CHAPTER III

DEMOCRATIC DEVICES

A satisfactory functioning of democracy requires democratic devices, the institutional structures that constitute democratic politics. Any discussion of how it might be made to work better must recognize and account for the role of political parties, press, pressure groups, popular elections and the idea of representation itself. For the success of democracy in the country what is needed is the existence of an electorate that is conscious of its rights, privileges and responsibilities and at the same time, we must have political parties which have commitment to distinctive socio-economic policies and programmes.

POLITICAL PARTIES

Political parties serve as the moving force in crystallizing public opinion, and as the unifying agencies that make democracy workable. Without political parties, says Maclver, "there can be no unified statement of principle, no orderly evolution of policy, no regular resort to the constitutional device of parliamentary elections, nor, of course, any of the recognized institutions by means of which a party seeks to gain or to maintain power."¹ These are the indispensable links between the people and the representative machinery of government. These are the vehicles through which individuals and groups work to secure political power, and make it successful, to exercise that power. Thus, political parties are responsible for maintaining a continuous connection between the people and those who represent them either in government or in the opposition.

Political parties, besides acting as indispensable link between the people and the government, also act as instruments of articulation and synthesis of

various demands of multiple, competing social groups. It is the political parties, which help in raising the political consciousness of the people in traditional societies as also in the formation of government, particularly in the parliamentary systems. A political party can be said to act as an organized group that seeks to capture power and control the government. Besides playing a crucial role as instrument of politicization of the masses and agents of social change, they also compete for popular support from different segments of society. Most of the political parties have definite ideological orientations that shape their articulation of social and economic goals and programmes.

In the adaptation of modern institutions of representative government to traditional societies, political parties play a decisive role. In every modern polity, or a polity that aspires to modernize, political parties are an indispensable link between the society and the institutions of government. In traditional societies undergoing modernization and political development, political parties have the double task of: (I) providing stable government and (ii) bringing new groups of people into the political processes while orienting them towards the political and economic goals of the modern state. Paul Brass, a well known political scientist states,

"The ability of former colonial countries to make a successful transition from foreign bureaucratic rule to democratic self-government depends very much upon the capacity of the political parties to perform these tasks. The capacity of the ruling party in a new state to perform these tasks, in turn, depends how successful it is in the year after independence."\(^2\)

Ambedkar, who gave prime importance to political power for the emancipation of the depressed classes, led their liberation movement under the political banner. It is a fact that a number of spiritual and religious leaders and social reformers inspired by humanitarian and spiritual love, tried to uplift the untouchables. Their approach towards the problem was based purely on social and humanitarian principles. In contrast to majority of his contemporaries, he felt that the depressed people must first acquire power to have their rightful place in the society, meaning thereby, that the untouchables must have a share and participation in political power and processes.

“We are often reminded that the problem of the depressed classes is a social problem and that its solution lies elsewhere than in politics. We take strong exception to this view. We hold that the problem of the depressed classes will never be solved unless they get political power in their own hands. If this is true, and if we do not think that the contrary can be made, then the problem of the depressed classes is, I submit, eminently a political problem and must be treated as such.”

As shall be revealed in the following pages, Ambedkar had definite view of political party, and the role political parties play in the liberation of depressed people and shaping of national politics.

According to R.G. Gettel -

“A political party consists of a group of citizens, more or less organized, who act as a political unit and who, by the use of their voting power, aim to control the government and carry out their policies. It is the most elaborate and

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comprehensive form in which public opinion is organized and made effective in government."4

Maclver defined Political party as –

“an association organized in support of some principle or policy which by constitutional means, endeavours to make, the determinant of government.”5 According to Appadorai -

“A political party is a more or less organized group of citizens who act together as a political unit, have distinctive aims and opinions on the leading political questions of controversy in the state, and who, by acting together as a political unit, seek to obtain control of the government.”6

Ambedkar’s definition of a political party is descriptive as well as analytical. He says –

“A Party is like an army. It must have – (i) a leader who is like a Commander-in-Chief. (ii) It must have an organization, which includes – (a) membership (b) a ground plan and (c) discipline. (iii) It must have principles and policy. (iv) It must have programmes or plan of work. (v) It must have tactics and strategies i.e. it must have plan when to do what and how to reach its goal.”7

Thus, political party is an organized group of citizens who hold common views on current and crucial questions of public interest and acts as a political unit to obtain control of the government with a view to further the programmes and the policies, which they profess and propagate.

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6. A. Appadorai: The substance of Politics (Delhi, Oxford University, Press) 1965, p. 530.

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Political parties, as indispensable organizations, perform two types of functions in modern democracies. Within government, they provide regular structure for the organization of legislative chambers (e.g. allocation of committee positions), for coalition building and for coordination among individual officials, both within and across branches of government. Externally, parties provide a forum for the debate of political ideas and a ready-made venue for political involvement by interested citizens. In the words of Bryce, the importance of political parties may be summed up as follows:

“In popular governments, however, parties have a wider extension, if not a more strenuous life, for everywhere a citizen has a vote. With the duty to use it at elections, each of the parties which strives for mastery must try to bring the largest possible number of voters into ranks, organize them locally, appeal to them by the spoken and printed words, bring them up to the polls. Ballots having replaced bullets in political life, every voter is supposed to belong to one of the parties and has to render more or less obedience to its leaders.”

Ambedkar held that at least two political parties are necessary for the successful functioning of democracy. “A party is necessary to run a government but two parties are necessary to keep the government from becoming a despot. A democratic government can remain democratic only if it is worked by minimum two parties, a party in power and a party in opposition.” Thus, Ambedkar clearly feels that in a democracy, the different view-points have to be respected and recognized; the point is not of having a dual party system or multi party system, the basic intentions of parties are that they generally arrange themselves on two

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sides. There may be many parties, but there are only two sides — a side that forms the government and the side that occupies the position of opposition in the system. Thus, the existence of a party system is a prerequisite for the foundation of a parliamentary democracy. As Jennings puts it: “If there is no opposition, there is no democracy, ‘His Majesty’s Opposition’ is an idle phrase. His majesty needs an opposition as well as government.”

In the opinion of Ambedkar, two-party system provides greater safety, for the party in power may jump over to totalitarianism and dictatorship. The negation of the party system in a democracy may lead the people to perilous consequences. He clearly lays down that “there are two pillars on which the parliamentary system of government rests... Those two pillars are (I) an opposition and (II) free and fair elections.”

He finds support for his argument for the necessity and importance of ‘opposition’, that is, the other viewpoints for the fair working of parliamentary democracy from India’s antiquity. There were ‘Nibandhkars’ to interpret the Vedas and Smrities. They began their comments on ‘Slokas’ and ‘Sutras’ by stating firstly the ‘Purva Paksha’ the one side of the questions, followed up by giving the ‘Uttar Paksha’- the other side. Then they used to give what they termed as a ‘Adhikaran’ where they used to criticize both the ‘Pakshas’. Finally, they gave the ‘Siddhant’, their own decisions.

“By this, they wanted to show us that the question raised was not an easy question; it is a question where there is dispute, discussion and doubt ... all our ancient teachers believed in two party system of government.”

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12. Ibid, p. 54.
Even “Britain and Canada, two exponents of parliamentary system of government, recognize this important fact; in both the countries the leader of opposition is paid salary by the government.” To him, “theoretically, political parties are agencies for the expression and execution of public opinion but in practice parties create and direct influence and often control public opinion. Indeed, this is the chief function of a party.”

Ambedkar did not believe merely in the nominal existence of a party. He insisted that a party should have practical programme. It should understand the views that other parties hold dear for the masses and their well-being. The success of a party shall depend on certain working conditions. “A party must do two things: In the first place, it must establish contact with the masses. It must go out among the masses with its wares – its principles, policies, ideas and candidates. In the second place, it must carry on propaganda among the masses in favour of its wares.”

