CHAPTER – XI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION:
Both Gandhiji and Ambedkar were champions of liberty. Their mission of life was to emancipate the so-called untouchables from their degraded position. In a social situation like India, where equality is denied to some people, equality is the obvious criterion of justice. Where social divisions exist in a society, neither all the people would come under one banner nor they be able to revolt against the established classes. Therefore the constitution and the laws are the best means of bringing about a new social order.

The main theme of discussion running through the entire thesis refers to the concept of ‘social justice’. Both Gandhiji and Ambedkar have discussed elaborately about various fundamental concepts which are related to ‘social justice’. They were in favour of establishing equality in the society, modification of caste system, abolition of untouchability. They also valued the social significance of religion. Both also discussed elaborately about ‘democracy’ and ‘socialism’ as these are also related with the concept of social justice.

They tried to bring into reality a just social order by adopting just means. They had indomitable belief in constitutional and peaceful means.

Both of them dedicated their life for the upliftment of downtrodden. But a comparative study between them is fruitful because of their socio-economic background. One is the sufferer and another is the sympathizer. Thus it seems natural that Ambedkar’s conception of social justice, his methods, his strategies are more practical, aggressive and relevant.
Whereas Gandhiji with a view to satisfy his own community sometime adopted a compromising policy.

**Was Ambedkar Anti – Gandhi?**

Gandhi and Ambedkar crossed swords on many occasions, not because of any hatred between them nor was there any reason for clash of personalities. Both were extremely sensitive to social causes and human suffering. Both were champions of the underdog, great emancipators and humanists. Neither of them was prepared to accept injustice or inhumanity, personal or political.

Despite their strategical differences, they had a sincere and profound respect for each other and quite willingly and gracefully acknowledged the merit in each other’s actions. After the signing of the Poona Pact (24 Sept. 1932), Gandhiji asked Ambedkar for a message to be published in the Weekly ‘Harijan’. Reluctantly though, Ambedkar gave this message: “The outcastes last as long as there are castes. Nothing can help save Hindus and ensure their survival in the coming struggle except the purging of the Hindu faith of the odious and vicious stigma”.

**Publishing this Gandhiji added:**

“Dr Ambedkar is bitter. He has every reason to feel so. He has received a liberal education. He has more than the talents of the average educated Indian. Outside India he is received with honour and affection, but in India, among Hindus, at every step he is reminded to his shame,
for, he had done no wrong to Hindu Society ...... This is Caste Hindus' shame, not his, but I would like him to feel that there are today thousands of caste Hindus who would listen to his message with the same respect and consideration that they would give to that of any other leader and that in their estimation there is no person high or no person low.” A more glowing tribute can hardly be expected from a political opponent!

Though they have great respect for each other but Ambedkar was a vociferous critic of Gandhiji. However while criticizing Gandhiji his criticism was logical and rational. Actually, it is not easy for Gandhiji who had deep faith on Hindu religion, scriptures, customs and tradition of Indian society, to give them up for the cause of downtrodden. He realized the difficulties of ‘Untouchables’, he was aware of hated system of caste, but he could not think even to reorganize the whole Hindu society by destroying ‘Chaturvarna’ system. But for Ambedkar there is no difference between Caste and Varna System. Thus destruction of both is necessary for the reorganization of Hindu Society. It is true that both fought against caste. But their strategies were different. Gandhi chose to fight against caste from within Hinduism and with the help of Caste Hindus .... Ambedkar directed his fight from within Hinduism, if possible and from without, if necessary. He embraced Buddhism at the fag-end of his life.

Gandhi’s attack on caste was started from its weakest link —
Untouchability. He believed that if untouchability was done away with, caste would automatically go. Ambedkar attacked the caste system as a whole. He wanted to abolish it lock, stock and barrel. From his early childhood Baba Saheb realized the curse of caste system. He underwent many painful incidents during his early education in school and high school days. These incidents made an ever lasting impression on his mind. Even in 1917 when he returned from abroad with doctorate degree of the Columbia University to join the Baroda State Service, he faced the same humiliation from the staff members of the State. It was an experience as shameful and humiliating as the one which Gandhiji experienced in South Africa in 1894 when he was thrown out of a first class coach at a wayside Railway Station for no other reason than that he did not belong to the white race. Just as Gandhiji resolved to fight against racism and colonialism, so did Ambedkar vow to root out untouchability.

