CHAPTER IV

INFLUENCE OF AMBEDKAR'S IDEOLOGY ON DALIT MOVEMENTS
Ambedkarism has varied dimensions and interpretations. The life and mission of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar is quite well known. His economic doctrines and political and social philosophy have widely discussed. His name is given to public and even private organizations by way of reorganization of his contribution to human development in general and weaker sections in particular. Although it is a fact that he was born in a community of untouchables, and strove hard throughout his life for ameliorating the conditions of their living, his philosophy is applicable to all depressed and oppressed groups of the society everywhere.

Ambedkarism stands for quality of opportunity to all citizens irrespective of caste, creed and religion in political, social, economic and cultural affairs. Liberty, fraternity and equality have been the corner stones of modern democratic constitutions. Equality is the central pillar of socialism. Ambedkar stood for human dignity, freedom, liberty, equality, justice and fraternity. Difference between Ambedkarism and ideologies arise not so much about the end, i.e., Equality, but about the means.

Ambedkar was a victim of untouchability, the worst form of inequality, and realized that it was inherent in the Hindu society itself due to its caste hierarchy and ritualistic character. He perceived the linkage between caste and occupation and hence the inherent power of the caste-ridden society to prevent vertical and occupational mobility. His struggles to unite the untouchables for establishing their right to access for drinking water at Mahad, and temple entry at Nasik, are classic examples of his passion for establishing the right of the untouchables to common property resources and cultural heritage.

Ambedkar has made great sacrifices for upholding and establishing the social values. He had suffered from the pangs of poverty and was made to depend upon the feudal and capitalist factors, for his maintenance and advancement. Ambedkar advocated a society based on equality, fraternity and liberty through constitutional means and safeguards. He was an advocate of modern western value system and strove hard to transform the traditional caste-based Hindu society. But it found almost a futile exercise, and finally he had to embrace Buddhism. Ambedkar identified the
root cause of conflict in the caste system-invented, imposed and perpetuated by the Brahmanical order of the Hindu society for centuries. (M.H. Makwana, 2004)

The Indian Constitution provides for the transformation of hierarchical society emphasizing inequality and reconstruction it not a modern egalitarian society based on individual achievement and equal opportunity for all, regardless of one's caste, religion or race. Dr. Ambedkar, rejection the orthodox values. Dismissed caste inequality as man-mad and proclaimed, "If I fail to do away with the abominable thralldom and human injustices under which the class into which I was born has been profaning, I will put an end to my life with a bullet."

"We must make our political democracy a social democracy. Political democracy cannot last unless there lies at the base of it social democracy. What does social democracy mean? It means a way of life, which recognizes liberty, equality and fraternity as the principles of life. These principals of liberty, equality and fraternity are not to be teased as separate items of trinity, they form the union of trinity in the sense that to divorce one form the other is to defeat the very propose of democracy, Liberty cannot be divorced form equality, equality cannot be divorced form liberty. Nor can liberty and equality be divorced form fraternity. Without equality, liberty world produce the supremacy of the few over the man. Equality without liberty would kill individual initiative, without fraternity, liberty and quality could not become a natural course of things. It would require a constable to enforce them. We must begin by acknowledging the fact that there is a complete absence of two things in the Indian society, one of these is quality. On the social place we have in India a society based on the principle of grade inequality which mean elevation for some and degradation of others. On the economic place, we have a society in which there are some who have immense wealth as against many who live in abject poverty. (Keer, Dhananjay 1961)

The Introduction of the constitutional safeguards and special confession a, extension of various facilities, means of transportation and communication, enactment of laws and planned welfare measures in favour of the scheduled castes and tribes have indeed brought about some changes in the objective conditions of life as well as in the mental horizon of these people. "The social distance between the Shudras and the dominant castes- the centuries old gulf that has divided them into separate worlds
and prevented and sort of interchange from marriage to simple eating together is too wide to be bridged in one full swoop". But the caste concept is weakening and social system is becoming more fluid and the gulf that has separated the Shudras from the rest of the community is inexorably narrowing.

Ambedkarism is relevant as long as the Hindu society is stratified and remains hierarchical, rigid and maintains the link between caste and occupation. Untouchability cannot be abolished by mere propaganda and exhortation. Institutional reforms are needed and are being implemented by the state at different levels and in different spheres of public like. More than half century of independent rule in India has awakened the consciousness of the people especially those belonging to the weaker strata of the society towards their conditions of living a working. The constitutional safeguards are to be extended form time to time to bring about social equality. The development strategy adopted under the regime of planning has conferred benefits on theses vulnerable section. But there have been several leakages, misuses and even abuses of the resources meant for the benefits of the poor. The new economic policy being pursued which is supposed to be market-friendly may not necessarily be friendly to the poor who are unorganized and therefore stand the chance of losing in the market-friendly system of governance. In several instances, the market forces are not even brought into play. Therefore, they have to organize themselves and find several Ambedkar's to fight for their cause in the years to come if India is to shape itself as truly democratic nation serving its people, namely the poverty-ridden masses whether they belong to the scheduled castes or tribes or even the other groups of society.

**Dr. Ambedkar's Concept of Social Justice:**

We can talk about social justice from different perspectives like political, social, economic, and religious. Therefore it is very difficult to give a single definition of social justice. However, Prof. D.R.Jatava has provided a working definition of social justice follows:

"Social justice is that sort of justice which prescribes certain ideas closely related to human society; it sustains the existence and continuity of the individuals, family, society and the nation; its implementation safeguards the interests of the weaker sections of society; this removes all the serious unjust imbalance found
between man and man so that the lives of all the citizens become improved and emancipated. As a result, every man, according to his own potentiality and merit, may avail of the opportunities for acquiring social goal of his own linking and outlook”. (Jatava D.R 2006)

Social justice being multifaceted deals with various aspects of human life and society, focusing on the preservation of the rights of the handicapped, marginalized, and depressed people. It deals with the people who are intentionally made victims of exploitation, injustice and unsociability, e.g., bonded labourers and unpaid scavengers. Social justice also critiques the laws, traditions, dogmas, customs, manners and usages that are used to perpetrate injustice. (Jatava D.R 2006)

Dr.Ambedkar accepted that there are moral and legal considerations behind the concept of social justice. He also accepted justice as a guiding and evaluative principle. His concept of social justice was based human values such as liberty, equality and fraternity. (Dr.Ambedkar B.R 1987) He argued with the explanation of Prof. Bergbon, “Justice has always evoked ideas of equality. Rules and regulations, right and righteousness are concerned with equality in value. If all men are equal, all men are the same essence and the common essence entitles them to the same fundamental rights and to equality liberty” (Dr.Ambedkar B.R., p.25)

He believed that if these values are cultivated by individuals then there will be neither caste barriers dividing them, nor any obstacles created by caste preventing the individual from a suitable career. Each individual will have sympathy and respect for others. This is what Dr.Ambedkar called social democracy. (Dr.Ambedkar B.R Vol.13)

According to Dr.Ambedkar, liberty shapes the human personality. It forms a person’s thought, belief and faith, and finds expression in his action. Though liberty the hidden talents of the individual are expressed. It enables man to make his destiny. Equality binds men together through reciprocities, co-operation and social sympathy. Fraternity creates an atmosphere that is conducive to the enjoyment of liberty and equality. According to Dr.Ambedkar, Fraternity means a sense of common brotherhood of all Indians, all Indiana being one people. It is the principle, which gives unity and solidarity to social life”. (Dr.Ambedkar B.R, pp1216-17) Thus these three principles jointly play a vital role in the process of social justice.
Prof. D.R. Jatava termed Dr. Ambedkar’s concept of social justice as a mode of life, giving every man his right place in society. “Its precepts may be; to live honorably, to respect all, to injure no one, and to give every man his due without any artificial discrimination in mind and unnatural classification in society. The other percepts of social justice are the supremacy of constitutional rule, equality before the law, safeguarding fundamental rights, performance of duties, adherence to social and legal obligations, and finally, a staunch faith in the values of justice, liberty, equality, fraternity and dignity of human personality. (D.R. Jatava, pp. 96-97)

Thus, according to Dr. Ambedkar the concept of justice does not merely means the distribution of social wealth, but basically a mode of life based on liberty, equality and fraternity. In short, the essence of Dr. Ambedkar’s concept of social justice is the unity and equality of all human beings, independently of considerations of class, caste, gender and caste, with respect to respect, rights, benevolence, mutual love, sympathy, tolerance and charity towards fellow beings, the dignity of all citizens, the abolition of caste-distinction, education and property for all, good will and gentleness. (D.R. Jatava, p. 106)

Dr. Ambedkar insisted on social justice because it includes all kinds of justice, namely, legally, economic, political, divine, religious, natural, distributive, administrative as also welfare of children and women. With this elaboration of Dr. Ambedkar’s concept of social justice, we will see how he has used it as an evaluative principle.

