Introduction

This study is indisputably within the wide-ranging scope of nationalism in general and post-colonial nationalisms in particular. It aims to explore, first of all, the general idea of ‘hydra-headed’ nationalism and its presentation in both Western and anti-colonial context as well as in its primordialist and instrumental mode. It provides the theoretical context to locate Ambedkar’s conception of nationalism amidst others in the colonial age. The success of Congress nationalism not only as popular nationalism but also as official nationalism in India has done much to push Ambedkar’s conception of nationalism to the backstage. Conversely, the failure of Ambedkar’s nationalism to translate itself either into popular or official nationalism has led to the long silence, after Independence, of the academicians over Ambedkar. This strategic silence, followed later by the attempts of right-wing scholars, like Arun Shourie, to portray Ambedkar as anti-nationalist or what he called as false god, has made to a great extent, the task of probing into Ambedkar’s conception of nationalism rather challenging. But interestingly, instead of a good number of authors on Ambedkar, it was Ambedkar’s own works that have informed this study.

The general idea of the thesis is that the assertive presence of Ambedkar style of politics and ‘civic-nationalism’ in colonial India has remarkably enriched not only the ensemble of anti-colonial nationalism but also contributed seminally to the sound establishment of the newly-arrived Indian state. It further assumes that Congress-nationalism has not been the sole political nationalism in colonial India and there are other potential rivals such as Ambedkar’s conception of nationalism which I have also called ‘difference-sensitive nationalism’. Another assumption this study makes is that any popular or official nationalism in a particular time-frame and territory cannot claim to subsume the entirety of the understanding of nationalism (even within the same category of nationalism). For instance, Congress nationalism, in spite of claiming to be the only umbrella-type political-nationalism, cannot claim to have co-opted successfully another equally indispensable version of political nationalism (e.g. Ambedkar’s conception of nationalism) in India.

Political nationalism in colonial India would have been far from being all-inclusive without Ambedkar’s intervention, as the political nationalists of Congress left too many socio-political gaps which required to be bridged. It was Ambedkar who rose to the occasion and filled these gaps not only in a theoretical sense but also in a politico-legal sense. Theoretically Congress nationalism invoked Western-universal-abstract categories and was insensitive to the peculiar and grim Indian social contextualities. It did not recognize, at least in the colonial age, the reality of social difference or identity and instead, treated Indian population homogenously. Ambedkar’s ‘Difference-sensitive nationalism’ on the other hand, distinguished between ascriptively-privileged traditional class and oppressed ascriptive social class. Mindful of these ascriptive social differences and identities, Ambedkar carved out his ‘Difference-sensitive nationalism’, which took the historically oppressed ‘social groups’ like minorities, women, untouchables and so on into account. But while making distinctions among identitarian social categories,
Ambedkar also took sufficient care to make his nationalism socially-inclusive. This is where his political nationalism got translated into a balanced and justiciable Indian state by not only taking overboard a specific conception of ‘universal citizenship’ but also qualifying it with group-rights. He also envisioned Indian state as a nationalist pantheon where all the diverse cultures of Indian society would be allowed to co-exist with a fair equality of dignity and voluntarily participate into a nation-making process.

In order to appropriately locate Ambedkar’s conception of nationalism on the terrain of anti-colonial Indian nationalism, it was imperative for this study to firstly elucidate the general but contested conception of nationalism as such. It was also important to distinguish between the well-established imperialist-expansionist nationalisms of the West and the newly-born fragile anti-colonial nationalisms of the orient. Secondly, the colonial age also presented a domestic inner domain of contestations wherein several indigenous competing anti-colonial nationalisms contended with one another sometimes for power and sometimes for actualizing their own separate ideological dreams of future India.

To be more precise, any endeavor to appreciate Ambedkar’s conception of nationalism needs to take into account the colonial age which provided the pedestal for the two-front wars between imperialist nationalism and anti-colonial nationalism on the one hand, and amongst the various forms of anti-colonial nationalisms themselves, on the other. As Ambedkar’s conception of nationalism, much like its contemporaneous competing counterparts, was also set to play its parts in the above-mentioned two-pronged battles for the obvious reason that it was also an ideological form of anti-colonial nationalism faced with two forms of opponents – western imperialism and domestic ideological competitors. In sum, Ambedkar’s conception of nationalism could only be understood in terms of (a) the age of nationalism, and (b) in relation to its competing pan-Indian anti-colonial nationalisms like Congress nationalism, Muslim-League nationalism, Hindu nationalism and Left-wing nationalism.

