UNIT 1 : "CASTES IN INDIA": DR BABASAHEB AMBEDKAR

Structure

1.0   OBJECTIVE

In this unit we seeks to familiarize the students with issues of inequality, and oppression of caste and race . Points as follows:

- To analyse and interpret Ambedkar's ideological reflection on social and political aspects and on their reformation, in the light of the characteristics of the social and political order that prevailed in India during his life time and before.
- To assess the contribution made by Ambedkar as a social reformist, in terms of the development of the down trodden classes in India and with special reference to the Ambedkar Movement.
- To assess the services rendered by Ambedkar in his various official capacities, for the propagation and establishment of his messages.

1.1   INTRODUCTION

Education is not only a source of power but it is also an instrument of social change. It has always been functioning as an agent of social control in the interest of the ruling class. The native elites in India used education as an apparatus to subject the downtrodden people to slavery by constituting them in the lowest strata of the caste hierarchy. The colonial forces too used it to establish their imperial reign. In the ancient times, education was the prerogative of the priestly class. They controlled the

social relations primarily through the construction of knowledge which was confined to the three higher varnas, the Brahmins, the Kshatiyas and the Vaishyas. The shudras, the untouchables and the women were completely denied access to the sacredness of knowledge which was equated to the learning of the vedas. Even during the medieval period and the begining of the modem age, the social relations and production of knowledge remained under the control of Brahmanic discourses. The exclusive possession of knowledge, power by the upper castes remained undisturbed even during the colonial rule, resulting in the subjugation of the Dalits and throwing them to the abyss of moral degradation.

1.2 B. R. AMBEDKAR

Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar

Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (14 April 1891 – 6 December 1956), also known as **Babasaheb Ambedkar**, was an Indian jurist, economist, politician and social reformer who inspired the Dalit Buddhist movement and campaigned against social discrimination towards the untouchables (*Dalits*). He was independent India's first law and justice minister, the major architect of the Constitution of India.

Ambedkar was a prolific student, earning doctorates in economics from both Columbia University and the London School of Economics, and gained a reputation as a scholar for his research in law, economics and political science.In his early career he was an economist, professor, and lawyer. His later life was marked by his political activities; he became involved in campaigning and negotiations for

India's independence, publishing journals, advocating political rights and social freedom for Dalits, and contributing significantly to the establishment of the state of India. In 1956 he converted to Buddhism, initiating mass conversions of Dalits.

In 1990, the Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian award, was posthumously conferred upon Ambedkar. Ambedkar's legacy includes numerous memorials and depictions in popular culture.

1.2.1 EARLY LIFE

Ambedkar was born on 14 April 1891 in the town and military cantonment of Mhow in the Central Provinces (now in Madhya Pradesh). He was the 14th and last child of Ramji Maloji Sakpal, an army officer who held the rank of Subedar, and Bhimabai Sakpal, daughter of Laxman Murbadkar. His family was of Marathi background from the town of Ambadawe (Mandangad taluka) in Ratnagiri district of modern-day Maharashtra. Ambedkar was born into a poor low Mahar (dalit) caste, who were treated as untouchables and subjected to socio-economic discrimination. Ambedkar's ancestors had long worked for the army of the British East India Company, and his father served in the British Indian Army at the Mhow cantonment. Although they attended school, Ambedkar and other untouchable children were segregated and given little attention or help by teachers. They were not allowed to sit inside the class. When they needed to drink water, someone from a higher caste had to pour that water from a height as they were not allowed to touch either the water or the vessel that contained it. This task was usually performed for the young Ambedkar by the school peon, and if the peon was not available then he had to go without water; he described the situation later in his writings as *"No peon, No Water"*. He was required to sit on a gunny sack which he had to take home with him.

Ramji Sakpal retired in 1894 and the family moved to Satara two years later. Shortly after their move, Ambedkar's mother died. The children were cared for by their paternal aunt and lived in difficult circumstances. Three sons – Balaram, Anandrao and Bhimrao – and two daughters – Manjula and Tulasa – of the Ambedkars survived them. Of his brothers and sisters, only Ambedkar passed his examinations and went to high school. His original surname was *Sakpal* but his father registered his name as *Ambadawekar* in school, meaning he comes from his native village 'Ambadawe' in Ratnagiri district. His Devrukhe Brahmin teacher, Krishna Keshav Ambedkar, changed his surname from 'Ambadawekar' to his own surname 'Ambedkar' in school records.

1.2.2   EDUCATION

Post-secondary education

In 1897, Ambedkar's family moved to Mumbai where Ambedkar became the only untouchable enrolled at Elphinstone High School. In 1906, when he was about 15 years old, his marriage to a nine-year-old girl, Ramabai, was arranged.

Undergraduate studies at the University of Bombay

Ambedkar as a student

In 1907, he passed his matriculation examination and in the following year he entered Elphinstone College, which was affiliated to the University of Bombay, becoming, according to him, the first from his Mahar caste to do so. When he passed his English fourth standard examinations, the people of his community wanted to celebrate because they considered that he had reached "great heights" which he says was "hardly an occasion compared to the state of education in other communities". A public ceremony was evoked, to celebrate his success, by the community, and it was at this occasion that he was presented with a biography of the Buddha by Dada Keluskar, the author and a family friend. *Pritchett, Frances. "In the 1890s" (PHP).*

 By 1912, he obtained his degree in economics and political science from Bombay University, and prepared to take up employment with the Baroda state government. His wife had just moved his young family and started work when he had to quickly return to Mumbai to see his ailing father, who died on 2 February 1913.