The Indian Concept of Social Justice:

Bharata Ratna Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was indeed a symbol of social justice. He played a major role in reforming the vertical hierarchical Brahminical social order and establishing humanitarian social order based on the principles of equality, liberty, fraternity and collective welfare. Brahmins were the earliest beneficiary of the concept of reservation by a peculiar method. Instead of directly reserving the positions for them, by way of Varnashram Dharma, they disqualified and eliminated all the others from contesting. The Varnashram Dharma fortified the Brahmins alone to enjoy all the powers and control all the positions and offices hence to dominate the Indian society for many centuries. Protective discrimination the caste discrimination
is not only and economic but more so irrevocable and claimed providential. (P. Jagadesan)

Some changes took place in the socio-economic and political system of India, through vision of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. The period from early 1920’s to early 1950’s is a crucial in evolution of the socio-economic and political framework of the country. As a cabinet member in charge of labour, irrigation and power portfolio during 1942-46 Ambedkar was instrumental in laying the foundation of India’s water and electric shape to the policy and planned development of economic of the country. With this objectives and sect oral priorities this plan showed significant influence of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar thinking.

Babasaheb was indeed a multi-faceted revolutionary. He emancipated Dalits, Tribals, women and peasants, workers and other weaker sections of Indian society. He was a great liberator of humanity and messiah of the oppressed and suppressed masses of India. He also took active part in education, organization, emancipation and empowerment of all weaker sections until he breathed his last.

After independence, the Government of India took up many legal and policy steps to remove these disabilities in order to end exploitation of these vulnerable sections. In the hands of upper caste Hindus and the modern policy provided many protective measures in the constitution of India and also initiated many programmes for the social development of these castes.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was a great media professional and critic. He edited Mookanayak (Leader of the Dumb), Bahiskruta Bharat (secluded India), Samantha (Equality) and Janatha (People). He was a prominent media critic of his times. (Dr. P. Mahesh Chandra Guru)

His struggle for social justice and political equality and especially for the oppressed class in the Hindu society has remained the keystone of the Indian democracy. Therefore, his ideology makes him as a socialist, economist, political thinker and strategist, constitutional lawmaker and cultural revolutionary. In the first part an attempt has been made to explain the contribution of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar into Indian polity. In the second part economic ideas of Ambedkar is analyzed. (Dr. R. Siva Kumar)
These ideas of Ambedkar include emphasis on capital investment in agriculture and priority to industrialization more active and positive role for the state in planned development or its economy and emphasis on planning and public sector with a definite place for the poor and socially oppressed section in the planned economic development of the country in general and the need of social policy for down trodden in particular (Dr. S. Kuppusamy, 1920-1950)

**Social justice Trinity:**

Ambedkar's works, are imperative towards social transformation or reconstruction, i.e. to uphold the need for human dignity, equality and liberty, rights and civil facilities for under privileged, and this may be the gist of his social justice which alone according to him could lead to social harmony and social stability and kindly patriotic feelings.

Ambedkar declares that “untouchability is not only a system of unmitigated economic exploitation but is also a system of uncontrolled economic exploitation. i.e. because there is no independent public opinion to him, defined his social ideologies by saying my social philosophy may be set to be enshrined in three words: Liberty, Equality and Fraternity” (Shahsare, M.L’ 1987)

‘Dr. Ambedkar’s concerted debate on justice, equality and fraternity reminds about the “Social Justice Trinity” embodied in preamble of the constitution of India in particular and concept of social Justice Trinity enjoined in the constitution of India in general”

The social justice, as per our constitution, has twin objectives: 1. To usher in a new social order ensuring social justice to all citizens, 2. To protect the liberties of the people from the onslaughts of autocratic and arbitrary powers. Our constitution envisages tripartite picturesque of social justice-social, economic and political is directed in the preamble, procured by the Directive principles of state policy and secured by Fundamental Rights.

Both Fundamental Rights and Directive principles aim at establishing a just social order to the entire masses of the nation including the have-nots and the handicapped, the lowliest and the lost. The freedoms guaranteed under the constitution are not an end in itself but the means to Ambedkar,” any test that serves to perform this task most effectively should be treated as objective social justice”.

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The first condition which I think is a condition precedent for the successful working of a democracy is that there must be no glaring not be class which has got all the privileges and a class which has got all the burdens to carry. Such thing, such a division, such an organization if a society has within itself the germs of a bloody revolution and perhaps it would be impossible for democracy to cure them” says Dr. Ambedkar. The Social justice through protective discrimination is not a privilege given to some aliens by somebody out of mercy or magnanimity but it is rather the rights of those who had not either realized or raised their voices so far but were exploited and deprived off for many centuries. (Bhatia, K.L)

The concern of these critics is mainly with regard to the employment front. In the educational sector, their problem is mainly with the higher education and very particularly with professional courses like medicine or engineering.

Another criticism against reservation policy is that in the 60 years of the implementation of the communal reservation, a section of the oppressed people became elevated from their brethrens. These sections are called as the creamy Layer of their lot and they continue to enjoy the privileges and also become an obstruction for other underprivileged people.

This argument looks as if these critics are reasonably human and have concern over the uneducated let of the oppressed. Hence they argue that ‘protective discrimination has undergone as development at the upper end and stagnation at the bottom’ (Mare Galantar)

Therefore, the concept of Creamy Layer among the oppressed is a veiled move by the opponents of the policy of Communal Reservation with an ulterior motive to divide and intriguing the oppressed people into rivalry. However the recently passed ‘Constitution (104th) Amendment Bill providing reservation for the socially and educationally backward classes, besides the SC’s and STs, in private unaided educational intuitions demonstrates the great change of mind among the Indians and the support of the political parties for the bill was almost unanimous.(Owem M. Lynch, 1969)

Dr.B.R.Ambedkar while addressing the “constituent Assembly of India” has said “on 26th January 1950, we are going to enter into a life contradictions. In politics, we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality we must
remove this contradiction at the earliest possible moment or else those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy which this Assembly has so laboriously built up.”

