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INTRODUCTION:

Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar has loomed large in the history of our country as a great scholar, thinker, emancipator and a constitutionalist of eminence. His is a familiar name for all students of Indian Politics and constitution. He emerged on the political scene of India, primarily as a minority leader. While putting up a stout defence of the rights and the privileges of the minorities, he was participating positively and effectively in the political life of our country during a decisive period in her history.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was a brilliant academician, a great legal luminary, an erudite scholar, a powerful writer, barrister, a great constitutional pundit, emancipator and champion of the dumb, downtrodden people from whose very ranks he sprung. He was a born untouchable from Ratnagiri District in Maharashtra. He was born on April 14, 1891 into one of those poor and unfortunate families of the Mahars. An untouchable lad with no means but industry and dedication, had a brilliant academic career and was destined to shine out as a distinguished alumnus of the Columbia University (U.S.A.), and the London School of Economics and Political Science, where he came under the inspiring influence of



great teachers like John Dewey and Edwin Cannan respectively. A great social reformer like Booker T. Washington, and an eminent parliamentarian like Edmund Burke influenced his thoughts and political actions to a great extent. Back at home, he came under the illuminating influence of Mahatma Jotiba Pule 'the greatest Shudra' of Modern India. Dr. Ambedkar's scholastic attainments were M.A., Ph.D., D.Sc., and Bar-at-Law. In addition, the Columbia University chose to honour him by conferring the Degree of 'Doctor of Laws' honoris causa upon "... one of India's leading citizens -- a great social reformer and a valiant upholder of human rights." The Osmania University conferred on him the honorary degree of 'Doctor of Literature' along with Dr. S. Radhakrishnan and Shri. M.K. Vellodi, in recognition of the meritorious services he had rendered to the nation. All these scholastic attainments and recognitions seemed inadequate to wipe out the stigma of untouchability that was attached to his caste. Nevertheless, it was his privilege to have come to be ranked as 'one of the top dozen great Indians' of the century.

The Social Setting:



Dr. Ambedkar was known and recognised as a man

with a sense of purpose and mission in his public life. His courage of conviction and his resentment for compromise were essential ingredients of his personality, which was characteristically his own. He was the victim of a society and religion that was highly undemocratic and conservative. Devoid of an egalitarian outlook, it chose to treat a considerable part of its own people as 'untouchable' and hence worse than inferior. The practice of untouchability for several centuries in India had its own repercussions on the social and political life of the country. In such an atmosphere of freezing conservatism and social calumny, anyone that dared point out these evils was bound to be branded and ostracised. Dr. Ambedkar was no exception to this phenomenon. He was bound to be misunderstood and misrepresented. The 'whirling avatare of learning' that flew in his several learned writings and innumerable public utterances were alleged to have been prompted by sectionalism and personal bitterness. Such a pronouncement was typical of the society into which he was born. Dr. Ambedkar belonged to that class of people who would not detract from their convictions and responsibilities by such abuses and calumny. Undaunted by the depressing atmosphere, he stuck to his guns and did not hesitate even to leave the folds of the Hindu religion itself. Such individuals



are very often the products of the social, religious and the political milieu around them. It is essential, therefore, to examine the thoughts and writings of such men in the light of the social set-up in which they grow and think. It is endeavoured to provide, in the course of Chapters I and II of the thesis, the social and political setting of the country. In Chapter II attention is focussed on the task he set to himself as 'the mission' of his life. Dr. Ambedkar had developed a theory of his own as to the genesis and development of untouchability in India and other related problems. His views on the subject are also touched upon briefly in the course of Chapter II with a view to providing the proper perspective to the studying of his role in the political and constitutional evolution of India. The chapter also provides the canvass upon which his ideas and mission are clearly depicted, besides making certain claims for him. In the remaining Chapters of the thesis each one of the claims made, are examined.