Postgraduate studies at Columbia University

In 1913, Ambedkar moved to the United States at the age of 22. He had been awarded a Baroda State Scholarship of £11.50 (Sterling) per month for three years under a scheme established by Sayajirao Gaekwad III (Gaekwad of Baroda) that was designed to provide opportunities for postgraduate education at Columbia University in New York City. Soon after arriving there he settled in rooms at Livingston Hall with Naval Bhathena, a Parsi who was to be a lifelong friend. He

passed his M.A. exam in June 1915, majoring in Economics, and other subjects of Sociology, History, Philosophy and Anthropology. He presented a thesis, *Ancient Indian Commerce*. Ambedkar was influenced by John Dewey and his work on democracy.

In 1916 he completed his second thesis, *National Dividend of India - A Historic and Analytical Study*, for another M.A., and finally he received his PhD in Economics in 1927, for his third thesis, after he left for London. On 9 May, he presented the paper *Castes in India: Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development* before a seminar conducted by the anthropologist Alexander Goldenweiser.

Postgraduate studies at the London School of Economics

Ambedkar (In center line, first from right) with his professors and friends from the London School of Economics (1916-17)

In October 1916, he enrolled for the Bar course at Gray's Inn, and at the same time enrolled at the London School of Economics where he started working on a doctoral thesis. In June 1917, he returned to India because his scholarship from Baroda ended. His book collection was dispatched on different ship from the one he was on, and that ship was torpedoed and sunk by a German submarine He got permission to return to London to submit his thesis within four years. He returned at the first opportunity, and completed a master's degree in 1921. His thesis was on "The problem of the rupee: Its origin and its solution".In 1923, he completed a D.Sc. in Economics, and the same year he was called to the Bar by Gray's Inn. His third and fourth Doctorates (LL.D, Columbia, 1952 and D.Litt., Osmania, 1953) were conferred *honoris causa*.

1.2.3   OPPOSITION TO ARYAN INVASION THEORY

Ambedkar viewed the Shudras as Aryan and adamantly rejected the Aryan invasion theory, describing it as "so absurd that it ought to have been dead long ago" in his 1946 book *Who Were the Shudras?*.

Ambedkar viewed Shudras as originally being "part of the Kshatriya Varna in the Indo-Aryan society", but became socially degraded after they inflicted many tyrannies on Brahmins.

According to Arvind Sharma, Ambedkar noticed certain flaws in the Aryan invasion theory that were later acknowledged by western scholarship. For example, scholars now acknowledge *anās* in Rig Veda 5.29.10 refers to speech rather than the shape of the nose. Ambedkar anticipated this modern view by stating:

The term *Anasa* occurs in Rig Veda V.29.10. What does the word mean? There are two interpretations. One is by Prof. Max Muller. The other is by Sayanacharya.

According to Prof. Max Muller, it means 'one without nose' or 'one with a flat nose' and has as such been relied upon as a piece of evidence in support of the view that the Aryans were a separate race from the Dasyus. Sayanacharya says that it means 'mouthless,' i.e., devoid of good speech. This difference of meaning is due to difference in the correct reading of the word *Anasa*. Sayanacharya reads it as *an-asa* while Prof. Max Muller reads it as *a-nasa*. As read by Prof. Max Muller, it means 'without nose.' Question is : which of the two readings is the correct one? There is no reason to hold that Sayana's reading is wrong. On the other hand there is everything to suggest that it is right. In the first place, it does not make non-sense of the word. Secondly, as there is no other place where the Dasyus are described as noseless, there is no reason why the word should be read in such a manner as to give it an altogether new sense. It is only fair to read it as a synonym of *Mridhravak*. There is therefore no evidence in support of the conclusion that the Dasyus belonged to a different race.

Ambedkar disputed various hypotheses of the Aryan homeland being outside India, and concluded the Aryan homeland was India itself. According to Ambedkar, the Rig Veda says Aryans, Dāsa and Dasyus were competing religious groups, not different people.

1.2.4 OPPOSITION TO UNTOUCHABILITY

Ambedkar as a barrister in 1922

As Ambedkar was educated by the Princely State of Baroda, he was bound to serve it. He was appointed Military Secretary to the Gaikwad but had to quit in a short time. He described the incident in his autobiography, *Waiting for a Visa*. Thereafter, he tried to find ways to make a living for his growing family. He worked as a private tutor, as an accountant, and established an investment consulting business, but it failed when his clients learned that he was an untouchable. In 1918, he became Professor of Political Economy in the Sydenham College of Commerce and

Economics in Mumbai. Although he was successful with the students, other professors objected to his sharing a drinking-water jug with them.

Ambedkar had been invited to testify before the Southborough Committee, which was preparing the Government of India Act 1919. At this hearing, Ambedkar argued for creating separate electorates and reservations for untouchables and other religious communities.In 1920, he began the publication of the weekly *Mooknayak* (*Leader of the Silent*) in Mumbai with the help of Shahu of Kolhapur i.e. Shahu IV (1874–1922).

Ambedkar went on to work as a legal professional. In 1926, he successfully defended three non-Brahmin leaders who had accused the Brahmin community of ruining India and were then subsequently sued for libel. Dhananjay Keer notes that "The victory was resounding, both socially and individually, for the clients and the Doctor Samarth.

While practising law in the Bombay High Court, he tried to promote education to untouchables and uplift them. His first organised attempt was his establishment of the central institution Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha, intended to promote education and socio-economic improvement, as well as the welfare of "outcastes", at the time referred to as depressed classes For the defence of Dalit rights, he started many periodicals like *Mook Nayak*, *Bahishkrit Bharat*, and *Equality Janta*

He was appointed to the Bombay Presidency Committee to work with the all-European Simon Commission in 1925.This commission had sparked great protests across India, and while its report was ignored by most Indians, Ambedkar himself wrote a separate set of recommendations for the future Constitution of India.