He realized that, in India next only to human resources, land is the most important natural resources and there can be no effective movement towards genuine equality, nor any real upliftment of the oppressed classes without drastic land reforms and extreme economic changes. Most important of all, he proposed that agriculture should be a state industry. He further proposed that all subsisting rights in key-industries, basic industries. Insurance and agriculture land should be acquired by the state on payment of compensation. Agriculture industry was to be organized by the division of the land into farms of standardized sizes. The farms were to be collectivized and collective farms by village groups formed without distinction of group or caste, the product to be shared by them in prescribed manner. There were no to be landlords, no tenants and no landless labourers. The state was to be under an obligation to finance the cultivation of the collective farms, to supply water etc. Dr. Ambedkar explained that the purpose behind his proposal was to oblige the state to plan the economic life of the people so as to attain a high point of productivity, without shutting the door to private enterprise and also to promote the equitable distribution of wealth. (Justice Dr. O. Chinnappa Reddy)

Ambedkar was of the view that the system graded inequality was not national but legal and penal, justice in the Indian feudal order had three characteristics. First, it has always preferred to hierarchy to equality. Secondly, this concept of justice underlines the importance of responding traditional rights and performed traditional duties. Finally, Hindu law means different things to different castes and people. This concept of justice has been used at the ideological level by the upper castes and classes’ justice to deny deprived sections the essence of justice in the Indian context was served to validate societal stratification and perpetuate casteism. (WSBRA, 1990)

From the Rig Vedic time, Indian society has shown deep concern for social justice. The Vedic concept of Dharma which is the kingpin of the whole social edifice permeates every thinking and action of the individual from Vedic time onwards. In its pure form, Dharma means ‘that which helps the upliftment of living being’. Gokulesh Sharma, quoting Madhavacharaya’s commentary of Parashara Smriti, explained
Dharma has ‘that which sustains and ensures progress and welfare of all in this world and eternal bliss in other world’ (1997-412). Welfare of all it’s enshrined in the concept ‘lokaa smastha sukhino bhabantu’, meaning ‘let all people on earth be happy’. Actually, the Indian concept of social justice was the crystallization and Operationalization of another basic concept ‘that twam asi’ (that thou art). (Sharma, Gokulesh. 1997)

Baba Saheb Ambedkar and his struggle for social justice:

Ambedkar’s idea of social justice is woven into single thread which runs continuously through his writings regarding equality, liberty, fraternity, human rights, socio-economic democracy, and the state and minorities, its appears that Ambedkar’s various theoretical positions with particular reference to social justice are so close to each other that they could lead to misinterpretation of not carefully differentiated using the dialectical method which is available in Ambedkar’s writings.

Therefore, First, to locate Ambedkar’s idea of social justice on a more visible and symmetric terrain. Second, to bring out the essence of his idea of social justice which he seems to have developed through the dialectical negation of his earlier positions on this subject. Third, to outline the mechanism that Ambedkar suggested for meting out justice to Untouchables. Finally, an attempt is made to critically assess Ambedkar’s concept of social justice in the modern context.

Before discussing Ambedkar’s concept of justice, it would be fruitful to examine to discuss in the various versions of social justice that thinkers in India seem to have advocated from time to time, both in the pre and post-Ambedkar periods.

Historically speaking, justice in the Indian context was seen as an important social value in as much as it consisted in the strict observance or enforcement of Hindu law which was based on the four Varnas and elaborated caste system. According to Ambedkar: Hindu law is that of the established order made by the touchables. The untouchables had noting to do except to obey it and respect it. The untouchables have not right against the touchables. For them there is no equal right, no justice which is due to them and nothing is allowed to them. Nothing is due to them except what the touchables are prepared to grant. The untouchables must not insist on rights. They should pray for mercy and favour and rest content with what is offered. (WSBRA, 1989)
Ambedkar further maintained that the established order was based on graded inequality and was legitimized by Hindu law which completely negated equality, fraternity, liberty, democracy and human rights. (WSBRA, 1989) Ambedkar was of the view that the system of graded inequality was not notional but legal and penal. (WSBRA, 1990) Thus, it can be argued that at the philosophical level, justice in the Indian feudal order had three characteristics: First, it gave preference to hierarchy over equality. Second, this concept of justice underlined the importance of respecting traditional rights and performing traditional duties. Finally, Hindu law meant different things to different castes and people. The concept of justice contained no notion of equal treatment to all men. In other words, the function of justice in this kind of situation was to preserve the existing hierarchy rather than provide criterion for social reforms. This concept of justice has been used at the ideological level by the upper castes and classes just to deny deprived sections the essence of justice. Justice in the Indian context was served to validate societal stratification and perpetuate casteism.

Movements of untouchables against this kind of injustice by the Hindu social order have a long history, particularly in Maharashtra. Dalit saints are found complaining to God about the injustice that was heaped on them by the exploitative social structure. (Babasaheb Ambedkaranche, 1991) However, their idea of justice was concerned with equality only in relation to God and not elsewhere, and confined it to devotees and the common man. Ambedkar criticized this rather the logic-religious concept of justice on the ground that it was limited to devotees and failed to attack the “Chaturvarna system which was mainly responsible for perpetuating the structures of inequality”. (Babasaheb Ambedkaranche, 1991) He for the argued that Dalit saints, individually speaking, might have achieved equality in the eyes of God and hence in the spiritual realm, but they failed to attack the social inequality that subverted the material life of millions of untouchables for centuries. (Babasaheb Ambedkaranche, 1991) In our time, we have come across the position taken by Walter Kaufmann that the origin of justice has to be traced meta physically to a kind of inherent moral sense in man, to his multiple emotive faculties. (Dutt Gupta, Shobhan Lal 1979) Speaking about the multiple dimensions of this unfulfilled promise, Kaufmann says: The promise, may concern reward or punishment, and this may be deferred or it may never come in our own sense or in that of others, and this
non-event may be met with envy or compassion, with self-pity or guilt feelings, with indignation or concern, with ardent hope or extreme anxiety. Ambedkar, like the overwhelming majority of liberal philosophers, has opposed this metaphysical concept of justice. (Dutt Gupta, Shobhan Lal 1979)

He was of the opinion that it was absolutely futile to any compassion from touchables, who were pledged to Brahmanism. (Ratnakar, Ganvir 1989) He said that touchables lacked social conscience towards untouchables and their sense of obligation was restricted to a limited class of people, mainly the members of their caste. (WSBRA Vol, 5, p. 99) Ambedkar further argued that it is because of this that untouchables could not be said to belong to the society of Hindus; the latter did not he that they and the untouchables belonged to one society.

According to him, this is the reason way the conduct of Hindus is marked by a moralistic United Nations concernedness. In his sharp attack on this metaphysical theory of justice, Ambedkar further says: Not having conscience, the Hindu has not search thing in him as righteous indignation against the inequalities and injustice from which the untouchable has been suffering. He sees no wrong in these inequalities and injustice and refuses to budge. By his absence of conscience the Hindu is a great obstacle in the path of the removal of untouchability. (WSBRA Vol, 5, p.99)

On yet another occasion, Ambedkar linked up this lack of concern and the lack of righteous indignation to the spiritual and material interests of touchables. He was of the opinion that touchables are insensitive to the justice of untouchables due to the heavy influence of Hindu Dharma.(Bahishkruit Bharatatil Agralekh,p.34 (4)) He further argued that this impact is perpetuated by high-caste Hindus who would not like untouchables to share their material comforts. Thus, Ambedkar on very soon material grounds rejects this metaphysical deduction of justice from the concept of self-consciousness. He contains that touchables have become indifferent to untouchables because of their material interests. Brahminical vales are used by upper castes to deny untouchables the social justice which otherwise directly threatens their material interests. (Bahishkruit Bharatatil Agralekh,p.34(4) It is this caste consciousness among touchables that makes Ambedkar suspicious about the validity of the legal concept of justices which involves punishment of wrong doing and the compensation of injury through the creation and enforcement of publish set of
In view of the fragmented and, therefore, discrimination nature of Hindu law during the feudal period, however, Ambedkar seemed to welcome the legal intervention of the British. Their attempts to standardize the legal system in India gave effect to the concept of equality before law. For example, Ambedkar found British legal injunctions useful in declaring the practice of untouchability to be invalid. (WSBRA Vol, 5.p.252)

He said that it was possible under the rule of law to declare untouchability in valid on the ground that it was opposed to morality and public policy. But it would be of no use, Ambedkar lamented, unless it was declared to be so by a judicial tribunal. He was of the opinion that such a measure would be of great help to untouchables in their fight for civil rights because it would seem illegal to import untouchables in civil matter.