Thus a political party in today’s society must equip itself with the wherewithal necessary for mass contact which is the most precious thing in the functioning of political parties without which it cannot muster support from the society or make impression on it. Money alone does not make a party effective nor enables it to exist. The socio-economic and political agenda and the tools it needs to publicize that agenda are, according to Ambedkar, necessary assets of a political party. That is why Ambedkar wants vigorous propaganda of the party programme in society. Although people differ in their opinions yet they are gregarious by nature. They have, of necessity, to adjust their differences if they are to live in society. The like-minded people may join hands in order to put forward their

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13. Ibid, p.54.
15. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, op.cit., Vol.1, p. 239.
views in an organized manner. They need to support and propagate the ideas, which they jointly favour. Otherwise, their ideas will be silent and dead. “It must animate them and enlighten them”. 16

He quoted Bryce in this regard:

“Give the voters some knowledge of the political issues they have to decide, to inform them of their leaders, and the crimes of their opponents.” 17

In Ambedkar’s considered opinion, these are the basic factors from which concerted action can arise. “A party which fails to forge concerted action has no right to call itself a party.”18 Men and their ideas form a political party or any other organization. “Men are mortal. So are ideas. It is wrong to hold that an idea will take roots pro-priovigare. An idea needs propagation as much as a plant needs watering. Both will otherwise wither and die.”19

It seems that Ambedkar also read Mazzini in depth, but was not necessarily influenced by him. For example, in the foregoing context, Mazzini, who held that “men may be killed, while their ideas cannot be killed’, Ambedkar maintains “ideas may be suppressed. They may be killed if not followed, suckled and supported by the public opinion. The same thing happens with a party, if it is without mass contact, living ideas and social support.20

These ideas of Ambedkar are essentially those of a true democrat who thought far beyond the availability of usual civil liberties that the citizens are entitled to, namely free expression, thinking and organization. The urge to achieve

16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
19. Ibid, p. 239.
20. Ibid.
and the sense of accomplishment through the exercise of these rights weighed quite high with him. “Men are not interested in principles and policies. But they are interested in accomplishing things. What is necessary for a party is to bring about concerted action.”

Acknowledging the Aspirations of people, their promises and agenda are not enough, actualization of aspirations is possible if the political parties pursue firstly the promises. In a parliamentary democracy, goals can be accomplished not by individual voice but by concerted action. The necessary thing for concerted action is “the crystallization of individual opinions into public opinion and this crystallization or the building up of public opinion constitutes the main function of a political party on which depends its work and success. A party which fails to forge concerted action has no right to call itself a party.”

Ambedkar does not believe in the mere formation of principles and polices, other superficial purposes and empty politics, but he stands for actual propaganda, mass contact and concerted action for the emancipation and enlightenment of all citizens. Political organizations served even higher purpose such as building of character. All this cannot be achieved without freedom and courage. He said, “The secret of freedom is courage, and courage is born in combination of individuals into a party.” Ambedkar lays a great emphasis on the necessity of the party system in democracy, and suggests two party system for India. He was of the opinion that political parties enable people of different opinions to agree upon some common principles, to work unitedly and to secure political power by constitutional means.

22. Ibid, p. 239.
**Political Participation**

The party is probably the most potent instrument in facilitating political participation, which is an ingredient of every polity, large or small. The right to participate is an essential element of a democratic government, inseparable from other attributes of democracy such as consent, accountability, majority rule, equality and popular sovereignty. The growth of democratic polity is, in fact, measured by the extension of suffrage, the right to hold office and to associate for political purposes. While the traditional monarchies restricted power and participation mainly to the nobility and their agents, democratic countries have, in principle, transformed their prerogatives into rights enjoyed by the citizens. This extension of participation was partly desired to give strength and force to the principles of consent, accountability, and political opposition. Participation is, therefore, the principal means by which consent is granted or withdrawn in a democracy and rulers are made accountable to the people. Political participation is associated with political awareness i.e. actual knowledge of political affairs. The political parties try to involve the voters in the political contest through organizing campaign activities.

**Political Power**

Thus in democracy, everyone can share political power, because it provides political liberty. Political liberty means political power to capture the machinery of government. To Ambedkar’s mind, it appears with certainty that the people share political power in a democratic government. Without sharing such power, the fate of a community may not be bright. As a matter of fact, he goes on to explain the meaning of political power, its significance and use. So, according to him, “Political power is the most precious thing in the life of a community, especially if
its position is constantly being challenged and the community is required to maintain it by meeting challenge; political power is the only means by which it can sustain its position."

Ambedkar, who gave prime importance to political power for the emancipation of the depressed classes, led their liberation movement under the political banner. In contrast to majority of his contemporaries, he felt that the depressed people must first acquire power to have their rightful place in the society. Meaning thereby that the untouchables must have a share in political power and processes. According to Bhagwan Dass –

"the problem of the depressed classes will never be solved unless they get political power in their own hands".25

However, the untouchables, who were deliberately subjected to discriminations on the irrational grounds of nature of occupation, could not even think of power. Due to their age long suppression and oppression, they had existence sans hopes and ambitions. Actually, they formed apolitical strata of the society, serving and submitting to the whims of their high caste masters. It seems that Ambedkar considered political emancipation of the deprived as prior most objective of the political parties, to which they should be committed to accomplish. This aspect of Ambedkar's policy has been termed as politics of emancipation by R.K. Kshirsagar, who said:

"it is because of the 'Politics of emancipation' played up by Ambedkar that they started taking keen interest in politics and started participating in politics with a view to sharing political power. Their ambitions were raised; as such their level of political

participation was raised to a great extent. Thus, they formed apolitical strata of the society."\(^{26}\)

Ambedkar believed that emancipation of the depressed classes was possible only in ‘Swaraj Constitution’ by which he meant democratic state. He said:

“It is only in a Swaraj Constitution that we stand any chance of getting the political power into our own hands, without which we cannot bring salvation to our people.”\(^{27}\)

Thus, Ambedkar established a direct linkage between political power and liberation of people in the programme of a political party. He successfully tried to rejuvenate the depressed to be hopeful and ambitious. They were set in motion to fulfill the role of a ‘ruling race’. He stated that, “we must resolve that in the free India of the future, we will be a ruling race. We refuse to continue to play a role of subservience or accept position in which we should be treated as servants, not masters."\(^{28}\)

He was not content merely with certain civil rights and safeguards, but he made a ‘resolve’ to raise the ‘apolitical strata’ to the level of powerful class. He had very confidently said that, “Unless they had the political power in their hands, they would not hope to bring about the desired improvement in the condition of the poverty stricken people.”\(^{29}\)

**Ambedkar as Founder of Political Parties**

He was of the firm opinion that the downtrodden communities cannot make any progress without having a share in political power. Understandably, there was consistent persistence on providing political safeguards to the ‘dalits’ from the

\(^{26}\) R.K Kshirsagar, op.cit., p. 112.
\(^{27}\) Bhagwan Dass, op.cit., Vol.1, p. 23.
\(^{28}\) Ibid, p. 77.
\(^{29}\) Ibid.
very beginning. In 1919, he gave his evidence before the Southborough Franchise Committee and strongly put forward the demand of separate electorate for the dalits. Later on, he founded Bahishkkrit Hitkarini Sabha in 1924 for bringing about socio-political awareness among the dalits, worked for it through the legislature as nominated member of the Bombay Legislative Council in which he was inducted in 1927. The famous Chaudar Tank Satyagraha at Mahad and Kalaram Temple entry Satyagraha at Nasik in 1930 are well-known efforts in the pursuit of political emancipation. So was his appearance for presenting the case for political equality before the Simon Commission in 1928. He took part in the Round Table Conferences in 1930-32 and concluded Poona Pact in 1932. However, all such initiatives were more of an individual effort at personal level and not under banner of a political party outfit.

Finally, it could rightly be said that the political movement of the dalits under a political party had started in 1936 itself with the establishment of the Independent Labour Party. Actually, he felt the necessity to form a political party for taking up the issue of share of the depressed classes in political power to the logical conclusion, particularly after the passing of 1935 Act. The British government passed the Government of Indian Act in August 1935, which envisaged greater representation to Indians in the Central and State Legislatures. Accordingly, general elections were to be held in 1937. Different political parties began to prepare for the general elections. The Indian National Congress was one of the biggest parties having following in every province. There were Liberals, the Muslim League, and Communist Parties etc. but not a single political party in India exclusively meant for the promotion of the interest of the dalits.

The Congress party, however, claimed to be the protector of all Indians; of course, including dalits. However, Ambedkar was not convinced if the Indian National Congress under Gandhi’s leadership was really fully committed for safeguarding the interest of the dalits because it could not do anything substantial or concrete for the dalits. It had even proved to be against the interest of the dalits by opposing separate electorate for them. The Congress was representing the high caste landlords and their vested interests. Therefore, Ambedkar had no faith in the Congress, as it could not even maintain the promises, given on the occasion of Poona Pact, in letter and spirit.

