Chapter I

Introduction

Non-fictional Indian writing in English occupies a unique place in the pre and post-independence literature of India. It has not only carved its place in the field of literature but also served many other purposes like social upliftment, strengthening of economy, religious awareness, women empowerment and expansion of education among others. Indian English writers attempting non-fictional writing during the renaissance age concentrated on social, political, religious, cultural and national issues. Dr. Ambedkar attempted to awaken people for freedom from the evils prevalent in the society and tried to lead the political, social and economic powers towards definite destinations. In his noble battle for human rights, Dr. Ambedkar did not use any guns. He used his mighty pen as a gun, his wisdom as bullets and his simple and poor people as army.

The history of India is rich with the life-stories of great men. A thorough study of the life and works of these men justify their being historical figures. Dr. Ambedkar is one such person commanding special respect. His multifarious and dynamic personality revealed in his life and works has received worldwide attention from the scholars and critics. He has carved out for himself a unique position in history. Dr. Ambedkar is not the man to allow himself to be forgotten.

Social justice was the corner stone of his movement. He was the harbinger of human rights. His life was a saga of his relentless struggle against the orthodox society. Dr. Ambedkar attained the pinnacle of glory neither by luck nor by a matter of chance but by sheer force of his personality, struggle, sacrifice, selflessness, erudition, dedication, devotion and commitment.

In the words of K. Raghavendra Rao,

To understand him is to forge ahead by creatively applying his ideas to a changing world. Certainly to follow him mechanically and to mummify his dynamic ideas would be a disservice to his memory. But to look upon his life and ideas as a source of inspiration and a resource would be the tribute he would have loved. (1998: 16)

Objectives

The aims and objectives of the present study are:

1. To critique the overall writings of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar with a literary point of view and thereby to show his contribution to Non-fictional Indian Writing in English.

2. To examine how far he has succeeded in presenting a realistic picture of the society and the people of the time.
3. To make an analytical study of his writings and thereby to explore his approach, interests and intentions as revealed in his works.

4. To evaluate him as one of the masters of prose in non-fictional Indian English literature.

5. To study his invincible personality with phenomenal energy and the vast erudition through the pages of his writings.

6. To study his social, political, economic, religious, cultural and legal perspectives as reflected in his writings.

Hypothesis

I had some basic assumptions in mind with which I directed my study. These have formed the hypothesis for my thesis:

1) The writings of Dr. Ambedkar have been neglected as non-fictional Indian writing in English in spite of their being significant. Absence of enough critical works which examined him as a prose writer is in itself a sign of this.

2) The writings of Dr. Ambedkar and his approaches to the contemporary problems of the Indian renaissance differed in many respects.

3) The writings of Dr. Ambedkar are significant in formulating a new awareness in keeping with changing times.

Thus, this research aims at making a comprehensive in depth study of the writings of Dr. Ambedkar. His writings and speeches speak of his vast erudition and learning. He emerges from these pages as a constructive social reformer and a philosopher of law with originality of thought and skeptical mind.

Indian Renaissance

Every writer is a child of the era in which he is born. He is invariably influenced by the social, religious, cultural, political and economic conditions of his family, society and nation. His philosophy of life gets moulded by those influences. His writings reflect those influences. Therefore one must examine the external factors related to his life and time in order to comprehend his internal journey towards the ultimate truth and its expression.

When one takes up the task of evaluating a person who is a political leader and social reformer and whose writings and speeches are the by-products of his other more important activities, one must study the background very carefully. Dr. Ambedkar is one such person whose writings occurred only to support his field-work. For him, writing was not a full-time occupation but a means to get his desired end.

Dr. Ambedkar was a child of the Indian Renaissance. In order to place him in right context from the political, social, religious and literary
perspectives, it is necessary to examine the milieu in which he wrote and worked. It is also indispensable to have a glimpse of the work and works of his predecessors advanced with the same intentions.

Renaissance or new birth in India was the awakening of the mind, soul and psyche of the nation after a long span of sleep. It stimulated creative activity of the dormant life-force of the national spirit. It might be described as a renewal of the national springs of life when they seemed all but choked and about to dry up. It was the emergence and unhampered functioning of the free and creative spirit of the country.

The 19th century in Indian context was also known as Navajagaran, Punarjagaran, Lokjagaran, Sudharayug or Prabodhan in different languages. It was a period of transition between the pre-colonial and the post-colonial India. The impact of the colonial rule was devastating. The great Indian leaders, thinkers, social reformers and writers of the time were persistently engaged with the economic, religious, social, political and cultural problems. Their actions, writings and speeches revolved around the discussions and solutions of these problems. The age of mental, moral and physical turbulence got itself reflected through educational, intellectual and religious forces. It witnessed revolution, reformation and resistance. That epoch of rebirth, renewal, revival and synthesis was full of turbulences, contradictions and inconsistencies which were reflected in the life, actions, discourses and writings of the leaders, thinkers and writers of the time.

The Renaissance Movement was so comprehensive that it reflected almost all departments of national life. It was a many-sided movement concerned with rejuvenating all aspects of Indian life and thought, education, humanities, the social sciences, the physical sciences, the economic, political and social life of the country, literature and the other fine arts: Philosophy and Religion.

The Indian Renaissance was expected to perform three essential tasks: The recovery of the old spiritual knowledge and experience in all its splendor, depth and fullness; the demonstration of this spirituality into new forms of philosophy, literature, art, science and critical knowledge and a novel dealing with modern problems in the light of Indian spirit and an attempt to formulate a greater synthesis of a spiritualized society.

There was a widespread turmoil and alteration of Indian society in the 19th century that paved the way to transition. It undoubtedly opened up the avenues to progress in the direction of recollecting the means to examine and disseminate its own culture. The future summoned people inviting to be the protagonists of their own narratives. This is certainly one of the legacies of the Indian renaissance.

With the establishment of the Indian National Congress in 1885, a new age was about to dawn that was to inspire large masses in general and the creative writers in particular to search for the national self and to assimilate its varied elements culminating into its assertion for liberty. The reformers and
leaders aroused in people a sense of patriotism and greater admiration and respect for its rich cultural tradition.

National consciousness emerged as a major thematic preoccupation in most of the Indian languages. The ‘discourse of struggle’ and ‘discourse of opposition’ was found in all the forms of literature of the time. Monhanty writes, “It is a happy phenomenon that the rise of Indian English literature coincided with Indian Renaissance and that it was able to construct the notion of nation in the absence of political freedom.” (Singh 2003: 193)

The Reformation Movement began with the establishment of the Brahmo Samaj by Raja Ram Mohan Roy in 1828, the Prarthana Samaj by Ranade in 1870, the Arya Samaj by Dayanand Saraswati in 1875 and the Theosophical Society by Annie Beasant in 1882. These were the upper class reformers. Along with them, Narayan Guru of Kerala and Mahatma Phule of Maharashtra, representing the lower strata of the society, tried their best to make the reformation movement powerful. The Indian scholars engaged in this reform movement began probing into the ideals of both ancient and the modern India identifying in a comparative sense the merits of both. The spirit of India was awakening the minds of a number of eminent persons to raise India from its deep slumber and recovering its spiritual heritage.

The term ‘reform’ encompassed within its domain some basic issues as the political set-up, the social constitution, religious sentiments, the systems of education and many others. The reformers and the conservatives formed separate camps which resulted into an open ideological conflict between them. The Christians also started criticizing various practices of the Hindu sects. This resulted in outrage and the soul of the nation was stirred. The Indian conscience was awakened and the feeling of selfhood emerged. India had always tried to Indianise what she got from the West.

Thus, the first half of the 19th century was marked by the social and religious movements in the Indian history. People started questioning the existing social, political, cultural institutions and traditions. The second half of the 19th century was noticed for the revival and re-establishment of Indian traditions by the works of Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Swami Vivekananda and later Shri Aurobindo. They, with their revolutionary thoughts, arguments and actions, made their invaluable contributions and left an indelible mark on the minds of the people. The recurrent themes of the Indian writers of the time were inseparably connected with the socio-political issues and the struggle for freedom.

The prose literature of the age was marked by discursiveness. Some extraordinary experiments were witnessed in literary forms. The creative writers of the age made abandon use of travelogues, biography, autobiography, letters, diary, novel and short stories for their purpose. The newly gained acquaintance with English attracted the intelligentsia of India and they wrote in English to spread their thoughts worldwide.

English education enabled Indian mind to have a closer view of the Western culture and literature. As a result, the mental outlook of the educated
Indian mind was broadened. Indian people were enabled to understand and appreciate the ideological forces that were the living force for the West. They came across the direct impact of a great industrial, scientific and technical civilization which was in a process to change the shape of the world. It also engendered a new critical and reflective attitude in them. They became more conscious of the shortcomings of their own society. Moreover, they could be conscious of evils that had entered Indian society through the ages and had almost deprived it of its dynamism and creative energy.

It was quite evident that the spread of Western education could not by itself have fostered and promoted the renaissance unless there had not been a genuine urge from within, a spirit of renaissance aiming at the revival of what was noble and elevating in India’s past. The Indian thinkers were now determined to reform society and purge it of all its evils. Infanticide, child marriage, Sati, enforced widowhood, purdah, Devadasi, untouchability, caste system and prohibition of foreign travel appeared to them as the plagues of Hindu society which were to be rooted out altogether. Above all, the Indian thinkers and reformers of this period condemned and discouraged the tendency of some English educated people to entertain blind and uncritical admiration for everything Western and cherish hostility towards their own culture and civilization.

The excavation of the Indian past, the active dissemination of Christianity and the demotion of Hinduism were the facets of the East-West encounter. The spread of English education and Western ideas influenced young Indians. They admired English education and the scientific and technical prowess of the West. But strikingly enough, they were not insensible to the injury being done to their own culture and religion.

The Indian Renaissance thinkers wanted to purge Hinduism of its evils. But they were not ashamed of their religion. On the contrary, they desired to nurture a new Hindu identity based on the spiritual tradition and awareness of pre-Islamic splendor of the past. Their nationalism was Hindu nationalism. Their India was Hindostan. They were fascinated by the greatness of ancient India. Yet they would not imitate either one or the other as they faced and creatively tried to reshape the realities of their own time and place.