Exposition : the two approaches:

This thesis makes an attempt to explain and discuss the prominent points in his thinking. We are fortunate indeed that Dr. Ambedkar belonged to that vanishing tribe of scholar-politicians who were able to

reduce all their thoughts, views and plans into concrete writings. A considerable number of books, and other writings of Dr. Ambedkar form the chief source of our information and study. Dr. Ambedkar successfully combined in him the role of a scholar, writer, thinker, leader and an agitator. He was primarily a social revolutionary. His revolt against Hinduism and the society it created, was volcanic. Of course, his was not the first trenchant attack on the unseamy side of Hinduism. He expressed explicitly his views on the problem in many broad-sides of his, including the ones at the Round Table Conferences, the Bombay Provincial Legislature, the Central Legislature and other national and international forums. A close study of his writings would reveal that he did not write for the sake of writing alone. Each one of his writings had a particular purpose and was intended to provide the means for pressing forward the demands on behalf of the downtrodden untouchables whose leadership he had come to assume. It had to be 'assumed' by him, for, the untouchables did not have that much of awareness and understanding as to appreciate the necessity of having a leader of their own flesh and blood, and one who would consider their humiliations and sufferings as his own. Still, it must be said to his credit, he came to have a huge following in the country.



Dr. Ambedkar's battle had to be arduous and exacting in the extreme. It was particularly so due to the claims made by the Indian National Congress under Gandhiji's leadership to speak for the entire Hindu society, nay the whole nation, including the 'HARIJANS' -- the children of God -- as they were christened by Gandhiji. It was naturally awkward for Dr. Ambedkar to press his case for the untouchables with the British, as their leader. He had also to expose all the enormities of injustices and wrongs endured and suffered by the sixty millions of untouchables, mutely. Such a process was bound to reduce the claims of the Congress directly, and also by implication, denigrate the Hindu faith. This, however, became inevitable when Dr. Ambedkar realised that he was facing a problem which was deeply entrenched and would not yield to reasonable political negotiation or good-will. It was at this stage that Mahatma Gandhi stepped-in to take up the cause of the untouchables. How far Gandhiji's claim to represent and speak for the 'Harijans' was calculated to supersede Dr. Ambedkar's claim requires examination.

The two approaches to the problem of untouchability, by the Mahatma on the one hand and Dr. Ambedkar on the other, were necessarily divergent. The Mahatma advocated

and adopted the ameliorative steps such as Temple Entry, and throwing open other places of public resort to the Harijans. Gandhiji appealed to the good sense of the caste Hindus to achieve this. He was opposed to seeking a solution through a political arrangement. He opposed the proposal for separate electorate even by staking his own life. Dr. Ambedkar was, on the other hand, opposed to this spiritual appeal though he realised that untouchability had a religious sanction. He also thought, a spiritual appeal without an appropriate social action geared by political power and sanction would stand little chance of survival. Chapter III of this thesis examines closely the two divergent approaches, and the role of each as emancipator, is determined in an objective and original way.

Dr. Ambedkar was also fully aware that to achieve his goal he should not only direct his appeal to the masses but to the intelligentsia also, who were largely led by the National Congress and formed the core of the national movement. He was also far-sighted and astute enough to realise the need for enlisting the sympathies of foreign observers for his cause. His writings such as : Annihilation of Caste (1936; '37); Mr. Gandhi and the Emancipation of the Untouchables (1943); What Congress



and Gandhi have done to Untouchables (1945); Communal Deadlock and a Way to Solve It (1945); Who Were The Shudras? (1946); States and Minorities (1947); The Untouchables: Who Were They And Why They Became Untouchables? (1948); Thoughts on Pakistan, or Pakistan or the Partition of India (1940, 1945, 1946); besides a number of articles and monographs, fully served this purpose of his. His writings also include works such as : Federation ~~and~~ Freedom (1939); Ranade, Gandhi and Jinnah (1948); Problem of the Rupee (1924); Evolution of Provincial Finances in British India (1928); Caste in India (1916); Thoughts on Linguistic States (1955), etc., dealing with the political and economic problems of the country. He was giving finishing touches to his posthumous publication.— The Buddha and His Dhamma (1957), when he breathed his last. This work of his contains an entirely new and original interpretation of Buddhism, which he embraced along with lakhs of his followers, as a religion of equality and tolerance, in preference to Hinduism.

