
\(^{107}\) Ibid.
Ambedkar clarifies his position by saying that the principle of efficiency, abstractly seen, cannot be objected to, because it is common sense to accept the best man in comparison to a bad man. However, the best man from one country can never be the best man for another country, in practice. The underlying argument that he is hinting at is that the best man who is supposed to represent a group can only come from that particular group, no matter the fact that a better man from other groups exist. This is the underlying principle of self-determination. Therefore, when talking of representation of lower classes, the best representative for these classes can only come from these classes, whether or not better qualified persons from other groups exist. As Ambedkar says,

“In answering this question, two things cannot be overlooked. One is that a great man is not necessarily a good man. The other that man is not a mere machine without feelings. This is even true of the best man. He two is charged with the feelings of class sympathies and class antipathies. Having regard to these considerations the “best man” from the governing classes may well turn out to be the worst from the point of view of the servile classes.”

The important insight he gives is that a “great man is not necessarily a good man,” and even he too will be “charged with class sympathies and antipathies” and could turn out to be the worst choice for the servile classes. Ambedkar claims that even Marx would endorse this fact, and writes,

“In selecting the instrumentality of the state considerations of class bias in the instrumentalities cannot be overlooked. It is in fact fundamental to good government. It is unfortunate that the importance of this fact is not generally recognized even by those who regard themselves as the champions of Democracy. Karl Marx was the first to recognize it and take account of it in the administration of the Paris commune. It is necessary to say that it is today the basis of government in socialist Russia. The demand for reservation put forth by the servile classes in India is essentially based upon the same considerations pointed out by Dicey, advocated by Marx and adopted by Russia. Only those who belong to the servile classes can be trusted to protect the interest of that class. This consideration is so important that the principle of efficiency cannot be allowed to altogether override it. If the governing class in India stands on the principle of efficiency and efficiency alone it is because it is actuated by the selfish motive of monopolizing the instrumentalities of government.”

108 Ibid.
109 Ibid., pp. 480-81
To conclude, Ambedkar argues that only those who belong to the servile classes can be trusted to represent the servile classes. Therefore, arguments of efficiency are no excuse to deny representation to the lower classes in the public services. Lastly, he says,

"Efficiency combined with selfish class interests instead of producing good government is far more likely to become a mere engine of suppression of the servile classes."\textsuperscript{110}

After dealing with the false arguments that are posited by Brahmins Ambedkar talks about the other means thorough which they stigmatize reservation policies. He writes,

"The second means employed by the governing class is the writing of the lampoon and parodies calculated to pour ridicule on the demand for reservations. Such lampoons are by no means few and far between. Even the most respectable members of the governing class do not mind indulging in such compositions."\textsuperscript{111}

To stigmatize Dalits the Brahmins give hate speeches and produce hate literature. He warns Dalits of the slandering against reservation and affirms that they are good for lower classes no matter what the Brahmins say. He, in turn, argues that the caste system is the one of the worst forms of reservation, as propounded by Manu. The Brahmin have benefited from such system of reservation, where the best occupation was reserved for them. He writes,

"The governing class does not bother to inquire into the ways and means by which it has acquired its supremacy. It does not feel the necessity of doing so, partly because it believes that it acquired its supremacy by dint of merit and partly because it believes that no matter how it acquired its power it is enough that it is in a position to dictate its policy on the servile classes. Assuming that the governing classes did not find it necessary to examine the ways and means by which it obtained its supremacy what would it find? Strange as it may seem the governing class has obtained its power by the same system of reservations which it is now opposing on the ground of communalism. Many may find it difficult to accept the truth of this statement. Those who have any doubt need do no more than read the Manusmriti, the bible of the Hindus. What will they find in it? They will find and will no doubt be shocked to know that the Brahmins, the chief and the leading element in the governing class, acquired their political power not by force of intellect – for intellect is nobody’s monopoly – but by sheer communalism."\textsuperscript{112}

Ambedkar therefore, charges the Brahmins with having gained their dominant position by practicing communalism. Thus, see that one of Ambedkar’s fundamental criticisms of