Pramod Patel comments on the contemporary Indian situation:

The predicament in the erstwhile Indian society of the 19th century was that it had reached a stasis. The Hindu society and its practices had touched an all-time low with its ostentations, polytheism, fragmentations, sectarianism, casteism, ritualism, superstitions, ignorance and outworn customs – all in the name of religion. It was prey to acute parochialism and had been reduced to hollow pretentiousness and pride by the religious institutions with all sorts of malpractices prevalent in them. Even the religious institutions had become centres of debauchery, vanity and depravity. The
ancient *Varna* system was all but destroyed, and instead, innumerable splinters of castes and sects surfaced fracturing the nation on these lines. The most shining principles and elements of our thought and culture were drowned in a quagmire of crass ritualism. The highly refined path of life formulated by our ancient *rishi-munis* had eroded down to just a worn-out quotidien routine of deeds. In such a time, our youth were drawn to the values of the Western civilization and yearned to bring about a change in their own Hindu society. They felt the urgent need to “reform” their contemporary way of life. (Singh 2003: 89-90)

The negative tendencies of the Western influence also came out. Instead of a revival of Indian classical thought, there was a deft invasive displacement of Indian knowledge systems. The Indian psyche was divided. Hinduism, as it was understood and practised in those days, was unable to withstand the terrific forces of the Western onslaught. Many of its ideas, institutions and practices were unable to stand those examinations and scrutiny and were therefore summarily rejected.

The impact of the West could at best be the occasion for the birth of the national awakening. No doubt Western education became a centre of intellectual revolution, a nursery for the origin and dissemination of new ideas of change in education, culture, society and politics. But unfortunately its alumni denationalised Indian spirit instead of being any help to recover the spiritual heritage of the past. They began to take pride in denouncing everything Indian. To them the ancient heritage of India was anathema. They denounced it outright as vile and corrupt and unworthy of the regard of rational beings. They became great admirers of everything Western and opened the doors for India to develop an attitude of contempt and inferiority complex towards their great religions and cultural traditions.

This state of affairs pointed out a peculiar thing about Indian history. It was the first time perhaps that the Indian mind was thrown off its balance. Even the devastating Muslim invasions and conquests had not produced a result of this kind. The reason for that was found in the contemporary social, political and religious condition of India. Santosh Gupta writes,

The missionaries’ preaching about the superiority of Christian religion and the British liberal thinkers’ condemnation of the Indian social life began to invade the cultural confidence of the people. As English language became the medium of instruction and western education began to be introduced, the situation began to threaten the native sense of identity and tradition and seemed to break down inner resistance within the Indian community. The need to face the challenges, to offer resistance became extreme and different
forms of resistance were formulated. There was no monolithic, unified response and the multiplicities of responses were rooted in different regional ideas, sources and tradition. (Singh 2005: 339)

The Indian Renaissance witnessed resistance in the form of practice, narration and theorization. The leaders and reformers striving to liberate India from the colonizers practiced resistance. Narmad and Gandhi in Gujarati, Vishnu Sastri Chiplunkar in Marathi, Bhartendu and Premchand in Hindi and Sri Aurobindo in English constructed their own discourse of resistance and narrated it. Gandhijii and Aurobindo also theorized it.

Dr. A. K. Singh comments on the discourse of resistance:

Tentatively, the pattern of discourse of resistance in Indian English writing is – acceptance (reconciliation) to the extent of celebration, ambivalence and resistance leading to the rejection of colonialism in Gandhi and Sri Aurobindo, and construction of discourse counter to Gandhi’s discourse in Sri Aurobindo and in Ambedkar, though on different grounds. Indian writing in English, thus, contained discourse of resistance against external colonization and a critique of native discourse of resistance as well. (Singh 2005: 36)

Dadabhai Naoroji, Pherozeshah Mehta, Gopala Krishna Gokhale and Surendranath Banerjee with many others introduced, formulated and strengthened the Western pattern of the liberal tradition in the political thinking of modern India.

The unique thoughts and deeds of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Keshab Chandra Sen, Debendranath Tagore, Swami Vivekanand, Mahadev Govind Ranade, Lokmanya Tilak, Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru formed an important part of the process of reinvigorating India with their distinctive socio-cultural outlook. They tried to prescribe the right role of religion, community, education and law in the new social set-up. They looked upon the past culture from a new angle and tried to understand and reshape it in the light of new ideas and knowledge to suit the modern society. Each of them thought independently in great detail about the quantum of the past tradition that was to be retained as well as the extent to which values from the Western culture could be assimilated in the new mode of life.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833)

Raja Ram Mohan Roy wanted modern knowledge to be communicated to the Indian masses as a supplement to the information gathered from the Indigenous tradition. He had a very balanced vision of the future of India in which the best of Indian and Western traditions combined without any attempt at establishing the superiority of either. He did not denounce Hinduism. But he
moved away from all the outward forms of worship in order to reach the Vedantic phase of Hinduism.

His emphasis on Western education was misconstrued. He wanted his countrymen to be able to compete with the best in the world. He found a two-fold formula for the development of his society, western education and return to the Vedas and Upanishads. The Vedic culture was free from the evils of caste system and idolatrous religious practices. As a rationalist, he discarded the idol-worship of the later Hinduism and returned to the pristine Hinduism of the earlier period.

Swami Vivekanand (1863-1902)

Swami Vivekanand believed that religion was the keynote of the Indian psyche. Religion had to be touched if the masses were to be aroused. He strove for modernizing the Hindu religion. He was a cyclonic Hindu. He vehemently attacked the Hindus for distorting their religion beyond limit. He bitterly proclaimed: “We are neither Vedantists, most of us now, nor Puranics, nor Tantrics. We are just “Don’t touchists”. Our religion is in the kitchen. Our God is the cooking-pot, and our religion is “Don’t touch me. I am holy”. If this goes on for another century, every one of us will be in a lunatic asylum.” (Vivekananda 1994: 167)

The Indian Renaissance thinkers did not complain that the British learners reduced Indians to a text by their study of Indian culture or they wanted them to behave according to their description of them. Quite on the contrary, they appreciated Western curiosity and critical sprit. Swami Vivekanand rebuked the Indians for not trying to seek anything original. He believed that his countrymen never thought beyond the Shastras and therefore, they had lost the capacity to think or find anything new.

He was very clear about his stand in the reformation movement. He announced: “To the reformers I will point out that I am a greater reformer than any one of them. They want to reform only little bits. I want root-and-branch reform. Where we differ is in the method. Theirs is the method of destruction, mine is that of construction. I do not believe in reform: I believe in growth.” (Vivekananda 1994: 213)

The Indian Renaissance thinkers were as critical of their Hindu-self as they were of the modern West. They knew that their distant past was great. But they rightly believed that their glorious past must not blind them to their present contemptible state of insensitive wretchedness and inertia. Their self-criticism did not substantially differ from Western perception of them. Vivekanand was most vociferous in this. He was harsh in his painful portrayal of the reality of Hindu character. As quoted by Jagdish V. Dave, Vivekananda said:

A conglomeration of three hundred million souls, resembling men only in appearance, crushed out of life by being down-trodden by their own people and foreign nations, by people professing their own
Both he and Keshab Chandra Sen were the disciples of Sri Ramkrishna Paramhans. Sen preached the brotherhood of all mankind based on the Fatherhood of God. But Vivekananda viewed that not the Fatherhood of God, but the Brahmanhood or Godhood of all men would make them brothers. He did not believe in any God or religion that did not serve the humanity.

The new Hinduism could emerge only if the orthodox Hinduism would be purged of its two great hates – the internal hate of the caste-divisions of society conflicting with one another and the external hate that of the foreigners. The first hate prevented Hinduism from becoming a homogeneous community. It was mutual hate that kept the Indians a territory without a nation unlike the Jews who had been for about a couple of millennia a nation without a territory. Both Sen and Vivekananda criticized the caste-system.

Vivekanand believed that the hate of the foreigners made the Hindu psyche sick and abnormal. Removal the twin hates would restore health to Hindu psyche and society. He firmly favoured the reconversion of those who had left Hinduism for social reasons.

Both of them knew that political power without proper education and without internalization certain norms and ideals of public life would be completely futile. Illiterate masses of India would fail to realize their own welfare by mere empowerment. They believed that the British rule was an opportunity to educate the people so that when the political independence came, it might not prove to be a calamity.

The mission of the life of Vivekanand was to universalize Hinduism and propagate the best of the Sanatan Parampara. He made them available to the
world. “Swamiji re-constructed a spirituality which is devoid of dogma, devoid of irrationalities, devoid of the mombo-jumbo of superstition, devoid of all the negative things in religion, devoid especially of intolerance, hatred, divisiveness, which religion seems to breed even today.” (Singh 2005: 208)

He earnestly tried to bring all the traditional systems like Bhakti, Karma, Yajna and Raja Yogas into one modern, rationalistic framework through his speeches and writings. He attempted not only to bridge the gulf between spirituality and science but also between the east and the west.

He clearly noted the presence of the spiritual tradition through our millennium old degradation. He was optimist about the rise of his motherland. He said that only the blind could not see and the perverted would not see that India was awakening from her deep long sleep.

**Aurobindo (1872-1950)**

Sri Aurobindo gave the call of *Purna Swaraj* long before Mahatma Gandhi. He also outlined the concept of passive resistance, the programme of non-cooperation and boycott together with its natural corollary of *Swadeshi* in all fields of activity – economic, educational, judicial, executive and social. He, unlike Mahatma Gandhi, believed in the effectiveness of the armed struggle.

Sri Aurobindo had great faith in the spirituality of India. “Sri Aurobindo had another interrelated conviction, that India was destined to spearhead the next phase of human evolution because it was *Swadharma* or essential nature to guide the world on the spiritual path.” (Singh 2003: 172)

His nationalism was marked by his forceful spiritualism. He approached the Hindu classics with a mind already sharpened by the western philosophy. The two strands in his personality – that of a political revolutionary and of a spiritual seeker – came together in his nationalism and in the associated political activity. It was not very surprising as the nationalism of the time itself could be seen as a product of the contemporary reform movements.