The Problem Of Minorities: Need for special protections:

These works of his were not only classics in their very nature and treatment but contain an advocacy of the cause of the untouchables in full dress. His writings bear an imprint of original thought and great scholarship.

They were all timely and also they stand out as bold and forthright verdicts on the problems they deal with. Dr. Ambedkar's views on the problem of religious and linguistic minorities in India have been developed in some of his writings. His suggestions to protect minority interests in general and those of the untouchables in particular were contained in the memoranda he submitted to the Simon Commission and the Round Table Conferences. He explained and pressed his demand for special electoral safeguards for them if they were to be saved from the ignominy to which they were subjected. He advocated that the untouchables should partake in the political power. This they cannot do unless they are given special electoral safeguards on the lines given to the other minorities like the Muslims. Though he once believed, joint electorates with reservation of seats would do, he later on realised that special electorates alone would enable his people to get into political power. In Chapter IV his views on the problem of minorities are examined. In the latter part of the chapter, his far-sighted judgment on the creation of Linguistic States has been examined in the light of what is happening in India since the reorganization of States. It is claimed here, that Dr. Ambedkar was perhaps one of the very few leaders who could think of and anticipate the repercussions accurately. His plea for utilising the

opportunity of the States reorganization for creating states of nearly equal size by adopting the principle of more than one State for a language rather than one State only for one language, could be claimed as a constructive and thoughtful suggestion. He even anticipated the balkanising tendency between the North and the South and suggested positive steps towards national integration which are highlighted in the course of Chapter IV of this thesis.

Pakistan a political necessity:

Dr. Ambedkar's 'Thoughts on Pakistan' is undoubtedly his magnum opus. The usefulness of the book is established by the very fact that it went into three editions in all. The study was devoted to an objective and dispassionate presentation of the case for and against Pakistan when the issue was hotly debated both in India and abroad. The book also contained his own views on the Pakistan project. Dr. Ambedkar had assumed on the part of his readers a sound background knowledge of the course of Hindu-Muslim relationships during the latter part of the 19th century and all along the 20th. To facilitate an objective appreciation of not only the book but his views and verdict on Pakistan, a separate chapter entitled 'Communal Tangle' was thought

proper and necessary. This constitutes Chapter V of the thesis which is essentially linked up with Chapter VI on 'Pakistan or No Pakistan?', as a prologue to it. It is a commonplace thing that the Hindu-Muslim antagonism constituted one of the dominant themes in the political and constitutional evolution of India. Any study of it, therefore, will be unrealistic if it does not take into account this major factor of communal claims and counter-claims. It is very much so when we examine the views of Dr. Ambedkar on the issue of partitioning of the country as a prelude to Indian independence. Hence the justification for Chapter V, in the course of which a comprehensive study of the communal problem vis-à-vis the political and constitutional evolution of India is made. Moreover, Dr. Ambedkar's views on this problem are also examined in this Chapter. A knowledge of the developments discussed in Chapter V provides the inescapable historical perspective to Chapter VI.

