CHAPTER SIX

EQUALITY, JUST SOCIETY AND HUMANISM

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was not only a brilliant scholar, intellectual, lawyer, a constitutional expert, an able administrator, a gifted orator, an effective parliamentarian, a great educationalist, a great patriot, a dedicated democrat, but he was also a creator of social justice and a great humanist. He was greatly influenced with the principles of freedom, equality and fraternity which for him would be regarded as the foundation of social justice. He wanted to give all citizens the right to equality in religions, economic and political matters so that they may get opportunity to better their lives. He was influenced by Karl Marx's theory of class struggle. In fact Marx was of the opinion that only those who were under the *fetters of slavery* could themselves remove their slavery. However, Ambedkar differs from Marx on the point that the sufferings is not only due to economic exploitation but also due to social exploitation where religion takes its upper hand.[58] Ambedkar was also influenced by Mill. Mill said that unless men are free to form and maintain their opinions, they cannot develop their mental well being on which everybody depends. Freedom of thought is absolutely indispensable although freedom of action may be limited.

Ambedkar wants an ideal or a casteless society based upon the principle of justice. In his own words, the 'ideal would be a society based on liberty, equality and fraternity'. While giving the meaning of justice, he said, 'Justice is simply another name for liberty, equality and fraternity.' Therefore to understand Ambedkar's vision of a 'just society' we have to understand the meaning of these three expressions, i.e. *liberty, equality and fraternity*. According to Ambedkar the existing social order based upon the Hindu classical religion is vitiated by evils and hence he

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[58] See B.R.Ambedkar " Speech on Buddha and Karl Marx, reprinted in *Thoughts of Dr. Ambedkar*, HotilalNim, Central Society, Agra, 1969, p.3-5.

asked for a complete change. In his well known work "Annihilation of Caste", Ambedkar says, "An ideal society should be mobile, should be full of channels for conveying a change-taking place in one part to other parts. In an ideal society there should be many interests consciously communicated and shared. There should be varied and free points of contact with other modes of association. In other words, there must be social endosmosis."[59]

The objective of this paper is three fold. These are:

(a) Existing social order

(b) An alternative society based upon justice

(c) Way to establish a just society

Existing Social Order

By existing social order Ambedkar means the Hindu social order deeply rooted in the Hindu *Varna* system. Ambedkar contends that the caste reality of existing social order does not give any importance to an individual. In this society an individual does not have any real chance of growth or development as a person. Consequently, the rights of human being do not find any place in the existing social order. The unit of existing Hindu society is not the individual Brahmin or the individual Kshatriya or the individual Vaishya or the individual Shudra or the individual *Panchama* . Even the family is not regarded by the Hindu social order as the unity of society concept for the purposes of marriage and inheritance. In fact the unit of Hindu society is the class or *Varna*.

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[59] Ambedkar, B.R, "Annihilation of Caste with a reply to Mahatma Gandhi" , in *DrBabasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches,* vol.1, compiled by Vasant Moon, Bombay: Education Department, 1989, p.57.

In his essay " The Hindu Social Order: Its Essential Principles" Ambedkar observes that the original Hindu social order recognises only four classes or castes as cited above, but these have became five because untouchables were added. As everything is determined on the basis of caste, there is no room for individual merit and no consideration of individual justice. If the individual has a privilege it is not because of his personality. Rather the privilege goes with the class, and if he is found to enjoy it, it is because he belongs to that class. On the other hand, if an individual is suffering from a wrong, it is not because by his conduct deserves it. The disability is the disability imposed upon the class and if he is found to be labouring under it, it is because he belongs to that class.

Ambedkar has listed three basic principles on which the then existing social order stood. The first principle was *the principle of graded inequality*. This order not only divided the society horizontally into numerous castes or sub-castes or communities, it badly divided society vertically. Ambedkar says, "The Brahmin is placed at the first in rank. Below him is the Kshatriya. Below the Kshatriya is the Vaishya. Below the Vaishya is the Shudra and below the Shudra is the Anti-Shudra or the untouchables. This order of precedence among the classes is not merely conventional. It is spiritual, moral and legal. There is no sphere of life which is not regulated by the principle of graded inequality."[60] The second principle which Dr. Ambedkar dealt was that of 'fixity of occupations.' And the third was the 'fixation of people within their respective classes'. That means every person's class status was decided by birth and not by ability. Even various reports such as "L.M. Shrikant's Report of the Commissions for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes for the period ending 31ist December, 1951 and Mandal Commission made public in 1990 suggested that the caste in Hindu is still most powerful factor

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[60] Ambedkar, B.R. " The Hindu Social Order: Its Essential Principles" in *Babasaheb Ambedkar*, vol.3, 1989, p.107

in determining a man's dignity, calling or profession. The Mandal Commission sated: "Caste are the building block of Hindu social structure……caste has fragmented the social consciousness of Hindu society by dividing it into numerous groups arranged in hierarchal order. It may be further remarked that in this process of divisions, groups called caste have been permanently arranged high or low ranks simply on the basis of birth. The social ranks and their respective duties, ordained by God for humanity, were intended to remain fixed and unremovale. Like the limbs of body, they cannot properly exchange either their place or function."[61]

Thus, from the writings of Dr. Ambedkar as well as the official reports of various commissions it is clear that the Indian social order is deeply rooted in the Varna system and because of the rigidity of the caste system no material alternation in its basic structure was possible. Thus, Dr. Ambedkar not only suggested a total annihilation of caste or caste based society, but also offered a model of an 'ideal society' or 'just society' based upon justice.

