CHAPTER II

THE IMPACT OF THE WEST AND THE CULTURAL ENCOUNTER

The Impact of the West:

Dr. Ambedkar's volcanic revolt against Hinduism and the Hindu social organisation was not the first trenchant attack. There have been, from time to time in our history, virile movements against Hinduism, such as Buddhism, Jainism, Veerashaivism etc., led by Buddha, Mahavira, Basava and other social revolutionaries respectively. In modern times, ever since the advent of the British, it had once again to come under the strident criticism of Christian teaching and culture. As Dr. K.P.S. Menon puts it:

"The missionaries of that monotheistic religion (Christianity), looking at the surface of Hinduism, scoffed at its (Hinduism's) polytheistic character. They also pointed their finger of scorn at the inhumane, and even inhuman, practices which had taken refuge under Hinduism." To this "Hinduism reacted with vigour but also with humility. It searched its own heart and a purifying movement began. Indeed, it may be said that 19th century saw in India, a reformation, comparable in its essence though not in its violence, to the Reformation in Europe in the 16th century."

The spearhead of this reformation in India was Raja Ram Mohan Roy; while men like Dayanand Saraswati, Swami Vivekananda continued the work of bringing about a social change in the Hindu Society. "In the first half of the nineteenth century alone, the recovery of Hindus had been initiated by Rajaram Mohan Roy, who, with his great learning and clear understanding of the factors that had thrown Indian society into the slough of despond, realised the need for radical social reform, and founded the Brahma Samaj with the object of rooting out the evil traditions and practices which had exposed Indian society to ridicule." The work of the Arya Samaj, Brahma Samaj and the Ramakrishna Mission was responsible for bringing about some marginal reforms such as the removal of the practice of the Suttee, the abolition of widow disabilities etc. A number of enactments such as the Civil Marriage Act, the Widow Re-Marriage Act, and the Age of Consent Act etc., owed their inspiration to these 19th century movements for social reform. Such social reform measures could bring about a reform in the Hindu Family, and not a social reform "in the sense of the reorganization and reconstruction of the Hindu Society," which relates to the abolition of the Caste system itself.

These efforts left the core of the traditional beliefs practically intact. The reformist movements, therefore, remained essentially as fringe-movements, while the main philosophy based on the cardinal Hindu beliefs remained yet to be brought under withering criticism for social change. One such problem was that of Untouchability, which till after Indian Independence remained a problem of problems, as the Hindu community was watching without much concern the existence of millions of human beings, who were regarded as Untouchables, may even unapproachables. It was with this problem that Ambedkar was devotedly involved throughout his life. He was very much inspired and guided by the noble example set by one of his own men — Mahatma Jotiba Fule. The impression and the impact of Jotiba's personality and endeavor is evident from the following words which Ambedkar inscribed dedicating his work (Ambedkar's) Who were the Shudras?— How they came to be the Fourth Varna in the Indo-Aryan Society? to the memory of Mahatma Jotiba Fule. The dedication runs thus:

"Inscribed to the Memory of Jotiba Fule (1827-1890) The Greatest Shudra of Modern India who made the lower classes of Hindus conscious of the slavery to the higher classes and who preached the gospel that for India social democracy was more vital than independence from foreign rule."

Jotiba Fule was no more there to guide Ambedkar. Nevertheless, his example had an indelible imprint on the mind of Ambedkar. He was determined to complete the work started by Jotiba and no wonder it became his life's mission.

Social change had to be brought about in India for two reasons at least: (1) The British made only such changes as were expedient in order to neutralise the criticism of the values inherent in the newly invading foreign culture. This was, no doubt, a negative attitude. (2) The Indian leaders also recognised the vitality inherent in the working of this new Western philosophy and, therefore, realised that unless some sort of new adjustments were made in the national approach to vital issues vis-à-vis the Western civilisation, India's own growth as a nation will be retarded and politically isolated. This positive approach, in fact, was to pay useful dividends in the progress of modern India. These considerations were influencing the national leaders in India.