He had no faith in the Communists also, since in their opinion, if the economic ‘base’ of the social structure were destroyed the whole superstructure would collapse. But Ambedkar thought that even if it has been agreed upon, the superstructure of the caste has to be destroyed first in order to reconstruct a new social order.31 The Communists, however, failed to understand the Indian social system in its real sense, according to him.

Independent Labour Party

At this critical time, Ambedkar took the lead and formed the Independent Labour Party (ILP) on August 15, 1936.32 Ambedkar was its President and Treasurer, Shri M.B. Samarth was its Secretary and Shri K.V. Chitre and Shri S.A. Upashyam were its joint Secretaries. The party’s Head Office was at Damodar Hall at Polbavadi, Parel (Mumbai). What prompted Ambedkar to select that particular name for the party that he wanted the party would be independent of every other political organization although it would be ready to co-operate with any other political party where co-operation was possible.

31 Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: op.cit., Vol.1, p. 47.
The party was a Labour Organization in the sense that its programme was mainly to advance the welfare of labour classes. The word 'Labour' is used instead of the word 'Depressed classes' because labour, in his opinion, includes the depressed classes as well. Here Ambedkar seems to treat labour in a broader sense, as the Independent Labour Party was obviously meant to serve the interest of almost all the oppressed and exploited sections of the society. The Independent Labour Party was not a communal or sectarian party at all. He declared:

"The present was no time of the parties communally organized, he had in agreement with the wishes of his friends, broadened the name and also the programme of the party, so as to permit political cooperation between the other classes and the depressed classes."

Further, according to the Act of 1935, Bombay Legislative Assembly was to be 'composed' of 175 members, out of which the Scheduled Castes got only 15 seats to be elected by joint electorate as per Poona Pact. "It was obvious that the strength of 15 members was insufficient for an active opposition."

Therefore, in consultation with his caste Hindu colleagues, he decided to put up some candidates for the general seats to raise their overall strength. He, therefore, was impelled to form such a political party, which could accommodate dalits, non-dalits, and all those who were subjected to exploitation, discrimination and other socio-economic hardships.

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34. Quoted by W.N. Kuber: op.cit., p. 221.
Programme of Party

A comprehensive programme was drawn to satisfy and redress all the immediate needs and grievances of the landless, poor tenants, agriculturists and workers. While framing the Constitution of the Labour Party, Ambedkar took largely the programme of the British Labour Party that he had studied in depth. During his stay in London at the time of the Round Table Conferences, he came into contact with leaders of the British Labour Party, had long discussions with Sidney Webb and Mrs. Webb. It proved encouraging that the “Formation of the Labour Party by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar marked a new stage in the politicization of the depressed class movement in India.”

The party’s manifesto had been formulated in consultation with all the concerned. The party decided to undertake to establish land mortgage banks, agriculture producers’ co-operative societies, and marketing societies with a view to improving the productivity of agriculture, as declared by Ambedkar. To raise the efficiency and productive capacity, an Extension Programme of technical education was to be devised. The principle of State Management and State Ownership of Industry was adopted. It resolved to get all obstacles to a free and full life removed, the party further resolved to get appropriate programme effected to protect agricultural tenants through (a) the Khoti system and (b) The Talukadary System. It assured to provide the workers a minimum standard of living compatible with civilized life, introduce legislation to control unemployment, and dismissal and promotion of employees in factories, to fix maximum hours of work, payment of adequate wages, leave with pay, and as many amenities of life as possible, and bonus to the workers, pensions or other benefits on retirements, benefits on account of old age or other incapacitation. The party resolved also to

36. Ibid, p. 46.
undertake legislation for all necessary social reforms and for preventing social 
ostracism and boycott, dealing with the problem of beggars and other destitutes 
and to bring suitable changes in the outlook of the village people. Thus the Party 
envisaged holistic programme of action to improve the lot of all dalits including 
the labour of all denominations.

In matters of education, the party promised to provide free and compulsory 
primary education, to undertake the scheme of adult education, to facilitate higher 
education, and education facilities to the educationally backward communities.

The following were the conditions laid down by Ambedkar while selecting 
candidates for the 15 reserved seats in Bombay Presidency;

(i) The candidate who wanted to contest the election on behalf of Independent Labour Party should know English well.

(ii) He should be young enough to walk 10 to 16 miles distance a day.

(iii) He should work under the discipline of the party.

(iv) He should not be after his personal ends.

(v) He should be able to devote his time for the cause of society.

The election took place on February 17, 1937 and when the results were 
declared, Ambedkar was elected with a thumping majority. Of the seventeen 
candidates put up by the party, fourteen came out successful. After the 1937 
elections, the Congress leaders formed their Ministry in Bombay Presidency and 
Independent Labour Party worked as an opposition party in Bombay Presidency. 
True to his conviction, his party indeed performed the functions of a real 
opposition. For example, it vehemently criticized the policies of the Congress 
(ruling party) regarding Tenancy, Industrial Disputes Bill, Khoti Bill and other 
measures. His speeches in the Bombay Assembly were well studied, thought
provoking and penetrating. Keer has rightly observed that: “In the first popular Provincial Assemblies, Ambedkar was the first legislator in India to introduce a Bill for the abolition of the serfdom of agricultural tenants.”

There were several bills and proposals on which the Independent Labour Party members expressed their views and observations. These were the Bills regarding Primary and University Education, Panchayat System and Local Boards. Also, there were other Bills like those to abolish Mahar Watans, Prohibition, Independence of Judiciary etc. Besides, the role on the floor of Assembly, the role in awakening the common masses about their rights and raising their level of political participation, and extending co-operation to the like-minded people are of great importance. Independent Labour Party served in significant way, as enlightened and creative opposition in the legislature and a prime mobilizer of public opinion in the particular sections of society.

The party, however, was not destined to live long. The popular ministries in the provinces resigned in protest against the British government’s unilateral declaration of making India a party to the World War II. Sir Stafford Cripps came to India in March 1942 to tackle the political and constitutional dead-lock and seek Indians’ cooperation in war efforts. He prepared a plan, which promised to offer freedom after the cessation of the hostilities. “An elected body shall be formed”, he said, “to frame the new constitution”. It was further laid down that the constitution making body would be composed of members duly elected by the Provincial Assemblies to the extent of 1/10 of their respective strength.

Ambedkar rejected outright the Cripps’ proposals, as they did not care to take cognizance of the depressed classes. The proposals left the dalits to be prey to

37. Ibid, p.296.
the wolves. Ambedkar described the attitude of the British Government to the depressed classes as a Munich mentality, the essence of which was to save oneself by sacrificing others.\textsuperscript{39}

As leader of Independent Labour Party, Ambedkar appeared before Cripps to give evidence, the latter asked him whether he represented the labour or depressed classes.\textsuperscript{40} This was an un-ambiguous hint to Ambedkar that he should be representing the interests of either of the two. That gave a turn to his role, and once again Ambedkar thought it wise to resume the leadership of the Depressed Classes in the interest of his people for whom he had been fighting all along the past twenty-five years.\textsuperscript{41}

With apprehension that in free India, the Hindus would enjoy the freedom from Britain and the Muslims would secure a separate nation, he got worried that the depressed classes / dalits would continue in the clutches of the orthodox Hindus and landlords. This made him resolute to give a decisive fight under the banner of a separate political party.

Ultimately on 31\textsuperscript{18} March 1942, he convened a meeting of leaders of the Scheduled Caste all over the country to discuss the Cripps' proposals and decided to hold an All India Depressed Classes Conference at Nagpur in July 1942 with a view to create an All India Organization with distinct aims and purposes. ...\textsuperscript{42} On July 2, 1942, the Viceroy declared that Ambedkar would be included in his Executive Council as a Labour Member. And 'indeed it was an unprecedented event.'\textsuperscript{43} The Dalit community all over the country was overwhelmed and their

\textsuperscript{39} Dhananjay Keer: op.cit.,pp. 342-343.
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid, p. 343.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid, p. 347.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid, p. 343.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid, p. 347.
exuberance manifestly lent fervor and lustre to the convention held at Nagpur on 18-19 July 1942 under the presidency of Rao Bahadur, N. Shivaraj.