An Alternative Society based upon Justice

Instead of caste based society, Ambedkar wanted an ideal society based on two principles. The first is that here the individual is *an end in himself* and that the aim and object of society is the growth of the individual and the development of his personality. Here society is not above the individual and if the individual has to subordinate to society, it is because such subordination is for his betterment and only to the extent necessity. The second essential is that the terms of associated life between members of society must be regarded by consideration founded on liberty, equality and fraternity. According to Ambedkar in the **caste based Hindu society an individual has no place,whereas in the just society, individual is the final end.** Moreover, in

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[61]L.M.Shrikant, "Report of the Commission for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes for the Period Ending 31 December", Delhi, 1951, p.1.

the caste based society a person's relationship with the member of his or her class or with the members of other classes were already fixed, but in just society as envisaged by Ambedkar, these relationships have to be based on liberty, equality and fraternity. Here the demand on the society is to protect the individual's human rights. Ambedkar inclined to say that any good social order or society has to go through the two tests namely, *the test of justice* and *the test of utility*. Besides these two essential principles, one of the most important components was *justice* or *the principle of justice*, because the norm or the criterion of judging the right and wrong in the modern society is *justice* or in another name for liberty, equality and fraternity. Therefore to understand the real nature of the just society, we have to know the meaning liberty, equality and fraternity.

Ambedkar has discussed the meaning of 'liberty' in his numerous works. He divided liberty into two categories, such as, *civil liberty* and *political liberty*. Civil liberty refers liberty of movement, liberty of speech and the liberty of action. Political liberty 'consists in the right of the individual to share in the framing of laws and in the making and unmaking of governments. However, Ambedkar while discussing the meaning of liberty also includes social equality, economic equality. Thus the idea of just society hinges on the fulfillment of the trio-concepts, such as, liberty, equality and fraternity, has been conceived by Ambedkar in a broad sense.

The general meaning of the expression equality is 'exactly the same or equivalent in measure amount, number, degree, value or equality. Ambedkar has agreed that all the persons may not be equal with regard to 'physical strength, in artistic skill, in material wealth, or mental capacity, but still human beings possess in degree and kind, fundamental characteristics that are common to humanity. The nature and manifestation of the fundamental characteristics, which appear in all human beings, are summed up in the phrase 'moral equality'. For Ambedkar emphasis must be placed on the term 'moral', because no rational exponent of moral equality has been disputed.

Therefore, in essence the phrase 'moral equality' asserts in ethical value, a belief to be sustained, and recognition of rights to be respected. For Ambedkar 'a society without any respect for human personalities is a band of robbers.'[62]

As far as fraternity is concerned, Dr. Ambedkar has given three statements which help us in understanding the meaning of 'fraternity', which along with liberty and equality was the cornerstone of an ideal or just society. In his "Philosophy of Hinduism", Ambedkar said that there are two forces prevalent in society, such as, Individualism and Fraternity. Individualism is ever present. Fraternity is a force of opposite character. Fraternity is another name for fellow being. It consists in a sentiment which leads an individual to identify himself with the goods of others. In the "Hindu Social Order: Its Essential Principles" Ambedkar conceived fraternity as one of the key essentials of a just society. Here Ambedkar has said fraternity is the name for the discussion of an individual ton treat men as the object of reverence and love and the desire to be in unity with the fellow beings. This statement is well expressed by Paul, when he said 'of one blood are all nations of men. There is neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free, neither male nor female; for yet are all one in Christ Jesus." We are knit together as a body in the most sacred convent of the Lord by virtue of which we hold ourselves tied to all care of each other's good and of the whole. These sentiments are of the essence of fraternity. Fraternity strengthens sociabilities and gives to each individual a stronger personal interest in practically consulting the welfare of others. It leads him to identify his feelings more and more with their good. With a disposition of fraternity, he comes closer to one who, of course, pays a regard to others.

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[62] Ambedkar, B.R. " The Hindu Social Order: Its Essential Principles" in *Babasaheb Ambedkar,* op.cit.p.96.