By 1927, Ambedkar had decided to launch active movements against untouchability. He began with public movements and marches to open up public drinking water resources. He also began a struggle for the right to enter Hindu temples. He led *a satyagraha* in Mahad to fight for the right of the untouchable community to draw water from the main water tank of the town. In a conference in late 1927, Ambedkar publicly condemned the classic Hindu text, the Manusmriti (Laws of Manu), for ideologically justifying caste discrimination and "untouchability", and he ceremonially burned copies of the ancient text. On 25 December 1927, he led thousands of followers to burn copies of Manusmrti. Thus annually 25 December is celebrated as *Manusmriti Dahan Din (Manusmriti Burning Day)* by Ambedkarites and Dalits. In 1930, Ambedkar launched Kalaram Temple movement after three months of preparation. About 15,000 volunteers assembled at Kalaram Temple satygraha making one of the greatest processions of Nashik. The procession was headed by a military band, a batch of scouts, women and men walked in discipline, order and determination to see the god for the first time. When they reached to gate, the gates were closed by Brahmin authorities.

Poona Pact

M.R. Jayakar, Tej Bahadur Sapru and Ambedkar at Yerwada jail, in Poona, on 24 September 1932, the day the Poona Pact was signed.

In 1932, British announced the formation of a separate electorate for "Depressed Classes" in the Communal Award. Gandhi fiercely opposed a separate electorate for untouchables, saying he feared that such an arrangement would divide the Hindu community. Gandhi protested by fasting while imprisoned in the Yerwada Central Jail of Poona. Following the fast, Congress politicians and activists such as Madan Mohan Malaviya and Palwankar Baloo organised joint meetings with Ambedkar and his supporters at Yerwada. On 25 September 1932, the agreement known as Poona Pact was signed between Ambedkar (on behalf of the depressed classes among Hindus) and Madan Mohan Malaviya (on behalf of the other Hindus). The agreement gave reserved seats for the depressed classes in the Provisional legislatures, within the general electorate. Due to the pact, the depressed class received 148 seats in the legislature, instead of the 71 as allocated in the Communal Award earlier proposed by British Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald. The text uses the term "Depressed Classes" to denote Untouchables among Hindus who were later called Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes under India Act 1935, and the later Indian Constitution of 1950. In the Poona Pact, a unified electorate was in principle formed, but primary and secondary elections allowed Untouchables in practice to choose their own candidates.

1.2.5   POLITICAL CAREER

Ambedkar with his family members at Rajgraha in February 1934. From left – Yashwant (son), Ambedkar, Ramabai (wife), Laxmibai (wife of his elder brother, Balaram), Mukund (nephew) and Ambedkar's favourite dog, Tobby

In 1935, Ambedkar was appointed principal of the Government Law College, Bombay, a position he held for two years. He also served as the chairman of Governing body of Ramjas College, University of Delhi, after the death of its Founder Shri Rai Kedarnath. Settling in Bombay (today called Mumbai), Ambedkar oversaw the construction of a house, and stocked his personal library with more than 50,000 books. His wife Ramabai died after a long illness the same year. It had been her long-standing wish to go on a pilgrimage to Pandharpur, but Ambedkar had refused to let her go, telling her that he would create a new Pandharpur for her instead of Hinduism's Pandharpur which treated them as untouchables. At the Yeola Conversion Conference on 13 October in Nasik, Ambedkar announced his intention to convert to a different religion and exhorted his followers to leave Hinduism. He would repeat his message at many public meetings across India.

In 1936, Ambedkar founded the Independent Labour Party, which contested the 1937 Bombay election to the Central Legislative Assembly for the 13 reserved and 4 general seats, and secured 11 and 3 seats respectively.

Ambedkar published his book *Annihilation of Caste* on 15 May 1936. It strongly criticised Hindu orthodox religious leaders and the caste system in general, and included "a rebuke of Gandhi" on the subject. Later, in a 1955 BBC interview, he accused Gandhi of writing in opposition of the caste system in English language papers while writing in support of it in Gujarati language papers.

Ambedkar served on the Defence Advisory Committee and the Viceroy's Executive Council as minister for labour. After the Lahore resolution (1940) of the Muslim League demanding Pakistan, Ambedkar wrote a 400 page tract titled *Thoughts on Pakistan*, which analysed the concept of "Pakistan" in all its aspects. Ambedkar argued that the Hindus should concede Pakistan to the Muslims. He proposed that the provincial boundaries of Punjab and Bengal should be redrawn to separate the Muslim and non-Muslim majority parts. He thought the Muslims could have no objection to redrawing provincial boundaries. If they did, they did not quite "understand the nature of their own demand". Scholar Venkat Dhulipala states that *Thoughts on Pakistan* "rocked Indian politics for a decade". It determined the course of dialogue between the Muslim League and the Indian Naitonal Congress, paving the way for the Partition of India. In his work *Who Were the Shudras?*, Ambedkar tried to explain the formation of untouchables. He saw Shudras and Ati Shudras who form the lowest caste in the ritual hierarchy of the caste system, as separate from Untouchables. Ambedkar oversaw the transformation of his political party into the Scheduled Castes Federation, although it performed poorly in the 1946 elections for Constituent Assembly of India. Later he was elected into the constituent assembly of Bengal where Muslim League was in power. Ambedkar contested in the Bombay North first Indian General Election of 1952, but lost to his former assistant and Congress Party candidate Narayan Kajrolkar. Ambedkar became a member of Rajya Sabha, probably an appointed member. He tried to enter Lok Sabha again in the by-election of 1954 from Bhandara, but he placed third (the Congress Party won). By the time of the second general election in 1957, Ambedkar had died.