One of the outstanding ways in which the virility of the Western impact was manifest, was in the approach to education. Though education in those days was narrow and of a limited compass, calculated only to manufacture a number of Indian substitutes for the English 'quill-drivers' in the Company Service, yet even according to Macaulay's 'Minute on Education', it was possible to envisage the
new spirit of liberalism in the teaching of English and its salutary effects in the life of the nation in the future. As an historian of the Indian freedom movement looks at the effects of Western education: "Indians imbied with avidity the high thoughts and aspirations of Western poets, philosophers and political thinkers; and saw to their dismay how these same people, as rulers, thought it fair and proper to drain India of its wealth and resources, and to keep them in political subjection in order to prevent them from offering an effective opposition... The education which was given to the people created a class of intellectuals, who clearly saw the intentions behind the patitudinous assertions of the British rulers."\textsuperscript{5}

The British, however, in their role as rulers were not naturally predisposed to exercise their minds unduly on the question of social reform. "They were particularly conservative in their social policy... Great Britain did not want to repeat Portugal's mistake and interfere with religion and customs of the people. The result of this attitude was that many evil customs became stereotyped and flourished under the garb of Hinduism."\textsuperscript{6} The British were principally concerned

\textsuperscript{5} G.S. Halappa: op. cit., p.5.

\textsuperscript{6} K.P.S. Menon: op. cit., p.16.
with the question of maintenance of law and order, and of tracking such social evils which were, in the main, social injustices that might disturb peace and order. In the main, their attitude as administrators was one of neutrality, which they believed was justly expected of them, if they had to dispense equity amongst the various cultural ethnic groups that made the Indian pluralistic society. To the British "such things as untouchability and caste had flourished in India from time immemorial and would continue to exist. It was no use trying to remove them. Indeed, in the eyes of the disharolds, the existence of such abuses formed an excellent excuse for the indefinite continuance of British rule in India. But such an attitude could not be maintained for long. It may also have been, it is suspected, due to (1) their innate fear that they might be suspected of bringing Christianity through the flag; (2) of getting involved in local religious wrangles which might negative their political influence; and (3) their pre-occupation for entrenching their political power which would be considerably offset by inviting the hostility of Hindu religious leaders, if they began to tinker with social reforms, especially as they were based on religious sanctions.

Dr. Ambedkar referred to this attitude of the British Government in India, while speaking at the Plenary

Session of the First Round Table Conference and accused the Government of utter negligence of the problem of social change in general, and Untouchability in particular. He charged:

"the British Government has accepted the social arrangements as it found them, and has preserved them faithfully...Our wrongs have remained as open sores and they have not been righted, although 150 years of British rule have rolled away..." 8

He thought that though the British are not found wanting in their sympathies, they are quite incompetent to tackle our problem."

"The British Government in India suffers from two very serious limitations. There is first of all an internal limitation which arises from the character, motives and interests of those who are in power, which prevents them from appreciating the living forces operating in our society, makes them indifferent and inimical to its aspirations, and apathetic to our education. It is not because they cannot help us in these things but because it is against their character, motives and interests to do so. The second consideration that limits its authority is the mortal fear it has of external resistance. 9 He also said that the British were aware of all the evils

9. Ibid.
of the Indian society. But it has not dared to touch them because it is afraid that its intervention to amend the existing code of social and economic life will give rise to resistance. 10

The net effect of such an attitude of neutralism on the part of the Britian was disastrous. As testified to by Mr. H.N. Brailsford:

"None the less, our official policy was then, as now, to interfere as little as possible with Indian institutions: it tolerated social customs injurious to health, notably child marriage, and accepted even untouchability as an immutable fact in an environment it dared not alter. Our courts, as time went on, took to administering Hindu law with an almost antiquarian fidelity. The result of this attitude was unquestionably to stereotype the past in a land that never has discarded it with ease. 11

FREIZING CONSERVATISM AND SOCIAL CHANGE:

There was no effective public opinion in the country which would express the public conscience or the mind on an issue such as this. There was also a very dim