But, since, apart from Ambedkar’s ‘difference-sensitive nationalism’, it was only Congress nationalism which advanced itself as political nationalism, the former could apparently be read more aptly in relation to the latter. Therefore, this study has dwelt extensively on the narrative of Congress nationalism in India. However, by foregrounding Ambedkar’s difference-sensitive conception of nationalism in the context of a general comparative understanding of nationalism and post-coloniality, this study facilitates a wider and more global reach to the former.

The greatest dilemma with the ideology of nationalism in the post-colonial age has been that it met with, what could almost be said to be, ‘desertion of intellectuals’ (to use Crane Brinton’s phrase). Despite the fact that sophisticated and systematic theories of nationalism surged in the postcolonial phase, it was given a skeptical treatment. May be, nationalism became a theoretical aporia in the eyes of liberal political philosophers due to its long intimacy with social fascism. Nationalism was declared by the Western Liberal political philosophers, in particular, as the ideology of the privileged and oppressive majority invoked more often as a tool against the oppressed minorities. But for the
colonial people, who remained in Western-imperial subjugation for centuries and got recently liberated, nationalism was still considerably appealing and carried the weight of a liberating element in it. Nationalism, to these vast masses of the Afro-Asian countries, was not merely ‘loyalty to a spaced polity’ but it was also a collective weapon of the oriental weak against the imperialist occidental might to dismantle the myth of ‘white man’s burden’ and thus attempt to restore the lost pride. The dilemma of nationalism was such that the Afro-Asian countries had to embrace the ideology of nationalism as a matter of official state policy (nation-building being the chief goal of these newly-born states), at a time when the liberal West came to be increasingly apprehensive of nationalism as the declared official ideology of the former.

Indian state was no exception to this in terms of setting out on ‘nation-building process’ as it also faced the same crisis of not just ‘national identity’ but truly-speaking, ‘civilizational identity’ due to perennial Western subjugation which was not merely confined to a politico-administrative subjugation but had permeated deeper through the core of Indian socio-economic-pedagogic structures (See A.R. Desai, ‘Social Background of Indian Nationalism’ 1948). Congress nationalism by virtue of being official-nationalism in India played this role of disciplining and modernizing the masses but not without indispensable but half-hearted collaboration with Ambedkar’s conception of nationalism, especially in the making of Constitution. Many of Ambedkar’s ideas (the idea of preferential treatment for the marginal sections of society, Hindu Code Bill, Strong Center and so forth) were accommodated by the Congress nationalism without acknowledging the debt to him, while striving to overshadow and subsume Ambedkar’s conception of nationalism.

The focus of my study, therefore, would be to show, firstly, that Ambedkar’s notion of political nationalism commenced a pioneering debate on community, minority and group-rights without refuting the idea of national identity and this is what qualified Ambedkar’s notion of nationalism to be called ‘difference sensitive’. Secondly, this study would also examine if the much-hyped slogan of “unity in diversity” made Congress nationalism ‘difference sensitive’ to the effect that its urge (Liberal-socialist) for “abstract universality” is outweighed by identitarian social contextualities? Thirdly, this study would make a comparative evaluation of Ambedkar’s project of political nationalism in relation to the communitarian notion of community and minority rights, especially in view of the communitarian idea that nation is too distant an identity for community members to identify themselves with and therefore it is a dispensable identity. Subscribing to the same communitarian notion of ‘embedded self’, it will further examine if the notion of the “self” is so deeply embedded into the community that it loses the entirety of its autonomy to the extent that it becomes incapable of identifying itself with national identity and the idea of citizenship? And finally whether Ambedkar needed to renounce his notion of nationalism in favor of community rights, in order to be ‘difference-sensitive’?