**All India Schedule Castes Federation**

Ambedkar finally announced the formation of All India Schedule Castes Federation. As Ambedkar rose to speak, he was cheered vociferously by the vast crowd of 70,000 persons, which was for him “a matter of immense satisfaction…” Ambedkar further exhorted that, “My final words of advice to you is educate, agitate and organize. With faith in yourself and justice on our side, I do not see how we can lose our battle. Our object is to achieve all sided progress of our people. However, we have no material strength with us, nor are we socially strong. Hence we must have political power. We can achieve this political power on our organizational strength. Hence we need to organize under a banner of national level political party. He further states that “we must stand on our own feet and fight as best as we can for our rights. So, carry on with your agitation and organize your forces. Power and Prestige will come to you through struggle.”

Thus, the All India Schedule Castes Federation was the first national political party, which comprised exclusively of the Schedule Castes. It gave a new impetus to the increasing awakening among the dalits. But, it cannot be called communal party. It is true that Ambedkar had stated that the Schedule Castes were separated from the Hindus but he had never said that they were separate from India. He had not demanded a separate land. He demanded only special political rights for their upliftment to the level of others. In this conference, he declared “that the untouchables have made great strides along all sides. The untouchables were not a

44 . Ibid, p. 351.
45 . Ibid.
46 . Ibid.
sub-section of the Hindus, but a distinct element in the national life of India... want separate political rights as against the Hindus.\textsuperscript{47} This shows that although at the second Round Table Conference, Gandhi was fighting against the fragmentation of society whereas Ambedkar was trying to establish the separate identity of Schedule Castes.\textsuperscript{48} This was further emphasized in one of the various resolutions passed at the convention:

(i) Cripps proposals were condemned.

(ii) The untouchables' separate identity should be accepted.

(iii) Special provisions should be made in the budgets of respective provinces for the higher education of the untouchable.

(iv) The untouchables should get adequate representation in the central and provincial ministries.

(v) Certain seats should be reserved in the Government services.

(vi) They should get representation in the legislatures and local self-governments in proportion to their population.

(vii) Their representatives should be elected by separate electorate.

(viii) There should be provision in the constitution for the separate settlements of the Schedule Castes.

(ix) They should be given available uncultivated land for their livelihood.\textsuperscript{49}

All the resolutions were very important for the Schedule Castes. It was a sort of blue print of future activities of the party.

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{49} Quoted by R.K. Kshirsagar, op.cit., p.100.
In March 1946, general elections to the Provincial Assemblies were held. The All India Schedule Castes Federation, like other political parties, actively took part in the elections. It contested altogether 51 seats, as under:

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<th>Bengal</th>
<th>U.P.</th>
<th>C.P. &amp; Berar</th>
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Of all the contestants, only one person named Shri J.N. Mandal from Bengal got elected. The first general election under the new Constitution was held in January 1952. The All India Schedule Castes Federation joined hands with the Praja Socialist Party, and made an electoral alliance with it. All India Schedule Castes Federation issued its Manifesto:

Principles of the Party:

(i) The All India Schedule Castes Federation would treat all Indians equal before law.

(ii) It would regard every Indian as an end in himself; the state is only a means to achieve that end;

(iii) It accepts the principle of freedom - religious, economic and political - as assured in the Constitution.

(iv) It would stand for the parliamentary system of Government.

Programme of the Party (Home Affairs):

(i) It would maintain the legacy of the British in respect of uniform system of equality, justice and administration.
(ii) It would try to minimize the gulf between the higher classes and the lower classes.

(iii) It would try to alleviate poverty by adopting such measures, which would be helpful in increasing agricultural and industrial production, and by controlling the excessive growth of population.

(iv) It would support national undertaking. Where private enterprise was possible and national undertaking was not essential, private enterprise would be allowed.

(v) It would reserve uncultivated land for the benefit of landless labourers and introduce the principle of adequate wages for their livelihood.

(vi) It favoured creation of linguistic states, on principle of ‘one state one language’.

(vii) It would try to root out corruption and restore purity of administration.

(External Affairs)

(i) The All India Schedule Castes Federation wanted to maintain peaceful relations with all the neighbouring countries.

(ii) It thought that Kashmir should be partitioned, the Muslim area should go to Pakistan and the non-Muslim area consisting of Jammu and Laddakh should come to India.

(iii) Instead of trying to make Communist China a permanent member of the U.N.O., India should try for getting herself recognised as the
permanent member of the U.N.O. It stated that, “India’s first duty should be to herself.”

The All India Schedule Castes Federation (AISCF) was a step backward from the 1920s radicalism. Its very formation meant giving up the effort to form a broad radical party of Dalits and caste Hindu workers and peasants for the different goals of uniting Dalits on an all-India level. There were two new specific resolutions, one demanding ‘separate village settlements’ of entirely Schedule Caste population, ‘away from and independent of Hindu villages’, and the other renewing the demand for separate electorates on the grounds that in any joint electorate, even with reserved seats, Dalits would be overwhelmed by caste Hindu voters. These resolutions indicated a reinvigorated distrust of ‘Caste Hindus’ as such and laying aside the efforts to form a political alliance with them. Aside from this, the All India Schedule Castes Federation maintained most of the other specific thrusts of the earlier Independent Labour Party’s programme, regarding alliances and peasant and worker demands.

The AISCF contested altogether 34 Lok Sabha seats in the first general election. Those were:

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Only two candidates were elected. The party’s failure was due to Ambedkar’s advocacy of the partition of Kashmir, his speech before the Bombay Muslims on separate electorate for the Muslims, lack of positive speeches before the people and above all the weakness of his disorganized party.

Again, in 1956, he thought of forming another party namely, the Republic Party of India. However, due to his sad demise, it could not be possible. After his death, his lieutenants established Republic party of India in a special convention held at Nagpur on October 3, 1957.

PRESSURE GROUPS

Pressure groups are another important factor influencing the democratic processes and policies. Ambedkar seems to have taken note of and reflected on their place in democracy at considerable length. The pressure groups are formed for the protection of specific interests. These groups influence the decision-making process of the government by different methods and impress upon the government to protect their special interests. These groups presupposed formal organization and included bodies such as Employers Organizations, Trade Unions, Consumer Groups etc. “Pressure groups are social aggregate with some level of cohesion and shared aims which attempt to influence political decision making process.”

Ambedkar wanted the Trade Union Movement in India to grow fast to protect the interest of workers. However, in the course of discussion in Bombay Legislature, he found that the proposed Industrial Disputes Bill 1946 would block the movement, as the free unions could not be found. The trade unions lacked the much required and desired organizational discipline and characteristics. “Trade unionism in India ... was in sorry state. It was a stagnant and stinking pool, because its leadership was timid, selfish or misguided. The warfare between different unions was far more deadly than what existed, if any at all, between workers and owners.”

There must be an individual representative or a group of representatives to present the grievances of the workers before the employers or the government, as all workers cannot come for discussion and present a memorandum of demands. He pondered over who is a representative of employees under the proposed Industrial Disputes Bill, and replied, “there are two categories of unions which will have the right to represent labour; one of these is a union which has 20% of the workers as its members, or at least a minimum of 20% of the workers as its members and recognized by the employers. Secondly, a union whose membership is more than 50% which can represent labour in the conciliation proceedings.”

Ambedkar did not agree with such representation. He thought that the first type is a slave union and the second is a free union. A union, which can have a locus standi, a legal existence, a right to represent and a right to speak only if it secures the prior approval of the employer, is a slave union and not a union of freemen.

The real democratic tradition demands free unions and not the slave union; hence he would like to see men of free union’s activity in the political orbit. At the same time, he wished that the condition of more than 50% membership suggested under the Industrial Disputes Bill should not be compulsory. He had objection to the slave union because that unionism based upon the principle of approval of the master as such would never be a representative body in a free atmosphere. The workers ought not to be chained to their masters, following his directions and not opinion of his/her own. Hence the so-called free unions were not after all really free, their constitution and very existence was subject to certain conditions. He did not have the slightest hesitation in saying, “there will never be free unions at all…”

57. Ibid, p. 221.
Ambedkar cited the example of Ahmedabad Majdoor Mahajan, an ideal union of those days. In the Ahmedabad textile industry, the total number of workers was 90,000. And in the Majdoor Mahajan, a federation of five different unions, the membership was only 22,000, i.e. hardly 21%. It means that the free union was not possible even in the city of Ahmedabad where employers and employees belonged to the same religion, same language and on the top of that, there is the great personality of Mahatma.” Ambedkar also suspected that workers might be under the influence of Mahatma Gandhi who, at that time, lived in Ahmedabad.