10. Ibid.

hope of public consciousness — however blatant an injustice that blistered the body-politic. It was partly due to the lack of public awareness of the evils. The lacunae in social thinking, which were so perceptible to any foreigner were easily passed by, by the Indian society, largely because of the positive illiteracy and inadequacy of the media of public opinion. Furthermore, the only organisation which could have effectively combatted this evil was that nascent political organisation — the Indian National Congress—which was naturally pre-occupied with the question of the freedom of the country from alien domination. Moreover, the Congress itself suffered from many internal squabbles over its programmes, policy and leadership. In such a situation the question of the Untouchables was considered to be a mere peripheral issue which, after all, was only something that concerned the Hindu society, and to be solved within its own reach. The enormity of the problem and its deep implications trenching on national interest, perhaps, remained for the champion of the cause of the Untouchables — Ambedkar, to bring to the fore. It is surprising that for quite some time Congress had not seriously exercised its mind over this issue and had believed, on the other hand, that some concessions by way of accommodation shown to the Untouchable might remove the edge of offense. Nevertheless, it was duly realised in time, that such an approach would
be unduly simplifying the issue. It is quite clear that it was because such an attitude of the Congress was patent that Ambedkar had to assume a position, too critical of the stance taken by the Congress. He also believed, that by doing so he would be discharging a duty towards his own people. He also strongly felt that by espousing their cause, he would be truly doing a profound service to the nation itself. Evidence of these convictions on his part can be seen in all the Conferences and deliberations where this matter came-up. It is only then that we would be truly appreciating the stature of the man, not only as a politician but as a visionary, a national leader and an humanist. Hence it would not be proper to limit his image, merely to that of a leader of a minority section of the Hindu society only, but should be displayed on a very much larger canvass.

THE LONE STRUGGLE:

Dr. Ambedkar's battle had to be arduous and exacting in the extreme. While the Congress claimed to speak for the entire Hindu society that was India, it was naturally awkward for Ambedkar to press his case for the Untouchables with the British. He had also to expose all the enormities of injustice and wrings, endured and suffered by his millions of Untouchables for ages, mutely. He could achieve his goal only by doing so. Such a process
was bound to traduce the claims of the Congress directly, and also, by implication, denigrate the Hindu faith before the alien rulers. This, however, at one stage or another became inevitable, when Dr. Ambedkar realised that he was facing a problem which is deeply entrenched and would not yield to reasonable political negotiation, good-faith or good-will. It was at this stage that Mahatma Gandhi stepped-in, in a way which, perhaps, impressed the foreigner more than it did either the Harijans, or the Hindus. His claim to represent the HARIJANS—the sons of God—incidentally a name which was very much resented by the Harijans themselves, was seen in a purely political perspective, i.e., a calculated move to supersede Ambedkar's claim for leadership. Mahatma Gandhi thought that by lifting the entire issue to a spiritual plane, he could make a direct appeal to the Hindus easier. The ameliorative steps advocated by the Mahatma as the Temple entry, removal of Untouchability, etc., did not impress Ambedkar. No doubt, as Untouchability had the religious sanction according to the canons of Hindu religion, a spiritual appeal was necessary. But a spiritual appeal without an appropriate social action, geared by political sanction would stand little chance of a stable survival. This was fully realised by Ambedkar. He was also fully aware that to achieve his goals, he should not only direct his appeal to the masses but also to the intelligentsia, who were
largely led by the National Congress and formed the core of the national movement. His writings of the period such as: *Annihilation of Caste* (1936); *Mr. Gandhi and the Emancipation of the Untouchables* (1943); *Communal Deadlock And A Way to Solve it* (1945); *What Congress and Gandhi have done to Untouchables* (1945); *Who were the Shudras?* (1946); *States and Minorities* (1947); *The Untouchables - who were they? and why they became Untouchables?* (1948) etc., etc., besides a number of articles and monographs,