As Kavita Sharma quoted from Sri Aurobindo’s *Bhawwani Mandir*:

> India must be must be Reborn, because her Rebirth is demanded by the future of the world: India cannot perish, our race cannot become extinct, because among all the divisions of mankind it is to India that is reserved the highest and the most splendid destiny, the most essential to the future of the human race. It is she who must send forth from herself the future religion of the entire world, the Eternal religion which is to harmonize all religions, Science and philosophies and make mankind one soul. (Singh 2003: 172)

The freedom for Sri Aurobindo was not just a political goal, a mere realignment of constitutional provisions, but a deep and fundamental spiritual
necessity without which India as a nation would perish and humanity would lose forever the spiritual light that she could, if she were free from alien bonds, spread throughout the world. He believed that political freedom was the foundation on which to build the development of India.

V. S. Srinivasa Sastri (1869-1946)

V. S. Srinivasa Sastri struggled for achieving equality of citizenship within the British Empire. Though the Indians were crusading for Swaraj, he displayed faith in the idea of the commonwealth, in British sense of fair play, in moderate politics, in constitutional reform. His conviction travelled through a literary and philosophical route. He was a political Sanyasi who took politics as an opportunity to serve instead of a chance to grab the power.

“His entire life was an example of close Socratic questioning of given ideas, a rejection of the market place and mere passion, an attempt to reconcile the claims of reason with those of the spirit. Sastriar, like Gandhi, went by the inner voice.” (Singh 2003: 232)

He showed faith in Indo-British constitutionalism and asked to cancel of repressive laws from a constitutional stand point. His desire was to achieve full constitutional liberty within the British Empire by entirely peaceful and constitutional methods. As a vigilant champion of civil liberties, he was instrument in getting most of these laws revoked.

He criticized both the British Government and the Congress. He admired Gandhiji but rejected his non-co-operation movement. He called for Peace which was a consistent theme in his life. He urged the Liberal Party to oppose unjust laws and neglect of duty by the Government but never to break the law or practice even in non-violent manner like Gandhiji.

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941)

Rabindranath Tagore advised the British Government to look upon free expression of public opinion as a safety-valve which let off dissatisfaction and not to drive it underground by trying to penalize it. Ranjan Ghosh writes,

Tagore, like Sri Aurobindo, believed that a national movement that becomes imitative, imported and artificial, that increasingly fails to stamp its ‘race’ on the movement, falters at seizing on ‘every new development as a means of self expression’, is destined to get stultified as the nation retrogresses to self sterilization; this was the situation with most ancient European nations who perished ‘when they gave up their own individuality as the price of Roman civilization, Roman peace, Roman prosperity’. Tagore finds such political ‘emancipatory’ enterprises ‘unreal to the core’ and pitifully feeble. Spiritual emancipation is what we
are in utter need of – seeking our own ‘inheritance’.
(Singh 2005: 177)

He stated that India had its own history, the history of ideas. He termed the Indian epics as ‘itihasas’, histories of ideas. The Indian historians used the method of symbols or metaphors to write the history.

Tagore did not want the total abolition of the caste system in India. On the contrary, he believed that India’s handling of caste was the first step towards the solution of the racial problem. Different castes had lived together peacefully for centuries in India which showed that India had recognized the law of differences. The Indian caste system followed the principle of toleration but this principle was not sufficient. According to him, India had yet to recognize the law of mutation as well. To realize this law, moral virtues like self-sacrifice and selfless love were required.

His fictional literature reflected his thoughts beautifully which, in turn, awakened the public conscience and affected the public psyche.

**Dr. Keshav Baliram Hedgewar (1889-1940)**

Dr. Keshav Baliram Hedgewar founded the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh in 1925. It played a unique role in the nation building and in the national movement. Dr. Hedgewar and the Swayamsevaks launched jana-jagarana – public awakening – campaigns on various issues of vital national concern. The dynamic role of Dr. Hedgewar in various fields of national life had left an indelible impact on the minds and the hearts of millions of the countrymen.

He wanted to strengthen all the Hindus so that they could fight against the British and all anti-national spirits. He dreamt and worked for building up of the organised national strength of the Hindu people for achieving freedom. He was against of undue pampering of the Muslims at the cost of the nationalism.

He desired to enlighten an intense unified national consciousness among the people in general and the Swayamsevaks in particular. He tried to do that through common commands in Sanskrit, common Sanskrit prayer to Bharat Mata, songs, stories and sayings of the great, talks and discussions on problems affecting the nation, emphasis on national faith and values of life, the daily chanting of the Ekmatma Stotra and Ekmatma Mantra. This made people aware of the the unifying and harmonising aspects of our historical, cultural and spiritual traditions. He also tried to bring healthy sanskars like oneness without any kind of sectarian, linguistic, caste or other differences. He was very well aware of the capacity of an overall Hindu morale which alone could prove an effective answer to anti-national challenges like the Britisher’s ‘divide and rule’ policy, Muslims’ attitude of separatism and the mean work of conversion of the Christian missionary.

During his visit to Sangh Shiksha Varga in 1939, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar was surprised to find that the Swayamsevaks were getting training
of equality, brotherhood and nationalism without even caring to know the caste of the others. As a positive result of the genuine efforts of Dr. Hedgewar, Shri Guruji and the Swayamsevaks, malicious evils like untouchability and casteism were gradually eradicated. Inculcation of noble personal virtues which were held high in the Hindu tradition, cultivation of spirit of loving brotherhood, bringing about social transformation while ensuring social justice were some of the prominent goals of the RSS.

The national freedom that Dr. Hedgewar had envisaged was essentially positive in its content. Getting rid of the foreigner did not mean true freedom. Upholding the national honour and values of life which had been debased or defamed during the foreigners’ rule was the essence of liberty.

According to the fundamental conception of the RSS, it was the level of the character and the calibre of an average man that would ultimately decide the level of the progress of a nation. Therefore the Sangh, since its very inception, had been concentrating all its attention on the task of moulding the right type of men.

Dr. Hedgewar took special pains to evolve a suitable technique to see that the Swayamsevaks were kept above all personal lures. Systems like keeping apart at least one hour a day for service of the Motherland, the collective prayer to Bharat Mata invoking in oneself the spirit of total surrender at Her altar and praying for virtues of invincible strength, character, knowledge, heroism and dedication to the ideal, offering Guru Dakshina in a spirit of selfless service to the society, practice of spending from one’s own pocket while taking part in camps and other special programmes and not going in for public funds for organisational expenses and much less seeking any kind of governmental favours – all these had helped in planting an unshakable spirit of self-reliance and self-sacrifice in the Swayamsevaks and strengthening their character.

The noble aim behind establishing this organization was to unite all the Hindus and to enlighten the feelings of patriotism, discipline and bravery in the thoughts and actions of the people of India.

Vinayak Damodar Savarkar (1883-1966)

Savarkar was a fearless freedom fighter, social reformer, writer, dramatist, historian, political leader and philosopher all rolled into one. He firmly believed that the Hindu society was based on the principle of mutual cooperation without any internal competition. And this became possible because of the distribution of social duties from the Shudras to the Brahmans in the Hindu civilization. He found the evils prevalent in the contemporary Hindu society and made attempts to eradicate them in order to strengthen the society. According to Savarkar, the theory of Chaturvarna demonstrated the four human tendencies: learning, fighting, trading and serving. He believed that the Varna of a person was determined by merit and action and not by birth.
Savarkar believed that the practice of caste division arose from a tectonic change in the practice of *Chaturvarna*. He found that this brought the evils like caste arrogance, caste hatred and caste conflict. He found that the atrocity was also existed from the Brahmin to the *Bhangi*. So he asserted that it became the responsibility of all to bring reform in the society. Every caste had some wicked people who became the chief cause of creating the evil effect of caste. He was against the religious conversion. He went further to assert that every man had one caste at birth – human. He insisted to cling to the identity of Hindu race as Muslims and Christians did. He urged the people to discard the notion of 'ritual impurity'.

He relentlessly fought to remove the following seven shackles which made the Hindu society weak: *sparshabandi* or untouchability, *shuddhibandi* or prohibition of reconversion, *betibandi* or prohibition of inter-caste marriages, *rotibandi* or prohibition of inter caste dining, *sindhubandi* or prohibition of seafaring, *vyavasayabandi* or prohibition of following profession of other castes and *vedoktabandi* or prohibition of performing Vedic rites.

He did not only theorise the ideals of the removal of caste evils but also make sincere and practical attempts like touring and surveying the villages of the Hindu untouchables, delivery of convincing speeches, organizing of the bhaijans among the untouchable mass, educate the children of low caste Hindus like Mahars, Chamars and Bhangis or Valmikis, celebration of Hindu festivals among them, giving monetary assistance, opening restaurants where all were welcomed to dine, organizing inter-caste dining and a bonfire of the statue of untouchability.

**M. K. Gandhi (1869-1948)**

Mahatma M. K. Gandhi was not happy with the type of history written by the British historians. He argued that the British historians distorted history of India and invented the theory of ‘inborn hostility’ between Hindus and Muslims. He blamed that the books written by the British historians sowed seeds of discord between Hindus and Muslims. He did not accept the British version of Indian history. He criticized the western historiography for writing the histories of princes, wars and bloodshed, ignoring more important aspects of human life. The British historians knew little about India. Therefore their version of history was not authentic. The real philosophical substance eluded the historians of events as they did not understand the nature of truth. He asked the Indians to find out and interpret their history on their own.

He admitted that there were certain defects in Indian civilization but these defects could be eradicated. According to him, in no part of the world and under no civilization had all men attained perfection.

He propounded that the spirit of national consciousness did not interfere with another's religion. It was a great virtue of India that she assimilated all foreign elements. Nationalism should not be based on hatred and enmity. Indian nationalism was not militarist, aggressive or destructive. Rather, it was health giving, religious and humanitarian.
Gandhiji devised his own way of *Satyagraha* whereby the dispossessed and oppressed could confront the powerful oppressor in a non-violent way through restraint and moral superiority. The British and, regretfully, the Indian leaders like Dr. Ambedkar did not realize the potency of this simple weapon of Gandhiji as he could awaken the hitherto unorganized and divided masses of India in a manner unprecedented in human history.

He pioneered a new way of thinking and resisting. He re-defined resistance, with the principle of *Satyagraha*, theorized it and demonstrated to the world the greatest example of resistance. The point worth-noting here is that Gandhi added a new dimension to resistance by considering the other not as an enemy. He did not believe in harassing or injuring the enemy. For him, it rather involved readiness to suffer in one’s own. Gandhiji authored resistance as *Satyagraha* and led one of the most successful, disciplined and non-violent struggles in the history of human civilization against the most powerful empire equipped with sophisticated strategists, attended by an insatiable hunger for power. Thus Gandhiji, the master strategist of the discourse of resistance against the colonization, gave a purposeful direction to the India’s struggle for independence that later became a model for all resisters in the world.