Ambedkar also criticised Islamic practice in South Asia. While justifying the Partition of India, he condemned child marriage and the mistreatment of women in Muslim society.

No words can adequately express the great and many evils of polygamy and concubinage, and especially as a source of misery to a Muslim woman. Take the caste system. Everybody infers that Islam must be free from slavery and caste. [...] [While slavery existed], much of its support was derived from Islam and Islamic countries. While the prescriptions by the Prophet regarding the just and humane

treatment of slaves contained in the Koran are praiseworthy, there is nothing whatever in Islam that lends support to the abolition of this curse. But if slavery has gone, caste among Musalmans [Muslims] has remained.

Drafting India's Constitution

Ambedkar, chairman of the Drafting Committee, presenting the final draft of the Indian Constitution to Rajendra Prasad on 25 November 1949.

Upon India's independence on 15 August 1947, the new Congress-led government invited Ambedkar to serve as the nation's first Law Minister, which he accepted. On 29 August, he was appointed Chairman of the Constitution Drafting Committee, and was appointed by the Assembly to write India's new Constitution. Granville Austin described the Indian Constitution drafted by Ambedkar as 'first and foremost a social document'. 'The majority of India's constitutional provisions are either directly arrived at furthering the aim of social revolution or attempt to foster this revolution by establishing conditions necessary for its achievement.'

The text prepared by Ambedkar provided constitutional guarantees and protections for a wide range of civil liberties for individual citizens, including freedom of religion, the abolition of untouchability, and the outlawing of all forms of discrimination. Ambedkar argued for extensive economic and social rights for women, and won the Assembly's support for introducing a system of reservations of jobs in the civil services, schools and colleges for members of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and Other Backward Class, a system akin to affirmative action. India's lawmakers hoped to eradicate the socio-economic inequalities and lack of opportunities for India's depressed classes through these measures. The Constitution was adopted on 26 November 1949 by the Constituent Assembly.

Opposition to Article 370

Ambedkar opposed Article 370 of the Constitution of India, which granted a special status to the State of Jammu and Kashmir, and which was included against his wishes. Balraj Madhok reportedly said, Ambedkar had clearly told the Kashmiri leader, Sheikh Abdullah: "You wish India should protect your borders, she should build roads in your area, she should supply you food grains, and Kashmir should get equal status as India. But Government of India should have only limited powers and Indian people should have no rights in Kashmir. To give consent to this proposal, would be a treacherous thing against the interests of India and I, as the Law Minister of India, will never do it." Then Sk. Abdullah approached Nehru, who directed him to Gopal Swami Ayyangar, who in turn approached Sardar Patel, saying Nehru had promised Sk. Abdullah the special status. Patel got the Article passed while Nehru was on a foreign tour. On the day the article came up for discussion, Ambedkar did not reply to questions on it but did participate on other articles. All arguments were done by Krishna Swami Ayyangar.

Support to Uniform Civil Code

I personally do not understand why religion should be given this vast, expansive jurisdiction, so as to cover the whole of life and to prevent the legislature from encroaching upon that field. After all, what are we having this liberty for? We are having this liberty in order to reform our social system, which is so full of inequities, discriminations and other things, which conflict with our fundamental rights.

During the debates in the Constituent Assembly, Ambedkar demonstrated his will to reform Indian society by recommending the adoption of a Uniform Civil Code. Ambedkar resigned from the cabinet in 1951, when parliament stalled his draft of the Hindu Code Bill, which sought to enshrine gender equality in the laws of inheritance and marriage. Ambedkar independently contested an election in 1952 to the lower house of parliament, the Lok Sabha, but was defeated in the Bombay (North Central) constituency by a little-known Narayan Sadoba Kajrolkar, who polled 138,137 votes compared to Ambedkar's 123,576. He was appointed to the upper house, of parliament, the Rajya Sabha in March 1952 and would remain as member till death.

Economic planning

Ambedkar was the first Indian to pursue a doctorate in economics abroad. He argued that industrialisation and agricultural growth could enhance the Indian economy. He stressed investment in agriculture as the primary industry of India. According to Sharad Pawar, Ambedkar's vision helped the government to achieve its food security goal. Ambedkar advocated national economic and social development,

stressing education, public hygiene, community health, residential facilities as the basic amenities. His DSc thesis "The problem of the Rupee: Its origin and solution" (1923) examines the causes for the Rupee's fall in value. He proved the importance of price stability over exchange stability. He analysed the silver and gold exchange rates and their effect on the economy, and found the reasons for the failure of British India's public treasury. He calculated the loss of development caused by British rule.

In 1951, Ambedkar established the Finance Commission of India. He opposed income tax for low-income groups. He contributed in Land Revenue Tax and excise duty policies to stabilise the economy. He played an important role in land reform and the state economic development.According to him, the caste system divided labourors and impeded economic progress. He emphasised a free economy with a stable Rupee which India has adopted recently. He advocated birth control to develop the Indian economy, and this has been adopted by Indian government as national policy for family planning. He emphasised equal rights for women for economic development. He laid the foundation of industrial relations after Indian independence.

Reserve Bank of India

Ambedkar was trained as an economist, and was a professional economist until 1921, when he became a political leader. He wrote three scholarly books on economics:

- Administration and Finance of the East India Company
- The Evolution of Provincial Finance in British India
- The Problem of the Rupee: Its Origin and Its Solution.
- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI), was based on the ideas that Ambedkar presented to the Hilton Young Commission.