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12. *Annihilation of Caste* - with a reply to *Mahatma Gandhi - Tracts for the Times* No.2, First Edn. 1936; and second Edn. 1937 - was originally a speech prepared by Ambedkar for the 1936 Annual Conference of the JAT-PAT-GODAK Mandal of Lahore (an organisation of castes-Hindu social reformers); but not delivered owing to the cancellation of the Conference by the Reception Committee on the ground that the views expressed in the speech would be 'unbearable to the Conference'. It was pointed out by the organisers that the address, as prepared, would be 'unnecessarily provocative and pinching'. Ambedkar did not agree to change the Address and, hence, was not delivered at all, but was published for public knowledge. It was translated, it is reported, from English into Gujarati, Tamil, Marathi, Punjabi, Hindi and Malayalam; and that 1500 copies of the English edition were sold out within two months of its publication.
fully support this view. These works of his were not only classics in their very nature and treatment, but contain an advocacy of the cause of the Untouchable in full dress. His writings bear an imprint of original thought and great scholarship. Speaking on the learning of Ambedkar, Mr. Vincent Sheean says: "His degrees were M.A., Ph.D., D.Sc., and LL.D. Degrees do not mean so much, perhaps, but in the torrential flood of his talk there came up great chunks and whirling avatars of learning. He may have not have been the greatest of Sanskrit scholars but he could plaster a text with dozens of references to early Hindu authorities." In his Preface to the Second Edition of the book *Annihilation of Caste* he says that he has tried to answer the criticisms of his views by Mr. Gandhi, "not because what he (Gandhiji) has said is so weighty as to deserve a reply but because to many a Hindu he (Gandhiji) is an oracle, so great that when he opens his lips it is expected that the argument must close and no dog must bark. But the world owes much to rebels (like himself) who would dare to argue in the face of the pontiff and insist that he is not infallible. I do not care for the credit which every progressive society must give to its rebels. I shall be satisfied if I make the Hindus realize

that they are the sickmen of India and that their sickness is causing danger to the health and happiness of other Indians. " This statement of his beautifully sums up the object he had in his writing thenceforward. It should be said to his credit that he very much accomplished his objective i.e., of opening the eyes of the caste-Hindus.

Accepts Office to Underwrite the Cause:

The Government of India Act, 1935 was a great landmark in the history of the British administration of India. With this Act, a new orientation was brought about which envisaged active association of Indian leadership in the administration, particularly at the Provincial level. The Congress, as usual, suspected the sincerity of this move from the White Hall, as to whether the rulers of their own volition would surrender any part of their power. However, after much bargaining and largely due to the able management of the Viceroy Lord Linlithgow, Congress was convinced of the bona fides of the British and accepted office in the Provinces. At the Centre the Indian representation came to be broad-based allowing for non-Congress Indian leaders such as Sir Aroot Ramaswami Mudaliar, and Dr. Ambedkar, who were the British nominees. This, no doubt, was construed as an occasion for the Congress to deride Ambedkar as one, whose political posturing all along was calculated only to come by the leaves and fishes of office, and not really the cause which he proclaimed to
spouse. This, however, is not to be surprised at. For, later they were once again to misconstrue, likewise, Ambedkar’s views regarding the realities on the issue of partitioning India. Whilst Congress was naturally inclined to apply detractors in order to bring down Ambedkar’s image as the sole champion of the Untouchables, it must be said that Ambedkar was motivated, in accepting office, solely by the urges of the high purpose which he was consistently upholding. His position in the Centre as that of a Member for Labour, far from deviating from his constant concern for the Untouchables was, in his view, capable of obtaining more effective advantages for this excluded community. He must have realised that his post at the Centre would naturally give him a freer scope to explore all the possible avenues, through which he could ameliorate its lot. Further, he must have also realised that as one vested with power, he could achieve better things for it by being within the Government than being without. This he had amply vindicated by his statements from time to time. On a later occasion, after the dawn of Independence, it was the same purposiveness which induced him to accept the invitation from Pandit Nehru to join the first Cabinet of free India. As evidence to this we come across his confidential Memorandum dated 29th October, 1942, addressed to the then Viceroy, demanding that the financial provision made available for educational and other ameliorative concessions extended to the Anglo-Indian
community might also, perhaps with a better justification, be made available to this excluded and depressed community. It is clear, therefore, that he considered it an opportunity to press for a favourable treatment for his community. Such an opportunity, he hoped, opened up for him because he held the high post as a Cabinet Minister. Besides this manifest demonstration through official channels in the cause of the Untouchable, it is well-known that whenever he went on official tours he unfailingly showed the same concern wherever and in whatever way he came into contact with the Untouchability problem. He did not find it necessary to burke this interest because of fear that it might not be strictly correct for a Cabinet Minister to overtly exhibit his sectional interest. His position as the Labour Member was of particular advantage for the cause. In some ways this was perhaps, more pertinent because it was from the Untouchables class that the labour force was largely recruited. Hence, it was sure to afford him many an opportunity to study at first hand and tackle this problem more usefully.