The condition of 50% membership seemed impossible to realize even in an industrially organized country like England. He cites the figures of 1924 as mentioned by Mr. Walter Citrine in a booklet that the total number of persons employed in different industries was 18 million, while the total number of the persons who were members of the unions, both male and female, was only 5,531,000 i.e. about 30%. Therefore, though 50% membership would be undoubtedly ideal but he had to compromise with the existing reality. “Now, if that is the state of affairs in a country like England where labour is so well organized, where the industry is so wide spread, what can we expect in a country like India?” Objecting to the clause of the bill that the registrar shall not register more than one union in any local area in respect of any industry or occupation, as the case may be, he held that the growth and progress of the trade unions in the country would be adversely affected. He wished the trade unions enjoyed the freedom in his country as they did in Britain, “the English Law has left it to the workers to organize on any lines that they chose to adopt. There is no rule as such.

58 Ibid, p.222.
60 Ibid.
that the union must be confined to one industry, that the union must be confined to one occupation.\textsuperscript{61}

He also cited from various authorities, various kinds of provisions and various kinds of trade unions. Referring to the book ‘The Employment Exchange Service of Great Britain’ by Chegwidden and Myrddin Evans, he reproduced the statement:

“All the workers in a particular industry are not necessarily organized in the same union but may belong to several different unions: in some cases organization is on a district basis, in another on an occupational basis, and a section of workers in a particular industry may even belong to the union which normally caters for workers in another industry or to a general labour union...”\textsuperscript{62}

Stability of the trade union movement in India was equally important for him. A trade union, which is once registered under this bill, in order that it may enjoy a perpetual existence, shall have to show at all times that it had 51% membership of the total number of the workers, which is not feasible for ever. “... In a country like England, where trade unionism may be said to be like the breath of the nostrils to a workman, the trade union membership fluctuates by 50% within a decade.”\textsuperscript{63} Thus, this condition could not ensure the growth of trade union movement in India. If ever trade union, which is registered, stands to have its registration cancelled, or stands in fear of it, from day to day, what prospect is there of trade unionism growing in this country?\textsuperscript{64}

\textsuperscript{61} Ibdi, p. 224.
\textsuperscript{62} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{63} Ibid, p. 227.
\textsuperscript{64} Ibid.
He maintained that a trade union might have three different objects:

(i) Purposes connected with the promotion of their particular interest as workers, wages, and hours of work, promotions in industry and so on. These are called purely trade union objects.

(ii) Social purposes conferring certain benefits, like giving old age pension, giving unemployment benefit to these members, providing pensions for their widows.

(iii) Political purpose, viz., freedom to promote a particular line of politics, which the union thinks is best suited for the protection of its economic and its social position.65

Surely, the protection of the trade union interests is not raison de etre for entering politics. According to Ambedkar, “to confine your attention to trade unionism is to mistake the immediate task for the ultimate goal; it is to assume that slaving for others is a destiny which the labouring classes cannot escape. On the contrary, your aims should be to replace this system of wages slavery by a system, which will recognize the principle of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. This means rebuilding of society.”66

His reservation regarding the proposed bill was firstly, that it is not possible for all persons who are employed in a particular industry to agree upon all these three purposes. Some may follow Congress line of politics, some may have to follow the politics of the Muslim League, and some may have Communist line of thinking. How can they come together to form a trade union?

Secondly, workers belonging to the untouchable community desire to promote certain social objectives and social purposes for their benefits, and will not be able to attract others, particularly when their social objective is different from the objective of the former. Thus this bill ultimately deters people from forming any union at all.

In the field of the trade union movement, time and again, the matter of recognition of trade unions became an issue, causing tensions in industry; and every now and then, need was felt to adopt permanent measures for their recognition. The role of trade unions in politics could not, unfortunately, be realized, because each political party started its own trade union. As a result, trade unions became springboards for gaining political power rather than promoting the cause of labour. However, Ambedkar advised trade unions to acquire knowledge in the field of labour. His advice is more significant in the context of advanced modern technological development for the protection of labour interests.

PRESS

Press, called as the fourth estate in the political terminology, the other three being government, opposition and judiciary, is a vital pillar of a free democratic society. Democracy ensures freedom and guarantees expression of views to create and influence public policy. By giving citizens an opportunity to have their say, democracy binds them with a sort of vital tissue to government. There are, thus, not only outgoing currents of commands and ordinances issued from the central seat of authority, but also incoming currents in the form of suggestions, desires and grievances of people.

Democracy is best qualified constantly to adjust the supply of control to social needs and favours a wholesale social equilibrium. It deepens the sense of social obligation. An extraordinarily powerful communication is periodical
literature and the most potent of such literature is the daily press. Walter Lippmann, the political scientist attached great deal of importance to the daily press in educating the people and forming opinion, which Ambedkar called as the ‘Bible of democracy’.

Freedom of press is a pre-requisite for the growth and development of a healthy public opinion, as it needs an alert and informed participation not only in purely political processes but also in efforts of the community to adjust its socio-economic life to increasingly complex circumstances. Democratic society, therefore, needs a clear and truthful account of events, of their background, and their causes; a forum for discussion and informed criticism; and a means whereby individuals and groups can express a point of view or advocate a cause. Ambedkar vehemently criticized the Indian Press Act of 1910, which had put severe restrictions on the press. He was against the suppression of the right of public meeting, the right to personal freedom and the right to freedom of discussion.

The first Press Commission, which was established in 1952 under Justice Rajadhyaksha, explains freedom of the press as, “Freedom to hold opinions, to receive and to impart information through the printed word without any interference from any public authority”. Thus, a free and impartial press is indispensable for the successful functioning of a democratic government. It acts as a jealous guardian of the rights and liberties of citizens and is a forum for the discussion of public policies, enabling the government to feel the pulse of the people. Ambedkar accorded a pride of place to freedom of speech and expression as one of the main objectives of the Constitution, as envisaged in its preamble, and

that is to secure liberty of thought and expression to all citizens. In order to give effect to this objective, ‘freedom of speech and expression’ has been guaranteed as a fundamental right under Article 19(1)(a) to all citizens, subject only to the restrictions, which may be imposed by the state under clause (2) of that article.69

Ambedkar entered the profession of journalism in 1920s as the Chief Spokesman of the voiceless, penniless and helpless millions of untouchables and exploited masses, starting different papers such as; ‘Mook Nayak’, ‘Bahishkrit Bharat’, ‘Samata’ and ‘Janata.’ He threw light on the history of social discrimination and led socio-cultural movement and utilized his papers as powerful means of struggle for social revolution; providing a forum to the cause of the oppressed and the down-trodden. As G.B. Molt, one of the great American journalists says that, “the press is a full fledged institution in our modern world and the various media utilized by the press are generally called by, and now professionally united, under the common name of journalism.”70

But Ambedkar felt that, “Journalism in India was once a profession. It has now become a trade.”71 In his opinion, journalism has a moral function, i.e., to give the news uncoloured, without any motive, which, to his dismay, is not regarded by “journalism in India its first and foremost duty.”72 He found the press in India under the complete monopoly of the ruling classes, the biggest enemy of the oppressed classes. The Indian press does not adequately focus on the untold miseries of the weak and the oppressed.

The following observations made by A.D. Gorwala aptly reveal the hopeless condition of the Indian press.

69. Quoted by R.C.S. Sarkar: The Press in India (New Delhi, S. Chand and Co. Ltd.), 1984, p. 32.
70. Gian Singh Mann: Journalism-Concept and Controversy (Ludhiana, Gagan Pub.) 1988, p. 16.
72. Ibid.
“Thus press in India certainly has the capacity to educate. For reasons that no doubt appear valid to large sections of it, it has chosen not to exercise that capacity to any large extent. Left free, seeing the present deplorable condition of all standards in this land, it may mend its way and begin to fulfill its proper functions. Deprived of freedom, regulated and confined by Government instructions and order, it will cease to be anything but a propaganda organization.”