By taking these areas of exploration in view, this study makes the proposition that Ambedkar’s conception of nationalism made an indispensable connecting bridge between universal rights of citizenship and group rights and thus establishing a check and balance
system between state and civil-society. This system of check and balance ensured that on the one hand, the vulnerable sections of the society – ethnic and religious minorities, untouchables and women – be protected from the whimsical prejudices of communal majority as well as from the arbitrariness of state (e.g. the constitutional provisions of fundamental rights and the preferential treatment for the marginal sections) and also ensured that these vulnerable sections may not be left alienated by the state machinery to live on their own. This study hopes to establish that Ambedkar wanted the Indian state to create such congenial social conditions for the vulnerable sections as to persuade them to voluntarily participate in the nation-building process. It is this difference-sensitive nationalist element in Ambedkar’s conception of nationalism which remained remarkably unrepresented in Congress nationalism and which this study would seek to emphasize upon.

Problematising Ambedkar’s Conception of Nationalism:

Each academic endeavor, to make an enquiry either into the theoretical aspects of nationalism, or into the nature of anti-colonial nationalism under colonialism, or into Ambedkar’s conception of nationalism, would meet with two forms of problems. One problem would be of a common nature which each of these separate and yet inter-related enquiries would encounter and another problem would be specific to each enquiry. The common predicament in dealing with every aspect of nationalism was the viability of this ideology itself to the observing eye of a research scholar as the element of reactionariness and conservativeness that seemed long back to prevail over its emancipatory potential. The original Western birthplace of nationalism itself seemed to abandon it (at least in theoretical discourses) by the late nineteenth century giving way to grander ideological narratives (positive-cum-Social Liberalism and Marxism) as more appropriate principles of justice and better scientific solutions to the human problems across the nation-states. The principle of nationalism thus seemed to be co-opted by these grand ideologies. The emergence of supra-national states (U.S.A. & U.S.S.R) in the cold war phase was another jolt to the principle of nationalism. The end of cold war and arrival of Globalization pronounced a death verdict against nationalism in spite of the resurgence of ethnic nationalities and religious fundamentalism as the focus of academic discourses shifted the debates to ‘end of history/ideology’, erosion of the principle of sovereignty and establishment of trans-national institutions, and above all, the rise of identity-politics. In the backdrop of these events, it was a challenging task to academically engage with the discourse on nationalism.

As far as the issue of anti-colonial Indian nationalism is concerned, the prime difficulty, this study faced was the extent to which Indian nationalism was derivative as well as, the extent of its autonomy, and whether it could be situated between modularity and autonomy. Thus the complexity for me in deliberating upon the anti-colonial Indian nationalism was the extent to which it invoked Indian-civilization-legacy that consciously distanced itself from ‘the West’ on the one hand, and on the other, ‘Indian nation’ as a bye-product of the Western education, industrialization process initiated by British colonialism and the rise of the urban educated middle-class.
The greatest dilemma this study came across was about locating Ambedkar’s conception of nationalism vis-à-vis Congress nationalism on the broader canvass of anti-colonial nationalism in India. This was pretty demanding, particularly in the light of the fact that Ambedkar’s non-participation in the Congress-led national movements was misinterpreted by the right-wing historians as anti-nationalist and anti-patriotic tendency in him and Left-wing historians’ perpetual silence upon Ambedkar’s conception of nationalism seemed to tacitly endorse this position. Another challenge was thrown up by the post-colonial theories of nationalism tangentially in terms of reviewing the contemporary viability of Ambedkar’s conception of nationalism in the rapidly-changing post-industrial political scenario. Finally, the last of all problems, this study took up to resolve was about rediscovering the intricate linkages between Ambedkar’s ideology of nationalism and his notion of community rights or say, his difference/identity sensitivity.

This study distances itself from all the previous studies made on theories of nationalism, anti-colonial nationalism in India and Ambedkar’s conception of nationalism. It marks a critical distinction, in this regard, not only in problematizing the various aspects of nationalism but also in minutely dealing with the predicaments that we made note of. As to the theories of nationalism, this work makes an effort not only to reconcile the two mutually antagonistic camps on nationalism (primordialists and instrumentalists), but also suggests their limits which might be transcended subject to the change of socio-political conditions. Most of the early studies on nationalism have treated it either skeptically or cynically and ended up either in endorsing ‘construction-project’ or ‘restoration-project’. This reading of nationalism does not give either a scathing or sanctimonious treatment to it. On the contrary, it engages with the nationalist discourse quite dispassionately like any other man-made ideology, institution or identity which will last as long as the conditions suited to it are there.