However, Ambedkar maintained the view that legal justice at the formal or at the theoretical level would be ineffective at the practical level. As he said: It might have been through that this principle of equal justice would strike a Dalit blow to the established order. As a matter of fact, far from suffering any damage, the established order has continued to operate. It might be asked why the principle of equal justice has failed to have its affect. The answer to this is simple. To enunciate the principle of justice is one thing, to make it effective is another thing. Whether the principle of equal justice is effective or not must necessarily depend on the nature and character of the civil services who administer the principle. If the civil services are by reason of class bias the friend of the established order and the enemy of the new order, the new order can never come into being, that a civil service in tune with the new order was essential for the success of the new order was recognized by Karl Marx in 1871 in the formation of the Paris Commune and was adopted by Lenin in the constitution of Soviet Communism. Unfortunately, the British government never cared about the personnel in the civil service. Indeed, it opened the gates of the administration to those classes who believed in the old established order of the Hindus in which the principles of equality had no place. As a result of this fact, India has been ruled by the Britishers but administered by the Hindus. (WSBRA Vol, 5.p.252)

According to Ambedkar upper-caste administrators have a Hindu bias and an antipathy towards untouchables, which results in the denial of protection and justice.
to the latter. During the Mahad confidence organised for establishing the right of Dalits to take water from the Chowder tank, Ambedkar proclaimed that untouchables wanted a complete overhauling of the Hindu social system. He further argued that this reconstruction must not have as its foundation the Hindu Shastra, but be consonant with justice and equality, which he later on embedded into the philosophy of Buddhism. As is clear from the political practice of the Dalit movement, Ambedkar used all just forms of protest: from launching temple entry and boycott of Hindu practices to conversion to Buddhism for establishing social justice, and preferential treatment to untouchables in the fields of bureaucracy and politics with the intention of protecting their interests. In this regard, it is essential to take into consideration Ambedkar’s evidence before the South Borough Committee and later on in the first All India Depressed Classes Congress, held at Nagpur in 1930.

While advocating special treatment for untouchables in the services Ambedkar said: The power to administer laws is not less important that the power to make laws and the spirit of the legislators may easily be violated, if not nullified by the machinery of the administrators. This is not the only reason why the depressed classes should show special concern for securing power of control over admonition. Often at times under pressure of work or under difficulties of circumstances one has to leave good deal of discretionary power in the hands of the heads of the administrative departments. The welfare of the people must greatly depend on how impartially this discretionary power is exercised. In a country like India where the public service is almost exclusively manned by people of one community, there is a great danger of this vast discretionary power being need for the personal aggrandizement of a class. The best antidote against it is to insist on a proper admixture of castes and creeds including the depressed classes in the public services of the country. We should demand a certain percentage in the public services to be preserved for the depressed classes and there will be no difficulty in guarantying this safeguard to us by a clause in the constitution. Such protection you could have dispensed with if there was any chance of the depressed classes being represented in the future cabinets of the country. But there is not the remotest chance of this in view of the fact that depressed classes will always remain in minatory. This makes it all the more necessary why you should insist upon such a guarantee. (WSBRA Vol, 1.1979) Ambedkar, while stating the importance of
political reservations for untouchables, said: The significance of suffrage or a political right consists in a change for active and direct participation in the regulation of the term upon which associated life shall be sustained. Now the terms upon which associated life between the touchables and untouchables is carried on today are the most ignominious to the former and highly detrimental to the later. To make effective the capacities of a people, there must be the power to fix the social conditions of their exercise. If the conditions are too obdurate, it is in the interest of the untouchables as well as the touchables that the conditions should be revised. The untouchables must be in a position to influence the revision looking to the gravity of their interest. They should get their representation as proposed in proportion to their population. (WSBRA Vol, 1.1979)

The mode of acquiring this political power in Ambedkar’s scheme, however, has to be located in a pluralist framework where sharing of political power is the main assumption. Ambedkar’s concept of political power aimed at enabling Dalits to secure social justice on more equitable and honorable terms.

However, it is necessary to point out here the shift in Ambedkar’s position. He started with a negation of the legal concept of justice on the ground that it cannot be relished because its implementation is in the hands of upper caste. On this occasion, however, he seems to be affirming this form of justice provided the implementation of the legal provisions is vested of justice appears to be embedded within the liberal framework. In fact, Ambedkar’s idea of social justice is tantamount to the concept of Rawls, who includes in his theory of distributive justice an element of the difference principle; in Ambedkar’s case it is the principle of special treatment. Both these principles of justice require a distribution of resources that will most effectively satisfy the needs of the worst off. (Millan) Distributive justice according to another author also involves the principle of equality. But in Ambedkar’s case it involves prestige and honor along with equality principle.

The question that arises here is: Does Ambedkar’s concepts of justice remain fettered within the narrow contours of liberalism? Does it imply the reconciliation of conflicting interests in society? Or does it expose the limits of both legal and political justice that Ambedkar was talking about earlier? The answer to these questions can be given in the following body of material. Before that it is essential to mention that
Ambedkar’s concept of justice is not an abstract and static one; on the country, it is a concrete and dynamic concept to be understood in terms of the changing social reality. As we have already seen, Ambedkar’s concept of justice keeps developing out of the negation of his earlier positions of justice. It moves in a direction away from the limits inherent in the liberal notion of social justice. Though his concept of social justice involves a normative element in as much as it aims at desirability or goodness in social life yet he views rather objectively the limitations of the liberal concept of justice which does not see the contradictions between how one lives and how one can live.

Ambedkar very clearly saw the conflicting interests that severely baffled the untouchables bureaucrats and the legislators who tried to meet out justice to their own caste people. Ambedkar was painful aware that even if adequately represented, Untouchables would not be able to meet out justice to their people because they would be working under terrible pressures and conditions of socio-economic insecurity dictated by the dominant forces in this country. (Guru, Gopal) Regarding political leaders and the legislators, Ambedkar lost the hope that would be able to do any justice to their people without the permission of their political bosses in the Congress Party. (Guru, Gopal)

Therefore, it is clear that for Ambedkar political justice was not enough for the good of the untouchables, in fact, he gave more importance to social and economic justice. Nay, he considered socio-economic justice as the precondition for redeeming political justice. He said: It is also clear from the above that unlike ethical philosophers who locate justice exclusively in moral terms, Ambedkar does not abstract the concept of social justice from its material base (that is the social base). Is concept of justice is firmly rooted in the synthesis of social equality involving freedom and liberty with economic equality. This is reflected in his understanding of the French revolution and Russian revolution. Ambedkar considers the French revolution as the first stage and the Russian revaluation as the second stage in human liberation. (Khairmode, G.B., 1987)

**Protective discrimination:**

Protective discrimination is one of three ways in which government attempts to deal with the problems confronting the Scheduled Castes. First, there are
several constitutional and other legal provisions which remove discrimination against untouchables and grant them the same rights as others citizens. Second, general development and welfare programs to aid landless agricultural laborers, municipal slum dwellers, or other low income group's benefit SC individuals since they are found in large members in such populations. In these programs the criteria of eligibility for benefits very with kind of benefits involved to such criteria the third alternative adds another criterion of eligibility caste membership which protects the Scheduled Castes’ interests by making other persons ineligible. That is all it does, for benefits of the third type are not automatically given to anyone. The jobs, scholarships, loans, and grants must still be applied for on the proper forms, and the applicant must present evidence that he possesses the minimum qualifications prescribed for them. In addition, he must present proper written certification that he belongs to one of the castes on the scheduled, a requirement that protects his right to be considered for the benefit by making non-members ineligible. (Leah Dushkin)