Second marriage

Ambedkar with wife Savita in 1948

Ambedkar's first wife Ramabai died in 1935 after a long illness. After completing the draft of India's constitution in the late 1940s, he suffered from lack of sleep,

had neuropathic pain in his legs, and was taking insulin and homoeopathic medicines. He went to Bombay for treatment, and there met Dr. Sharada Kabir, whom he married on 15 April 1948, at his home in New Delhi. Doctors recommended a companion who was a good cook and had medical knowledge to care for him. She adopted the name Savita Ambedkar and cared for him the rest of his life. Savita Ambedkar, who was called 'Mai', died on May 29, 2003, aged 93 at Mehrauli, New Delhi.

Conversion to Buddhism

Ambedkar delivering speech during mass conversion

Ambedkar considered converting to Sikhism, which encouraged opposition to oppression and so appealed to leaders of scheduled castes. But after meeting with Sikh leaders, he concluded that he might get "second-rate" Sikh status, as described by scholar Stephen P. Cohen.

Instead, he studied Buddhism all his life. Around 1950, he devoted his attention to Buddhism and travelled to Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) to attend a meeting of the World Fellowship of Buddhists. While dedicating a new Buddhist vihara near Pune, Ambedkar announced he was writing a book on Buddhism, and that when it was finished, he would formally convert to Buddhism. He twice visited Burma in 1954; the second time to attend the third conference of the World Fellowship of Buddhists in Rangoon. In 1955, he founded the Bharatiya Bauddha Mahasabha, or the Buddhist Society of India. He completed his final work, *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, in 1956 which was published posthumously. After meetings with the Sri Lankan Buddhist monk Hammalawa Saddhatissa, Ambedkar organised a formal public ceremony for himself and his supporters in Nagpur on 14 October 1956. Accepting the Three Refuges and Five Precepts from a Buddhist monk in the traditional manner, Ambedkar completed his own conversion, along with his wife. He then proceeded to convert some 500,000 of his supporters who were gathered around him. He prescribed the 22 Vows for these converts, after the Three Jewels and Five Precepts. He then travelled to Kathmandu, Nepal to attend the Fourth World Buddhist Conference. His work on *The Buddha or Karl Marx* and "Revolution and counter-revolution in ancient India" remained incomplete.

Death

Since 1948, Ambedkar suffered from diabetes. He was bed-ridden from June to October in 1954 due to medication side-effects and poor eyesight. He had been increasingly embittered by political issues, which took a toll on his health. His health worsened during 1955. Three days after completing his final manuscript *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, Ambedkar died in his sleep on 6 December 1956 at his home in Delhi.

A Buddhist cremation was organised at Dadar Chowpatty beach on 7 December, attended by half a million grieving people. A conversion program was organised on 16 December 1956, so that cremation attendees were also converted to Buddhism at the same place.

Ambedkar was survived by his second wife, who died in 2003, and his son Yashwant (known as Bhaiyasaheb Ambedkar). Ambedkar's grandson, Ambedkar Prakash Yashwant, is the chief-adviser of the Buddhist Society of India, leads the Bharipa Bahujan Mahasangh and has served in both houses of the Indian Parliament. A number of unfinished typescripts and handwritten drafts were found among Ambedkar's notes and papers and gradually made available. Among these were *Waiting for a Visa*, which probably dates from 1935–36 and is an autobiographical work, and the *Untouchables, or the Children of India's Ghetto*, which refers to the census of 1951. A memorial for Ambedkar was established in his Delhi house at 26 Alipur Road. His birthdate is celebrated as a public holiday known as Ambedkar Jayanti or Bhim Jayanti. He was posthumously awarded India's highest civilian honour, the Bharat Ratna, in 1990.

On the anniversary of his birth and death, and on Dhamma Chakra Pravartan Din (14 October) at Nagpur, at least half a million people gather to pay homage to him at his memorial in Mumbai.[101] Thousands of bookshops are set up, and books are sold. His message to his followers was "educate, agitate, organise!".

Legacy

Ambedkar's legacy as a socio-political reformer, had a deep effect on modern India. In post-Independence India, his socio-political thought is respected across the political spectrum. His initiatives have influenced various spheres of life and transformed the way India today looks at socio-economic policies, education and affirmative action through socio-economic and legal incentives. His reputation as a scholar led to his appointment as free India's first law minister, and chairman of the

committee for drafting the constitution. He passionately believed in individual freedom and criticised caste society. His accusations of Hinduism as being the foundation of the caste system made him controversial and unpopular among Hindus. His conversion to Buddhism sparked a revival in interest in Buddhist philosophy in India and abroad. Many public institutions are named in his honour, and the Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar International Airport in Nagpur, otherwise known as Sonegaon Airport. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar National Institute of Technology, Jalandhar, Ambedkar University Delhi is also named in his honour.

The Maharashtra government has acquired a house in London where Ambedkar lived during his days as a student in the 1920s. The house is expected to be converted into a museum-cum-memorial to Ambedkar. Ambedkar was voted "the Greatest Indian" in 2012 by a poll which didn't included Mahatma Gandhi, citing it was not possible to beat him in the poll. The poll was organised by History TV18 and CNN IBN. Nearly 20 million votes were cast. Due to his role in economics, Narendra Jadhav, a notable Indian economist, has said that Ambedkar was "the highest educated Indian economist of all times." Amartya Sen, said that Ambedkar is "father of my economics", and "he was highly controversial figure in his home country, though it was not the reality. His contribution in the field of economics is marvelous and will be remembered forever."