Ambedkar also paid tribute to Gandhiji. In the course of a speech he made in the Rajya Sabha on 6th Sept. 1954. Ambedkar said: “I respect him and I suggest, in the name of Mr Gandhi, a Gandhi Trust Fund be created for development or settlement of Untouchables. After all, the Untouchables, according to all of us, were the nearest and dearest to him and there is no reason why Mr Gandhi may not bless this project from heaven. “This is what the champion of the Dalits had to say to the so-called enemy of Dalits.”!
Thus if Ambedkar opposed Gandhi, it was not so much a matter of difference in ideology as of approach or strategy. All that Ambedkar wanted was that along with the movement for the liberation of the country from the foreign yoke, there should be an equally forceful commitment on the part of Congress and Gandhi for the liberation of the Dalits.

Was Ambedkar an Anti-Nationalist?

Despite Ambedkar’s undivided passion for liberty, equality and fraternity, Ambedkar was the “misunderstood” man among the intellectuals of his time. And still now he is not valued properly. Sometimes he was regarded as a political reactionary and pro-imperialist as Dr Ambedkar declared on many occasions that he would remain consistently loyal to the British Government in India. But this statement cannot be accepted at its face value, for he has proved more than once, that he was never less a patriot than any other Congress leaders, only his priorities were different.

Ambedkar was fully aware of the fact that the Indian National Congress led by Mahatma Gandhi was engaged in an anti-imperialist struggle to gain political freedom for India. He also knew that political freedom was an essential condition of social transformation. So he fully endorsed the Congress goal of Swaraj. For, it meant liberation not merely of the Hindu majority but also of all minorities including the Depressed classes. And for the good of the majority as well as the
minorities, they should bury their differences and learn to live together as one nation. Ambedkar was not a sectarian leader who refused to recognize what was in the national interest. Only his support for Congress was not unconditional. Speaking at the All-India Depressed Classes Congress held at Nagpur on 8 August 1930, he clarified: "A common government is often the best instrument one can devise to mould a diverse people into a nation ... ... Historically, as well as logically it seems to me not open to any one to urge that the diversity of conditions and people puts a bar in the way of India's self-government. Indeed, if the ideal is that India should be a united nation, I venture to say, self-government would be the most potent instrument for the realization of that ideal." Then referring to the question of Depressed Classes, he added: "Surely we ought not to be content with the mere change of masters .... I agree with Congressmen that no country is good enough to rule over another. But I must also take the liberty to tell them pointblank that the proposition does not end here and that no class is good enough to rule over another class."

Is it anti-nationalism to speak of Swaraj? Is it sectarianism to suggest a 'Common government? Is it anti-nationalism to advocate the ideal of a 'United nation'? Then how and why this label of 'anti-nationalism' was thrust on Ambedkar? It is true that Ambedkar refused to be a blind and uncritical follower of the Congress. He refused to follow the majority which did not care for the minorities. And his sole mission in life was to uplift his people who like him, were victims of
the worst tyranny and segregation for centuries all in the name of religion.

Babasaheb Ambedkar was a true nationalist. He was very much optimistic about the national integration of India. Thus he said that “I know today we are divided politically, socially and economically. We are a group of warring camps and I may go even to the extent of conferring that I am probably one of the leaders of such a camp. But Sir, with all this, I am quite convinced that given time and circumstances nothing in the world will prevent this country from becoming one”.

He was a real nationalist leader of our country. He being born in an untouchable family had to suffer a lot the agony of untouchability and casteism, though he was highly educated, intelligent and of worth and wisdom par excellence. Some of the critics instead of being grateful to him, who constantly was giving his support for a strong and united India, showered on him bitter criticism and all humiliations virtually throughout his life only on the ground of caste.