**The Impact of Renaissance on Untouchability**

The various socio-religious reform movements taking place in India during the British rule were the expression of the rising national consciousness and spread of the liberal ideas of the West among the Indian people. These movements, in varying degrees, emphasized and fought for the principles of individual liberty and social equality and stood for nationalism.

The new society developing in India since the advent of the renaissance had distinct needs. The new intelligentsia, which imbibed the liberal Western culture, recognized the needs and launched various movements accordingly. They wanted to revolutionize social, political and religious institutions. They were convinced that the new society could politically, culturally and economically develop only on the basis of liberal principles such as the recognition of individual liberty, freedom of human personality and social equality.

The Indian social reformers accused the British government for their insufficient support in the work of social reformation. It strengthened the determination of the leader of the Indian national movement to secure political power so that they could use it to accelerate the tempo of social and religious reform in India.

Shirish Panchal comments on the attitude of the British:

Due to the catholicity of the Indian mind, the difference between outsiders and natives were dissolved. But this was not the case with Europeans who came to India.... Indian people also did not hesitate to borrow from migratory people. They were able to establish all kinds of
relations with ruling communities. But this was not the case with Europeans. After witnessing India’s prosperity, they wanted to rule over India, otherwise they would have limited themselves only to the trade. They knew that only ruling power could enhance their profitable trade and commerce. For this purpose they found out other ways also. They tried to create an inferiority complex in Indian people. Not only this, in order to rule without any hurdles they tried to erase the glorious past form minds of the Indians. (Singh 2005: 271-272)

The British knew that the easiest way to rule over the people was to destroy all their traditions by one way or another. They used all means of oppression against the Indians.

Quite naturally, every imposition of power generates its resistance mechanism. In the post 1857 era, as the imperial power in India became more arrogant and harsh, the reaction to the power system also began to take ideological shape. As subjugation became severer, the need to salvage native dignity and preserve one’s indigenous identity became strong too. It was not possible to express the resistance openly always. Therefore the indirect strategies for expressing the ideas, values and thinking processes of the colonizers were looked for. The colonized people developed, despite imposing supremacy of the colonizers, innumerable ways of responding to colonial power, ways of engaging colonial discourse which may more subtly resist its authoritative control.

The same can be observed about the evil of untouchability also. Time came when the untouchables got tired of repression and devised various ways for resistance. They also took resort to violent and non-violent struggles, political demands, media and literature.

Indian English discourse can be read as a reception, celebration and rejection through systematic resistance as in Coomaraswami, Gandhi, Sri Aurobindo and Dr. Ambedkar. A remarkably different dimension was added to the discourse of resistance by the writings and speeches of Dr. Ambedkar who eventually championed the cause of the untouchables. His was a bitter discourse of resistance against the prevalent political and social scenario. He complained that the British established their rule in India with the help of valour, discipline and loyalty of the untouchables in different parts of India but they did precious little for the emancipation and upliftment of the depressed classes.

The evil of untouchability was the product of the caste system. This system of Hindus, which divided the Hindu community into a multitude of almost hermetically sealed groups, was one of the principal targets of the reform movement. It became an obstacle to the development of the contemporary economy and also to the national unity and solidarity.
Though Indian nationalism reached the conclusion that political power was vital promise for a fundamental reconstruction of Indian society on a democratic basis, it did not relax its campaign against social evils. The socially submerged classes formed about one fifth of the whole Hindu population. The problem of their emancipation, therefore assumed vital importance in any scheme of national freedom and social reconstruction of India.

The movements of the lower castes of Hindu society suffering from social, religious and legal disabilities had two aspects: (i) progressive and (ii) the reactionary and anti-national. Lower castes would be right in demanding the removal of special obstacles put in their way for the manifestation and development of their talent as a result of hierarchic structures of society. This would be a progressive democratic demand and would help to increase the creative vitality of the people. When a lower caste organized itself for securing a specific weight in the constitution of the country, when it demanded separate electorate, it acted in a reactionary, undemocratic and anti-national manner. Separate electorates would only perpetuate communalism.

The removal of untouchability and all disabilities from which the depressed classes suffered formed an important part of all social and religious reform movements. The social, political and religious organisations stroke by propaganda, education and practical measures to restore equal rights to the untouchables. The prominent leaders and institutions of the day tried to reinterpret the Hindu scriptures in order to eradicate the evil of untouchability. The depressed classes themselves were also awakened. The spread of education among them brought forth a group of intellectual such as Dr. Ambedkar, who became the spokesman of their suffering and disabilities and passionate fighter for their elementary human rights. The All India Depressed Classes Association and All India Depressed Federation were the principal organizations of these classes. In addition, there were numerous local and sectional organizations of the various castes working for the same goal.

The Indian nationalists stated that the British Government did not energetically and enthusiastically work for the restoration of the rights of the depressed classes and that it did not exercise its power to strike at the undemocratic denial of elementary human rights to untouchables. The democratic awakening of the depressed classes, their increasing consciousness of their basic human rights was a part of the general national democratic awakening which had taken place among the Indian people during the British rule.

A statesman, scholar, crusader of downtrodden and above all a spiritual guide, Dr. Ambedkar has left an indelible impression on the Indian History. His contribution to uplift the downtrodden made him a cult figure among the depressed classes.

Almost all of the prominent social, political and religious leaders preceding Dr. Ambedkar worked for the elimination of the evil of untouchability in their own peculiar ways. Dr. Ambedkar, therefore, cannot be hailed as the first and foremost to do that. Rather, at the time of his entry to the Indian
political scene, the ground for the abolishment of the untouchability was already prepared by those farsighted leaders of India.

Most of the renaissance thinkers firmly believed that the aim of reformation can only be fulfilled through social and religious reformation. All of them equally felt the need of the restoration of their religion. But none of them even thought of discarding Hinduism and accepting a new religion. Rather, all of them asked people to go back to the root of Hinduism and find it once again in its ancient glory. One of the rare exceptions to that was Dr. Ambedkar who vigourously tried to reveal the drawbacks of Hinduism and insisted on conversion.

The things which were spoiled should not be cut off and thrown away. Serious and sincere efforts should be made to improve the situation. Decaying Hinduism of the contemporary India cried for rejuvenation. The negative propaganda of the missionaries, indifferent approach of some educated youth and hammer blows of the untouchables like Dr. Ambedkar would have destructed the Hindu religion completely. But people like Vivekananda, Hedgewar, Golwalkar, Savarkar, Aurobindo, Dayanand Saraswati, Gandhiji and many others constantly expressed faith in Hinduism and worked in positive direction.

Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (1891-1956)

The British rule aroused the general democratic feelings among the Indians. The newly developed humanitarian approach of the upper class towards the depressed also helped the movement. The modernization of India in the form of the introduction of the railways and buses, restaurants, modern industries having both touchables and untouchables as labourers, newly developed class-consciousness were some of the important events which helped to slow down rigid class-consciousness and caste-distinctions. The awareness towards the education forced the movement. All these factors brought forth a group of intellectual, thought-provocative and passionate as well as rebellious writers and fighters.

Dr. Ambedkar was one such leader who wanted to bring social and political reforms, through his speeches and writings, not as philanthropy, but as a right. We can see a severe urge to create the spirit of independence and self-realization among the untouchables in his works. Through his speeches and writings, he wanted to produce a ‘new man’ and ‘a new society’. His writings and speeches were full of revolt against the orthodox Hindu society. His giant contribution to the non-fictional Indian English writing and Indian society can be well-understood by the systematic and scientific study of his ideas, thoughts and visions.

Dr. Ambedkar’s life and his struggle were closely related to the most important decades of the history of modern India. He was born around six years after the modern nationalist movement was launched in Indian with the establishment of the Indian National Congress in 1885. It is important to notice here that the relationship between Dr. Ambedkar and his movement with the growing and changing nationalist movement is full of problems and
complications. He lived his life against the prevalent background of the national movement.

Ambedkar’s life was a fearless journey marked by so many vicissitudes, punctuated with raging storms, and serious conflicts with Gandhi and Jinnah, that one could hardly carry on Ambedkar’s mission was true, yet tedious to reach; he did not stop in spite of being abused...he was bruised and blasted for his trenchant criticism of the Hindu Shastras. Perhaps, no other man could tolerate such things, but Ambedkar proved himself to be an indefatigable fighter with an undying love for the downtrodden people of India…. (Jatava 1998: 1-2)

Birth and Background

The revolutionary changes that were taking place during the age could not be bracketed in a single term ‘nationalist movement’. Modernization of India during this time was a tortuous process full of contradictions and confusions with visible and invisible resistance. It was against this notable Indian historical background burdened with confusions and conflicts, Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar was born at Mhow, Central India as the fourteenth child of Ramji Sakpal and Bhimabai. 14th April is a red-letter day to all lovers of human rights and dignity as on this day in 1891 was born Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. Dr. Ambedkar’s family originally belonged to Konkan region in Maharashtra. His ancestral village is Ambavade in Ratnagiri district. His Mahar community was considered as one of the Hindu untouchable communities in India. Vidyasagar quotes Dr. A. C. Paranjpe,

The story of the untold privations, frustrations and humiliation of the untouchables form the darkest and dirtiest spot of the history of mankind. The situation of unprivileged section of any society in the world is comparable in certain respects and has been described in terms of the social poverty. The situation of the untouchables was probably worse than the one commonly described in sociological terms because of the added sense of humiliation brought by the stigma of untouchability.” (Vidyasagar 2005: 5-6)

Some important characteristics of Dr. Ambedkar’s family should be mentioned which shaped the personality and attitude of this great man.

Dr. Ambedkar belonged to Mahar community of untouchables which was notable for their general intelligence, physical resilience and adaptability to situation. To quote V. Chandra Mowli, “The Mahars are brave people, physically strong and mentally bright. The British recruited them into their services and as a result of this training and development of their long suppressed potentiality, the Mahars emerged as a strong social force. The Mahars were taken in large number in Armed services. They had formed the
forces of the Maratha Empire in even earlier.” (1990: 3) Some scholars believe that the Mahars were the original settlers in Maharashtra. They were pushed aside by the invading Aryans. Even it is claimed that the name of the state Maharashtra (Literally, a great Nation) was originally Mahar-Rashtra or the land of Mahars.