Another major feature of the system is that it is by definition temporary and is supposed to last only as long as it is needed. In theory, the protective caste criterion is used to ensure members of the lowest castes a share of power and opportunity for advancement until they can hold their own without it. However, no guidelines have been established for determining when this goal has been reached, and the only provision with legal time limit on it has been extended each time it was about to expire. The benefits obviously build a vested interest in their own perpetuation. To the extant that the correlation breaks down between caste membership and actual levels of income, education, and power, the system which relies on such a correlation becomes less workable and more subject to criticism. (Leah Dushkin)

Social Mobility and Status of Scheduled Castes:

A number of constitutional safeguards have been provide, after independence, to the scheduled castes (and also to the scheduled tribes) under the “Policy of the protective discrimination” popularly known as the reservation policy. These safeguards are primarily in the areas of their social welfare: protection from all sorts of exploitation and discrimination, and their overall social and economic development. The reservation given in the areas of education, employment in public sector jobs (recently in the private sector also), and representation in the parliament
and state legislatures is to protect the interests and to facilitate social and economic development of various scheduled castes in the country. Through the whole scheme with the concurrence of the central has been adopted as a national policy, the state governments are empowered to implement its various provisions in their own ways but within the overall directives laid down by the central government. (Nandu Ram)

The causes of social mobility in terms of the supply of vacant status and the interchangeability of ranks as envisaged in the theory are not directly relevant in the case of the sponsored social mobility among the scheduled castes. In fact, their mobility is greatly facilitated by the government policy of "preferential treatment" or "protective discriminations" meant for them through the policy does generate some sprite of competitiveness or contest mobility among them to fill the vacant statuses or positions in the class structure. This also helps them to claim a higher status in the caste system in which no vacancy of statuses exist. Hence, there is no questions of "demand and supply" of vacant statuses and "interchangeability of ranks" in the cast system. (R.A.Schermerhorn, 1978) The mobile scheduled castes have remained in "semi-limbo" (Harold R. Isaacs 1965) satiation as they are uprooted from their family and caste, and where would they go nobody knew. They have also been suffering from the "stigmatized identity" (Gerald D. Berreman 1979) of being 'Untouchables'. Contrary to this, we have found that not only those who opposed the hierarchical identification and identified at the non-caste-class level, but even those who believed in contra-identification were, in fact, in an "identification dilemma". They were ambivalent to their identification as their kith and kin were still a part of the Hindu caste system and they themselves lived with their caste members, continuing their relations with them and availing of the reservation facilities meant for the scheduled castes, especially when they had to face various types of prejudices and discriminations. Hence, they were opposed to the ethnocentric (caste) identification.

Thus, the findings of our study suggest emergence of a new middle class, which is an outcome of the "Protective discrimination", is quite different from the old middle class in the country due to its specific social background and distinct historical origin. The members of the new middle class have not yet been fully accepted by the old middle class. In addition, a sizeable number of them suffer from status-anxiety resulting from an incongruity between their caste and class statuses. Moreover, they
have an ambivalent identification due to dualism, that is, ethnocentric identification and, the contra-identification.

Social Transformation:

The transition from a feudal society to a democratic structure, and from an oligarchic state to democratic polity, is necessarily a painful, slow and arduous process. The pre-independence colonial India was characterized by a predominance of feudal relationships, attitudes and organization in rural areas. These feudal forces received reinforcement and support from an oligarchic state. Power was primarily in the hands of small elite groups comprising representatives of the imperial government and its local allies who, with some honorable exceptions, were, to paraphrase Macaulay. English in taste, behaviour intellect and morals.

Leaders of the freedom struggle had an insight into the conditions of, and were able to identify themselves to an extent with the rural masses. This is why they succeeded in mobilizing people for the cause they espoused. Their appreciation of social realities, however, was partial; it enabled them to anticipate only certain kinds of difficulties inherent in the transition from a feudalistic society and oligarchic state to a democratic order. Leaders like Gandhiji and Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar had greater awareness and were able to effectively highlight the existing inequalities, injustice and extreme forms of social discrimination, economic exploitation, and inhuman customs and practices. Though Gandhiji called untouchability a sin against God and humanity, and initiated a number of measures to abolish the practice, it continued unabated in its revolting cruelty, intolerable indignity, and insufferable humiliation.

Political safeguards for depressed classes:

The period from 1947 to 1951 was for Ambedkar a period a creative co-operation with the Congress Government. It is interesting to note that once Ambedkar became the Law Minister of India, he fell in line with the views of Gandhi as far as the emancipation of the untouchables was concerned. He gave up the concept of separate electorates and accepted that the Scheduled Castes were not a minority but was an underprivileged part of Hinduism and required safeguards for a temporary period to become an integral part of their community. (Keer, Dhanjaya)
The greatest contribution of Ambedkar and the Congress, which represented the views of Gandhi, for the cause of the Scheduled Castes, was that in the Constitution of India, the fundamental rights including equality before the law were made applicable to all citizens of India, irrespective of caste and creed. It should not be forgotten that Ambedkar was the only member of the Scheduled Caste in the Constituent Assembly who was elected on a non-Congress platform. The Constituent Assembly was dominated by the Congress. Although Ambedkar had a major role as Law Minister in the drafting of the Constitution, all the provisions were much debated and scrutinized by various luminaries. (Constituent Assembly Debate, Vol.XIV, p.994)

It would not be wrong to say, therefore that the provisions of the Constitution granting equal rights to the Scheduled Castes embodied the dreams of both Gandhi (through the Congress) and Ambedkar, who without doubt were the greatest emancipators of the untouchables in modern India. "Both of them strove for the uplift of the Scheduled Castes, but concentrated on different areas and their work was complementary and supplementary to each other. Ambedkar worked primarily amongst the Scheduled Castes and fought for their political rights to secure for them social and economic justice. Gandhi worked primarily amongst caste Hindus to bring about a change of heart towards the Scheduled Castes and to ensure that the Scheduled Castes remained within the Hindu fold. In assessing their roles, it would not be wrong to say that Ambedkar was the saviour of the Scheduled Castes while Gandhi was the saviour of Hinduism. In their rivalry Gandhi emerged the winner as even after his death his views were accepted by Ambedkar. (Krishnam Asha)

The crowning glory of their mission was the Constitution of India which safeguarded the rights of the Scheduled Castes. The provisions of the Constitution which embodied the dreams of Gandhi and Ambedkar are highlighted below:

(i) Equally before law: Article 14 provides that the State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws.

(ii) Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or birth: Article 15 provides that the state shall not discriminate against any citizen on these grounds. No citizen shall on these grounds be subject to any disability or restriction with regard to access to shops, public restaurants, hotels and places of public entertainment or the use of wells, tanks, bathing ghats, roads and places of
public resort maintained wholly or partly out of State funds or out of State funds or
dedicated to the use of general public. Article 15(4) also provides that nothing in this
article shall prevent the State from making any socially and educationally backward
classes of citizens or for the Scheduled Castes and Tribes.

(iii) *Equally of opportunity in matters of public employment:* Article 16
provides that no citizen shall on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, descent,
place of birth, residence or any of them, be ineligible for, or discriminated against in
respect of any employment or office under the State. Article 16(4) also provides that
nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making any provision for the
reservation of appointments or posts in favour of any backward class of citizens
which in the opinion of the State is not adequately represented in the services under
the State.

(iv) *Abolition of Untouchability:* Article 17 provides that "Untouchability" is
abolished and its practice in any form is forbidden and enforcement of any disability
arising out of "Untouchability" shall be an offence punishable in accordance with law.