We observe similar interpretation of fraternity in Rawls. According to Rawls, fraternity conveys "certain attitudes of minds and forms of conduct without which we would lose sight of the values expressed by these rights. Or closely related to this, fraternity is held to represent a certain equality of social esteem manifest in various public conventions and in the absence of manners of defense and servility."[63] Fraternity thus implies these things, as well as a sense of civic friendship and social solidarity. Rawls interprets the idea of fraternity with regard to his *difference principle* of justice. It is the difference principle that provides an interpretation of these underlying ideas of the principle of fraternity. The difference principle, Rawls contends, does seem to correspond to the natural meaning of fraternity, namely, to the idea of not wanting to have greater advantages unless this is to the benefit of others who are less well off.[64]

It is important to note here that Ambedkar was a leading campaigner of preferential treatment. As an architect of Indian constitution, Ambedkar proposed some constitutional provisions in favour of preferential treatment. The reservation policy of India is a case in point. The point that needs to be taken care of at this juncture is that how does the concept of liberty and equality preserve the so-called preferential treatment. In the strict sense of the term, the concept of liberty and equality has been violated in the case of preferential treatment. Only the concept of fraternity favours preferential treatment. Even Rawls opines that in democratic justice the scope of preferential treatment is minimal. His idea of difference principle may support preferential treatment because it is linked with the concept of fraternity. The preferential treatment in India can be justified from the concept of fraternity. Even though Ambedkar advocated liberty, equality and fraternity as the trio-concepts of just society, but he perhaps interpreted liberty and equality from political and religious perspective and fraternity from the perspective of difference

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[63] John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice, Revised Edition,* Cambridge, MA:Harvard University Press, 1999, p.90.
[64]Ibid. p.90.

principle of Rawls. While developing the contemporary theory of justice as *justice as fairness*, Rawls introduces the concept of *justitum* where the concept of 'liberty' and 'equality' count the most. Rawls was non-committal about religions. He was more concerned about political liberalism based on deontological principles. Where the principle of *justitum* counts the most, it would be very difficult to accommodate preferential treatment. Ambedkar was intended to develop an alround concept of justice which would incorporate liberty, equality and fraternity. His interpretation of justice incorporates the implication of political, religious, and social justice. He perhaps conceived 'liberty' in terms of political liberty, 'equality' in terms of religious equality and fraternity in terms of civic friendship and social solidarity.

Way to establish a just society

On the basis of the above observation, it becomes clear that Ambedkar was not just a critic or a person having some new ideas, he was also at the same time a person, who had concrete suggestions for the implementation of the same. In his analysis of the existing social order based on the caste, he was very clear what evils it carried, he was also very clear about *justice* as the basis of his alternative society. Again at the end regarding how to establish an ideal or just society, he was very clear. For Ambedkar Varna system is the basis of the existing Indian social order and it is this system, which is responsible for all the evils of the existing order. He talked about the annihilation of caste, but he was very clear that it is not possible to break caste without annihilating the religious notions on what it, the caste system is founded. This was only possible through revolution, but not through a simple reformation. Ambedkar said 'you must give a new doctrinal basis to your Religion – a basis that will be in consonance with Liberty, Equality and Fraternity in short, with *Democracy'*. It gives a complete change in the fundamental notion of life. It means a complete change in our look and in attitude towards men and things. It means

conversion, i.e. a new life. New life can enter only in a new body. The old body must die before a new body can come into existence and a new life can enter into it. To put in simple, the old must cease to be operative before the new can begin to enliven and to pulsate. That is why Ambedkar insisted to discard the authority of the *Shastras* and destroy the religion of the *Shastras.*

Ambedkar then proposed three main steps as a way to establish a just society.

First step: New Doctrinal basis

Ambedkar suggested the first step to formulate the new doctrinal basis of the Hindu religion, which according to him, has to 'be in consonance with Liberty, Equality and Fraternity'. Here it means to reinterpret part of the scriptures such as Upanishads, which carries the philosophical basis of Hinduism. Ambedkar's stress here was on the radical interpretation which involves a considerable scraping and chipping off the ore they contain, which presently go against the principle of fraternity or fellow feeling and does not allow the practice of *the associated mode of life* which is one of the important basis for the establishment of a just society. Ambedkar in this regard give the explanation of Sikhism and Islam. Unlike such religions, the present doctrinal basis of Hinduism does not fully allow the principles of liberty and equality to be practiced.

Second Step: A complete change in the fundamental notions of life

The first step leads to the second by entering into **'the associated mode of life'** asking for a complete change in the fundamental notions of life. It means adopting a new set of values of life which in the strict sense conversion is leading to a new life. In this regard, Ambedkar looked into the following practical possibilities:

The first notion he suggested was to abolish the *caste and the various sub-castes,* because these came into existence only through *imitation and excommunication*. But he was not fully convinced with this, because he thought the process may stop with the abolition of sub-castes.

He suggested another action, according to which *inter-caste dining* may be the solution. But again he himself argued against this suggestion, because there were many castes which allow inter-dining, but it was not succeeded in killing the spirit of caste and the consciousness of caste.