We see the military background of the family. Ramji and his father Maloji had been in the military service. Ramji’s wife also belonged to a military family. Mhow itself is a cantonment area. There is a legend related to Dr. Ambedkar’s birth. One of Ramji’s uncles, who had gone away as a hermit, had conferred on him the boon that a boy would be born in the family, who would leave his imprint on history!

Dr. Ambedkar’s family followed the democratic and humanistic Bhakti tradition of the Kabir Panth which formed his life-long conviction that human beings cannot live without some religious faith. It is important to notice here that Kabir preached against caste and gave the massage of human equality which formed the philosophy and ideology of Dr. Ambedkar’s writings and speeches.

Ramji, with his family, shifted to Dapoli in Ratnagiri district after his retirement from the army. Young Bhimrao of five was sent to the local Marathi school. Again Ramji was transferred to Satara with a civilian job. Bhimrao started his high school education in 1900 in the Government High School of Satara. Bhima Ramji Ambavadekar was the original name registered in the school. There is a curious history behind the surname of Ambedkar which he himself took for himself. One of the teachers of his school took special care of Dr. Ambedkar. As a part of respect and affection towards his ‘Guru’, he adopted the latter’s surname for himself. Like other untouchable boys of the time, Dr. Ambedkar also suffered from various kinds of humiliation. He was not allowed to sit or play with other boys of the open caste. His Sanskrit teacher didn’t allow him to learn the language as it was the divine language! As a result, he was forced to study Persian in spite of his wish to study Sanskrit language. The teachers of the school didn’t touch the books of the untouchable students. They even avoided talking for the fear of being polluted! An emotional, sensitive and gifted boy like him must have suffered humiliations like these which made his writings and speeches full of bitter criticism towards the Indian caste-system in general and Brahmin caste in particular.

After the termination of the service of Ramji, the family shifted to Bombay in 1904. They settled in a single-room in a chawl in Parel. Due to the open-minded culture and cosmopolitan ethos of Bombay, the Mahar boy was not barred to study or play with other boy of the open caste. The insatiable thirst for knowledge and love for reading can be shown from the early days of his childhood. He passed his matriculation exam in 1907, a remarkable achievement in the life of a Mahar boy. The achievement was celebrated under the presidentship of S. K. Bole, a leader of the Satyashodhak social reform movement. On the same occasion, as if prophetically, Ambedkar was presented with a copy of a biography of Buddha by the author, K. A. Keluskar.
Ambedkar got married at the age of fourteen with just nine years old girl named Ramabai, the daughter of Bhiku Walangkar.

**Higher Education**

Dr. Ambedkar joined the Elphinstone College after passing his matriculation. He began to study earnestly but owing to ill health he lost one year. In the inter arts and by the time he passed the inter arts, his father fell under the financial throes. K. A. Keluskar became instrumental in helping him through the wood by arranging an interview with the Maharaja Sayajirao Gaikwad of Baroda. Satisfied with Dr. Ambedkar’s interview, Maharaja sanctioned a monthly scholarship of Rs. 25 for the completion of his graduation. Keluskar, though not directly, stimulated him to attack the tyranny of the caste system and by securing him a scholarship; he enlightened his path and added ballast to his brains. Prof. Muller also helped him by offering books and clothes. But the social humiliation continued to torture Ambedkar by refusing tea and water.

Due to material prosperity, the family of Ambedkar shifted to a more specious two room tenement in the Improvement Trust Chawl. Ambedkar became father with the birth of his first son Yeshwant while he was in the college. He passed his B.A. with English and Persian without any class or distinction in the year 1913. It was in the same year that heavy blow blew on him in the form of his father’s death who devoted his life for the sake of his son’s education. He completed his M.A. degree for the dissertation on Ancient Indian Commerce. He submitted his doctoral dissertation on *National Dividend of India: A Historic and Analytical Study* which later on published in the book form entitled as *The Evolution of Provincial Finance in British India* (1989). In the introduction, Professor Seligman comments that the book is of practical use to the members of the Indian Legislature during budgetary debates.

Ambedkar, against his father’s wish, joined service in the princely State of Baroda after his graduation. He again suffered due to the evil of untouchability as the authority belonged to the upper class of the society! He had to suffer humiliations in the hands of his upper class subordinates. He faced a lot of difficulties in finding out residence. He lived with an Aryasamajist, but the hostile behaviour of the upper class people didn’t allow him to live peacefully.

Ambedkar signed an agreement to serve in the State after completing his advanced studies at Columbia University in New York. He was the first to study at the foreign university in his community. He did not suffer due to his untouchable identity at Columbia. He worked eighteen hours a day during his studies. He entered into a new sunshine of popularity. Professor Seligman, a renowned economist, helped him. Two notable events must be mentioned here which began to shape the personality and ideology of Ambedkar. One of them is his meeting with Lala Lajpat Rai and his seminar paper on the origin of the caste which includes his thoughts on the structural principles of caste. The paper was later on published in the *Indian Antiquary*. 
His thirst for the knowledge led him to the London School of Economics and Political Science in the UK as a graduate student. He came there into contact with Professor Cannan. He also succeeded to get admission in the Gray’s Inn to qualify as a Bar-at-Law. Due to the discontinuation of the scholarship from the king of Baroda, Ambedkar could not continue his studies after working for a year on his M.Sc. thesis. Because of his good luck, he got special permission from Professor Cannan to resume his studies any time before four years beginning October 1917.

Professional Career

On his return to India, he took the charge of Military Secretary to the Maharaja of Baroda which is considered as the beginning of his political career as the Finance Minister of the State. Instead of getting greetings for his academic merits after his return to his motherland, he faced mere humiliation. He didn’t get any hotel or place to stay. He was accommodated in a Parsi inn even while disclosing his identity. Even his peons threw papers and files at him and he could not get water to drink! Now he had to adjust in the Public Library for the further stay. His appeal to the Maharaja to intervene in this matter resulted in failure. He was bitter that his academic achievements were of no use to save him from this situation. He broke into tears and left Baroda State, thoroughly disgusted and dissatisfied. He probably then and there took a vow to dedicate himself to the sacred cause of the suppressed humanity of India. “It may certainly be said that whatever he fought for, co-operated with, revolted against and contributed to, his was the only theme: the service of suffering humanity.” (Jatava, 1998: 21)

He re-structured his life and means by giving tuitions to students and by setting up a firm to provide counsel on stocks and shares at Bombay. The business didn’t run smoothly as the people were not willing to go to an untouchable for advice! Then he worked as an assistant for the correspondence and accounts of a Parsi to earn his bread. He got some relief when he joined Sydenham College, Bombay as a temporary professor of Political Economy. He made his name as an inspiring teacher. The students of other colleges also came to attend his lecture. But this didn’t soften his attitude towards high-caste Hindus as the humiliations continued to shower on him. His upper-caste colleagues didn’t allow him to drink water from the same source. For his further studies of economics and law at London, he resigned from his present job in March 1920.

Before leaving India, he had advocated separate electorates on communal basis before the Southborough Commission. The Montford constitutional reforms made the recommendations of the Southborough Commission as its basis.

Dr. Ambedkar began his career as a lawyer in June 1923. He was so poor that he didn’t have money to pay for the sanad. So he had to take up the work of appellate. The shadow of untouchability did not leave him as the solicitors denied to work with him on the ground of social inequality. He was forced to confine himself to mofussil work. With the extended help of N. M. Joshi, he was able to open an office in Damodar Hall, Parel. On the one side,
he faced a lot of humiliation from the upper caste Hindus while on the other side, there were people like B. G. Modak and D. A. Khare who came forward to help him by giving some cases to this budding lawyer. He was succeeded in increasing his income by working as the professor of law at the Batliboi's Institute of Accountancy. He also worked as the examiner at Bombay University which earned a little for him.

**Emerging Leader**

Dr. Ambedkar started a weekly, *Mooknayak* (leader of the voiceless) to express the sufferings and interests and demands of the untouchables. He made his mission about his fight against the injustice, inequality and oppression against the downtrodden very clear. Even after finding some financial help from the Maharaja of Kolhapur, the paper could not survive for long.

Then Dr. Ambedkar participated in the conferences of depressed classes at Nagpur (1918) and Kolhapur (1920). In the Kolhapur conference, he advocated an important principle of organized mobilization. He stated that the institutions and individuals had no right to defend the interests of the depressed classes, if they were not run by untouchables. Actually he was against the Depressed Classes Mission of V. R. Shinde. This incidence became an important milestone in the history of the fight of the depressed classes as it called for the self-reliance in matters of organized action.

Dr. Ambedkar's personal worries didn’t hinder him to work for the public actively. He organized a public meeting at Damodar Hall, Parel, on 9th March, 1924, to draw attention on the wretched condition of the depressed class. The Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha (the Depressed Classes Welfare Association) was the outcome of the meeting held on 20th July, 1924. Sir Chimanlal Setalved and Ambedkar were respectively the president and chairman of its managing committee. The committee also included such illustrious figures as P. R. Paranjpe, K. F. Narriman and B. G. Kher. The short-term goals of the Sabha were to increase the economic and educational levels of the depressed classes and thereby remove the hardships of these classes. Dr. Ambedkar could have been asked to fill up the position of the Principal, Sydenham College, vacant then, by R. P. Paranjpe who was Minister for Education, but he was not. To remain free for the public life and to do social work, he refused the offers of professorship in Elphinstone College and ministership in Kolhapur State.

The paper *Bahishkrit Bharat* was started by him in April 1927 to discuss the sorrows and sufferings of the depressed classes and to give way to their interests keeping in mind the forthcoming constitutional reforms. The chief argument was to win the representation for these classes considering their total population. The committee fought for the social rights of these people such as the permission of using drinking water from the public tank and entering the public places like temple and school. S. K. Bole, in fact, presented a resolution in the Bombay legislature to give punishment to anyone opposing these social reforms. Dr. Ambedkar started a *Satyagraha* at Mahad in Kolaba district to attract the attention of the people towards the
access of the public places allowed the untouchables. He initiated the untouchables to use the public tank for drinking water but unfortunately the untouchables hesitated considering the call as a tactical move. Dr. Ambedkar and Dr. Solanki were nominated to the Legislative Council of Bombay.