The mysterious passion of nationalism has not just been confined to a rational conjecture or commonly-evolved culture but always remained inextricably interwoven with a particular territory, an accountable economy, a well-structured governmentality and, above-all, equal democratic rights of citizenship. In sum, nation-state still promises the best available ‘principle of justice’ and finds people ready enough to believe in it and put their allegiance to it. Even if we put aside the elements of commonly-evolved culture and primordial ethnies (a term coined by Anthony Smith) men are born with, no transnational institution, till date, makes available any of the above-mentioned effects to citizens of a nation-state. In true sense of the word, transnational world has nothing to offer to national citizens except the Hobbsian ‘state of nature’ and, nationalism may not vanish till this international ‘state of nature’ gives way to a more democratic and accountable cosmopolitan structure.

As regards, the description of anti-colonial nationalism in India is concerned; this study differs from the earlier works in its assumption that Indian experience of anti-colonial nationalism was unique enough to preserve its own peculiar “Indian” identity and not to be called mere “modular”. But at the same time India would have been incapable of articulating its own unique and peculiar national identity, in the absence of the necessary socio-economic conditions created by British imperialism and the modern-rational
pedagogy inherited from the West. This study, therefore, critically reviews the two important schools on Indian nationalism: the Orientalist school which regards Indian nationalism as a mere fall-out of Western education that created an urban elite and, the Nationalist school which regards Indian nationalism as a sole product of rich Indian national movement. Tagore’s ideas on nationalism, Gandhism as an ideological force behind the national movement and Ambedkar’s urge to devise a nationalism of the subaltern classes are some of the unprecedented peculiar features of anti-colonial nationalism in India which are conspicuously absent not only in the Western conceptions of nationalism but also in any other Afro-Asian conceptions of nationalisms. But again, there would have been no Gandhi, Tagore or Ambedkar, but for the Western legal-rational pedagogy.

Last but not least, this study makes a point of departure from the previous studies on the subject of Ambedkar’s conception of nationalism. In spite of the large number of researches done on Ambedkar’s role in the Constituent Assembly, preferential treatment and reservation policy for the marginal sections, social justice and Dalit identity, there is notable dearth of academic inquiries on his notion of a political nation and nationalism based on social-inclusiveness. This study also marks a difference from the previous ones in its conjecture that Indian typology of nationalism consists of two different conceptions of political nationalism: Congress nationalism and Ambedkar’s conception of nationalism. Another unexplored area, this study seeks to cover, lies in the comparative assessment of Nehruvian conception of Congress nationalism and Ambedkar’s conception of nationalism, to establish that there was an unbridgeable gap between them. It further makes a statement that certain substantial elements present in Ambedkar’s conception of nationalism remained notably unrepresented in Nehru-led Congress nationalism. For instance, in spite of upholding the ideas of cultural pluralism and religious toleration, Nehruvian conception of nationalism was predominantly guided by the classical socialist position of economic determinism and abstract universal categories at the expense of identity-based social differences which were left to take care of themselves, while Ambedkar was keen on identifying the contextual identity-based social differences in his notion of citizenship and welfare state and to him, a nation could be built only on the acknowledgement of these differences rather than on the rebuttal of the same.

Hypothesis:

In view of the above-mentioned problems and the marked differences that this study has with earlier works, the hypotheses foregrounding this study are:

(a) Ambedkar’s conception of nationalism made Indian nationalism egalitarian and difference-sensitive.

(b) Ambedkar’s nationalism forms a connecting bridge between a nationalism resting on abstract equality of citizens and indigenous expressions of communitarianism.

Scope of the Study:
The scope of this study is confined to three aspects of nationalism: (a) Theories of nationalism, (b) Anti-colonial nationalism in India, and (c) Ambedkar’s conception of nationalism. These forms of nationalism also appear to be a trajectory of nationalism from general to particular or from colonial to post-colonial or from occidental to oriental to subaltern. But there are no such preconceived patterns of deductive reasonings which this study has sought to apply. In foregrounding conceptions of nationalism it confines itself to three schools: the instrumentalist school of positive sociology, the primordialist ethnographic school and the Marxist school.