Therefore he suggested another action which involved *inter-caste marriage*. About this he says, "Fusion of blood can alone create the feeling of being kith and kin and unless the feeling of kinship, of being kindred, becomes paramount the separatist feelings, the feeling of being aliens, created by caste will not vanish. Among the Hindu inter-marriage must necessarily be a factor of grater force in social life than it need be in the life of non-Hindu. Where society is already well-knit by other ties, marriage is an ordinary incident. But where society cut as under marriage as a binding force becomes a matter of urgent necessity.*The real remedy for breaking caste in inter-marriage. Nothing else will serve as the solvent of Caste."*

Third Step: The old body must die to receive a new body

 The second step leading to conversion through a u-turn leading to a new life actually meant going through a death experience, rejecting completely the old life before entering into a new one. This, according to Ambedkar, was possible if one was willing to *'discard the authority of the Shastras'*. He strongly suggested, "You must take the stand that Buddha took. You must take the stand which Guru Nanak took. You must not only discard the Shastras, you must deny their authority, as did Buddha and Nanak." Here point needs to be remembered is that though Lord Buddha and Guru Nanak belonged to a *Kshatriya caste* and the Shastras only allow their caste to

study not to teach, yet both became founder teachers of the two great religions, which means they took the rule of Brahmins and through this action rejected the authority of the Shastras.

Thus, the vision **of just society** of Ambedkar is based upon the three universal principles, namely*, liberty, equality and fraternity*. Justice is the outcome of these trio- concepts. He understands justice in terms of *social, economic and political*, Liberty in terms of *thought, expression, belief, faith and worship,* Equality in terms *of status and of opportunity and to promote among them all* and finally, Fraternity *in terms of assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and the interiority of the nation.* Thus, justice is another name of Democracy. Accordingly, the form of Government of India and the vision of a just society remained the same.

Justice ensures what is just for society. It ensures the goodness, happiness and welfare of all human beings. It believes that human beings possess creative choice and action and they are the masters of their own destiny. It considers ethics or morality as the basis of human values. It believes in good life of the individual contributing to the welfare of the community. It also believes in social programme to establish democracy, peace and high standard of life thought out the world on the basis of economic foundations. Humanism claims that man is the only reality. Accordingly, it tries to emancipate men from the clusters of orthodoxy and dogmatism. Humanism thus stands for the values like happiness, love, kindness, compassion, tolerance, pleasure, freedom, removal of fanaticism, intolerance, feudalism, despotism. egoism. Thus, humanism stands as the foundation of social justice.

It is important to point out here that Ambedkar was the founder of scientific and social humanism. Reason is the very essence of his humanism. For Ambedkar a rational society is

composed of good and rational human beings. Rationalism basically emphasizes the importance of reason. It implies belief in reason. Naturally, in his humanism there is no existence of God, permanent soul and its transmigration and other metaphysical maxims. He observed that all kinds of exploitations in every sphere of life of Shudras and others are due to Brahmanism. It should be rooted out to save humanity from India. For him Buddhism is the only solution for all evils.

Dr. Ambedkar's humanism and social justice has a few important dimensions. These are: (a) it rests on rationalism, (b) it gives due importance on the emancipation of women, (c) it seeks social equality, (d) it voices in favour of socialism and (e) democracy. Thus, his concept of humanism stands *for liberty equality and fraternity of all human beings*. He stood for a social system based on right relation between man and man in all spheres of life. His humanism or social justice is closely associated with the concept of religion and morality. Ambedkar was not an atheist; rather he was a religious minded man. For him a man cannot survive without religion. Therefore, alienation from religion is a disgrace. He writes, "It pains me to see youths growing indifferent to religion, religion is not **opium** as it is held by some people. What good things I have in me or whatever have been the benefits of my education to society, I owe them to the religious feelings in me." [65] However, the religion which he conceives is a rational, ethical, spiritual and humanitarian and full of karuna. It is a religion which grants equality and treats all its believers equal. According to Ambedkar, the religion which discriminates between two persons is a partial religion. Religion based on reason would be a universal religion. Universal religion can ensure humanism and social justice. In fact Ambedkar's rationalist and humanistic approach did not approve any type of hypocrisy, injustice and exploitation of man by man in the name of religion. Instead of this, he advocates a kind of religion based on universal principles of

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[65]R.B.Rao, (ed.) *Bharat Ratna Dr. Ambedkar*, Chugh Publication, Allahabad, 1993, p.105.

morality and is applicable to all times to all countries and to all races. It must be in harmony with reason and must be based on the basic tenets of liberty, equality and fraternity.

Here we can find a similarity between Ambedkar and Vivekananda. Like Ambedkar, Vivekananda was a great humanist. His humanism actuallycrosses the limits. As a proponent of Practical Vedanta, Vivekananda finds non-dualism among all humans. He advocates universal religion and was against casteism. He elsewhere remarks that the downfall of India started from the very day when the term *mlechha*has been introduced. Like Vivekananda, Ambedkar equally claimed that the downfall of India set in motion from the day when the majority of downtrodden people of India were treated as untouchables. The terms 'untouchable' and 'mlechha' are very similar in meaning.