Before he came on the scene, the politics of the scheduled castes or the untouchable community was based on appeals and humble petitions to the British authorities against the caste Hindus. Dr. Ambedkar based their demands on self-assertion and the consciousness of a just cause. Indeed, the one reason why he succeeded where others had failed was his patriotism, unimpeachable integrity and unflinching devotion to the cause of the suppressed humanity he had the honour to lead. For the first time Harijans had a leader who could not be bought over by favours or silenced by fear.

**Journalist**

Almost all contemporary leaders of repute had started newspapers or magazines. It was a part of their career and undertaking. It was weapon to propagate the ideas and launch struggles against social and political tyranny. Dr. Ambedkar was no exception. He started *Mooknayak, Samta, Bahishkrit Bharat* and *Janta (Prabuddha Bharat)*.

Dr. Ambedkar, in spite of his busy schedule with the political activities and his various assignments as the member of Viceroy's Council or as the Chairman of the Indian Constitution Drafting Committee, found time to write for his magazines. He even used to send editorials while he was overseas. He was a committed journalist.

He remarked that the first and foremost duty of a journalist was to give the news uncoloured by any motive, to present a certain view of public policy which it believed to be for the good of the community and to correct and chastise without fear.

Dr. Ambedkar's journalism was goal-oriented and value-oriented. It was devoted to social reformation. For him, journalism was not a profession but a medium for the expression of the sufferings of the untouchables of the time and their upliftment. He was one of the fearless and effective journalists of his time. He always discussed controversial issues. He was also criticized for his ever-attacking attitude. He, through his letters and articles in his journals, regularly replied to the bitter criticism imposed upon him.

He wrote in English, Hindi and Marathi for his journals. His Marathi articles showed his command over the language, style, presentation of the subject matter and internal structure of the article. His language was simple and lucid. He had never used uncultured words or language in his writings. The titles that he selected for his articles were simple, apt, symbolic and suggestive. The use of Sanskrit *shlokas* and *Subhasits* was one more characteristic of his writings which attracted readers' attention. He frequently quoted lines, stories and incidents from the great scriptures.

**Thirst for Knowledge**
It is important to notice here that he registered himself simultaneously with the London School of Economics and Political Science and Gray’s Inn. Ambedkar’s financial situation was not good during his foreign studies. His luck favoured him and Shahu Maharaja of Kolhapur came forward to help him financially. He started to work hard even avoiding his meal sometimes and was totally cut off from all the sources of entertainment to achieve his academic goals. His wife was ready to sell her ornaments to lessen the financial crisis.

He got his M.Sc. degree for his thesis *Provincial Decentralization of Imperial Finance in British India* in June 1921. After some time, he again submitted his thesis *The Problem of the Rupee: Its Origin and Its Solution* to the London University for the D.Sc. (Econ.) degree. He published his thesis in London. Professor Cannan wrote an introduction with high appreciation in this thesis. Again the thesis was re-published in an Indian edition in 1947 with the title *History of Indian Currency and Banking*. He was called to the Bar in 1923 and got the chance to discuss the problems of the untouchables with E. S. Montagu, then Secretary of State for India, and Vithalbhai Patel.

The year 1952 proved lucky for him in two ways. He was elected to the Rajya Sabha and he was honoured the degree of L.L.D. by the Columbia University. He was a part of an excellent group as the same university simultaneously honoured with doctorates the persons like Lester B. Pearson, Secretary for Foreign Affairs in Canada; Daniel Monnet, a well-known French literary historian as well as eight other distinguished Americans. It is really a great achievement for him when the University cited the following words for the work he did: “The degree is being conferred in recognition of the work done by him in connection with the drafting of India’s Constitutions.” The University hailed him by calling him ‘one of India’s leading citizens, a great social reformer and a valiant upholder of human rights.” (Jeanette 1964: 131)

Dr. Ambedkar considered education as a crucial instrument for achieving the socio-economic equality. He was convinced that, education alone is a grand panacea to all social evils. He did not leave any stone unturned to imbibe the importance of education. He expected the depressed class to participate in the teaching programmes. The reason behind this expectation is that the content of education reflected the ideology, interests and values of those in charge of teaching. Actually he wanted to remove the monopoly of the Brahmins from the teaching profession. Dr. Ambedkar made an unsuccessful attempt at modernizing the Indian administrative system by offering an amendment to the Bombay Hereditary Offices Act, 1874, aiming at the abolition of hereditary offices – a feudal relic.

He was a profound thinker having constant awareness of his immediate environment. He perceived the contemporary Indian society keeping the liberal influences of western education in mind. Sharad Pawar observes, “…………He recognized the need for synthesis and assimilation of western critical outlook with the emerging social ethos of democracy and the welfare state.” (Vol. 6: VII)

**Political Career**
Dhananjay Keer rightly remarks,

Great men are sometimes pushed into the vortex of politics by their sense of justice and love of liberty and at the first opportunity they turn their back upon the tumult of the life and seek refuge in knowledge. The cause of Indian independence pushed Tilak into politics; the cause of untouchables drove Ambedkar into politics. Otherwise Ambedkar would not have cared to see the inside of a Legislative Assembly. He would have been a servant, a sheer Dhyanshwar, thanks to the Baroda officers and peons who inflicted insults on Ambedkar, otherwise Indian politics and the world’s problem of slavery would have been deprived of a personality and the saviour. (1971: 46)

Dr. Ambedkar became the professor of law in the Government Law College, Bombay in 1928. During this period, the Congress party boycotted the Simon Commission. He was asked to present the evidences before the commission which he didn’t hesitate to do braving opposition from his students. Dr. Ambedkar strongly recommended separate electorates for the depressed classes to promote the interest of these people. The Simon Commission suggested the holding of a Round Table Conference in London to solve these constitutional problems of India. The Congress boycotted the conference resulting in the opposition from the whole nation. The conference didn’t take place. However, Dr. Ambedkar was of the opinion to take practical advantage of situations instead of unrealistically expecting the impossible. Kamalkishor Kadam rightly comments, “He was a pragmatist par excellence, a stylist of high order, a profound social philosopher who never allowed himself to be swayed by abstract ideas and dogmas.” (Vol. 6: X)

Under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhiji, the Indian National Congress launched a civil disobedience movement and the salt Satyagraha during 1930-31. The Congress and the Government arrived at a compromise under the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. As a result of this Pact, the Congress Party became ready to participate in the Second Round Table Conference, scheduled to be held during August-December 1931 in London. The communal matters and the proposal for the separate electorates for the untouchables were the central issues to be discussed at the conference. Gandhiji, Malaviya and Sarojini Naidu represented the Congress Party. Dr. Ambedkar came into direct opposition to Gandhiji regarding the issue of the representation of the untouchables. Dr. Ambedkar very clearly refused Gandhiji’s claim to represent the untouchables. This communal issue had created such unresolvable chasms between groups that the conference failed to generate any consensus on the issue of communal representation.

On his return, Gandhiji found that his followers were becoming the victims of the tyranny of the government. Gandhiji, along with his followers, was arrested. The Ramsay MacDonald government proclaimed officially to
accept the demand for separate electorates for the untouchables. But Gandhiji opposed the demand by saying that it would harm the unity of the Hindu community and declared his fast unto death if the scheme was not withdrawn. Dr. Ambedkar, on the other hand, was firm for the implementation of the scheme. But he had to give in before the forced demand in the form of the fast by Gandhiji. The compromise included that joint electorates with reservation of seats for the untouchables should replace completely communal electorates. The compromise, known as the Poona Pact, was reached on 24th September, 1932. Dr. Ambedkar continued to work as a member of the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Constitutional Reforms and also as a member of the Third Round Table Conference in London in 1932-33.

Dr. Ambedkar took charge of the Principal and Perry Professor of jurisprudence in the Government Law College, Bombay. But he continued to work as an active socialist for the interests of the downtrodden. His one of the most famous presidential addresses, *Annihilation of Caste*, was written on the invitation of the Jat-Pat-Todak Mandal of Lahore. But unfortunately the speech remained undelivered due to his extremely radical views. He again delivered the speech advocating the need to abandon Hinduism at the Bombay Presidency Mahar Conference in May 1936.

Dr. Ambedkar now decided to be a member of the legislature through the democratic process of provincial elections which were to be conducted under the 1935 Act. He launched the Independent Labour Party to fight these elections and to promote the interest of the depressed classes. The Independent Labour Party contested 17 seats and won 15. As the Congress acquired the throne, Dr. Ambedkar had to sit in the opposition in the Bombay legislature. Dr. Ambedkar's party made some notable work by introducing *Khoti* and Abolition of Mahar Watan Bill in August 1937. To abolish the feudal land tenure system existed in the Kokan region was the aim of the bill. The bill was radical in nature as it implied the elimination of serfdom in agriculture in India. For the first time in the history of legislature, such a revolutionary bill was introduced. Unfortunately the bill ceased to be revolutionary as it provided for the compensation to the *Khots* who would lose their rights under it. He introduced the other complementary legislation which called for the eradication of the Mahar Watan system. However, the legislation got postponed indefinitely due to the demoralization of the government.

Gandhiji suggested addressing the untouchables as *Harijans*. But Dr. Ambedkar and his party opposed this move of the Congress Party. He discarded the proposal of accepting the name Harijan for his people by saying that it would be a cosmetic change and would not be fruitful for the upliftment of the downtrodden.

Dr. Ambedkar stressed the role of law and constitutional safeguards in protecting the interests of the Scheduled Castes. He believed that law without idealism is mechanical and morality without legal sanction is a beautiful but ineffectual angel beating in the void his luminous wings in vain. Gandhiji treated the same problem as the moral stigma to be removed by acts
of atonements. Dr. Ambedkar had the courage to differ from Gandhiji and Gandhiji showed the willingness to understand Dr. Ambedkar’s point of view.