(v) *Freedom of Religion:* Article 25 provides that all persons are equally
entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practice and
propagate religion. Article 25(2) provides that nothing in this article shall affect the
operation of any existing law or prevent the State from making any law providing for
social welfare and reform or the throwing open of Hindu religious institutions of a
public character to all classes and sections of Hindus. Explanation II to Article 25(2)
provides that the reference to Hindus shall profess the Sikh, Jaina, or Buddhist
religion, and the reference to Hindu religious institutions shall be construed
accordingly.

(vi) *Welfare State:* Article 38 provides that the State shall strive to promote the
welfare of the people by securing and protecting as effectively as it may a social order
in form all the institutions of the national life.

(vii) *Protection from Injustice:* Article 46 provides that the state shall promote
with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the
people and in particular of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes, and shall protect them
from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.
(viii) Welfare of Tribals: Articles 164 provides that in the states of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa, there shall be a minister in charge of tribal welfare who may in addition be in charge of the Scheduled Castes and backward classes or any other work.

(ix) Right to Vote: Article 325 provides that there shall be one general electoral role for every constituency for election to either House of Parliament or either House of the Legislature of a State and no person shall be ineligible for exclusion in such roll or claim to be included in any special electoral role for any such constituency on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or any of them.

(x) Adult suffrage: Article 326 provides that the elections to the house of people and to the legislative assemblies of states shall be on the basis of adult suffrage.

(xi) Reservation of seats for scheduled castes: Article 330 provides that seats shall be reserved in the house of the people for the Scheduled Castes and the scheduled tribes as nearly as may be in proportion to their population as ascertained at the last preceding census of which the relevant figures have been published. Article 332 makes similar provisions in the legislative assemblies of the states.

(xii) Reservations for elections to be temporary: Article 334 provides that the reservation of seats for the Scheduled Castes and scheduled tribes shall cease on the expiry of 10 years. (However, this provision has been amended from time to time and now provides for reservations to cease on the expiry of 50 years.)

(xiii) Reservations of elections to be temporary: Article 335 provides that the claims of the members of the Scheduled Castes and scheduled tribes shall be taken into consideration, consistently with the maintenance of efficiency of administration, in the making of appointments to services and posts in connection with the affairs of services and posts in connection with the affairs of the union states.

(xiv) Special officer for Scheduled Castes and tribes: Article 338 provides that there shall be a special officer for the Scheduled Castes and tribes to be appointed by the president. It shall be the duty of the special officer to investigate all matters relating to the safeguards provided for the Scheduled Castes and tribes under the constitution and report to the president on the working of those safeguards at such
intervals as the president may direct, and the president shall cause all such reports to be laid before each house of parliament.

(xv) **Scheduled Castes and tribes:** Articles 341 and 342 provide that the president after due procedure may by public notification specify the castes, races or tribes which shall be deemed to be Scheduled Castes or tribes as the case may be. Parliament may by law include in or exclude from the list of Scheduled Castes and tribes specified in a notification any caste, race or tribe. Article 366 defines Scheduled Castes and tribes to mean such castes, races or tribes or parts of or groups within such castes, races or tribes as are deemed under articles 341 and 342 to be Scheduled Castes and tribes. The fifth schedule also provides for the administration and control of scheduled tribes in certain areas through tribes advisory councils.

The system of separate electorates on communal lines granted by the British to religious minorities was given up; instead, a system of joint electorates with reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes and tribes was provided. Article 334 fixed the period of reservation as 10 years from the commencement of the constitution. Ambedkar has proposed a longer period; however, he accepted the period of ten years which was based on general agreement among the parties concerned, stating: "it was considered necessary to extend the period at the end of 10 years, it would not be beyond their capacity or their interests to invent new ways of getting the protection which they were promised here."(Constituent Assembly Debate, Vol. XI, p. 994)

How farsighted and right was Ambedkar, as the reservations, which were to cease after 10 years, have continued till this day. In essence, Ambedkar was able to secure all the political safeguards he had been demanding, except the concept of separate electorates.

The safeguards provided for the Scheduled Castes in the constitution of India amounted to the implementation of the Poona pact. Ambedkar had finally given up the concept of separate electorates. In a speech at the inauguration of Siddhartha college parliament on 25 September 1947, be stated. It is also interesting to note that after independence, Ambedkar like Gandhi stood firmly for the unity for India. He favored centralized government, integration of Indian states with the union of India, Hindi as the optional language for every province and joint electorates. (Omvedt, Gail)

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When Gandhi talked of Swaraj, he meant the achievement of the same ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity espoused by Ambedkar, which were ultimately enshrined in the preamble to the constitution of India. Gandhi's endeavour was that socio-economic justice should be available to all classes, irrespective of caste, creed, or religion. Ambedkar wanted a separate identity for the depressed classes first and Swaraj afterwards. To Gandhi this was placing the cart before the horse. To Gandhi, once Swaraj was attained, other freedoms would follow, whereas Ambedkar's suspicion was that after independence, nobody would bother about the upliftment of the depressed classes. Gandhi wanted to remove untouchables from the hearts of the caste Hindus and absorb the Scheduled Castes as an integral part of the Hindu community. Ambedkar wanted the Scheduled Castes to organize themselves politically as a distinct entity and fight for their rights. (Omvedt, Gail)

Lealah Dushkin, in The Policy of the Indian National Congress, writes: "probably nowhere in the world is so large a lower class minority granted so much favourable treatment by the Government as are the Depressed Classes of India today." This would not have been possible without the efforts of Gandhi amongst the caste Hindus and Ambedkar amongst the Scheduled Castes. The policies pursued by Gandhi and Ambedkar, in the ultimate analysis, worked in conjunction with each other. Both Gandhi and Ambedkar were great men. While Gandhi was the Father of the Nation, Ambedkar was the Father of the Indian Constitution. While Gandhi was an apostle of peace and non-violence, Ambedkar became a convert to Buddhism, which preached universal peace and non-violence. Both of them worked assiduously for the emancipation of the Scheduled Castes, though their means differed. For Gandhi, the change had to come primarily in the hearts of caste Hindus. He staked his life for retaining the Scheduled Castes within the Hindu fold. Gandhi wanted political freedom before the rights of various classes could be secured. Ambedkar agitated for separate electorates but showed generosity of spirit and gave up this demand to save Gandhi's life. It is unfortunate that Gandhi died on 30 January 1948 and could not see for himself the progress made by Scheduled Castes. Ambedkar was fortunate enough to see for himself the initial progress made by the Scheduled Caste arising out of the safeguards provided in the Constitution. (Krishnan Asha)
However, without a leader of Ambedkar's stature, the Scheduled Castes are politically fragmented. Atrocities on them in the countryside continue though the educated amongst them have attained high positions in government or public life and fend for themselves. The reservations have benefited a segment of Scheduled Castes who are already economically better off. If the advantage of the reservations goes to the economically backward scheduled castes, the situation would be different. The progress of reconstruction of their social and economic life is tardy. The actual filling of reserved posts in the governments as well as the public sector continues to lag behind on the pretext do class coming scheduled castes. No leader of Ambedkar's stature has emerged. The Scheduled Castes federation and its successor, the Republican Party of untouchability is a crime under the Untouchability Offences Act, 1955, the Act has proved extremely difficult to enforce. To take a case of court is expensive, and there are no central resources to assist in a prolonged lawsuit. Untouchability has not completely gone away from Indian society and is still practiced in remote villages in backward areas. Occasionally, there are reports on atrocities on Scheduled Castes in different parts of the country. (Krishnan Asha, p.197)

There is, however a major redeeming feature. The condition and status of Scheduled Castes is not what it was half a century ago. A transformation has taken place for the better in their political consciousness, social intercourse, economic opportunity and style of living. (V. R. Krishnan Iyer) India still has mile to go before these centuries old disabilities disappear but much depends on the Scheduled Castes too. They must develop the spirit of independence and shelf help, a sense of their own self worth which compels respect. They must organize themselves and produce honest and able leadership to keep the caravan going. They must exploit the politics of numbers to their advantage and not allow themselves to be fragmented politically.