The main object of his life was to emancipate the so called untouchables from the thraldom of untouchability, casteism, superstitions and social and economic dependence; that too without harming the cause of the nation. All his demands were, however, aimed at uplifting the Scheduled Castes at par with the Caste Hindus and integrate them with the mainstream on terms of equality. While demanding separate

1. Thus Spoke Ambedkar, Vol-I p-133
electorate and other privileges for the Schedule Castes, he had thought of the entire nation as one unit and had the comprehensive vision of the whole society. For him, development of the Scheduled Castes was a part of the development of the Society as a whole. However whenever the question arose of giving preference either to national interest or the interest of the Scheduled Castes, he preferred the former one and became ready for mutual adjustment.

It is true that he did not take part in the national movement under the banner of Congress and under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and he had his own reasons behind this non-cooperation.

Although he was a staunch nationalist and visualized an integrated society in the real sense, he was misunderstood by some people. He was called an anti-national, communalist and “stooge” in the hands of Britishers. However, he was so sincere in his cause, firm in his determination, uncompromising in his conviction, unparalleled in his intellectual honesty and confident of his abilities that he remained unperturbed irrespective of all the criticisms against him. He retorted against those who criticized him saying that, “India is a peculiar country and her nationalists and patriots are a peculiar people. A patriot and a nationalist in India is one who sees with open eyes his fellowmen treated as being less than men. But his humanity does not rise in protest. He knows that men and women for no cause are denied their human rights. But it does not prick his civic sense to helpful action. He finds whole classes of people shut out from public employment. But it does not
rouse his sense of justice and fair play. Hundreds of evil practices that injure man and society are perceived by him. But they do not sicken him with disgust. The patriot’s one cry is power and more power for him and for his class.”

“I am glad I do not belong to that class of patriots.”

Some of the India’s known commentators on current and political affairs not only questioned his role at freedom movement but also viewed his love for untouchables as a means for capturing power. They even said that his conversion to Buddhism was merely a political act.

Actually all these criticisms which are levelled against Ambedkar by so-called intellectuals belonging to caste Hindu community are the result of growing importance of ‘Dalit Politics’ in India. But Ambedkar never wanted to play the dirty game of politics in the name of his brethern. It is the politicians of free India who play the card of politics in the name of Untouchables. And the aim of the politicians whether they belong to caste Hindu community or Untouchables group are same, they are all hankering for power, power not for the upliftment of their community but for themselves alone.

In sum, Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar’s anti-Congressism which is wrongly branded as anti-nationalism was a political strategy to protect the interests of the Depressed classes on occasions when the Congress appeared to come in the way. His perspective of national integration was

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2. Thus Spoke Ambedkar, Vol-1, pp 34-35
very comprehensive, rational and real. He visualized an integrated society, based on liberty, equality, fraternity and social justice. He was of the firm opinion that unless the society is based on those principles, it cannot achieve integration at all. Mere religious or ideological appeal without substantial change in the structure, philosophy and attitude will not be helpful in achieving the objective of a cohesive society.

Ambedkar’s Priority:

It is but a self-evident fact that there are several divisive forces which pose potential danger to our national integration, such as casteism, regionalism, linguism, communalism, capitalism, feudalism and many others. But above every thing else, Ambedkar wanted to fight the 2000 – year old tyranny and oppression of caste Hindus and secure equality for millions of socially outcast ‘Untouchables’. Being one of them, he had experienced humiliation and human degradation. However, he was never opposed to freedom, as he ardently desired an immediate transfer of power, only after making sure that the ‘Depressed’ have their rightful place in free India. For him the British rule was the lesser evil than the caste Hindu orthodoxy. He therefore, focussed all his time, energy and resources to educate and organize his people to fight against ‘untouchability’ and for social justice rather than join the Congress and fight for political freedom.

It is true that he did not take part in the national movement under the banner of Congress and under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi.
Because he was of the opinion that unless it became clear that the depressed classes would get some benefit in the ensuing Swaraj, their involvement in the independence movement was not possible. The Congress Party under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, could not come out with any substantial proposals for sharing of the power with Scheduled Castes, as such it failed to gain his confidence.

His ideological differences with Gandhiji at the Round Table Conference in 1931, made him the target of the entire nationalist press, which maligned him as ‘the traitor to the national cause, and a separatist’. But Ambedkar rightly denied that his demand for a separate electorate would create anti-national spirit. The Sikh, the Muslims and the Indian Christians who had separate electorates, also were loyal to national cause. Nationalism or anti-nationalism have nothing to do with the electoral system, they are the result of extra-electoral forces.