We notice Ambedkar, in his own apologia for accepting the office as Chairman of the Drafting Committee.

of the Constituent Assembly, unequivocally declared his clear purpose with which he accepted this office. He stated that he did so not because of vanity or because of his special acumen for such a task, but because he was activated by the sole motive that it would afford him an unique opportunity to serve the cause of the Untouchable in a significant manner. In other words, being a principal Draftsman of the Constitution, he had hoped that he could write the rights of the Untouchables into the Constitution, thereby expunging all the injustices and continually the Untouchables had suffered all along, for ever. Despite his many detractors who had from time to time strove hard to decry his political purposiveness, none could ever advise anything to show that he had strayed away from his dedicated cause. It might be true that the ways and means he had advocated or pursued might have appeared to them as mere political chicanery or unworthy of his stature. This we find to be baseless, because one has to realise that it is only, as Ambedkar remarked once, fools who are consistent in politics and real politics needs fresh judgement for tackling issues which alter as circumstance change. It might also be pointed out here, that whilst he remained constant and consistent in his purpose, he had firmly believed on the Congress to be reasonable to his just demands. But when he found that they were shifty in their stand aiming only to discomfiture
his approach and not to meet his arguments, he had no other recourse but to turn his armour, in order to meet them on their own ground.

**SOCIAL JUSTICE - the goal:**

Such an approach on his part was quite evident, when Article 17 of the Constitution dealing with the abolition of untouchability was on the anvil. Ambedkar must have realised, from the trend of the proceedings, how hard and difficult it was to wrench justice from deeply entrenched political interests. He was striving his utmost to write JUSTICE in capital letters into the Constitution and naturally he must have been greatly dismayed to realise how justice, as a ruling principle in the Hindu Polity, could only be name and not in reality.

The Aristotelian 'common good' as the basis for social order based on the idea of justice, he must have realised, could not be applied here with over fifty million untouchables in economic and social shackles. As also a student of Plato, he must have realised how the slaves and aliens in the Republic being excluded from the right of citizenship, which was later to fester that society. Ambedkar must have been deeply convinced that the denial of full rehabilitation of the Untouchable, vested with all the rights and privileges of full citizenship, would always leave an incurable wound in the Indian polity. Perhaps,
when he became deeply convinced that the lofty principle of justice would never come to its own in this society, which has shown no inclination whatsoever to appreciate it fully because of its traditional inhibitions, he must have despaired about the cause of the Untouchable ever being redeemed. The situation was such that the caste-Hindu national leaders, whilst prepared to make concessions, were probably averse for anything that demanded a radical approach to this question. Perhaps, they feared that the reparcussions might loosen the joists and cornices of the social edifice coming off loose, once the Untouchable became merged without distinction with the rest. Ambedkar must have sensed this and, perhaps, was driven to the conclusion that in pleading for his community, he had placed his finger on the scar spot. Hinduism minus the caste, it became clear, would become non-descript, insignificant and, perhaps, come off loose as a world religion. This prospect would no doubt be shattering to the national leaders from their point of view. They could not envisage a free India with Hinduism left debilitated which, they feared, might bring down the social edifice disastrously. They were prepared to acquiesce, therefore, in limited changes only, in so far as they left the Hindu society unaffected. It was not, Ambedkar must have realised, that they were blind to the force of his argument and appeal. They were deeply committed to stand by the
tenets of their faith, with which they saw no future for their faith. They may have also been affected by the fear that any radical approach by the national leaders might result in estranging the Hindu masses from their leadership. In such a milieu Ambedkar is sure to have realised that he could see no way out with the intransigent Hindu attitude being reconciled on the plank of justice with cause of the Untouchable. Hence it was, more in despair than as a political ruse or expedient, that this great leader was compelled to quest for a faith which would promise a destiny — political, social and religious — for the Untouchable to realise his fulfilment as a person and human being. We are led to this belief for, we find that although Ambedkar was commissioned with the drafting of the Constitution, he was hedged in by the terms of reference which were framed by the Congress leaders. It may be mentioned here that the 'Aims and Objectives Resolution', which was moved by Mr. Nehru in the Constituent Assembly, kept strictly the vested interest untouched although it proclaimed, in a broad way, to ensure the goals of social justice. It must have left Ambedkar somewhat cramped, as it could not have left much room to deploy his avowed cause to the extent that he wanted to. He acknowledges elsewhere as to the limitation under which he had to labour but for which the Constitution would have taken a different shape. Some members of the
Constituent Assembly themselves testified to this fact. Dr. Punjabrao Deshmukh while expressing his satisfaction over Ambedkar's excellent commentary on the Constitution said that Ambedkar would have, perhaps shaped the Constitution differently, if he had the scope to do so. Another Member Mr. Sadulla, who was also a Member of the Drafting Committee, revealed that the Drafting Committee was not a free agent and was handicapped by various circumstances. Ambedkar had also observed about the inappropriateness of applying the democratic principle of Western conception in a region, which is bereft of the roots of justice from which it draws its strength. Perhaps, it was with some justification that Ambedkar said: "Hinduism is bankrupt, there is in it nothing upon which to base a democracy. There is in it no sense of justice."15

