

AMBEDKAR :LIFE, TIME AND STRUGGLE

Ramadas V. “Dr. B.R Ambedkar as an educational and social reformer”
Thesis. Department of Adult education and extension services, University
of Calicut, 2002

Chapter 2
AMBEDKAR : LIFE, TIME AND STRUGGLE

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

AMBEDKAR : LIFE, TIME AND STRUGGLE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Birth and Education

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A Victim of Casteism and Untouchability

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

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

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

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

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

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

A Student of Indian Society and Culture

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

His early academic writings reflect his identification with the working

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

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

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

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

The Crypto Educationist

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

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

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

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

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

The War Against Casteism

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Advocate of State Socialism

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

The Conversion

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Persons who Influenced Ambedkar

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

violence at any cost, but the communists do.

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

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

An Unfinished Life

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Note:

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