Ambedkar felt that Indian press lacked social commitment hence he focused his writings more than adequately on revealing the untold miseries of the untouchables and the most oppressed classes in his papers. He gave them a great scope to make use of his papers as their mouthpiece. He took to journalism as champion of the cause of the weak and the oppressed. He was an exceptional journalist of his times; while most of the journalists did their best to champion the cause of the haves, he put forth his best efforts to champion the cause of the have-nots. He, therefore, denounced the writings of the Congress journals “as the writing done by drum boys to glorify their heroes.” He observed that for a journalist in India, to accept a hero worship has become its principal duty under it, the news gives place to sensation, reasoned opinion to unreasoning passion, in place of appeal to the minds of responsible people, to appeal to the emotions of the irresponsible.

Ambedkar was in every sense people-oriented, committed to value-based journalism, writing regularly and vigorously for enlightenment and advancement of dalits, women, peasants, workers and all other oppressed people. Instead of making money out of this profession or to glorify hero worship, his papers contained volumes of information on religion, culture, caste-system, economy,

73. R.C.S. Sarkar, op.cit., p. 36.
74. Dhananjay Keer, op.cit., p. 358.
polity, secularism, socialism, democracy, equality, liberty, justice, fraternity, education, modernization, development and so on and so forth. Thus his papers aimed at bringing about transformation in the lifestyles of millions of neglected men and women, as he did not find even a single newspaper, which was committed to abolition of untouchability and emancipation of the depressed classes.

To articulate the problem of Dalits, Ambedkar started a paper under the title ‘Mook Nayak’, meaning leader of the dumb, with some financial help from the Maharaja of Kolhapur through Dottaba Pawar.

The unwelcome reception that ‘Mook Nayak’ received is very succinctly put in by Keer:

“How violent and unfavourable were the times can be seen from the fact that the ‘Kesari’ refused even to announce its publication although solicited to do so as a paid advertisement! And this happened when Tilak was yet alive!”

In the first issue of the ‘Mook Nayak’, Ambedkar unambiguously announced the aim of the paper to awaken depressed to their disabilities.

‘Mook Nayak’ tried to create greater awareness among the weaker sections of the society about their status, problems and prospects. However, the paper could not survive for long due to economic constraints and lack of social support.

After a gap of seven years, on April 3, 1927, the fortnightly vernacular ‘Bahishkrit Bharat’ was launched, as he realized that a paper is the most important channel of communication between the leader and the masses. He said in this connection thus:

75. Ibid, p. 41.
76. Ibid.
“A leader without a paper is like a bird without wings.”77

Obviously, to run a press was not an economically viable venture and then
the rude revelation that there were no buyers if the paper is dedicated to a social
cause; indeed the financial constraints always remained in the forefront, making it
difficult for him to carry it on. And another important factor responsible for this
was the community, whose cause he was representing, did not buy it, as they could
not read or write, due to illiteracy and ignorance amongst them. That apart, he
was not prepared to compromise with his professional values. He did not become
an agent of the capitalists. He never had any inclination towards
commercialization of his paper.

His editorial after editorial in a crisp and fearless style, impressed upon the
government to punish the wrong doers and trespassers who opposed the welfare of
the downtrodden people. G.S. Lokhande also observed: “the name of the weekly
was changed into Bahishkrit Bharat’ or ‘Ex-communicated India” in the year
1927, signifying that most of the untouchables were kept segregated from the
various villages. Therefore, he exhorted the untouchables to rise in revolt against
the shastras, which sanctified the oppressive social customs, and simultaneously
making the caste Hindus aware of their responsibility for the welfare and uplift of
the downtrodden.”78

On the eve of his departure for England to attend Round Table Conference
in 1930, he was given a grand send-off by the untouchables in Mumbai, presenting
him with a purse as a token of their abiding gratitude for his selfless services to
their cause. He gratefully thanked the organizers especially “Shankar Rao S.
Pasha, who had spent large sums on his movement and declared that a fortnightly
paper named ‘The Janata’, (the people) would soon be published in place of

77 Ibid, p. 80.
78 G.S. Lokhande, op.cit., p. 230.
Bahishkrit Bharat – the Excluded India.” However, later, ‘Samata’, was considered more appropriate signifying the message of equality and ceaselessly pleading for the removal of all the existing social barriers.

Again, in 1931, his companions Deorao Naik and Kadrekar started a new fortnightly paper called the ‘Janata’ – the people - with a vowed mission to educate the people in citizenship rights and responsibilities. It also sought to make the people aware of their patriotic duty to protect the independence and integrity of the country.

Ambedkar’s efforts received due appreciation. The Times of India, Mumbai (April, 21) observed:

“Without political and economic power, the Harijans will find it hard to attain social equality, and Dr. Ambedkar has done well in realizing this fact.”

The Bombay Chronicle wrote:

“Ambedkar brooded day in and day out over the unending inhumanity to his community and it was no wonder, therefore, that his devotion to the Harijans was unequalled, if not exceeded…”

The Press, indeed recognized and appreciated the services and scholarship of Ambedkar.

In 1956, the weekly Janata was baptized and re-named, as ‘Prabuddha Bharat’, which means “Enlightened and Self-disciplined India”,

81. Ibid.
emphasizing the responsibilities of the people as free citizens. Rights involve responsibilities. In fact, they are two sides of the same coin. Human rights, though essentially individualistic in form and content, have profound social significance and, therefore, a moral dimension. Civilized social life, which alone can provide the basis for individual creativity and excellence is impossible in the absence of a code of ethics to regulate and sustain it. "

Thus the Press has to be committed objectively to the ethical conduct. His basic message, of course, was that the control of minds by some powerful individuals through press and other means of communication was bad. Such a control retarded the movement; he held rationally that journalism should not be allowed to become the handmaid of the corrupt and dominant sections of the society, for maintaining their status quo and promoting their vested interests.

REPRESENTATION AND PARTICIPATION

Direct and indirect are two known forms of democracy. In direct democracy, the policies are formulated and expressed by the people themselves. Because of the size of population and territory, it is not feasible for most of the countries to adopt direct democracy. Indirect democracy is a more common political system in the contemporary comity of nations. The voters elect their representatives to legislative assemblies, invested with the duty of making laws and bringing harmony of purpose between the government and the governed. Today, representative institutions have become the distinguishing feature of a democratic state and an indispensable instrument of government. There are a number of liberal democratic states and their indispensable instrument called government. There are a number of liberal democratic theories of representation implying not only extension of the franchise but also equality of voting rights as

82. G.S. Lokhande, op.cit., p. 231.
the representative is elected according to geographically demarcated constituencies, not according to classes, occupational distinctions or distinct interests.

Firstly, there is more emphasis on the importance of individual rights, especially the inviolability of the individual’s property, and the necessity of limiting the powers of government to protect those rights. The justification for these individual rights was to be found in theories of natural rights that were beyond the competence of any government interference.

Secondly, its approach is rational; man is a creature of reason who can identify his own interests and his own opinions, and is aware of the wider claims of the community. He will, therefore, use his vote in an intelligent fashion and is consequently entitled to a share in the selection of representatives. Thomas Jefferson laid emphasis on the importance of an educated majority as a prerequisite for American representative government. The view was equally well echoed by the classic English liberals of the mid-nineteenth century. They held human reason superior to historical tradition or haloed customs; therefore, political institutions and practices are to be judged empirically.

This leads to the third characteristic, viz., sovereignty of the people, which is expressed through universal suffrage. The British reformist tradition in the 19th century measured its success by the successive Reforms Acts which increased the size of electorate, attempts to equalize the size of constituencies by the introduction of the secret ballot and attack on corrupt electoral practices etc.

In this framework, Ambedkar saw the representative endowed to play a particular role; who was responsible to the electorate but was not its delegate; he represented a geographical collection of opinions, but was not required to surrender personal views. Liberal democracy emphasizes the role of the
representative assembly as a protection against encroachment by executive power, especially encroachments on liberties of the individual. Yet he was not oblivious of the problem of the tyrannical majority. Can that popular majority interfere with the 'inalienable rights' of individuals?