\textsuperscript{110} Ibid., p. 477.  
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., p 472.  
\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., p. 476.
Hindu ruling class is that of communalism. To protect against such communalism there is a need to reserve electorates plus posts for untouchables and other deserving minorities. He writes,

"... it must be admitted that though the reservations made by Manu have gone, the advantages derived from their continuance over several centuries have remained. In asking for reservation the servile classes are not asking for anything new or anything extraordinary. The demand for reservation is a demand for protection against the aggressive communalism of the governing class, which wants to dominate the servile class in all fields of life and without imposing on the governing class any such ignominious conditions as was done by the Brahmins for their own aggrandizement and for the perpetuation of their own domination on the Shudra, namely, to make it a crime for the governing class to learn or to acquire property."

The next important question that emerges is how long should these reservations be given to Dalits. To this question, Ambedkar replies by tracing their history under the British; how other communities like Muslims and Christians benefited for a long period and Dalits for only a very brief period. In the Constituent Assembly, he settles for a 10-year period, with an option to review every 10 years. In response to the questions by some that this was too short a period for the betterment of Dalits, he replies,

"I would like to say one or two words on the remarks of Members of the Scheduled Castes who have spoken in somewhat passionate and vehement terms on the limitation imposed by this article. I have to say that they have really no cause for complaint, because the decision to limit the thing to ten years is really a decision which has been arrived at with their consent. I personally was prepared to press for a larger time, because I do feel that so far as scheduled castes are concerned, they are treated on the same footing as the other minorities. For instance, as far as I know the special reservation for the Mussalmans started in the year 1892; so to say, the beginning was made then. Therefore, the Muslims had practically enjoyed these privileges for more or less sixty years. The Christians got their privilege under the constitution of 1920 and they have enjoyed it for 28 years. The scheduled castes got this only in the constitution of 1935. The commencement of this benefit of special reservation practically began in the year 1937 when the Act can into operation. Unfortunately for them, they had the benefit of this only for two years, from 1939 practically up to the present moment, or up to 1946, the constitution was suspended and the scheduled castes were not in position to enjoy the benefits of the privileges which were given to them in the 1935 Act, and it would have been quite proper I think, and generous on the part of this house to have given the scheduled castes a longer term with regard to reservations. But as I said, it was all accepted by the house. It was accepted by Mr. Nagaappa and Mr. Muniswamy Pillai and all these members, if I may say so - I am not making any complaint - were acting on the other side, and I think it is not right now to go back on these provisions. If at the end of the ten years, the scheduled castes find that their position has not improved or that they want further extension of this period, it will not be beyond their capacity or their

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113 Ibid.
intelligence to invent new ways of getting the same protection which they are promised here.  

He comments further that,

"For the Scheduled tribes I am prepared to give far longer time. But all those who have spoken about the reservation to Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes have been so meticulous that the thing should end by ten years. All I want to say to them, in the words of Edmund Burke is, "large Empires and small minds go ill together."  

His reply, in short, is that a ten-year period is too short, but it is a good start, and recommends that only Dalits have the final right to discard this safeguard when they feel it unnecessary. This view falls in line with his view that the minority must have deciding power to demand safeguards and to decide the nature of the safeguards.

Thus, we can end this section on reservations by saying that for Ambedkar, reservations are not policies that are based on sentiments of benevolence but are based on the principle of representation that is essential to democracy. They aim at ensuring Dalit representation, and effective representation at that, in the instrumentalities of the state. In other words, they aim to ensure that the lower classes get their share in the political power, which was until then only a privilege of the governing classes. They are imperative in character. They are an essential part of democracy and its pursuit of Social justice. Therefore, Ambedkar argued that these safeguards as he demands in the memoranda, "States and Minorities" must be promised by the Congress before the declaration of the independence, so that Dalits can trust the Congress. He asks the Congress,

"Why not join the Congress in the "fight to freedom"?; Why make agreement on constitutional safeguards a condition precedent to cooperation with he Congress? After all, Safeguards can come only after freedom is won."  