Ambedkar's legacy was not without criticism. Ambedkar has been criticised for his one-sided views on the issue of untouchability at the expense of cooperation with the larger nationalist movement. Ambedkar has been also criticised by some of his biographers over his neglect of organization-building. Ambedkar's political philosophy has given rise to a large number of political parties, publications and workers' unions that remain active across India, especially in Maharashtra. His promotion of Buddhism has rejuvenated interest in Buddhist philosophy among sections of population in India. Mass conversion ceremonies have been organised by human rights activists in modern times, emulating Ambedkar's Nagpur ceremony of 1956. Some Indian Buddhists regard him as a Bodhisattva, although he never claimed it himself. Outside India, during the late 1990s, some Hungarian Romani people drew parallels between their own situation and that of the downtrodden people in India. Inspired by Ambedkar, they started to convert to Buddhism.

1.2.6   IN POPULAR CULTURE

Several movies, plays, and other works have been based on the life and thoughts of Ambedkar. Jabbar Patel directed the English-language film *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar* in 2000 with Mammootty in the lead role. This biopic was sponsored by the National Film Development Corporation of India and the government's Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. The film was released after a long and controversial gestation. David Blundell, professor of anthropology at UCLA and

historical ethnographer, has established *Arising Light* – a series of films and events that are intended to stimulate interest and knowledge about the social conditions in India and the life of Ambedkar. In *Samvidhaan*, a TV mini-series on the making of the Constitution of India directed by Shyam Benegal, the pivotal role of B. R. Ambedkar was played by Sachin Khedekar. The play *Ambedkar Aur Gandhi*, directed by Arvind Gaur and written by Rajesh Kumar, tracks the two prominent personalities of its title. *Bhimayana: Experiences of Untouchability* is a graphic biography of Ambedkar created by Pardhan-Gond artists Durgabai Vyam and Subhash Vyam, and writers Srividya Natarajan and S. Anand. The book depicts the experiences of untouchability faced by Ambedkar from childhood to adulthood. CNN named it one of the top 5 political comic books. The Ambedkar Memorial at Lucknow is dedicated in his memory. The chaitya consists of monuments showing his biography.

Google commemorated Ambedkar's 124th birthday through a homepage doodle on 14 April 2015. The doodle was featured in India, Argentina, Chile, Ireland, Peru, Poland, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

Works

The Education Department, Government of Maharashtra (Mumbai) published the collection of Ambedkar's writings and speeches in different volumes.

Castes in India: Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development and 11 Other Essays

- *Ambedkar in the Bombay Legislature,*
- *with the Simon Commission and at the*
- *Round Table Conferences*, 1927–1939
- *Philosophy of Hinduism; India and the Pre-requisites of Communism;*
- *Revolution and Counter-revolution; Buddha or Karl Marx*
- *Riddles in Hinduism*
- *Essays on Untouchables and Untouchability*
- *The Evolution of Provincial Finance in British India*
- *The Untouchables Who Were They And Why They Became Untouchables ?*
- *The Annihilation of Caste* (1936)
- *Pakistan or the Partition of India*
- *What Congress and Gandhi have done to the Untouchables; Mr. Gandhi and the Emancipation of the Untouchables*
- Ambedkar as member of the Governor General's Executive Council, 1942–46
- *The Buddha and his Dhamma*
- *Unpublished Writings; Ancient Indian Commerce; Notes on laws; Waiting for a Visa ; Miscellaneous notes, etc.*
- Ambedkar as the principal architect of the Constitution of India

- (2 parts) Dr. Ambedkar and The Hindu Code Bill
- *Ambedkar as Free India's First Law Minister and Member of Opposition in Indian Parliament* (1947–1956)
- *The Pali Grammar*
- Ambedkar and his Egalitarian Revolution – Struggle for Human Rights. Events starting from March 1927 to 17 November 1956 in the chronological order; Ambedkar and his Egalitarian Revolution – Socio-political and religious activities. Events starting from November 1929 to 8 May 1956 in the chronological order; Ambedkar and his Egalitarian Revolution – Speeches. (Events starting from 1 January to 20 November 1956 in the chronological order.)

1.3   LET US SUM UP

Ambedkar conceived education as an instrument of social change and religion as a social force to reconstruct the world. In this context his conception of religion and its significance for education and social change can be studied in more details.

Production of an enlighted, emancipatory, democratised citizen was a prime concern of Arnbedkar's social project. In this light Ambedkar's democratic ideals and their importance for education can be investigated and a construct for a scheme of education in accordance with these ideals developed.

1.4   CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1) 'Educate Agitate Organise' has also been subjected to exhumation. Explain

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2) Ambedkar's style of social criticism. Elaborate

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3) Religion as a transformative force. Do you agree?

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UNIT 2 : A TEXT ON "CASTES IN INDIA": DR. BABASAHEB AMBEDKAR

Structure

2.0   OBJECTIVE

1. To analyse and interpret Ambedkar's conception of education as power, as a tool for the development of the individual as well as the society and as an instrument for the emancipation of the deprived groups.
2. To trace the contribution made by Ambedkar for the development of education in general and for the education of the Dalits in particular.
3. To analyse and interpret the educational ideas and activities of Ambedkar in the light of his message, 'Educate, Agitate and Organise.
4. To establish meaningful linkages between Ambedkar's theories on social and political reformation and on education and its development.

2.1   INTRODUCTION

Ambedkarism is a living force in India and that force defines the ideology of the Dalit movements. But, Ambedkar as a thinker and ardent rebel against casteism is being subjected to a systematic dememorization. The discourse communities of powerknowledge in India, who would like very much to preserve their superiority as well as monopoly over knowledge have got united in their efforts to mistify the thoughts and social actions of this revolutionary of modem India. The academics and scholars have not yet shed their reluctance to have a dispassionate discourse on Ambedkar's life and struggle against casteism. Though his observations and message are still relevant for completing the unfinished social projects in India, the academies in the country have ignored or discouraged scholarly studies on caste issues. At the same time, attempts are made outside the boundaries of academies to characterize him as a 'false god' to be ignored. What is truly demeaning is the effort to block any discussion on his observations on caste, society and religion, particularly Hinduism.