Alexander Hamilton outlined the problem during the debates on the American Constitution in 1778:

"Men love power.... Give all power to many, they will oppress the few. Give all power to the few, they will oppress the many. Both, therefore, ought to have power, that they may defend themselves against the other." 83

The potential conflict between the sovereignty of the majority and the protection of the rights of the individual may be seen in terms of Robert Dahl's concepts of Madisonian and Populistic Democracy. 84 Dahl defines Madisonian democracy as:

"What I am going to call the 'Madisonian' theory of democracy is effort to bring off a compromise between the power of majorities and the power of minorities, between the equality of all adult citizens on the one side, and the desire to limit their sovereignty on the other." 85

It is this theory that he applies to the American political system with its constitutional checks and balances. His definition of Populist Democracy is that:

"it postulates only two goals to be maximized - political equality and popular sovereignty." 86

83. Quoted in Robert A. Dahl: Democracy in United States (Chicago), 1962, p. 73.
84. For detail see Robert A. Dahl: A Preface to Democratic Theory (Chicago), 1956.
85. Ibid, p.4.
86. Ibid, p. 50
Minority Representation

In Ambedkar’s opinion, such a system of representation, where mere majority election exists, cannot be the real basis of democracy. A democracy is a government of the people meaning whereby that the people constitute the whole mass of the people in a state. It is an essential principle of democracy that it must not deny political participation to a considerable portion of the people. Adequate representation to minorities, therefore, is a vital factor in representative democracy. It would be in place to mention that this was an uphill task for constitution making in the case of India where people are divided both horizontally and vertically and communication has always been the bane of her politics. In other countries, people are essentially divided on their political or economic issues.

A democratic form of government pre-supposes equal share of every individual in power. Any community on the ground of only its relative numerical strength cannot impose its will on the minority community. In order to avoid the possibility of such grim situation, it is necessary to make some legal-constitutional arrangement and instill confidence in the mind of minority community. It was John Stuart Mill who advocated that in a democracy, the majority must rule, but he insisted that the minority should be represented in proportion to its numbers.

It emerges that to Ambedkar proportional representation is not a remedy to solve two problems of minorities. “Proportional representation is intended to give proportionate representation to views. It presupposes that voters vote for a candidate because of his views not because of his person. Proportional representative is ill suited. . .”87

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It is not especially true in a situation in which minority or the majority is perpetually communal and socially, culturally, economically a dominant, discriminating and oppressive in relation to a vulnerable tiny minority.

In this context, Separate Electorate is considered to be the way for achieving adequate and effective representation of the minorities in the legislature. The voters of a community vote separately for a candidate of their own community in their respective constituencies. Thus the voters and candidates belong to the same community and the voting takes place separately. Separate electorate as a method of securing communal representation came into operation in India in respect of the Muslims at first under the Act of 1909, in response to their demands to that effect under the leadership of Agha Khan. The Sikhs and the Europeans got separate electorate in 1919, and Indian Christians and Anglo-Indians under the Act of 1935. The obvious purpose of separate electorate is to secure adequate and effective representation to a minority in order to thwart any probable attempt to impose tyranny by communal majority over the communal minority.

Separate electorate, found favour with Ambedkar for securing true representation of the dalits, thereby protecting their interest, who suffer invidious discrimination politically, socially, economically. They form 'a group' by themselves, which was distinct and separate from the Muslims and the Hindus. He thought that the depressed classes were more suppressed than the serfs and slaves. A government for the people, but not by the people, is sure to treat some into master and others into subjects. To be specific, it is not enough to be electors only. It is necessary to be lawmakers; otherwise, who can be lawmakers will be masters of those who can only be electors.
“The most difficult and the most important question of government (is) how to transmit the force of individual opinions and preference into public action. This is the crux of popular institutions,” says Professor A.B. Hart. 88 A popular government in Ambedkar’s view ‘is the most important field for the exercise of individual capacities, it is in the interest of people that no person as such should be denied the opportunity of actively participating in the process of government, meaning thereby that representation of opinion by itself is not sufficient to constitute popular government, it requires personal representation as well.’89

Protection of Separate Interests

The basis of minority representation is the protection of the interest of each community such as:

1) of religious antipathies which are pretty strong in India, or
2) out of the backward state of a community in educational matters, or
3) out of the socio-religious disabilities to which a community may be subject.90

Ambedkar was firm in his belief that Dalits have faced more serious problems than this, “…There are certain communities who besides being very backward, are suffering under a great social tyranny, and the untouchable classes must have their own men in the council hall to fight for the redress of their grievances. The non-Brahmins, as a class, are subjected to the social and intellectual domination of the Brahmin priesthood and may, therefore, rightly advocate separate representation.”91 It is Ambedkar’s distinctive and unique approach, which led him to think that, “The problem of the depressed classes will

89. Ibid.
90. Ibid, p. 252.
91. Ibid, pp. 252-253.
never be solved unless they get political power in their own hands.” The interests of the untouchables can be represented by the untouchables alone. “Untouchability constitutes a definite set of interests which the untouchables alone can speak for. Hence it is evident that we must find the untouchables to represent their grievances which are their interests and, secondly, we must find them in such numbers as will constitute a force sufficient to claim redness.”

Ambedkar put forth his demand for separate electorate for depressed classes first in 1919 before the Southborough Franchise Committee. The possible method of securing representation, seems to him, to be “either to reserve seat in plural constituencies for those minorities that cannot otherwise secure personal representation or grant them communal electorate.” The reason for Ambedkar to make a demand for separate electorate for the depressed classes is probably that he visualized the problem of dalits from the political angle as he stated unambiguously that the problem of depressed classes was “eminently political problem and must be treated as such.”

Ambedkar recommended adult franchise, and joint electorates with reserved seats for almost all the communities except the Europeans, while giving evidence before the Simon Commission in 1928. Further, he replied to a question, “if there is no adult franchise?”, then we would ask for separate electorate.”

Even at the Round Table Conference (20th Nov., 1930) he candidly expressed “No share of this political power can evidently come to us so long as British government remains as it is. It is only in a Swaraj constitution that we stand any chance of getting the political power into our own hands, without which we cannot

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94. For detail see Ibid, pp. 247-278.
95. Ibid, p. 252.
bring salvation to our people." He added: "we have been called Hindus for political purposes, but we have never been acknowledged socially by the Hindus as their brethren." 99

Ultimately, Ambedkar demanded, firm inter-alia, separate electorate for depressed classes through a memorandum submitted to the Round Table Conference jointly by himself and R.B.R. Srinivasan who felt that the depressed must be given sufficient political power to influence legislative and executive action for the purpose of securing their welfare. In view of this, they demanded that the following provisions should be made in the electoral law so as to give them:

(i) Right to adequate representation in the legislatures of the country, Provincial and Central.

(ii) Right to elect their own men as their representatives; (a) by adult suffrage, and (b) by separate electorates for the first ten years and thereafter by joint electorates and reserved seats, it being understood that joint electorates shall not be forced upon the depresses classes against their will unless such joint electorates are accompanied by adult suffrage." 100

Thus, Ambedkar demanded separated electorates for the depressed classes only for a period of first ten years. The main purpose of Ambedkar was to break the monopoly in shape and form enjoyed by the so-called high castes. He had stated that his aim was to realize in practice the ideal of one-man one value in all walks of life - political, economic and social. It is because representative government is one means to that and that the depressed classes attach to it as great

98. Ibid, p. 505.
100. Ibid, pp. 550-551.
a value and it is because of its value to us that I have urged upon you the necessity of making your declaration subject to its fulfillment."\textsuperscript{101} Ambedkar tried to convince Agha Khan (Muslim), R.B. Pannir Selvam, (Indian Christians), Sir Henry Gidney, (Anglo-Indians) and Sir Hubert Carr; (Europeans), the Indian delegates in the conference and the British delegates including Prime Minister. However, Gandhi who participated in the second Round Table Conference as a representative of the Indian National Congress was not convinced of the demand of separate electorate. He said very emphatically that:

"I will not bargain away their rights for the Kingdom of the whole world ... It will create a division in Hinduism which I cannot possibly look forward to.... I do not mind untouchables, if they so desire, being converted to Islam or Christianity. I should tolerate that, but I cannot possibly tolerate what is in store for Hinduism if there are two divisions set forth in the villages ... I would resist it with my life."\textsuperscript{102} Mahatma Gandhi could not allow further fragmentation of our society. Hence the strongly opposed any proposal for further separate representation. He was convinced such a scheme will not ensure social justice. In fact they must be provided protection from social and religion persecution by discarding decadent traditions and customs in Hindu society opposed to the Harijans at Round Table Conference and professed, "... what these people need more than election to the legislature is protection from social and religious persecution."\textsuperscript{103}

However, the British government finally declared the Communal Award on August 4, 1932, which inter-alia stated separate electorate for the depressed classes. "In the history of India, untouchables were for first time given

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid, p. 599.
\textsuperscript{102} Ibid, p. 663.
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid, pp. 660-661.
independent political existence and legal right to shape the future of the motherland. It was a victory of Ambedkar’s ideology of uplifting the untouchables.”