And Ambedkar replies,

"The first reason is founded in common sense. The untouchables say, 'what harm is there in demanding from the Congress an agreement in advance? What is lost, if a guarantee is

\[114\] BAWS, Vol. 13, p. 852.  
\[115\] Ibid.  
\[116\] BAWS, Vol. 9, p. 173.
given by the Congress in advance? They argue that if the Congress agreed to this demand for safeguards in advance it will have a double effect. In the first place, it will give an assurance to the untouchables who entertain so much dread as to what their lot would be under a Hindu communal majority. Secondly, such an assurance would go a long way in inducing the untouchables to cooperate with the Congress.\textsuperscript{117}

We will now move on to look at some of the historical facts concerning reservations and electorates for minorities, from Ambedkar’s point of view. We will look at what views he has expressed in the Constituent Assembly to which he was elected in 1947, as well as the chairperson of the Drafting Committee. We look at how he deals with the minority issue in the Assembly debates.

The Constitution and the Minorities

The first point Ambedkar makes is that the Constitution uses the word minority in two different ways. One, in the technical sense; and the other, as Ambedkar uses it, in its wider sense, to include social and economical minorities. The term “minority” when used in the technical sense is applied to, what he calls cultural and linguistic minorities. In Article 23 of the Constitution, which talks about protection of linguistic and cultural rights of the people, the term minority is used in this technical sense. However, in Article 18, which relates to fundamental rights, the term minority is used in the wider sense. Both in this chapter and in the previous chapter we dealt with what the term minority means in its wider sense, and hence it needs no further elaboration. Ambedkar writes,

\textit{On reading the paragraph contained in the original Fundamental rights, it will be noticed that the term ‘minority’ as used therein is not in the technical sense of the word ‘minority’ as we have been accustomed to use it for the purposes of certain political safeguards such as representation in the legislature, representation in the services and so on. The word is used not merely to indicate the minority in the technical sense of the word, it is used to cover minorities which are not minorities in the technical sense, but which are nonetheless minorities in the cultural and linguistic sense. For instance for the purpose of this article 23, if a certain number of people from Madras came and settled in Bombay they would be, although not a minority in the technical sense, cultural minorities. Similarly, if a certain number of Maharashtrians went for Maharashtra and settled in Bengal, although they may not be minorities in the technical sense, they would be cultural and linguistic minorities in Bengal. The article intends to give protection in the matter of culture, language and script not only to a minority technically, but also to a minority in the wider sense of the terms as I have explained just now. That is the reason why we dropped the word ‘minority’ because we felt that the word might be interpreted}

\textsuperscript{117}Ibid.
in the narrow sense of the term, when the intention of this house, when it passed article 18, was to use the word 'minority' in much wider sense, so as to give cultural protection to those who were technically not minorities but minorities nonetheless.''

After the Partition, in a debate over what rights be given to religious minorities, Ambedkar criticises those who are delaying the debate so as to give minority rights in India only after observing what Pakistan gave to its minorities. He argues that the rights must be based on principles; and India must take the lead in giving rights to minorities based on such principles. He said,

"Mr. President, sir, I confess that I am considerably surprise at these amendments — both by Mr. Munshi as well as by Mr. Tyagi. They have, I submit, given no reason why this clause 18 should be referred back to the Committee. The only reason in support of this proposal — one can sense — is that the rights of minorities should be relative, that is to say, we must wait to see what rights the minorities are given by the Pakistan Assembly before we determine the rights we want to give to the minorities in the Hindustan area. Now, sir, with all deference, I must deprecate any such idea. Rights of minorities should be absolute rights. They should not be subject to any consideration as to what another party may like to do to minorities within its jurisdiction. If we find that certain minorities in which we are interested and which are within the jurisdiction of another state have not got the same rights which we have given to minorities in our territory, it would be open for the state to take up the matter in a diplomatic manner and that the wrongs are rectified. But no matter what others do, I think we ought to do what is right in our own judgment and personally I think that the rights which are indicated in clause 18 are rights which every minority, irrespective of any other consideration is entitled to claim."

