INTRODUCTION

In the popular mind, the major contribution of Ambedkar, hailed as the architect of the Indian constitution, having been the Chairman of the Drafting Committee of Indian Constitution, is his crusade for securing the rightful place for the discriminated, deprived and downtrodden sections of our society. But both the achievements are inextricably linked with the setting up of democratic Indian polity. Ambedkar was actively engaged in events and procedures related to the making of India a flawless democratic polity. His substantive participation in this task goes back to 1918, when he was called upon to give evidence before the Southborough Committee appointed to deal with the issue of franchise. Ambedkar ably impressed upon the committee that social equality or elimination of social inequalities is a prerequisite for Swaraj.

As member of the Bombay Legislative Council during 1926-34, Ambedkar was actively associated with constitutional matters. He prepared and presented to the Statutory Commission in 1928, a statement concerning the safeguards for the protection of the depressed classes.

His active participation in the three Round Table Conferences (1930-1932) is an important landmark in making him a potential constitution framer. During the Round Table Conferences, Ambedkar got opportunity to master matters related to the representation and electorates. Although having sharp differences of opinion with Gandhiji yet he stressed the need for legislation against social persecution. Equally forcefully, he argued for the right to adequate representation in legislature by election and not by nomination.

Further, as negotiator in the Poona Pact, 1932, his role was of utmost importance. From negotiation at the Round Table Conferences, Ambedkar emerged as the greatest champion of the depressed classes and, subsequently, by actively advocating their cause, such as at the time of Cripps Mission, Interim Government, and Constituent Assembly. Ambedkar, as is well known,
was the Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the world’s largest democracy. Although drafting of the Constitution was based on the various reports and also the mandates given by the Constituent Assembly and the policy opinion of the Congress party from time to time yet Ambedkar, a man of extraordinary legal acumen, brought to bear upon the draft his technical skills, as he was by discipline one of the great constitutionalists. Further, as revealed by Mr. T.T.Krishnamachari - a member of Drafting Committee - that owing to the continued absence of most of the members of the Committee for some reason or the other, ‘there was a void’ of expertise in the quorum of the committee. “So it happened, ultimately, that the burden of drafting this Constitution fell on Dr. Ambedkar and I have no doubt”, he said, “that we are grateful to him for having achieved this task in a manner which is undoubtedly commendable….”.  

He had the unique distinction and special responsibility of moving the draft for consideration of the Constituent Assembly and defending its provisions.

Ambedkar’s major objective in life was to break the hierarchical Indian social structure - iniquitous, torn into conflicting loyalties, governed by very rigid caste system - and work for democracy, which he regarded not merely as a form of government but essentially a society ensuring economic and social equality. Besides the political denotation, it has considerable social context and content, too. Ambedkar was indeed a multifaceted personality – a scholar, a thinker, writer, debater, a distinguished economist, a lawyer, an educationist, endowed with qualities of a parliamentarian, and a practical democrat, ever eager to bring about fundamental political and social transformation of Indian society. He gave social content to the struggle for independence and a distinct direction for the establishment of democratic and egalitarian social order in free India.

This thesis is an attempt to put together Ambedkar's ideas about democracy and to present them in a logical manner, which lie scattered over his numerous writings – a task which Ambedkar himself could not undertake. The main purpose in doing so is to put forward ideas of one of the constitution makers of the largest democracy of the world and also of a modern Indian thinker who had envisioned free India as a democracy where social justice would be a reality - not just a dream or an idea or a concept in abstract terms. This study has, therefore, attempted to present his ideas against the background of the situation in modern India, for it is in this context that his ideas have developed. It includes the social, economic and political factors, which impinge upon Ambedkar's thought.

The Thesis delineates as accurately as possible Ambedkar's ideas about the principles and problems of democracy, also addressing questions like - why did Ambedkar believe in democracy? What is his interpretation? How did he extend and apply it to Indian ethos? What is his original contribution and its significance in the development of India as a democratic society?

As shall be discussed in the following pages, he felt that the political theories, which were largely derived from the West, had to be made meaningful in an entirely different cultural and political context. The basic conceptions had to be worked out in relation to problems of Indian society that were considerably different from those of Europe and America. The succeeding chapters would show, essentially, Ambedkar's attempt to make his ideas relevant to the needs of the Indian people. He found in Indian conditions certain factors, which made impossible a blind copying of western theories regarding democracy. They had to be interpreted in terms of prevailing conditions in India.

Ambedkar's significant contribution, then, lies in the application and adaptation of democratic ideas to Indian politics. The proposed exercise,
therefore, focused on social dynamics of democracy in the Indian context as perceived by Ambedkar.

Equally important aspect of the study is to bring out the extent to which, as the Chairman of the Constitution Drafting Committee, he gave expression to his own belief in the ideal, “Sarvenah Bhavantu Sukhinah Sarve Santa Niramayah” i.e. the good and prosperity of all.

**Methodology**

The study is largely descriptive and analytical. An attempt has been made systematically to arrange and analyze Ambedkar’s own idea of democracy that has considerable social context and content besides the political connotation. Critical analysis and interpretation of the literature on the subject has been adopted as the main method in formulation of the study.

The source material is primarily Ambedkar’s works and those of his contemporaries discussing, evaluating and critically examining his ideas. The same has been supplemented by secondary sources, wherever considered necessary. So far as the primary sources are concerned, an extensive study of Ambedkar’s writings and speeches as well as Constituent Assembly debates has been undertaken. Further, the views of a number of political scientists, economists, socialists, lawyers, as well as the study of Buddhist, Gandhian and Dalit scholars and writers who have pondered over the issue of democracy and presented their perceptions of democracy, have been consulted. Their works have, therefore, been sources of considerable value in clarifying the concept and understanding of Ambedkar’s views on the issue.

**Chapter Scheme**

The thesis comprises of five chapters. Chapter I - ‘Reflection of the Prevailing Democracy’ seeks to find out how the prevailing political milieu in the different democratic societies and the intellectual trends made an impact on Ambedkar’s mind, when he was in New York, London and Germany for higher
studies. Chapter II – ‘On Parliamentary Democracy’ - seeks to point out the factors and consideration that determined Ambedkar’s preference for parliamentary democracy.

Chapter III - ‘Democratic Devices’ - seeks to examine Ambedkar’s view on the Party System, Franchise, Pressure Groups, Political obligation, Electoral System, Freedom of Speech and Expression, as these constitute the basic devices of modern representative democratic system.

In Ambedkar’s time, Guild Socialism, Syndicalism, Fabian Socialism, Scientific Socialism formed important themes in political as well as the academic circles. Ambedkar was exposed to these ideas early in his life. Chapter IV - ‘Democracy and Socialism’ - seeks to lay down the economic issues that Ambedkar approached and examined with such foresight that his analysis and treatment of some of them is relevant today. Being committed to social equality, justice, cause of the deprived and the oppressed, Ambedkar discussed at length about labour problems, agricultural reforms and industrial issues such as social security, wages, public/private sector etc. The study attempts to examine these issues pertaining to the form and functioning of democracy.

The task of making India a democracy obviously did not end with just having opted for democratic form of government; it actually began after having made this choice. Chapter V - ‘Democratic Social Change’ - seeks to analyse Ambedkar’s plan for democratic social reconstruction of India.