Ambedkar launched the Scheduled Caste Movement not only to remove the social disabilities of the ‘untouchables’ but to bring a social revolution which would remove all man-made barriers like caste and provide equal opportunities to all. He said, “If we achieve success in our movement to unite all the Hindus in a single caste, we shall have rendered the greatest service to the Indian Nation, and to the Hindu Community in particular”. But unfortunately, with other strong political forces, especially the Indian National Congress, he not only failed in uniting all the Hindus, but also failed to maintain the unity of the
depressed classes, as hundreds of them expressed full confidence in Gandhiji. He was thus disowned by a section of the people for whom he fought and struggled all his life.

**Social Justice in Practice:**

Today, when the country is being torn by communal turmoil, religious fundamentalism and upsurge of violence killing thousands of innocent people, we miss a leader and social revolutionary like Gandhiji and Ambedkar. Both of them played a memorable role in uplifting the untouchables. But it is not out of place to examine critically the present scenario of Indian society, to find out whether the untouchables received the blessing of socio-economic justice or it has still played hide and seek with them.

The Constitution of India contains many measures designed to uplift the dalits, to remove their disabilities and give them special opportunities for advancement in education and employment. Bonded labour is by law abolished, untouchability is legally forbidden. But all these are on paper. The social evils continue. The economic wrongs go on. Even today discrimination against Scheduled Castes and the practice of untouchability persist in certain parts of the country. In certain areas dalits are working as bonded labour. Investigation into offences against the Scheduled Castes is often done by hostile police men. Gang rapes of these backward women rarely reach the court and if they do they hardly survive to end in conviction. Actually neither the Police nor the
Court has sufficient social commitment towards the dalit.

There are special reservations for employment and education. And whatever the quantum of reservation in official orders, the fact remains that only a small percentage get the benefit. For lack of minimum educational qualification they are not getting the fruits of reservation. And it is clear that in the bureaucracy and the judiciary, not to speak even the Ministry, from time to time they have been suffering discrimination in actual facts.

Thus rigorous efforts are necessary to educate their children properly. Reservation for them should not be end of governmental responsibility. Emphasis should be put on better initial education and additional coaching with full educational and financial assistance at upper classes level. Untill these minimum steps are taken educational untouchability will survive the Constitution.

It is a fact that, there is no genetic discrimination inflicted by Divinity on them : It is society, the oppressive environment, distance from intellectual, industrial, educational and cultural opportunities which have kept them in dark and depressed serfdom.

But while education is extremely important for their around development but equality and homogeneity are a far cry if they are not getting financial assistance from the Government for raising their standard of living. Thus it is necessary to raise their economic position by launching special projects.
The Father of the Nation adopted, as his fighting faith, the uplift of the Untouchables and his assimilation, on equal footing, into Hindu Society, and the Constitution whose principal architect was himself a militant mahar, made social justice a founding faith and built into it humanist provisions to lift the level of the lowly scheduled castes and tribes to make democracy viable and equal for all. The Dalits have been oppressed and exploited by all others, and subjected to shameful discrimination. The Constitutional provisions for them and the scheduled tribes, who have long been isolated from the mainstream, needs to be respected. But the social reality is that if caste is taken as a basis to determine who should get the concessions regarding opportunities for higher education and government jobs, the society will be fragmented. Experience in the last quarter of a century clearly has shown that the number of groups in the list of weaker section increases rather than decreases with the time. Concessions create a vested interest in backwardness! No group wants to forgo the concessions; it is because no group as a whole can truly say that all its members have now become ‘forward’, that no section of the group needs special concessions. It is true that some sections of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes are now as ‘forward’ as any ‘forward’ section. But it is also true that large majorities of these groups are yet very backward. The basic fact which every citizen of India has to acknowledge is that two-third or more of the citizens of India are steeped in illiteracy and suffer utter poverty.
The danger of 'reservation' is three-fold. Firstly, its benefits by and large, are snatched away by the top creamy layer of the 'backward' class or caste, thus keeping the weakest among the weak always weak. Secondly, claim of backwardness is over-played in democracy by large and vocal groups whose burden of backwardness has been substantially lightened by the march of time and measures of better education and more opportunities for employment etc. Lastly, a lasting solution to the problem comes only from improvement of social environment, added educational facilities and cross-fertilization of castes by inter-caste and inter-class marriages sponsored as a massive State programme, and this solution is calculatedly hidden from view by the higher 'backward' groups with a vested interest in the plums of backwardism.