It is in this context that Ambedkar was not sanguine in his hope that Congress, though it had succeeded in making the British quit India, might yet fail to build a democratic, strong and free India. He was, even because of this, assailed by the fear that the situation might open the floodgates of Communism into India.16

In view of the foregoing, are we not to suppose

15. Quoted in C.S. Braden: War, Communism and World Religions, 1953, p. 158.
16. Ibid.
that our preference for a socialistic pattern of society and 'Secularism' was more to stave off the evil day of Communism rather than an innate desire to build up a 'Just Society'? Perhaps, Pandit Nehru, being a farsighted statesman, and being seized fully of the inherent defects in the political outlook in India, was questing for a political formula, which would help him build an equitable and just society by opting for a democratic socialism, which, at the same time, will be neutral to religious persuasions. This will naturally remove the afiolt of 'Caste', which constituted the main impediment for any programme for progress on democratic lines. No wonder, Pandit Nehru was tireless in his tirade against 'Casteism' in season and out, by which he was in fact assailing the tradition-bound aspects of Hinduism. It is not to be surprised at that in so doing this great leader had incurred the wrath of the orthodox sections. The Hindu Mahasabha, the Rashtraseya Swayam Sevak Sangh and the Jan Sangh became vociferous in their criticism of Nehru's policy in this respect. It is also surmised that the evidences of a resurgent form of Hinduism came on the scene as a sequel to this. Their slogan that Hinduism was in danger was frequently heard. When this reactionary agitation gained momentum, it also included in its sweep violent criticism of the national leaders' approach to such other minorities as Muslims, Christians and others. Such a trend, in this context, leads to an oblique implication that these world
Religious were a criticism of the Hindu faith in as much as they were casteless and spoke of human brotherhood. The reactionary elements, perhaps, rightly feared of their appeal to the Untouchables as well as weaken the hold of Hinduism on India. Viewed in this perspective, although nothing concrete had shaped out in the political nostrum of Pandit Nehru's democratic socialism by way of a social reform profitable to the Untouchables, yet politically it speaks volumes of his sagacity in a difficult political dilemma.

TWILIGHT AND DESPAIR:

Ambedkar stood unconvinced that a political solution, whatever may be the safeguards provided, was not going to bring his excluded community anywhere near the goal he had envisaged. He was very much sad and a disillusioned man. This feeling of disillusionment in the post-Constitution period was considerably aggravated, when his 'Hindu Code Bill' was practically shelved, in spite of Mr. Nehru's assurances to him. Thereafter he had no other alternative but to renounce his post of the Law Member in the Central Cabinet and take his seat with the Opposition. His crucial decision to renounce his 'Faith' in Hinduism was to follow a few years hence. Subsequent story of his search for a satisfying 'faith' either in Buddhism, Christianity or Islam for himself and his people is well-known. His cherished hopes that his
political struggle would provide the much needed leverage to set off a religious revolution for social justice, apparently, had only sparked off a religious revival of old fanaticism instead of a renewal of a chastened Hindu faith. Ambedkar naturally began to feel the clawing hand of frustration. His zeal nevertheless persisted and hence he could not but turn to a spiritual answer for the problem, wherever he may find it.