The constitution guarantees for the protection and progress of the Scheduled Castes for an initial period of ten years, were enshrined as a result of the life long efforts of Gandhi and Ambedkar. It was their dream that during these ten years, the Scheduled Castes would make adequate progress through education, employment and political development to become an integral part of the Indian society, not tainted in any way. The complete emancipation of the Scheduled Castes has yet to be attained, as is evident from the extension of the constitutional guarantees for the past forty
years. At a time when untouchability was widely practiced in India, Ambedkar and Gandhi envisaged their social emancipation and worked with dedication for this goal. With each passing year, their version is nearing realization. However, the complete emancipation of the untouchables in modern India will be achieved when the constitutional guarantees are no longer required.

**Historicity and Identities:**

Like the *imagined communities*, the Dalit movement has its own historicity. Time lineage is perceived by Dalit activists from the perspective of their suffering and oppression by the higher castes. Dalits themselves often refer to the Brahmanic scriptures that legitimize the caste system. The Caste system is thereby something that has existed in the Indian sub-continent since the archaic past and thus their history is mythologized. The difference from before is that now they are engaged in social action and are struggling for a change. The history takes shape and becomes "real" and "their" in Dalit activists' perceptions since the major Dalit history landmark, Ambedkar's movement in India during the pre- and post-independence period. It divides Dalit history into two periods, one being archaic and mysterious, vague and of an endless suffering, and the other one of self-awareness and struggle, although still, full of pain.

In case of India, caste is presented as something that exists "even" after the independence, and "even" having a constitution. Most of the Dalit activists consider the Indian Constitution one of the best in the world because of its inclusive multiculturalist ideology. Besides, the creator of the reservations for minorities, SCs and STs is Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. Hence, the Constitution symbolizes the success of Dalit struggle and merits of their famous leader. The Constitution is also important as a legal base and often referred to in their rhetoric. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was by no doubt the most prominent Dalit leader and his contribution to the Dalit struggle for their rights is obvious. As he himself was from the untouchable Mahar community, he was, according to Zelliot, a leader of caste, a spokesman of untouchables and a national spokesman (Zelliot, 2005, [1992]). For Mahars he meant the struggle for political rights of all Indians in a democratic system. For this reason, the Ambedkar period marks a transformation in the Dalit history. Almost all the reports and publications of the National Campaign of Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR) have a picture of Dr.
Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar. The picture is located in the preamble, the cover or the inner side of the cover of the edition. They also edit pamphlets about him and his picture can be found on the agitation posters. Most of the pictures of Ambedkar are accompanied by a quotation of his thought, and sometimes he is quoted with no picture. In addition, forewords in the reports are often ended with a phrase “Jai Bhim” (literary meaning “victory Bhim”), an expression of respect for Ambedkar. Ambedkar and his principles are also referred to in the material, published.

In all pictures Dr. Ambedkar is wearing a suit, and thus represents an educated elite person, as he truly was. His elite image and status was of a great importance for his own untouchable Mahar community, as it represented the new identity he sought for the Mahars (Zelliot, 2005 [1992]. One of his main guiding principles for the eradication of untouchability was Dalits' education and leadership by themselves. He also saw high education as crucial precondition for Dalits to be able to represent themselves in the executive and administration (Thorat and Kumar, 2008). In addition, he sought to expand educational opportunities for Dalits and make them able to act in the highest levels of Indian urban society (Zelliot, 2005, [1992]. As most of the NCDHR activists are educated middle class and collaborate with the Dalit elite, the images of Ambedkar in the NCDHR's representation seem to bring not only historical and ideological meaning. Most of the activists are Dalits themselves, who studied social work, human rights or other relevant disciplines that are useful in working for the Dalit issue. Hence, they constitute the continuity of Ambedkar's work and leader identities. This particular wording of the disappointment about the present situation of Dalits “in spite of the constitutional provisions” and “even 60 year after the independence” emerged in some of the interviews with the activists and can be found in some reports of the NCDHR. By advocating reservations and inclusive policies for particular castes and tribes in India as early as 1930, Ambedkar could be considered a pioneer of affirmative action in practice (Thorat and Kumar, 2008)

Dalit Movement and Identity:

Dalit movements are, in fact, Harijan/Scheduled Castes movements. The word “oppressed” is closest to the word “Dalit”. As noted earlier, from, “Harijan” to “Scheduled Castes” to “Dalit” mark the process of emergence of this word. Thus, Dalits are SCs, constituting nearly 16 per cent of India’s population. Most of them are
manual and agricultural workers. While many of them are engaged in their traditional occupations, some are in white-collar government and public sector jobs. (Radhakrishnan, P., 1991) In Maharashtra Dr. Ambedkar mobilised the Mahars and other “Untouchables” for launching a sociopolitical movement against their persisting depressed status. Some scholars have compared the Dalits of India with the blacks of United States of America (USA). (Shah. Ganshyam 1990) Barring some studies, such as by Bharat Patankar and Gail Omvedt and Ghanshyam shah, (Omvedt, Gail 1979) most of the research has emphasized the process of Sanskritization among SCs.

Ghanshyam Shah has classified Dalit movements as a) reformative, and b) alternative. Reformative movements focus mainly on the study of changes in the caste system and the institution of untouchability. Issues relating to conversion to other religions (For example, Buddhism, Islam, Christianity), education, economic status and political power are taken up in the study of alternative movements.(M.S.Gore, 1993) However, Patankar and Omvedt mention that Dalit movements are (a) caste-based,(Shah) and (b) class-based. In essence all Dalit movements are anti-Brahmin, anti-upper castes and anti-caste. Movements such as Satyashodhak Samaj, self-respect, Adi-Dharma, the Adi-Andhra, Adi-Hindu, the Namashudra, Nadar, neo-Buddhist, etc. placed emphasis on discarding the Brahminical ways of life and the practice of untouchability. In the process of mobilisation, “Untouchables” discarded their traditional occupations too for claiming an equal social status to the “clean castes”. In fact, Sanskritisation has been found to be the main consequence albeit not clearly intended, of most Dalit movements.

The most significant outcome of Dalit movements has been the formation of various voluntary organisations for the welfare of the poorest of the poor from among Dalits. Some of these are: Rural Community Development Association, Harijans Labourers’ Association, the Agricultural Workers’ Movement, Rural Harijan Agricultural Development Association, Association of Rural poor, etc. the main objective of these organisations is to mobilize the agricultural poor from among Dalits to make them conscious of their socio-economic oppression and cultural subjugation. For peter Robb, all movements of labourers, both tribal and non-tribal including SCs, are Dalit movements. (Omvedt, Gail) These organisations have so far remained active in the states of Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.

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The message which Ambedkar gave to the bhikkhus was of becoming models of "self-culture and self-service". The supporters of Ambedkar's Buddhism and the Dalit movement consider Ambedkar's writings on Buddhism as a "religion of the oppressed", or a form of "liberation theology". (Peter Robb 1993) Ambedkar's contribution is seen as a shift in the debates from religious to secular discourse, having the emancipator exercise at its core. The "Ambedkar's cult" is perhaps in the making. A sense of liberation and freedom through the act of conversion to neo-Buddhism has captured the attention of Dalits more than any other idea. Such was the impact of Kabirpanth and Jyotirao Phule on Ambedkar that it created a sense of repulsion and hatred in him against Hinduism and the traditional caste-hierarchy. He distanced himself from Gandhi and became drawn to Marxism. (Rodrigues Valerian)

Since the early 1970s, the word "Dalit" has become "a positive, assertive expression of pride in untouchable heritage and a rejection of oppression" (Rodrigues, Valerian, 2002) Dalit refers to all forms of social and economic oppression: it also applies to other oppressed groups like tribals, religious minorities, women and the economically oppressed of all castes. (Joshi, Barbara R. 1986) Many scholars, however, prefer to use the term "Untouchable" rather than "Dalith". (Joshi, Barbara R. 1986) Ambedkar's message for the downtrodden was: be a lion, "be your own light" He attacked the established Indian order by giving a call for destroying culturally defined inequality and perorating economic inequality. The creation culturally defined inequality and persisting economic inequality. The creation of a counter-culture: a culture of protest was his goal.