Whatever may be the fact, the problem of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are totally different from other backward classes. The considerations and reasons which led the founding father to make special provisions for them still exist and therefore, reservation for them should continue for some more years. A declaration can also be made by the Government that after a stipulated period of time there would be no reservation in the form of quota system. And after this period of time other measures should be adopted by the Government to assist them in preparation for fair competition.

Methods should be devised so as to ensure that not only few castes members among the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes grab most of the fruits of preferential treatment and thereby create new upper
Caste should never be recognized as criteria of identifying backwardness and backwardness must be terrible backwardness of the type from which Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes people suffer. In respect of O.B.C. the courts should apply the strict scrutiny test. If the O.B.C. need protective discrimination, the preferential treatment other than reservation of seats, e.g., scholarship, concessions in upper age limit for competitive examinations and special coaching may be awarded.

In order to inspire the confidence of S.Cs, S.Ts and O.B.Cs, and with a view to develop a sense of security without reservation, the upper castes have to leave the way of their vested interest’s protection through untold, unofficial reservations what Dr Anirudh Prasad has termed as destructive discrimination.

Another important point is that reservation should be restricted to the stage of initial appointment, and after that every employee become member of one and the same class. After appointment any discrimination will breed injustice not only among equals but against the society by giving undue weightage to incompetent employee and thereby creating job dissatisfaction among others affecting efficiency in service. And as far as possible, de-reservation should be adopted in top and merit requiring services.

In sum, everybody regarded that Scheduled Castes and Scheduled
Tribes are not as caste but as a large backward group deserving of societal compassion. Their case is totally different from others. They have been oppressed and exploited by all others and subjected to shameful discrimination. But even here care should be taken to see that the benefits go to really poor, and that there is a time limit to reservation. Because so long 'reservation' system is there, two groups one 'forward' and other 'backward' will be there. And in that case establishment of 'equality' which is another name of 'social justice' is impossible. It is necessary for the sake of 'social justice' to establish a classless casteless society. In order to set up such a society, steps have to be taken to weaken and progressively eliminate caste structure. Unfortunately, the movement is in the reverse gear. Caste stratification has become more rigid. In fact there is a mad rush for being recognized as belonging to a caste which by its nomenclature would be included in the list of socially and educationally backward classes. Thus it is high time for the Government to renew its 'Reservation Policy' in such a manner that it will assist the Government to establish a society based on 'social justice' which is a dream of both Gandhiji and Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar.

Both Gandhi and Ambedkar bestowed us a vision of a strong and united India inspired by the ideals of liberty, equality and social justice and even more than that, a legacy of moral and spiritual values which should inspire us in all our endeavours. There may be differing views about the conflicting approaches adopted by the two leaders – Ambedkar and Gandhi, to resolve the problem of untouchability but
none can deny their prime contributions in removing the taboos and restraints to the depressed classes. Refusing to be cowed down by the attached traditional concepts and customary ideas they broke new grounds consistent with the concept of equality of all human beings. It is equality that is absent in Hindu society. Ambedkar and Gandhi dedicated their lives to restoration of equality to the avarna section of Hindu Society. The success they achieved is limited. Nevertheless they acted as a sobering influence on Hinduism. The reformation they started, has changed the pattern of Hindu society and brought, if not full equality, a reasonable tolerance and acceptance of the depressed classes by the caste Hindus. It is this achievement that lends credence to their role as great emancipators.

Thus, let us keep away from criticizing one against the other. Let us read them, read what they have written more than what others have written about them. Both were extremely sensitive to social causes and human suffering. They have their own compulsions and commitments and thus they crossed swords on many occasions, but one thing is certain that both were the champions of humanity. And humanism demands eradication of all injustices from the society whether social, economic or political.