The British Indian Government picked him up as a member of the Executive Council of the Governor-General in July, 1942. He was given the charge of labour. To comment on his acceptance of the position, K. Raghavendra Rao writes,

At the time, his acceptance of this position which he held till July 1946 was interpreted as an act of betrayal by most nationalist groups. This seems to be a legitimate criticism, though one should not rush to a crude reading of it. One must look at it in the larger framework of Ambedkar’s politics as a whole. This framework, whither one agreed or not with it, implied that the notions of nation and national freedom meant very little without a concrete content of socio-economic equality, liberty and justice. (1998: 11-12)

The Congress Party, engaged in the life-and-death struggle against the British rule under the Quit India Movement, looked towards this act as betrayal. Dr. Amedkar went to England to convince the British Government to protect the interests of the untouchables by providing clear-cut constitutional safeguards in the post-colonial India. He was very keen regarding the positive response from the Cabinet Mission.

Dr. Ambedkar liked the secularist, humanist and scientific approach of Nehru. And so he joined his government as the Cabinet Minister of Law on 15 August, 1947. But soon he was disillusioned with Nehru Government and resigned from it in September 1951. He initiated the Hindu Code Bill but he was unhappy with the attitude of the government towards the scheduled castes and also with its foreign policy.

K. Raghavendra Rao makes a scholarly analysis on Dr. Ambedkar’s way of working in the politics in the following words,

…..but the critics seem to forget two things. The first is that Ambedkar rightly saw that he would remain isolated from national life if he did not develop some sort of working relationship with the new power system. Secondly, he did not surrender his right to be a critic of the system even while being part of it. It must have been an agonizing decision for him, and his eventual departure from the corridors of power was predictable. (1998: 13)

Architect of the Indian Constitution

Dr. Ambedkar, in his very first address after elected to the Constituent Assembly from Bengal, emphasized the unity of India as a nation. It can be considered as a heavy blow to those who interpreted him as an anti-national
figure. It was really one of the greatest achievements in the career of Dr. Ambedkar that the Constituent Assembly nominated him as a member of its drafting committee in August 1947 and the same assembly had elected him as the chairman of the committee. To work as the chairman of the drafting committee was a difficult task which included to draft the constitution, to clarify and then to defend its provisions. His hard work as the chairman of the committee won the title ‘Architect of the Indian Constitution’ for him. This was considered as the beginning of his political career in the main stream of Congress political system.

There were several sociological factors and historical forces working behind the political drama of constitution – making. The task Dr. Ambedkar took upon as a statesman was to shake the situation to reduce social misereres and to absorb the shocks of sudden changes in which man lose their intellectual moorings. He believed that democracy is not only a form of government, but it was essentially a form of society. According to him, social and economic democracies were tissues and the fibre of political democracy. He sees the paramount need for the diffusion of ‘Constitutional Morality’ in society as it is not a natural sentiment. It has to be cultivated.

He reduced the sizes of the forms and made the government of India aware of the avoidable paper work. His non-conventional approach to the problems of flood control, navigation, irrigation and drainage, soil conversion and power developments reveals the scientific and modern bent of mind.

Social Concern

Dr. Ambedkar challenged Hinduism as it gave birth to the unjust partitions of the society. The graded inequality was the fundamental principle of the Hindu social order which nurtured the spirit of social separation and segregation. Promotion of discriminative attitudes among the innumerable castes and sub-castes generated perpetual caste conflicts and mutual hatred. In short, the pernicious principle hollowed the vitals of the society.

The untouchables were mercilessly thrown into quagmire of social segregation, political deprivation, economic destitution and perpetual subjugation. He intended to awaken the common mass of the Hindus to know in what predicament the Brahmans have placed them and to lead them on to the road of rational thinking. As they were not a part of Hindu society, they deserved separate electorates and due share in power for their political advancement. Dr. Ambedkar pleaded for urgent solution of the problem so that it must not be left to the shifting sands of sympathy and the goodwill of the rulers of the future. He demanded for parity and not for charity.

He wanted to propound that the Hindu religion is not Sanatan (unchanging) as told by the Brahmans. They misguide and deceive the common mass. He challenged the dogma of infallibility of the Vedas spread by the Brahmans. He hated what he called the ‘Brahmanic Theology’.

He wanted to strengthen the Hindu society on the basis of the human values. He believed, “…………..the Hindu mind must be freed from the hold which the silly ideas propagated by the Brahmans have on them. Without this
liberation India has no future. I have undertaken this task knowing full well what risk it involves. I am not afraid of the consequences. I shall be happy if I succeed in stirring the masses.” (Vol. 4: 9)

Dr. Ambedkar tried to change the Hindu mindset. The aim of Mahad Satyagrah was to unfurl the banner of equality and to smash the steel frames of the caste system. December 25, 1927 was a Red letter day in the annals of history when Manu Smruti was consigned to flames as a symbolic protest against the unjust social order.

The Hindu reform which he dreamed for through the Hindu Code Bill met with a steel resistance from the Hindu orthodoxy. He realized that thousands year old mental twist of the Caste Hindus would be impossible to untwist. Hence he resolved to renounce Hinduism. He embraced Buddhism in 1956 at Nagpur. He opted for Buddhism because it was built on the foundations of liberty, equality, fraternity, morality and professes scientific, rational and humanistic outlook. The central aim of Buddhism is to emancipate suffering humanity.

He firmly believed that social reform could be brought only through the sound law. Therefore he, while shaping our constitution, worked massively on the Hindu Law. He played the pivotal role in codifying the same. He explained lucidly the need for consolidation and codification. The chaotic condition of the Hindu law was reduced to neat propositions in the form of judicial pronouncements and codification was the legislative recognition of the judge made law.

He granted the state the right to interfere in the personal law of any community in this country. And therefore, there was a sound basis for liberalization of personal laws so as to broaden the freedom of the individual and the unity of the country based on such freedom.

Manohar Joshi notes: “Dr. Ambedkar, by codifying the Hindu Law in respect of marriage, divorce and succession, rationalized and restored its glory. Dr. Ambedkar has preserved marriage as sacrament and promoted the growth of family values.” (Vol. 14: VI)

Religion Shift

Dr. Ambedkar made the celebrated statement, in his presidential address, on 13 October, 1935 at Yeola in Nasik, “..........I was born in Hinduism but I will not die as a Hindu.........” (Vol. 17 Part 3: 95) Those who were present at the announcement of Dr. Ambedkar of leaving Hinduism supported this idea. But he didn’t name there the religion which he would join after leaving Hinduism.

Dr. Ambedkar was getting interested in Buddhism and his willingness to adopt Buddhism was growing day by day. He had been participating in many Buddhist meets. He participated in the World Buddhist Conference in Kathmandu where he delivered a thought-provoking address on the comparative merits and demerits of Buddhism and Marxism, declaring the superiority of the former. He was praised as a Nav Buddha. He established
the Bharatiya Buddha Janasangh in July 1951. He produced the Buddhist prayer book, Buddha Upasana Pantha, in September of the same year. He was a delegate to the World Buddhist Conference in Rangoon. He formed the Bharatiya Bauddha Mahasabha in May 1955. He ceremonially left Hinduism to become a Buddhist in Nagpur on 14th October, 1956.

Dr. Ambedkar commented on his choice of Buddhism that Buddhism was a part and parcel of Indian Culture. He was satisfied that he had taken care that conversion would not harm the tradition of the culture and history of this land.

It is important here to notice that Gandhiji also, in his early life in South Africa, announced to leave Hinduism for Christianity but eventually decided to remain a Hindu. In case of Dr. Ambedkar’s adoption of Buddhism, Gandhiji did not see it as desertion of Hinduism because he considered Buddhism and Jainism as essentially off-shoots of Hinduism!

**Departing Soul**

Dr. Ambedkar passed his last years cheerfully. However, he suffered badly because of his ill health. The institutions established by him went through financial crisis. His health started deteriorating more and more from May 1955. His had his teeth extracted earlier. Now the slight move was also impossible for him without the help of others. His breathing too had become quite hard. An oxygen cylinder was ready at hand and he was given it occasionally. However, the news about his bad health was not leaked as he feared that if it was leaked, his followers might panic at the news. Now the doctor gave him oxygen twice a week. He had to be given heat and warmth artificially in winter. Even electric bath had to be resorted to. Only his wife and his doctor, Dr. Mavlankanar, knew this truth. He had to take some doses of brandy and beer in winter on medical advice against his own resistance. He faced a lot of difficulty even in eating and due to insufficient food, his body got shrunk. Moreover, his friend Chitre became estranged from him. His educational and other institutions faced severe financial problems. His appeal for help for sustaining the Society to Nehru and to U.S.A. turned futile.

Interestingly enough for a social reformer, he did not approve of the frequent amendments made to the Constitution as destabilizing the value system; the values of liberal democracy enshrined in the constitution. It is interesting here to note that he propagate his views on Buddhism as the best answer to Communism and Marxism before he joined Buddhism. He propagated Buddhism on the Gandhian ground that it could bring about the goals of Marxism through a bloodless, non-violent revolution.

In spite of the bad health, he wrote *The Buddha and His Dhamma* (1991). While busy with writings on various topics, he was also engaged with designing and scheming for the strengthening of Indian democracy. He proposed to start a new political party, the Republican Party, to give a new strengthened vision to India's political democracy. He also wanted to open a school for those who want to make their career in politics. This great son of India died on 6th December, 1956.
Among the galaxy of proponents in non-fictional Indian writings in English born in the 19th century, who played a pivotal role in shaping the destiny of free India and left an indelible imprint on our national life and polity as well as non-fictional Indian writings in English, the name of Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar shines like a luminous star.

Dr. Ambedkar was also a bibliophile. He collected thousands of books and maintained a very big personal library. He had a thirst for books which was ever growing. “In fact, immense was his joy whenever he wrote a book and when he saw his thoughts, ideas and concepts, printed in a book, he enjoyed blissful moments of life.” (Jatava 1998: 88)

Dr. Ambedkar was not only a voracious reader but also a prolific writer. His writings span over a variety of subjects of human interest such as administration, anthropology, economics, finance, politics, religion and so on. Within a period of four decades, he wrote over 20 books, pamphlets and articles in English. Dr. Ambedkar started his first weekly Mooknayak (leader of the dumb) in 1920 to espouse the cause of the depressed classes in India. However, the weekly could not last long.

The paper he read out as a student at the Anthropology Seminar in Columbia The Castes in India, Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development (1989) was the first published work of Dr. Ambedkar. His Ph.D. thesis, published in 1924 under the title The Evolution of Provincial Finance in British India, was dedicated to the Maharaja of Baroda as a token of his gratitude. This book proved to be a useful source of information for the Members of Indian Legislatures during the discussion on Budget. His other books included What Congress and Gandhiji have done to the untouchables?, Who were the Shudras and how they came to be the fourth Varna in the Indo-Aryan society?, Thoughts on Linguistics States, Thoughts on Pakistan, Ranade, Gandhi and Jinnah and Annihilation of Caste in India.