Ambedkar's fight for Dalits to gain the status of minority, which starts in 1919 with the Round Table Conferences, finally ends in their getting this status in independent India under the Constitution. Declaring that the Constitution finally accepts them as a minority he writes,

"That was the original proposition passed by the House. Subsequently the Advisory Committee came to the conclusion on the consent of the two minorities — Muslims and Christians — that they were not to be treated as minorities. When the House has now accepted that the only minorities to be provided for in this manner are the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes obviously, the Drafting Committee is bound by the decision of the house and to alter the article in terms of such decision."

And finally, when reservations were accepted, ensured in the form of article 296, Ambedkar says,
"The report of the minorities committee provided that all minorities should have two benefits or privileges, namely, representation in the legislatures and representation in the services. Paragraph 9 of the report which was accepted by this House contained this, 'in the all-India and provincial services the claims of all minorities shall be kept in view in making appointments to these services consistently with the consideration of efficiency in the administration.'" \(^{121}\)

Conclusion

To conclude, Ambedkar’s understanding of the particularity of the minority situation in India was the main concern of this chapter. One of the most important points that emerges based on the discussion in the chapter is that Dalits constitute a distinct and unique minority in the country. They are a minority both in the cultural and political sense. Culturally, they do not belong to the Hindu culture but have a dialectical and unequal relationship with Hindu culture. It is dialectical relationship because, untouchability is a result of this Hindu caste system and its values, hence its culture. Yet, they are not a part of Hindu culture because they do participate in the religious and cultural processes of the Hindus. They are apart from the Hindus and yet dependent on them. They do menial jobs for the Hindus and importantly not out of some economic constraints but because these jobs are socially imposed on them against their will. In this sense, what they do determines their identity and their identity, in turn, is determined by the Hindus. Based on this understanding Ambedkar fought for their distinct status in the Indian politics.

This fight of Ambedkar’s was not without hurdles. One of the major obstacles to this fight comes from Gandhi, and we has seen how Ambedkar and Gandhi differ on this matter. Gandhi does not accept Dalits as a distinct minority though he is willing to accept that they have gone through great injustice. His way of solving the issue is through a greater inclusion of Dalits in the Hindu society rather than fighting for their separate identity as Ambedkar did.

\(^{121}\) BAWS, Vol. 9, p. 169.
After dealing with Dalits, in the sense of cultural minorities, we dealt with the issue of them being political minorities. As we discussed in the second and third chapter, according to Ambedkar, a minority is nothing but a subaltern group. A subaltern group is economically and socially weak and, is therefore, also politically weak. Dalits too are economically and socially weak. Therefore, they are also political minorities. Ambedkar argues that political minorities unlike cultural minorities need different kind of safeguards. Based on this argument we noticed Ambedkar demands reservation for Dalits. Here, we looked at the way Ambedkar defends safeguards like separate electorates to ensure political representation, and reservations for their representation in public services. Because, as in politics, even in public services the upper castes have occupied key positions and a major chunk of the jobs and because of this, job recruitment is based on communal lines, rather than on merit. Here comes Ambedkar's critique of the argument of merit and efficiency. He rejects these criteria for selection of jobs because of the hypocrisy of the dominant castes who, while canting about merit and efficiency, practice corruption and communalism during recruitment of the services.

One of the important arguments running throughout the chapter is the communal nature of Indian politics. For Ambedkar, Indian politics right from the time Gandhi enters the Indian National Congress till the gaining of independence was laden with communal politics. We spent a major portion of the chapter in discussing the nature of this communal politics and the reason for this communal politics. In this discussion, what clearly emerges is that for Ambedkar, the term "communal" includes not just religious difference and the interest attached to it, but also caste difference and its interests. The Congress and its leaders are the main culprits in this business. They started using communal sentiments of the people to gain popularity and power. Electoral politics was largely based on these lines. As Ambedkar says, "voting is always communal and nothing but communal." He also says that the Congress represents the Hindus because they are in a majority and can give it the most number of votes.