Ambedkar further contends that some people falsely think that religion is not essential to society. For him the foundation of religion is essential to life and practices of life. In fact he wanted a religion which instructed people how they should behave with one another and prescribed for man, his duty to another, and religion without god in the light of equality, fraternity and liberty. Religion is necessary for development of an individual. For him Hinduism had lost these values and could not be reformed. Therefore, he wanted to give up the Hindu religion.

According to Ambedkar the problem with Hinduism is that it indulges untouchability through caste system. A section of scholars argue that the caste system denotes a division of labour which is based upon birth. All the castes are interrelated and as such, interdependence is a continued phenomenon, because interests of each and every composite segment irrespective of its social status and ranking get fulfilled from it. Ambedkar does not agree with this point. Even

Ambedkar criticizes Plato's idea to put all the people into the three categories, such as, (a) labouring and trading class, (b) courageous class and (c) the law giver.

There we witness a considerable debate between Gandhi and Ambedkar regarding castism and untouchables. Unlike Ambedkar, Gandhi has a great faith on caste system. Gandhi did not accept the view that the caste system of *Manu* stands against the upliftment of downtrodden or social equality. However, Ambedkar opposed Gandhi to a great extent. According to Ambedkar there can be no upliftment of untouchables within caste system. That is why Ambedkar was repeating boldly that Gandhi is the greatest enemy of untouchables. Even both Gandhi and Ambedkar are the leading campaigners of social justice, but the debate between them addresses lot of insight as far as their religious outlook towards Hinduism is concerned.

Foundation of social justice

According to Ambedkar reason is the foundation of social justice. In fact his humanism and social justice is the outcome reason. Like Vivekananda, Ambedkar did not advocate any kind of *kitchen religion*. He condemned kitchen religion and don't touchism. Even M.N.Roy, the founder of 'new humanism and social justice' asserted that the advance of science was the factor for the liberation of man's *creative nature* from which emerges the future of modern civilisation in the progressive triumph of sciences over superstition, reason over faith. Just like Roy, Ambedkar also regarded that religion is necessary for social reconstruction. He also thought that religion was the essence of social creation, cultural evolution and heritage. (Ambedkar was influence by Western patter of religion.).

According to Ambedkar liberty, equality and fraternity are the foundation of social justice. Ambedkar understands fraternity in terms of democracy. For him democracy is not merely a

form of government, it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoin communicated experience. For Ambedkar any ideal society should be mobile, should be full of channels for conveying a change taking place in one part to other parts. In an ideal society there should be many interests consciously communicated and shared. This is fraternity. Fraternity thus is the name for the disposition of an individual to treat man as the object of reverence and love and the desire to be in unity with his fellow beings. This statement is well expressed by Paul when he said, "Of one blood are all nations of men. There is neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free, neither male nor female; for yet are all one in Christ Jesus." We are knit together as a body in the most sacred convent of the Lord by virtue of which we hold ourselves tied to all care of each other's good and of the whole. These sentiments are of the essence of fraternity. Fraternity strengthens sociabilities and gives to each individual a stronger personal interest in practically consulting the welfare of others. It leads him to identify his feelings more and more with their good. With a disposition of fraternity, he comes closer to one who of course pays a regard to others.

The term 'equality' means exactly the same or equivalent in value or quality. Equality may be a fiction but nonetheless one must accept it as the governing principle. A man's power is dependent upon (i) physical heredity, (2) social inheritance or endowment in the form of parental care, education etc. and finally (3) on his own efforts. In all these three respects men are undoubtedly unequal. But the pertinent question is: shall we treat them as unequal because they are unequal? This is a question which the opponents of equality must answer. It may be desirable to give as much incentive as possible to the full development of every one's power. But what would happen if men were treated unequally as they are, in the first two respects? In the first two respects we should treat men as equally as possible. It can also be urged that if it is good for the

social body to get the most out of its members, it can get most out of them only by making them equal as far as possible at the very start of the race. That is one reason why we cannot escape equality.

Liberty is essential for social justice. Liberty falls under two classes, such as, civil liberty and political liberty. Civil liberty refers to liberty of freedom, liberty to speech and liberty of action. Political liberty consists in the light of the individuals to share in the framing of laws. Political liberty is really a deduction from the principle of human personality and equality. According to Ambedkar the principle of liberty, equality and fraternity when taken together, form an ethical standard by means of which we can measure what an individual does, what a society thinks, and what a nation aspires for. For Ambedkar, every man should have a philosophy of life or a standard by which to measure his conduct. In the light of this standard, an individual, who promotes the values of liberty, equality and fraternity, is good; and on the other hand, if he ignores and makes a mockery of these ideals, he would not be a good man; he may be anything else, but not a man of Dr. Ambedkar's vision, choice and liking. Likewise a society based on these principles, strengthens itself with devotion towards them, and is just an open society. An open society runs with social justice and therefore it is by all means a good society which aims at an egalitarian social system. Contrary to this, a society which undermines and ignores them is a society, but not a good one. It is a society, having accepted the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity in theory, but allows the practice of *Varna,* caste and untouchability, or exploitation of man by man, is worse than a society of beasts.