He wrote a book named Pakistan or the Partition of India: The Indian Political: what is what (1990) to express his views on the partition. It can be considered as a historical kaleidoscope of the thoughts and events that led to the partition of the country. It displayed the rare and original insight of the author.

Kamalkishor Kadam comments on Dr. Ambedkar’s literary talent in these words:

Dr. Ambedkar writes with ease and felicity of diction that should be the theme of study by those who are to express themselves in the Queen’s English or Fowler’s English idioms and phrases. Dr. Ambedkar has at his command a wealth of quotation and statistics to support his point of view and the linguistic skills of a trained and sophisticated advocate. He quotes passages from Burke to Augustine Birrell. (Vol. 8: II)
Being a true devotee of the Buddha and his teachings, he compiled a Buddhist prayer book *Buddha Upasana Patha* in 1952. Another of his book, *The Buddha and His Dhamma* published in 1957, has come to be known as the ‘Buddhist Bible’ and it encompasses the life and personality of Buddha and presents an analytical exposition of the Dhamma.

During his hectic political life in 1946, he wrote his one of the most scholarly books entitled *Who Were the Shudras?* The writings and speeches of Dr. Ambedkar also contain the same philosophy. The book *Who Were the Shudras?* contains his new historical findings that the Shudras were originally members of the Kshatriya *Varna*. But due to the conflicts between the Brahmins and Kshatriyas regarding the sacred thread, they degraded as the fourth *Varna* below the Vaishyas.

The chief purpose of the Ambedkar literature is to set the human beings against the prevailing socio-economic background in order to find out the causes of their downfall and degradation from various points of view. “His writings convey the message that we are to make what we can make of life by our own efforts, rigorously adhering to pragmatic ethics with enthusiasm without being afraid of the oppressors. We have to be bold enough to honestly fight for our just demands. To face the oppressors with courage is the supreme virtue in Ambedkar’s view of life. His message is, ultimately, a life of struggle for human dignity….” (Jatava 2004: 223)

He possesses dialectical skill of an advocate and frank recognition of truth. Kamalkishor Kadam again writes about Dr. Ambedkar’s style of writing,

> Dr. Ambedkar was in excellent company of mighty minds of yore. He cites Lanepool, Toynbee, Bryce, Lord Acton to impression on the reader his points of arguments. Tables of statistics, statements of figures and citations from official documents are presented in logical sequence supported by contemporary new paper reports, there by showing the quality of genuine scholarship that Dr. Ambedkar possessed. He should be the model for an academic don as much as for a practical advocate. However it must be added that though logic was a strong point with Dr. Ambedkar, it was supported by experience and sometimes by bitter experiences of the hard school of life. But he was not a bitter man. There are flashes of wit and humour in his writings. (Vol. 8: III-IV)

The great writers live even after death, sometimes live even more vigorously than before, through their influential ideas and equally through the impact they have made while alive on a nation’s social, political, cultural and literary life. We can give this great man the greatest tribute by reading his works and understanding the meanings of his speeches rightly, by finding out and accepting the essence of his life and thought, by revival of his vision and by following the glorious path which he had prepared for us to run. As a
Buddhist, Dr. Ambedkar did not believe in the existence of soul or life after death. But his Buddhism does not exclude the possibility of his life and his historical contribution surviving his body as living historical force.

For understanding modern India and our present day problems in a better manner, Dr. Ambedkar must be studied with an objective and scientific point of view.

The Education Department of Maharashtra has published all works of Dr. Ambedkar in 21 volumes. The volumes are significantly analytical and critical books. They are a store-house containing several concepts and theories related to a variety of subjects. “Dr. Ambedkar’s brainstorming, striking and thought-provoking speeches at the Round Table Conferences bear ample testimony to his depth of knowledge, the thorough grasp over subject, immense power of logic, tremendous tenacity and capacity to put across his point of view in a cogent, comprehensive, crystal clear and convincing manner.” (Vol. 17, Part 3: XVIII)

**Literary Genius**

Dr. Ambedkar knew very well that without disproving the western scholar’s Aryan invasion theory and the Brahmanical theory of divine origin, his explanation of the nature of the complex historical process leading to the origin of the untouchability would serve no purpose. So, Ambedkar critically examined the Aryan invasion theory. Y. S. Alone comments,

> As has been said earlier, sociological problem of Chaturvarna was approached on the two premises: one was a racial theory of Aryan invasion and the other was a theory of divine origin. Ambedkar shifted the premises to the more natural explanation of human problems. Hence, he questioned a corpus of textual data with ‘why’ and ‘how’. For getting answer to ‘why’, Ambedkar very consciously noticed the ‘intentions’ as recorded in the textual tradition itself along with translating action into social practice, whereas to analyze ‘how’, nature of narrative account in the text itself is treated as an element of crucial evidence as the narrative account itself has deep-rooted meanings related with social practices. (Thorat and Aryma 2007: 268-269)

After studying the ancient Indian literature, Dr. Ambedkar came to infer that the Purushsukta was a later incorporation in the Rig Veda. This signified that he paid serious attention to the tradition of compilation of the text. The references found from various texts were correlated and internalized to bring out a possible meaning in the historical formations of the society.

While dealing with Indian history, he tried to establish a missing link. Alone writes, “It is precisely by relating different units if one text with various meanings in different texts, Ambedkar made historical reconstruction of the
ancient past. Even a single reference of Paijavan in the *Mahabharata* is treated as a crucial link to unfold the chains of events in different texts which has been religious practices of societies holding their ritual-based values as instrumental objects to form a particular code of functioning.....” (Thorat and Aryma 2007: 270)

There was a tendency among the educated people of the lower strata to prove themselves of high origin. Dr. Ambedkar was charged by R. S. Sharma for having a fixed purpose of finding a noble origin for the Shudras while evaluating the Indian history. He was criticized for relying only on one example or reference to establish some thesis ignoring the complexities of the situation.

But, Dr. Ambedkar employed inductive logic. He never tried to idealize or romanticize the Shudras. He states: “……it is a well-known principle of the law of evidence that witness must be weighed and not numbered.” (Vol.7: 205) There were several such single references which gave the idea of the pattern of living in the past. Therefore, a single reference in a particular text also had historical validity. Alone states, “What Ambedkar did was that he shifted the Western imperial theory of race and Brahmanical explanation of sacredness as a historical process to an instrumental form of reasoning. It is not intended that any other explanation is not accepted in the subject.....” (Thorat and Aryma 2007: 274-275)

Wide and intense reading enabled Dr. Ambedkar to understand the meanings of the texts. He could also make out the way the texts conceptualize the world. He wanted to represent historical realities in different ways through the textual data. He pointed out the problems in accepting the view of westerners as they adhered to the imperial discourse and also the views of the Brahmanical scholars as they stuck to native hegemonic discourses. It was important for Dr. Ambedkar to situate the non-Brahmanical population in the larger realm of historical writing. It was done by a historical subject and through subjectivity. But it was definitely not unreliable.

Many scholars have studied Dr. Ambedkar with a view to understanding and explaining his thoughts on various subjects. These scholars generally belong to the fields of history, political science, economics, sociology or law. They either accept his theories completely or reject them thoroughly. They either praise him or criticize him bitterly. They try to find out the reflection of his thoughts and personality in his writings and speeches.

But, as a student of literature, my approach is somewhat different. I try to derive Dr. Ambedkar’s thoughts and personality as reflected in his writings and speeches. I try to be as neutral as possible in evaluating Dr. Ambedkar through his writings and speeches. I want to present Dr. Ambedkar as a man of letters. I want to find out how Dr. Ambedkar carried himself through his words. I want to study the effect of his words on people.

Therefore it is a task of gigantic proportions to decipher the core-meaning of his words, analyse them and reconstruct the composite body of the thought that he lived. This thesis merely touches upon some salient issues so as to provoke reflection and discussion among the scholars.
In the light of the above given details, my endeavor is to explore the social, economic and religious thoughts and contributions of Dr. Ambedkar with literary perspective. Few efforts are made to reveal his literary genius. Mine may prove to be a small step to begin with in this direction.

The present thesis would follow the below-mentioned path:

Chapter I: Introduction

The introductory chapter traces in brief the historical background of the late 19th and the early 20th centuries. It was the age of renaissance. India witnessed the emergence of many great leaders and got enriched by their contributions. A glimpse of their thoughts and works is presented. The same chapter offers a bird’s view over Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar’s movement. The different phases of his personal development and the growth of his academic and political career are explored here.

Chapter II: Dr. Ambedkar and His Sociological Writings

The chapter includes the thoughts of Dr. Ambedkar on society with critical analysis. It starts with the views of Dr. Ambedkar on the origin of Shudras, riddles of Shudras, nature of untouchability, caste system, Brahminism and non-Brahminism movements and ends with his views on the Hindu Code.

Chapter III: Dr. Ambedkar and His Religious Writings

The chapter discusses his philosophy of religion finding the culmination in his conversion to Buddhism. It displays his views on the Hindu social order, revolution and counter-revolution of India, priesthood, riddles in Hinduism, rise and fall of Buddhism and so on. It contains his views on the specific nature of religion and culture as they have been historically configured and are now functioning as contemporary phenomena.

Chapter IV: Dr. Ambedkar and His Economic, Political and Legal Writings

The chapter discusses Dr. Ambedkar’s views on constitutional matters, nationalism, minorities, the birth of Pakistan, Parliamentary Democracy, Labour problems faced as a labour member, Marxism versus Buddhism. It reflects on the evolution of ideas in relation to parties and formation of the opposition party. It also throws light on some major economic problems of the day. It presents his views on law of state.

Chapter V: Conclusion

The concluding chapter offers a summing-up of the study by presenting a critical appreciation of his ideas as reflected in his writings. It comments on the craftsmanship of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar. It presents the ideology and philosophy of this writer at different time, place and circumstances. The chapter tries to show the relevance of Dr. Ambedkar’s thoughts and revolution in the present era. It summaries the features of non-fictional prose as
reflected in his writings. This chapter also mentions the extent to which the objectives of the research are achieved.
References