Next, Ambedkar criticizes Jinnah for propagating the politics of minorities qua minorities. Though he blames the Congress for creating the environment for it, he still holds the minority leaders responsible for yielding to such tactics. Later, justifying the
safeguards that were provided to minorities in the Constitution, he criticizes communal politics thus,

"The draft constitution is also criticized because of the safeguards it provides for minorities. In this, the drafting committee has no responsibility. It follows the decisions of the Constituent Assembly. Speaking for myself, I have no doubt that the Constituent Assembly had done wisely in providing such safeguards for minorities as it has done. In this country both the minorities and the majorities have followed a wrong path. It is wrong for the minorities to deny the existence of minorities. It is equally wrong for the minorities to perpetuate themselves." 122

What clearly emerges from this comment of Ambedkar is that he is not arguing for Dalits as a minority because he wants them to remain a minority, forever. He ultimately wants them to get integrated into Indian society, not a society that is ridden with communalism and injustice, but a society which has justice and compassion as its guiding values. To understand this, we need to talk about his vision of a good society, which will be the main concern of the next chapter. Coming back to the problem of majority and minority, Ambedkar wants us to understand that India's majority is a communal majority not a political majority; but despite this the minorities in India, unlike in Ireland, have cooperated with the majority in forming a nation. And this needs to be respected by the majority if they do not want to upset the minorities. If this is not so, it can convulse the whole nation. Commenting on this aspect he writes,

"A solution must be found which will serve a double purpose. It must recognize the existence of the minorities to start with. It must also be such that it will enable majorities and minorities to merge some day into one. The solution proposed by the Constituent Assembly is to be welcomed because it is a solution which serves this two-fold purpose. To discard who have developed a kind of fanaticism against minority protection I would like to say two things. One is that minorities are an explosive force which, if it erupts, can blow up the whole fabric of the state. The history of Europe bears ample and appalling testimony to this fact. The other is that the minorities in India have agreed to place their existence in the hands of the majority. In the history of negotiation for preventing the partition of Ireland. Redmond said to Carson, 'ask for any safeguard you like for the Protestant minority but let us have a United Ireland.' Carson's reply was, 'Damn your safeguards, we don't want to be ruled by you.' No minority in India has taken this stand. They have loyally accepted the rule of the majority which is basically a communal majority and not a political majority. It is for the majority to realize its duty not to discriminate against minorities. Whether the minorities will continue or will vanish must depend upon this habit of the majority. The moment the majority loses the habit of discriminating against the minority, the minority can have no ground to exist. They will vanish." 123

123 Ibid.
We also touched upon Ambedkar’s views on nationalism. Here we noticed that for Ambedkar, nationalism can furnish the necessary feeling of solidarity among its people, which can in turn further social justice. We also noticed that, for Ambedkar, the right to self-determination by any group is an important value, based on which he defends the demand for Pakistan even though he has numerous other objections to the idea. Ambedkar’s central argument is that homogeneity within a group is good for better cooperation and to pursue common goals; whereas pluralism can create hurdles for common action, particularly in fighting social injustice.

In the next chapter, we will see that, in a similar vein, Ambedkar argues that Dalits constitute a unique minority in the country, who need special representation in all the sectors. For this reason, laws need to be enacted so that protection for them is effective. One of the best ways to ensure this is to enshrine these laws in the constitution itself. But that is not the end of the story. Ambedkar fought throughout his life to get these legal safeguards, but at the same time was deeply skeptical regarding the effectiveness of these safeguards. To ensure effectiveness he believes that these safeguards needed to be supported with a culture that ensures that they are followed and implemented. For this purpose, the last phase of his struggle went into contemplating and working, for making the society of this country democratic in its daily life.

“Will history repeat itself? It is this thought, which fills me with anxiety. This 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 Indians place the country above their creed or will they place creed above country? I do not 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.”