Another threshold of this study, which falls in the zone of ‘anti-colonial nationalism in India’, is that while illustrating the nature and form of nationalisms in the colonies as responses to imperialist/expansionist nationalisms of their Western masters, it does not transcend the precincts of Indian subcontinent or to be precise, Indian nationalism. Instead, this study has chosen to focus on the various forms of nationalisms (both mainstream and off-stream) in colonial and post-colonial India. It goes without saying that every ‘anti-colonial nationalism’ in the Third-world countries has distinctive and unique characteristics not to be found in any other colonies but at the same time it cannot be ruled out that there are also common characteristics which connect them together on the same plane and the scope of my study of ‘anti-colonial nationalism in India’ would not allow me to explore beyond these ‘common characteristics of the colonies’ through the experiences of Indian nationalism. Another restraint on this study is that it does not stretch its course back to the pre-colonial period and is confined to colonial and post-colonial era only.

The scope of this study has not been extended to cover the vast range of social-reform movements launched by the lower-caste saints preceding Ambedkar which spread throughout the Indian subcontinent ever since the Bhakti movement. Besides, it also lies beyond the scope of this study to include a good many of the anti-Brahmin and other social reform movements launched by the lower caste reformers in colonial India, for instance, social-reform movements led by Phule, Periyar, Sri Narayan Guru and many others in various parts of India. Apart from this, my study also does not include one of the most significant subaltern discourses and movements that took place in post-colonial India, namely, ‘Dalit-Bahujan discourse/movement’. The scope of my study is confined to Ambedkar’s conception of nationalism vis-à-vis the competing nationalisms of his time and its post-colonial viability.

Mode of Investigation:

This study relies on three different sets of literature on nationalism in both colonial and post-colonial age. For the theoretical part of nationalism it relies firstly on the nineteenth century classical European thinkers like Herder, Fichte, Renan, Mazzini, Marx and so forth and secondly on the post-colonial theorists, both primordialists and instrumentalists. This part of investigation seeks to trace the origin of nationalism in Western Europe and the conditions that gave birth to nationalism in the aftermath of industrial revolution and Enlightenment. Thereafter, the mode of inquiry shifts on the birth and evolution of anti-
colonial nationalism in India. For this, it relies both on the Western account of Indian nationalism as well as on the indigenous account of the same. The indigenous account primarily focuses on the different variants of anti-colonial nationalism in India and also the contemporary discourses on the emergence of Indian nationalism. In addition to this, it also makes a reading of the various ideological movements launched by the proponents of different shades of nationalism in colonial India. Even the typical style of national statesmanship, autobiographies, books, and articles written by the concerned leadership are also included as sources of enquiry. Finally, for the part of Ambedkar’s conception of nationalism, this study resorts to the same mode of investigation, which is to say, it not only counts on Ambedkar’s own books, pamphlets, articles in newspapers and journals, speeches, interviews and radio-talks but also on the contemporary write-ups on Ambedkar’s conception of nationalism. Besides, it also makes a note of the movements launched by Ambedkar, the various political parties formed by him and his typical style of statesmanship.

Review of Literature:

This thesis endeavors to make a comprehensive statement on three aspects of nationalism: (a) on the origin and definitional aspect of nationalism, (b) on anti-colonial nationalism (with an emphasis on Indian case) and (c) Ambedkar’s conception of nationalism as a version of political nationalism that departed from the idea of abstract universality to encompass the difference-based social inclusiveness.

All the above-mentioned three aspects of nationalism required processing a distinct body of literature. To start with, for the first aspect of nationalism, this study has consulted not only the contemporary authors on nationalism but also classical thinkers like Fichte, Hegel, Herder, Renan, Marx, Mazzini and so on.