Dr. Ambedkar's masterly analysis of the Muslim demand for a separate home-state of their own is a stimulating study exhibiting profound historical knowledge and analytical skill. In Chapter VI a study of his views on Pakistan are examined. His contribution in this regard is significant not only to the political



evolution of India, but much more to the political thought of India of the day. The merit of his study lay in his recommendation of Pakistan idea to the attention of his countrymen, not because he was eager to concede the Muslim demand, but because he thought it was a political necessity. This, he pointed out, realising fully well, that it would be unpalatable to a large section of Indians. At a time when there was more heat than light in the country on the issue, he was the one who showed the path and prepared the minds of top leaders of the nation for accepting partition, however unpleasant it was, as a necessary evil. Dr. Ambedkar, of course, without full justification, lays the blame at the doors of the Congress for leading the situation ultimately to such a stage as to make it a political necessity. With his ability to look straight at fundamental facts, he pointed out that the possibility of preserving a single Indian nation had receded in view of 'the extravagance of the Congress policies and activities' and 'the bewildering political theories of Mr. Gandhi.' The role of the British in this regard is not highlighted by Dr. Ambedkar. Dictated by prudence, perhaps, he did not want to antagonise the British. The study is valuable even to-day after years of partition in as much as it is an epitome of the political and social history of India during the Century and as

such it is as well called 'India's political what is what' of the period.

In the thick of public life: a crisis of participation:

The posturing of a politician may sometimes be calculated by the leaves and fishes of high offices. But to some they come even without such a posturing. Dr. Ambedkar was picked up by the British Government for the high office of the Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council. He accepted it with the avowed purpose of serving the cause he had espoused, from a position of strength, power and influence. As Labour Member, he thought, he would be in an advantageous position to serve the cause of the untouchables who constituted the bulk of the labour class. His acceptance of the high office was bound to be used for ~~degrading~~^{degrading} him as playing the stooge in the hands of the British! This was most ungenerous a criticism. He did serve the cause effectively during the time of his office. He was further condemned for his active support to the British war-effort. Though there was nothing to be surprised at in this action of his, he was, nevertheless, the target of scathing criticism from the so-called nationalists. Dr. Ambedkar, in fact, was a nationalist to the core. In Chapter VII his nationalist fervour has been clearly

brought to the surface. At the same time, attention is devoted to examine his stance in Indian politics in the most difficult years, immediately preceding independence. It was a period of political set-back in the public life of Dr. Ambedkar. The nominees of the Scheduled Castes Federation were completely routed in the 1946 Elections, which was a great shock to Dr. Ambedkar. He also realised that the proposals of the 'Cabinet Mission' were too stringent and unhelpful to the Depressed Classes. He registered naturally a stout protest to the proposals on behalf of the Federation. He, also, was aware that it was a testing and a trying period of his public life. Driven to almost near despondency he sent out appeals to the Tory and other British leaders. He opposed even the project of the Constituent Assembly as totally superfluous and wasteful. His assessment of the situation was, of course, completely wrong and did not befit a leader of his stature. This was an unfortunate development. The rising-up of the situation by him was one of miscalculation. In the course of Chapter VII these strategic errors and miscalculations of his are examined in detail and the conclusion is, he should not have allowed himself to be so easy a target for attack.

Dr. Ambedkar and Constitution-making:

This was, however, a period of partial eclipse.

But he was soon to emerge as the man of the hour. When the Constituent Assembly was formed he entered it, once again with the purpose of guarding the interests of the Scheduled Castes. He was also invited by Mr. Nehru to join his Cabinet as Member for Law, which he accepted consistent with his policy. Dr. Ambedkar was more surprised than anybody else when he was first put on the Drafting Committee and later as its Chairman. He is described as the 'chief architect' and the 'father' of Indian Constitution. In the opinion of the author of this thesis, he was, no doubt, the chief draftsman of the constitution. He could not be the philosopher of the constitution. This, however, is not to suggest in the least that he was incapable of a philosophy, but it was because he did not have the freedom to write the constitution according to his own philosophy. His job was purely that of a technocrat. These observations on his role as the maker of our constitution are examined and substantiated in Chapter VIII of the thesis on the basis of the debates and discussions in the Constituent Assembly of India. In the course of Chapter IX a final assessment of his contribution is attempted. In doing so the precise role of Dr. Ambedkar is sought to be determined in a dispassionate, objective and original manner.