According to Ambedkar, if we want radical changes in our social life in order to solidify the roots of our political system based on democracy and social justice, we have to ensure liberty, equality and fraternity or social brotherhood. Hinduism fails to ensure it. Only Buddhism ensures

it. Therefore, justice for the downtrodden is retained only in Buddhism. That is why Ambedkar ultimately shifted from Hinduism to Buddhism.

Does Hinduism stand against Humanism and Social justice?

Ambedkar rejected Hinduism because he realised that Hinduism or in short Hindu religion, in particular, stood against humanism and social justice. Ambedkar gives the following arguments in favour of his claim:

First, Hinduism was separated from morality. It had generated and became corrupt. The morality as found in Hinduism is not based on values like *equality, liberty and fraternity*. For Ambedkar religion was a system of socio-cultural values which would bring all the individuals on equal place and would create a powerful political and social community. The organisation of Hindu society based on the caste system is the main cause of inequality and exploitation in the society. **The caste system gets favour from religion**. *Varna vyavastha* is responsible for untouchability. In this system the class of Brahmins became above all. This system strengthened the self-centered one class and the class behaved in the most cruel and hatred way that the *humanity and social justice is threatened.* For Ambedkar the caste system is mainly responsible for the miserable conditions of the untouchables, the caste system is supported by religion and *Manusmriti.*Ambedkar's own observation is that so long *Varna vyavastha* lasts, the miserable conditions of the untouchables cannot be reformed on the basis of social justice. In this regard, there we notice a considerable debate between Gandhi and Ambedkar. Gandhi was a firm believer of *Varna vyavastha*. According to Gandhi there is nothing wrong in Hinduism and the so-called *Varna vyavastha.* In fact, Gandhi has a strong reservation regarding the very concept of untouchablity; rather he prefers to use the term *harijon* instead of untouchability. However, both

of them were the pioneer campaigner of social justice and established themselves as great social reformers and messengers of humanism.

Secondly, Hindu religion does not accept the principle of equality and brotherhood in general behaviour. Hinduism is destructive for humanism and social justice. Hinduism teaches one man to hate another. Ambedkar one says, "I am a snake in their garden". Even Gandhi warns and said to the Hindus, "You cannot neglect Dr. Ambedkar." For Ambedkar, caste system stands as a barrier to social justice, because in the society every caste is limited to itself. Their thinking and way of living may be one and the same. Accordingly, they are not one society, nor one nation. Therefore, without eradicating the caste system it would be ridiculous to seek social justice in Hinduism. No caste can maintain social justice, social purity according to Ambedkar. Casteism survives within *himsa.* Where there is *humsa,* there is no social justice.

Ambedkar's concept of just society, has deeply been ingrained in the trio-concepts of liberty, equality and fraternity. A society that falls short of fulfilling either of these would be an unjust society. While illuminating the structure of just society with regard to these concepts, Ambedkar incorporates the relevance of politics, economics, religious and social dimensions. In this sense his vision of just society is comprehensive in nature.

The most important dimension of Ambedkar's vision of justice is the influence of religion. This, in fact, is a contentious issue simply because it is directed towards Hinduism. Ambedkar was critical about some Hindu scriptures, particularly, *Manusmrti* where the divisions of caste in terms of Varna has been elucidated. Ambedkar felt that due to the Varna system, the social curse in the name of *untouchability* has been created and millions of people belonging to downtrodden had been inhumanly humiliated in the course of history. Ambedkar himself was the victim of

untouchability. Accordingly, he was revolted against Hinduism. Even though Hinduism is a jungle of scripts, religious texts and theories, but there are a few scripts in Hinduism which have been treated as the essence of Hinduism. *Manusmriti*, besides *Gita* and *Mahabharata*, is one of them. Ambedkar realised it very well that so long caste system based on religion remains in India, it would be hard to come by a just society. Thus, for Ambedkar, to ensure social justice in India, we have to annihilate caste system prevailing in Hinduism. Even though Ambedkar all the way through his life tried his level best to annihilate Varna system, but he did not succeed simply because there were other great humanists' such as Mahatma Gandhi, Sawmi Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore, who were the ardent followers of Hinduism. Even though, as social reformers, they interpreted Hinduism from broader perspective, but at the same time they were committed and devoted themselves towards Hinduism. The debate between Ambedkar and Gandhi is a case in point. Ambedkar insisted Gandhi to accept the concept of untouchability and to reject the Varna system of Hinduism. But Gandhi did not support Ambedkar. According to Gandhi, there is nothing wrong in the caste system and instead of the concept of untouchability; Gandhi introduced the concept of *Harijon.*