Conclusion:

In the summing up of the survey of the activities and programmes of Ambedkar in the course of over two decades of his public life, we see in Ambedkar a personality which would defy any description which narrows him to one aspect only. No doubt, he was an indefatigable champion of the cause of the Untouchable. But in espousing this 'lost cause' he made it the principal means to clean up the asean stables of Indian politics which was deeply steeped in parochialism and too sterile and stagnant to yield to the demands of a progressive outlook, consistent with modern democracy. He viewed India as a free nation as against the canvass of free India in the world. He was rightly concerned that India could not play that role unless she first sets her own house in order. Order pre-supposes that every citizen as well as every community
and interest should get the right it deserves. Denial
of such a right and discrimination would, to that extent,
be a denial of right and, therefore, of justice. It may
not be wrong, when viewed in retrospect, that even Pandit
Nehru's preference for the 'Socialistic Pattern of Society'
and its politics derive from the insights and political
urges of Ambedkar's vision, work and writing, among others.
All things considered Ambedkar's contribution to nation-
building, though not spectacular, nevertheless was something
whose impact could only be by-passed at our own peril. His
ideas have gone into the ferment which is still condition-
ing our political thought. His influence persists as the
hidden force working in the deep layers of Indian political
consciousness which, if heeded to properly and betimes,
is bound to pay us dividends beyond all measure of reckon-
ing, both to-day and to-morrow. Taken by and large,
his contribution was vital, salutary and substantial.

The true stature of the man seems to emerge
when viewed properly against the backdrop of the Indian
political scene of his day. Indian politics, so to say,
had yet to emerge into a definite pattern. Freedom struggle
was, no doubt, the obvious expression of Indian nationalism
even which was still nascent and had to look out for a
fuller and more satisfying expression. To make nationalism
a collective expression of a pluralistic society, with all
Its divergent interests pulling, often times, in different directions, was a problem of such a magnitude as to try the mettle of our foremost leaders. Of course, the presence of an alien regime, served as a rallying point to merge the things which otherwise would make us disunited. But they, however, were to riddle the Indian scene with considerable mischief once the cause of our offending, namely the British, quit India. Even then many issues still remained unsolved and posed serious difficulties for our national leaders, who were eager to consolidate the fruits of freedom.

In such a context, there is always the temptation to play sage and look out for easy solvents at the least cost. Such an atmosphere would, naturally abound with much political opportunism and a pragmatic approach. In a parochial and tradition-bound society and all its concomitants considered together with the problem of reconciling the divergent interests into national purposes, naturally would be both practical as well as opportune. In a situation like this, principles were often submerged or went by the board. Ambedkar in contrast stood by his principles and he would not be content with mere half-measures which were only temporary remedies. He insisted on going to the root of things whereas the Congress appeared to be pre-occupied with the symptoms rather than the true malady which lay deep down. Hence, his task was to apply
incisive politics in order to expose the trouble spot and thus heal the gaping wound in the social fabric. A lone voice such as his, perhaps, was like that of a voice in the wilderness. Nevertheless, it has to be heard because he had touched a crying need, which could neither be muffled nor muffled. This was so, because politics to Ambedkar became a mission rather than a ladder to climb higher and higher for personal gain or aggrandisement, as he had embraced a great cause. He could never be either a Machiavelli or a Chandakya. Although considering his outstanding acumen, vision and political sagacity, one sometimes wishes that he also combined the virtues of these pragmatic politicians of old, in which case he might have made matters much easier for himself. He was a politician of principles and not of pragmatism. In retrospect, when we assess his achievements we are bound to see that what was his personal sacrifice turned out to be the national gain. By championing the cause of the Untouchable, he seems to have vitalised the Indian approach to nationalism, which was suffering from deep-died parochialism and traditionalism. Through his unrelenting onslaught on such politics, he liberated Indian politics from such a cribbling outlook and introduced a true catholicity. In many ways our leaders could not but acknowledge the effects of this positive ingredient in their political approach both in the national as well as
the international spheres. As witnesses to Ambedkar's catholicity in his politics, we notice how much he had drawn from the constitutions of the western nations and wrote them into our own. By this token alone we unmistakably see how he had envisaged a great nation, that is, India or Bharat playing a great role in the comity of nations. In short, in no small measure did this principal architect of the Constitution provide a dynamism to Indian politics, the measure of which extends to-day to the whole world. This is a measure of our debt to Ambedkar's services to the nation. Such was Ambedkar, the thinker, the scholar, the social reformer and humanist.

This thesis sets out to examine the foregoing claims made for Ambedkar.