2.2 TEXT

Castes in India: Their Mechanism, Genesis, and Development

1. Many of us, I dare say, have witnessed local, national or international expositions of material objects that make up the sum total of human civilization. But few can entertain the idea of there being such a thing as an exposition of human institutions. Exhibition of human institutions is a strange idea; some might call it the wildest of ideas. But the students of Ethnology I hope you will not be hard on this innovation, for it is not so, and to you at least it should not be strange.

2. You all have visited, I believe, some historic place like ruins of Pompeii, and listened with curiosity to the history of the remains as it flowed from the glib tongue of the guide. In my opinion a student of Ethnology, in one sense at least, is much like the guide. Like his prototype, he holds up (perhaps with more seriousness and desire of self-instruction) the social institutions to view with all the objectiveness humanly possible, and inquires in their origin and function.

3. Most of our fellow students in this Seminar, which concerns itself with primitive versus modern society, have ably acquitted themselves along these lines by giving lucid expositions of the various institutions, modern or primitive, in which they are interested. It is my turn now, this evening, to entertain you, as best I can, with a paper on "Castes in India: Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development."

4. I need hardly remind you of the complexity of the subject I intend to handle. Subtler minds and abler pens than mine have been brought to the task of unravelling the mysteries of Caste; but unfortunately it still remains in the domain of the "unexplained," not to say of the "un-understood." I am quite alive to the complex intricacies of a hoary institution like Caste, but I am not so pessimistic as to relegate it to the region of the unknowable, for I believe it can be known. The caste problem is a vast one, both theoretically and practically. Practically, it is an institution that portends tremendous consequences. It is a local problem, but one capable of much wider mischief, for "as long as caste in India does exist, Hindus will hardly intermarry or have any social intercourse with outsiders; and if Hindus migrate to other regions on earth, Indian caste would become a world problem." Theoretically, it has defied a great many scholars who have taken upon themselves, as a labour of love, to dig into its origin. Such being the case, I cannot treat the problem in its entirety. Time, space and acumen, I am afraid, would all fail me, if I attempted to do otherwise than limit myself to a phase of it, namely, the genesis, mechanism and spread of the caste system. I will strictly observe this rule, and will dwell on extraneous matters only when it is necessary to clarify or support a point in my thesis.

5. To proceed with the subject. According to well-known ethnologists, the population of India is a mixture of Aryans, Dravidians, Mongolians and Scythians. All these stocks of people came into India from various directions and with various cultures, centuries ago, when they were in a tribal state. They all in turn elbowed their entry into the country by fighting with their predecessors, and after a stomachful of it settled down as peaceful neighbours. Through constant contact and mutual intercourse they evolved a common culture that superseded their distinctive cultures. It may be granted that there has not been a thorough amalgamation of the various stocks that make up the peoples of India, and to a traveller from within the boundaries of India the East presents a marked contrast in physique and even in colour to the West, as does the South to the North. But amalgamation can never be the sole criterion of homogeneity as predicated of any people. Ethnically all people are heterogeneous. It is the unity of culture that is the basis of homogeneity. Taking this for granted, I venture to say that there is no country that can rival the Indian Peninsula with respect to the unity of its culture. It has not only a geographic unity, but it has over and above all a deeper and a much more fundamental unity—the indubitable cultural unity that covers the land from end to end. But it is because of this homogeneity that Caste becomes a problem so difficult to be explained. If the Hindu Society were a mere federation of mutually exclusive units, the matter would be simple enough. But Caste is a parcelling of an already homogeneous unit, and the explanation of the genesis of Caste is the explanation of this process of parcelling.

6. Before launching into our field of enquiry, it is better to advise ourselves regarding the nature of a caste. I will therefore draw upon a few of the best students of caste for their definitions of it :

(1) Mr. Senart, a French authority, defines a caste as "a close corporation, in theory at any rate rigorously hereditary: equipped with a certain traditional and independent organisation, including a chief and a council, meeting on occasion in assemblies of more or less plenary authority and joining together at certain festivals: bound together by common occupations, which relate more particularly to marriage and to food and to questions of ceremonial pollution, and ruling its members by the exercise of jurisdiction, the extent of which varies, but which succeeds in making the authority of the community more felt by the sanction of certain penalties and, above all, by final irrevocable exclusion from the group." (2) Mr. Nesfield defines a caste as "a class of the community which disowns any connection with any other class and can neither intermarry nor eat nor drink with any but persons of their own community."

(3) According to Sir H. Risley, "a caste may be defined as a collection of families or groups of families bearing a common name which usually denotes or is associated with specific occupation, claiming common descent from a mythical ancestor, human

or divine, professing to follow the same professional callings and are regarded by those who are competent to give an opinion as forming a single homogeneous community."

(4) Dr. Ketkar defines caste as "a social group having two characteristics: (i) membership is confined to those who are born of members and includes all persons so born; (ii) the members are forbidden by an inexorable social law to marry outside the group."

7. To review these definitions is of great importance for our purpose. It will be noticed that taken individually the definitions of three of the writers include too much or too little: none is complete or correct by itself and all have missed the central point in the mechanism of the Caste system. Their mistake lies in trying to define caste as an isolated unit by itself, and not as a group within, and with definite relations to, the system of caste as a whole. Yet collectively all of them are complementary to one another, each one emphasising what has been obscured in the other. By way of criticism, therefore, I will take only those points common to all Castes in each of the above definitions which are regarded as peculiarities of Caste and evaluate them as such.