Ambedkar's strong advocacy was for a cultural revolution and a radical social democracy. Labour must control government and not people inspired by self-serving individualism. He asked for protection against exploitation as a fundamental right. Even the Gandhian moral reform, orthodox Marxism, Western economic developmentalism (both the capitalist and the socialist varieties) put together would not equal an indigenous Dalit tradition. It represents a "community of communication within which individuals and organisations argue and evolve" (Joshi, Barbara R. 1986)
Approaches for the study of Dalits:

Two distinct approaches are found towards Dr. Ambedkar's basic formulations about Indian society. As illustration of these approaches we propose to highlight briefly the views of M.S Gore and Gail Omvedt. (Gore) Gore analyses Dr. Ambedkar's thought system from the Dalit revolt from the historical materialist viewpoint. Gore and Omvedt have published more or less at the same time. In 1993 and 1994, respectively. Let us sum up the salient points of their perspectives on Ambedkar.

Gore considers Ambedkar's thought and action as an "ideology of protest". According to Gore, Ambedkar clearly considered the outcaste Untouchables to be distinct from the intermediate castes of Marathas and Kunbis, and the Backward Castes of Telis, Tambolis, barbers and artisans. (Omvedt) He declared before the Simon Commission that the "depressed classes" referred to untouchable caste groups as well as tribal communities, but he referred to plead on behalf of untouchables only. He was also ware of the fact the untouchables comprised several sub-castes as unequal status groups within Maharashtra and elsewhere. Despite intra-untouchable distinctions based on language, cultural context and economic standing, Ambedkar tried to create a sense of common identity among the untouchables of India. Ambedkar identified Brahmins as the real adversaries of untouchables as they were not only priests, but also the most important elite group in society who controlled public life by holding positions in education, administration and professions. A counter-protest from Brahmins in defence of the established social order would be a natural consequence. (Omvedt, P.52)

Ambedkar hinted at the "graded" inequality in Indian society as the root cause of the persisting oppression of lower sections. Gore applies the Mertonism paradigm of sociology of knowledge to the understanding of Ambedkar ideology and its social context. The "communication paradigm" is also found useful by Gore in addressing questions like who protests against whom for what reasons, with what objective and with which means. The nationalist/larger political context inspired mobilization, but the internal division and stratification among untouchables created obstacles for the movement.

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The main aim of Ambedkar was to evolve a definite perspective on the problems faced by the untouchables of India. To register their protest and ensure their effective participation in the power structure of Indian society were his main concerns. The untouchables of India were seen by Ambedkar to be different from underdogs elsewhere in the world. To elevate untouchables from the underdog position, Ambedkar emphasized the role of both “law” and “moral order”.

Gail Omvedt focuses on the Dalit movement as a part of a broader anti-caste movement in the colonial period. The Dalit and non-Brahmin anti-caste movements can be classified as “anti-systemic movements”, or as “value-oriented movements as opposed to “norm-oriented movements.(Omvedt, P.52) Omvedt writes:”That is they (movements) challenged and sought to transform the basic structure of the Indian social system, replacing caste and the accompanying social oppression, economic exploitation and political domination by an equalitarian society. There were also reformist trends in the anti- caste movements particularly represented by Gandhi, Jagjivan Ram, etc. the anti-caste Dalit movement imparts a revolutionary message, a will to act against exploitation, a rise from death to life, from darkness to light. Thus, the spirit of militant Marxism and Naxalism is close to the ethos of the Dalit movement. The Dalits for steering such a movement must have a power of thought to challenge and destroy Brahminic hegemony and Hindu nationalism. Anti-caste radicals are thus distinguished from the reformers.

According to Ambedkar the Indian National Congress was controlled by upper castes and capitalists (“Brahman” and bourgeois). Phule gave them the name “Irani Arya- Bhats”, and later on others called them “Shetji-Bhatji” and referred to these clouts as Brahmanbania’ raj. Only a left Dalit unity having workers and peasants as its core base can bring about the empowerment of exploited sections of society. Dalit panthers mention in their manifesto: “We don’t want a little place in Brahman alley. We want the rule of the whole country”. (Omvedt, Dalits and Democratic Revolution) The Dalit movement is seen by Omvedt as “diversionary”, and not simply in “class” terms or as playing second fiddle to the congress dominated national movement.(Lata Murugkar 1973) Omvedt suggests formulating “a revised historical materialist understanding not only of the linkage between the ‘economic base’ and the ‘superstructure’, but economic processes themselves”. Along with “economic
subordination’, Omvedt discusses the role played by cultural/community forms and force and violence in the agenda she sets for an understanding of the anti-caste and Dalit movements.

Gail Omvedt’s study provides a systematic socio-historical account of Dalits and their movements in the states of Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka from a will-knit neo-Marxist viewpoint. With regard to the patterns of Dalit mobilisation and Ambedkar, the following points may be mentioned:

1. As a result of Ambedkar’s leadership the Dalit movement emerged in all regions with similar trends, though of varying degrees of strength.
2. The movement was genuinely anti-caste, and not merely a case-reform movement.
3. Dalits as exploited workers, peasants and agricultural workers were involved with economic or “class” issues everywhere, in all regions.

According to Omvedt, “the Dalit movement emerged as a political force at the same time as the non-Brahman movement and about the same time as the working class and peasantry were creating their organizational forms”.(Omvedt, pp.17-67)

With all this, ‘Ambedkarism’ is considered by Omvedt as “the theory of Dalit liberation”. (Omvedt, pp.165) Ambedkarism” outlines the following:

1. An uncompromising dedication to the needs of Dalits, which required the total annihilation of the system and the Brahminic superiority it embodies.
2. An almost equally strong dedication to the reality of India-denial of the imposition of a ‘Hindu’ identity.
3. A conviction that the eradication of caste required a repudiation of ‘Hinduism as a religion, and adoption of Buddhism as an alternative religion.
4. A broad economic radicalism interpreted as “socialism”, mixed with and growing out of Ambedkar’s democratic liberalism and liberal dedication to individual rights.
5. A fierce rationalism.
6. A firmly autonomous Dalit movement having the socially and economically exploited sections (Dalits and Shudras. Workers and peasants in class terms) as an alternative political front to the Congress Party which he saw as the unique platform of “Brahminism” and “capitalism”.(Omvedt, pp.223-59)

In 1949 Ambedkar hinted in the Constituent Assembly that the country was entering a life of contradictions. “In politics we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality”. (Dr.Ambedkar’s writings, 1945, 1949, 1974, 1979) Ambedkar was so disgusted with the situation that he once said” I myself will burn the constitution”. In the 1970s the followers of Ambedkar threatened to desecrate the
national flag, burn the Constitution as well as Manusmriti. Ambedkar once declared Nehru to be “just another Brahmin”. He referred to the Dalit movement as a “class-caste struggle”. He viewed it as a movement for establishing an alternative identity which is explosive and revolutionary. (Omvedt, p.324) The creation of a new Dalit consciousness is the ultimate goal of Dalit movements. Dalit literature and Dalit writers have been at the centre stage in creating a sense of self-respect and dignity. The recent controversy and ensuing conflicts (including killings and suicides) over the issue of renaming the Marathawada University as Dr. B.R.Ambedkar University can be seen as an example of the ongoing power struggle between the upper castes and Dalits. (for details, Murugkar, Movements in Maharashtra.)