What I intend to say here is that Ambedkar was sensitive about the impact of religion while formulating the structure of just society. As an architect of Indian Constitution, he introduced a few provisions in favour of introducing *preferential treatment*. The reservation policy of India is a case in point. He also introduced some symbolic semblance of Buddhism, namely, the existence *Ashoke Chakra* in Indian National Flag. He studied many religions, but eventually he found that Buddhism is the only religion on the basis of which one can construct a just society from religious perspective. As a last ditch before his final departure he embraced Buddhism instead of Hinduism. Though Hinduism even today survives, but the influence of Hinduism has

been degraded at considerable length because of the departure of Ambedkar from Hinduism to Buddhism. As the genesis of India is its spirituality centered on Hinduism, the caste system will remain so long Indian spiritualism remains. Nobody can deny it. But the significance of Ambedkar's vision of just society is that it actually opens up a new path which the people of modern India can follow. Vivekananda was also vocal about the narrow based interpretation of Hinduism. He tells us that the downfall of India cannot be resisted so long the people of India overcome the division of caste from where the term '**mlechha**' has been generated. Our conclusion is that we as Hindus must survive within the religion of Hinduism, but at the same time even if there remains caste system in Hinduism, it should be treated as a religious myth, not as a science. In this regard, one can follow Buddha and Vivekananda. Only then one can assess the relevance of the vision of just society of Ambedkar. Following Vivekananda, we can say that we need first breed and then religion. Following Buddha, we can say we need *nirvana*, not on the basis of religious myth persisting in Hinduism, but on the basis of eightfold path as suggested by Buddha. Religion is a path of life, but it must cohere with reason, science and commonsense, otherwise the world as such will suffer from religious dogmas as it has been witnessed in the past. Social justice can only be obtained with the reconciliation of liberty, equality and fraternity where the term fraternity counts the most.

Ambedkar on Humanism

Ambedkar was a great social reformer and great humanist. Although from his school days to the end of his life he was struggling to overcome the social curse of untouchability, but his humanistic attitude and approach eventually made himself a great social reformist. He dedicated his life for the upliftment of the dalits, downtrodden and the millions of untouchables. Humanism is as old as human society itself. The ideals of humanism have been cherished by men

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throughout the history of mankind. Humanism implies the goodness, happiness and welfare of all human beings on this planet. It represents basically the specific of the universe, nature of man and problems relating to human beings. Humanism considers man as the evolutionary product of nature. It believes that human beings possess creative choice and action and human beings themselves are the masters of their own destiny. It considers ethics and morality as the basis of human values and also believes in good life of the individual contributing to the welfare of the community. Humanistic philosophy of Ambedkar also believes in social programme to establish democracy, peace and high standard of living throughout the world on the basis of **economic foundations**. It considers complete social implementation of reason along with democratic procedures to measure economic, political and cultural and philosophical aspects of life. This, in general humanism claims that man is the only reality and there is nothing real besides. Humanism tries to emancipate man from the clutches of ecclesiastical and religious orthodoxy and dogmatism. It stands for the values like happiness, Love, kindness, compassion, tolerance, pleasure, freedom, and removal of fanatism, meticulousness, intolerance, feudalism, despotism, egoism and above all self-aggrandizement.

Ambedkar was the founder of scientific and social humanism. He absolutely refused the existence of God, permanent soul, and its transmigration and other metaphysical maxims. His philosophical approach was scientific, rational and humanistic. He revealed that all kinds of exploitations in every sphere of life of Shudras and others are due to Brahmanism. There is no rationality. Therefore, it should be rooted out to save humanity from India and Buddhism is the only solution for all evils. Ambedkar's concept of humanism stands for liberty, equality and fraternity- the trio concepts of justice. Thus the main contention of Ambedkar's humanism is to restore justice in the society in the real sense of the term. In this regard, he stood for a social

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system based on right relations between man and man in all sphere of life. Thus, to know about his humanism, one has to go through his view about religion particularly Hindu religion which is the source of exploitation and injustice. His humanism or alternatively known as social justice is closely connected with his concept of religion and morality. Ambedkar was a religious minded man, but for him religion must be a rational practice or enterprise. His addiction towards religion is reflected by the remarks, " it pains me to see youths growing indifferent to religion, religion is not an opinion as it is held by some people. What good things I have in me or whatever have been the benefits of my education to society, I owe them to the religious feelings in me."[66] However, the religion he conceives is a rational, ethical, spiritual and humanitarian and full of karuna. It is a religion which grants equality, liberty and fraternity. However, religion which discriminates between two fellows is a partial religion; the religion which treats cores of its adherents worse than dogs and criminals and inflicts upon them insufferable disabilities is no religion at all. His rational and humanistic religion did not approve any type of hypocrisy, injustice and exploitation of man by man in the name of religion. He stood for a religion which is based on universal principle of morality and is applicable to all times to all countries and to all races. It must be in accord with reason and must be based on the three basic tenets of liberty, equality and fraternity. Ambedkar was highly dissatisfied with Hinduism as it gives no support to the principle of social unity and believes in social separation and discrimination. In this regard, he says, "… if Hindus wish to be one they will have to discard the theory of 'Chaturvarna'" His perception of Humanism goes against the greatest evil he found in Hindu religion as he thought that the root cause of all inequality lies in Hindu religion. Hindu religion is the parent of the caste system and untouchability; it actually robs and destroys humanism as such. His duty is to remove