Of the contemporary authors on nationalism, this study has made use of the writings of Hans Kohn, Elie Kedourie, Ernest Gellner, Tom Nairn, Hobsbawm, John Breuilly, Benedict Anderson, Anthony Smith, John Hutchinson and so on. Hans Kohn and Elie Kedourie were indispensable for the crucial distinction between Western and Eastern nationalism as also of developed and backward nationalism respectively. Hobsbawm was crucial for suggesting how nationalism was invented deliberately and strategically by the ruling elites who fabricate a number of invented situations which enchant the people of a nation into the national frenzy and that it has a broad-based trickle-down effect. Tom Nairn had a Marxist take on nationalism seeing it in terms of an ‘inwardly-determined social necessity’. John Breuilly regarded nationalism as an ideology which is a pseudo-solution to the problem of the relationship between state and society. Ernest Gellner’s work was imperative for this study for his brilliant portrayal of the sociology of nationalism in an industrial society. Lastly, Benedict Anderson was indispensable for seeing nationalism in both subjective and objective aspects, and suggesting that nationalism, on the one hand, was imagined subjectively in all its peculiarities and on the other hand, it was also a byproduct of print-capitalism.
Anthony Smith, one of the most ardent of primordialists, was significant for this study for taking a radically different position that capitalism and modernity can not invent a nation in a vacuum as it would always require, what is most vital to a nation, an ethnic identity and precisely because of this specific primordial identity, every nation successfully maintains its national distinctiveness and does not get lost into the generality of nationalism. Another author, closer to Smith, is John Hutchinson who strives to show the positive and moral side of cultural nationalism which leads to moral regeneration. The reflections of Michael Lowy, Robin Blackburn, and A.W. Wright on the national question in Marxism have foregrounded my formulations on ‘Left-Wing nationalism’.

The second aspect of nationalism, this study deals with, is the nature of the anti-colonial nationalism or nationalism in the Third-world countries, with an emphasis on Indian case. For this part of study, M.N. Roy’s work on the emergence of Indian nationalism was important as he explained in a classical Marxist fashion that Indian society was in a state of transition from semi-feudal mode of production to the bourgeois mode of production and nationalism was the political reflection of this historic march of the forces of production. Another author I have used for this part is an American research scholar Mccully for his early derivation that the rise of Indian nationalism could be attributed to the Western education introduced by the British that led to the proliferation of a middle class.

The second interpretation on Indian nationalism comes from such early thinkers as Gandhi and Tagore. Both of these thinkers, apart from Ambedkar, occupy a significant space in my description of Indian version of anti-colonial nationalism. Their views are noteworthy especially in the light of the fact that they reject the whole project of modernity and the very ideology of nationalism, calling India a civilization. Thereafter, this study also invokes the views of cultural nationalists like Savarkar and Golwalkar who take, in a revivalist fashion, a near primordialist position on Indian nationalism by arguing that India was always a nation and Hindus alone were entitled to make a legitimate claim for it.

After illustrating these early interpretations on Indian nationalism in the colonial age, I have proceeded to review the post-colonial and rather contemporary literature on anti-colonial Indian nationalism. There is a host of contemporary writers I have resorted to, on this aspect, but Partha Chatterjee and Aloysius are the two authors that I have extensively engaged with. Apart from them, I have found Ashis Nandy’s work refuting the impact of Western-imperialist discourse and endorsing Gandhian indigenous discourse as remarkable. Sudipta Kaviraj provided useful leads to the understanding of colonial power and to the formulation of anti-colonial nationalism. With regard to the ‘Left-Wing nationalism’ in India, the work of Valerian Rodrigues on Indian communism was quite useful to me. This study uses his argument, with approval, that inability of the Indian Communists to theoretically engage with substantial India-specific issues has led the Communist parties to embrace a formal territorial nationalism, which can easily collapse into a conception of homogenous cultural nationalism, or be synonymous with a regime of rights and liberties making national identity superfluous.
The last section of my thesis, which is also the mainstay of my work covering three major chapters, lays stress on Ambedkar's conception of nationalism, his notion of culture, tradition and their place in the project of nationalism and finally his idea of democracy. Apart from using Ambedkar's own works, this section uses a vast range of contemporary authors or literature on Ambedkar's ideas of nationalism, culture and democracy. In addition to this, it also includes authors who juxtapose nationalism with gender, minority and community. On Ambedkar, I have consulted the works of Elenor Zelliot, Gail Omvedt, Jaffrelot, Oneil Biswas, D. R. Jatav, Valerian Rodrigues, Bhima Sen Hantal, Bhalchandra Mungekar, C.M. Wagh, Y.S. Alone, S.N. Busi, Dhananjay Keer, W.N. Kuber, M.P. Mangudkar, Gopal Guru, K. Ramaswamy, D.C. Ahir, Nanak Chand Rattu, Kancha Illaiah, Y.K. Tiwari, R.K. Kshirsagar, B. Nicholas, Sudha Pai, and so on. On the relationship between nationalism, minority rights and gender justice, studies of Amartya Sen, Aijaz Ahmad, Aditya Nigam, Nivedita Menon, Madhu Kishwar, Majeed Akhtar, Arshi Khan, Will Kymlicka, Bill Bowring, Roy Bhaskar, Ayesha Jalal, Wendy Robbins, Anne McClintock, Lina Sunseri, Deniz Kandiyoti, Arun Prabha Mookerji, and Iris Marion Young have been extensively made use of.