Mahatma Gandhi who was in jail in those days, finally resorted to go on ‘fast unto death’ on September 20, 1936 in protest against the separate electorates for the depressed classes provided under the Communal Award. The political atmosphere in the country became grim and tense. Several letters threatening the life of Ambedkar poured in and demands were made to save Gandhi’s life at any cost. Ambedkar categorically announced “I shall not deter from my pious duty, and betray the just and legitimate interests of my people even if you hang me on the nearest lamp-post in the street.” Hence tension was mounting day by day.

Ambedkar was caught in a big dilemma either to save the precious life of M. K. Gandhi or to lose the special safeguards in the form of separate electorate which he achieved after a prolonged intellectual fight against many odds.” Eventually, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru evolved a scheme of primary and secondary elections for the reserved seats in place of separate electorate. After many deliberations, the agreement was signed on 24th September 1932 at Poona, as such it is known as “Poona Pact.”

The reactions of Ambedkar about Poona Pact were very bitter. He expressed that there existed a conspiracy by the Hindus to make the Poona Pact of no benefit to the depressed classes. He was fully aware of the disadvantages, which the Schedule Castes are to sustain due to joint electorates. The Schedule Caste candidate contesting reserved seat under joint electorate was to win only on the strength of majority caste Hindu votes. They, however, elected such candidates

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104 Quoted by W.N. Kuber, op.cit., p. 106.
105 Dhananjay Keer, op.cit., p. 209.
from among the Scheduled Castes who were to serve the interest of the majority caste Hindus and not of the Schedule Castes. Therefore, Ambedkar had rightly observed that: “Poona Pact has completely disfranchised the Schedule Castes.”

In 1946, he prepared a memorandum on behalf of the Scheduled Castes Federation to be submitted to the Constituent Assembly, later on published under the title of “States and Minorities” where he vehemently demanded separate electorate. He had categorically stated that:

(a) The system of election introduced by the Poona Pact shall be abolished.
(b) In its place, the system of separate electorate shall be substituted.
(c) Franchise shall be adult franchise.
(d) The system of voting shall be cumulative.

He believed that weightage carved out from the share of majority should be divided among all minority communities equally or in proportion to their economic position, social status and educational advance.

He tried to systematically argue against the objections to the separate electorate in the following way:

1. The ‘Scheduled Castes are not a ‘minority.’ His response was that “the meaning of the word ‘minority.’ Should not be misunderstood. He said that separation in religion is not the only test of a minority. Social discrimination

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Note: (each voter has as many votes as there are seats and he is allowed to caste his voters either to different candidates, or to a particular candidate).
constitutes the real test for determining whether a social group is or is not a minority.\textsuperscript{109}

In his support, he even quoted Gandhi's views expressed in Harijan dated 21\textsuperscript{st} October, 1939, under the heading 'The Fiction of Majority' that the Schedule Caste are the only real minority in India.\textsuperscript{110}

2. He contested the statement, "That the Schedule Castes are Hindus and, therefore they cannot have separate electorate."\textsuperscript{111} According to him, religious affiliations could not be the ground of separate electorate but social separation could be. In order to prove his statement, he cited the example of Christian Community who were divided into 3 sections Europeans, Angld-Indians and Indian Christians. In spite of the fact that they all belong and to the same religion, each section had separate electorates. This shows that what is decisive is not religious affiliation but social separation.\textsuperscript{112}

3. To the point that separate electorates prevented solidarity between the Untouchables and the Caste Hindus, he held, "if there were joint electorates, it is difficult to understand how social solidarity between the Hindus and the Untouchables could be promoted by their devoting one day for voting together when out of the rest of the five years they were leading severally separate lives? Similarly, assuming that there were separate electorates it was difficult to understand how one day devoted to separate voting in the course of five years could make for greater separation than what already existed?"\textsuperscript{113}

Thus, it is 'futile' to say that separate electorate for the untouchables will perpetuate separation between them and the Hindus, he answered.

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{109} Ibid, p. 422.  \\
\textsuperscript{110} Ibid.  \\
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid.  \\
\textsuperscript{112} Ibid, p. 423.  \\
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid.
\end{flushleft}
4. The opponents also argued that it led to anti-nationalism. He, however, stated that ‘nationalism and anti-nationalism had nothing to do with the electoral system. They were the result of extra electoral forces’. And the separate electorate “is nothing but a mechanism to enable a minority to return its true representatives to the legislature.”

However, after having been entrusted with the responsibility of the Chairmanship of the drafting committee of the Constituent Assembly, Ambedkar could not raise the issue of separate electorate in the Constituent Assembly, as on the one hand the whole nation was still alive to the shock of partition, which it had woefully sustained, in the recent past. On the other hand, it was going to accept universal adult franchise.

Ultimately, Ambedkar succeeded in his fight for securing human right, for the Scheduled Castes and laying provisions under the Constitution in respect of the welfare of Scheduled Castes are as under:

Article 17: “Untouchability is abolished and its practice in any form is forbidden. The enforcement of any disability arising out of “untouchability” shall be an offence punishable in accordance with law.

Article 15(1)...

Article 15(4): Nothing in this article or in clause (2) of article 29 shall prevent the State from making any special provision for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for the Scheduled Castes and the scheduled tribes.

114 Ibid, p.423.
Article 16(1)...

Article 16(4): 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.

Article 46: 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 the scheduled tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.

Article 164: In the states of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa there shall be a Minister in charge of Tribal Welfare who may, in addition, be in charge of the welfare of the scheduled castes and backward classes.

Article 330(1): Seats shall be reserved in the house of the people for (a) the scheduled castes, (b) the scheduled tribes (in proportion to their population).

Article 332(1): Seats shall be reserved in the house of the States for the scheduled castes and the scheduled tribes (in proportion to their population).

Article 338(1): There shall be a special officer for the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes to be appointed by the President. (2) It shall be the duty of the special officer to investigate all matters relating to the safeguards provided for the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes under this Constitution and report to the President upon 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.
Rethinking

However, during the first few years of the working of the Constitution, he found that the representatives of Scheduled Castes did not prove to be competent in protecting the interests of their brethren. Therefore, Ambedkar was disappointed the working committee of the Scheduled Castes Federation, under its President, Ambedkar, passed a resolution on August 27, 1955, in favour of abolition of reservation of seats for Schedule castes in the central and state legislatures ..."116. Further, in his book “Thoughts on Linguistic States” published on December 23, 1955, he states very categorically that, “Separate electorate or reservation of seats may not be restored to. It would be enough to have plural member constituencies (of two or three) with cumulative voting in place of the system of single member embodied in the present Constitution. This will allay the fears which the minorities have about linguistic states.”117 Thus, he once again considered the method of representation. It shows that he was very much concerned about the adequate and effective representation of the scheduled castes, no matter by which way, emphasizing that such representation must be able to protect the interests of the scheduled castes as a part of the society as a whole.

Thus, the foregoing account goes to prove that Ambedkar’s mind was set on making a choice about the form of democracy India would have. For instance, founding of political parties from time to time explains that he understood that the party organization was absolutely necessary for forming and association organized in support of principles or policy, which by constitutional means, it endeavours to make the determinants of government. Any unified statement of principle; orderly evolution of policy requires political party. Further election system is the most constitutional device for determining the government and political parties

influence electorate by forming and eliciting public opinion. Because Ambedkar believed that parliamentary majorities do not rule by divine rights. They are maintained and sanctioned by public opinion. Media helps in expression of that opinion which in his days was only by words of mouth or through the Press. He made use of the Press as we had seen that he has a natural flavour of journalism. Therefore not only did Ambedkar found them primary to the functioning of Parliamentary Democracy but also he used his own talent and these devices in the pursuit of his objectives.