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[66]Rao, B. B., (ED.) *Bharat Ratna Dr. Ambedkar,* Cough Publications, Allahbad, 1993, p.105.

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his own owes, slavery and poverty. In this regard he tells to the untouchables and downtrodden that 'do not believe in fate, rather believe in your strength'.[67]

Ambedkar's rational and empirical approach leads him to reject the believe in the existence of God. For Ambedkar, belief in God is unprofitable from social and individual point of view as it makes man inactive, dormant, fatalist and indifferent to the miseries of mankind. To belief in God or any super human being is a belief in falsehood. His humanism is directly associated with the well-being of man. Man is the central of his thought, men are the master of their fate, and they are also the captain of their souls. In this regard Ambedkar says, "He will attain self-elevation only if we can learn self-help, regain our self-respect and again self-knowledge."[68] Ambedkar did not belief in soul because it not only creates priesthood, it also gives priesthood complete control over man from birth to death. He also rejected the theory of past Karma which holds that man takes birth in rich family because of his past good karma. For Ambedkar, it is dangerous doctrine as it creates a mentality which makes man helpless and hopeless.

Thus the main objective of Ambedkar's humanism is to liberate depressed classes from the stronghold of Brahmanism and the Chaturvarna system. By Brahmanism, he meant the negation of the spirit of equality, liberty and fraternity. His humanism is primarily concerned with the uplift and well-being of the depressed classes as a whole. He wanted the depressed classes to educate, organize and agitate to elevate their position as respectable citizens of the country and contribute their share in the uphill task of nation-building. His humanism also targeted political and economic rights of the depressed classes. In this regard he demanded separate electorate for making solidarity between the untouchables and the Hindu castes. He said that when the two

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[67]Jatava, D.R., *The Political Philosophy of Dr. Ambedkar,* Phenix Publishing House, Agra, 1965, p.7.
[68]Ibid., p.37.

classes always lived apart, how could voting together once again every five years to promote solidarity. He questioned it. He further denied that his demand for a separate electorate would create anti-national spirits, the Sikh, the Muslims and the Indian Christians who had separate electorate, also were loyal to the national cause.

Education is another important dimension of Ambedkar's humanism. For him education actually gives birth to the reason, the feeling of unity, brotherhood and love of country. The building of culture and civilisation is made on the pillars of education. Education gives manhood to man. Due to lack of education man is just like an animal. He was greatly in favour of human values in education. Education gives man light and in turn can remove the darkness. For Ambedkar, man should be given such education as may create social and moral qualities in man. He was quite clear that change cannot be brought in the present condition of society when human qualities are not made the base in education. He was in favour of good and simple education. He in his three principles: Be educated, organised, and agitate, gave first place to education and at the same time he indicated towards the aim of education that education must create the feeling of unity and should struggle against injustice and tyranny. True education, he opined, must create ability, equality and morality. Education is the safeguards of human. True education is really which may create equality in society, give bread and satisfy the hunger of knowledge.

Ambedkar also targeted the well-being of man from economic perspective. He is **an eminent economist** and his PhD thesis has been published under the title "The Evolution of Provincial Finance of British India" and his D.Sc. thesis under the title "The Problem of the Rupee" was pioneering efforts on their respective topics. His M.A. thesis was on "Ancient Indian Commerce" and his M. Sc. Thesis on "Provincial Decentralization of Imperial Finance in British India". As an economist, he belongs to the group of liberal thinkers, but his orientation is that of a socialist.

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He did not agree with Karl Marx whose ideas and methods are of violent nature to him. He was in his life over-whelmed by the problems of the downtrodden as he knew pretty well that these people most of whom are Dalits were being exploited by landlords and capitalists and to prevent it. He struggled for mixed economic or state socialism. In fact Ambedkar was a champion of socialism and he integrated socialism with economy. He held that socialism is essential for Indian industrialisation. Private economy cannot do so. Society always be kept in the state planning. He firmly believed that by eradicating exploitation the industrial harmony can be established through labour welfare and congenial industrial relations. Emancipation of women is another important dimension of Ambedkar's humanism. Ambedkar criticised the traditional and conservative values and made Manu, the Hindu law giver, responsible for the decline of the status and dignity of the women in India. In summing up, we can say that the humanism of Ambedkar incorporates rationalism, emancipation of women, social equality, socialism and democracy.

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