Chapterization:

This thesis undertakes to examine Ambedkar's nationalism holistically not just from sociological point of view but using the conceptual baggage of political science. This thesis has been, for the sake of convenience, divided into five chapters apart from a general introduction and conclusion which, however, do not constitute any of the chapters. Each of the chapters in spite of dealing with a separate aspect of nationalism seeks to connect closely with each other.

Chapter I: "An Inquiry into the Theories of Nationalism"

This chapter is quite foundational for the thesis as it prepares the theoretical foregrounding of the study. It traces the origin of nationalism and dwells on some of the most significant debates revolving around the issue. The central theme of the chapter moves around two separate discourses of nationalism: primordial and instrumental, cultural and political or say, restoration project and construction project. The chapter also makes a critique of both the above-mentioned schools of thought on nationalism to make way to explore a third possible ground.
Chapter II: “Debates on Nationalism in Modern India”

The focus in this chapter is the contextual specificity of Indian nationalism. It inserts the issue of the degree of autonomy of an anti-colonial nationalism like that of India and its dependence on or derivation from the so-called ‘original’ West-bred nationalism. It draws up an Indian typology of nationalism in the colonial age. This chapter also enlarges the scope of theories of nationalism by including into it a debate on the elasticity of nationalism to accommodate not only the concept of homogeneity but also ‘difference’ and such differential categories like gender, minority and so on. This chapter, apart from describing Hindu nationalism as mainstream nationalism, also bifurcates political nationalism into two variants: (a) Congress nationalism and (b) Difference-sensitive nationalism. Besides, it also deals with Left-Wing nationalism in India as well as various forms of secessionist nationalisms.

Chapter III: “Ambedkar and Difference-sensitive nationalism in India”

This chapter proceeds to elaborate on the version of anti-colonial nationalism which I have characterized as ‘difference-sensitive’. This chapter studies Ambedkar’s nationalism in a comparative perspective, estimating his conception of nationalism vis-à-vis that of Congress nationalism. This also becomes simultaneously a study of the statesmanship of Ambedkar, Gandhi and Nehru, all of whom claimed in their different styles to represent the subaltern masses. The focus, however, of this chapter is on the ‘difference-sensitive nationalism’ of Ambedkar.

Chapter IV: “Culture and Tradition and Their Place in the Project of Nationalism”

This chapter is a little different from others in terms of the fact that it deals much more with the historical narratives than contemporary concepts. It explores the notion of Ambedkar’s historiography and the place that culture and tradition occupy in his project of nationalism. Textually it analyses the significance of culture and tradition in both the cultural and political project of nationalism while contextually it also investigates into the form of nationalism that subaltern masses would seek to invent. This chapter specifically focuses on the methods Ambedkar chose to accommodate an alternative culture and tradition in his conception of political nationalism. The fascinating dilemma in Ambedkar’s conception of nationalism is that whereas nationalism has always been considered as the privilege of the social elites, in Indian case this privileged class was construed to be Brahmins. In the face of such dominant Brahminical culture it was a great challenge for Ambedkar to discover a nationalism of the subaltern masses based on the culture and tradition of the people on the margins, in opposition to the Brahminical culture.
Chapter V: "The Relation between Nationalism and Democracy in Ambedkar"

This chapter establishes the conceptual relationship of nationalism and democracy and locates the same in Ambedkar's theoretical ensemble. It has already been established that in Western Europe nationalism could sustain itself only after the first wave of democracy got well entrenched but by the arrival of the cold war, when democracy began to prevail wider, the same forces of nationalism began to lose their ground. In the case of anti-colonial nationalism, however, nationalism was quite coeval with democracy. For Ambedkar, nationalism and democracy did not form two separate entities but they were one and the same thing. This chapter argues that amidst all forms of democracies, Ambedkar stood much closer to deliberative democracy which is not an import from Western Liberal democracy in so much as it is from indigenous literature. It is from this indigenous literature that Ambedkar derives his principled trinity: liberty, equality and fraternity.