8. To start with Mr. Senart. He draws attention to the "idea of pollution" as a characteristic of Caste. With regard to this point it may be safely said that it is by no means a peculiarity of Caste as such. It usually originates in priestly ceremonialism and is a particular case of the general belief in purity. Consequently its necessary connection with Caste may be completely denied without damaging the working of Caste. The "idea of pollution" has been attached to the institution of Caste, only because the Caste that enjoys the highest rank is the priestly Caste: while we know that priest and purity are old associates. We may therefore conclude that the "idea of pollution" is a characteristic of Caste only in so far as Caste has a religious flavour.

9. Mr. Nesfield in his way dwells on the absence of messing with those outside the Caste as one of its characteristics. In spite of the newness of the point we must say that Mr. Nesfield has mistaken the effect for the cause. Caste, being a self-enclosed unit, naturally limits social intercourse, including messing etc., to members within it. Consequently this absence of messing with outsiders is not due to positive prohibition, but is a natural result of Caste, i.e. exclusiveness. No doubt this absence of messing, originally due to exclusiveness, acquired the prohibitory character of a religious injunction, but it may be regarded as a later growth. Sir H. Risley makes no new point deserving of special attention.

10. We now pass on to the definition of Dr. Ketkar who has done much for the elucidation of the subject. Not only is he a native, but he has also brought a critical acumen and an open mind to bear on his study of Caste. His definition merits consideration, for he has defined Caste in its relation to a system of Castes, and has

concentrated his attention only on those characteristics which are absolutely necessary for the existence of a Caste within a system, rightly excluding all others as being secondary or derivative in character. With respect to his definition it must, however, be said that in it there is a slight confusion of thought, lucid and clear as otherwise it is. He speaks of Prohibition of Intermarriage and Membership by Autogeny as the two characteristics of Caste. I submit that these are but two aspects of one and the same thing, and not two different things as Dr. Ketkar supposes them to be. If you prohibit intermarriage the result is that you limit membership. to those born within the group. Thus the two are the obverse and the reverse sides of the same medal.

11. This critical evaluation of the various characteristics of Caste leave no doubt that prohibition, or rather the absence of intermarriage—endogamy, to be concise—is the only one that can be called the essence of Caste when rightly understood. But some may deny this on abstract anthropological grounds, for there exist endogamous groups without giving rise to the problem of Caste. In a general way this may be true, as endogamous societies, culturally different, making their abode in localities more or less removed, and having little to do with each other are a physical reality. The Negroes and the Whites and the various tribal groups that go by name of American Indians in the United States may be cited as more or less appropriate illustrations in support of this view. But we must not confuse matters, for in India the situation is different. As pointed out before, the peoples of India form a homogeneous whole. The various races of India occupying definite territories have more or less fused into one another and do possess cultural unity, which is the only criterion of a homogeneous population. Given this homogeneity as a basis, Caste becomes a problem altogether new in character and wholly absent in the situation constituted by the mere propinquity of endogamous social or tribal groups. Caste in India means an artificial chopping off of the population into fixed and definite units, each one prevented from fusing into another through the custom of endogamy. Thus the conclusion is inevitable that Endogamy is the only characteristic that is peculiar to caste, and if we succeed in showing how endogamy is maintained, we shall practically have proved the genesis and also the mechanism of Caste.

12. It may not be quite easy for you to anticipate why I regard endogamy as a key to the mystery of the Caste system. Not to strain your imagination too much, I will proceed to give you my reasons for it.

13. It may not also be out of place to emphasize at this moment that no civilized society of today presents more survivals of primitive times than does the Indian society. Its religion is essentially primitive and its tribal code, in spite of the advance of time and civilization, operates in all its pristine vigour even today. One of these primitive survivals, to which I wish particularly to draw your attention, is the Custom

of Exogamy. The prevalence of exogamy in the primitive worlds is a fact too well-known to need any explanation. With the growth of history, however, exogamy has lost its efficacy, and excepting the nearest blood-kins, there is usually no social bar restricting the field of marriage. But regarding the peoples of India the law of exogamy is a positive injunction even today. Indian society still savours of the clan system, even though there are no clans; and this can be easily seen from the law of matrimony which centres round the principle of exogamy, for it is not that Sapindas (blood-kins) cannot marry, but a marriage even between Sagotras (of the same class) is regarded as a sacrilege.

14. Nothing is therefore more important for you to remember than the fact that endogamy is foreign to the people of India. The various Gotras of India are and have been exogamous: so are the other groups with totemic organization. It is no exaggeration to say that with the people of India exogamy is a creed and none dare infringe it, so much so that, in spite of the endogamy of the Castes within them, exogamy is strictly observed and that there are more rigorous penalties for violating exogamy than there are for violating endogamy. You will, therefore, readily see that with exogamy as the rule there could be no Caste, for exogamy means fusion. But we have castes; consequently in the final analysis creation of Castes, so far as India is concerned, means the superposition of endogamy on exogamy. However, in an originally exogamous population an easy working out of endogamy (which is equivalent to the creation of Caste) is a grave problem, and it is in the consideration of the means utilized for the preservation of endogamy against exogamy that we may hope to find the solution of our problem.

15. Thus the superposition of endogamy on exogamy means the creation of caste. But this is not an easy affair. Let us take an imaginary group that desires to make itself into a Caste and analyse what means it will have to adopt to make itself endogamous. If a group desires to make itself endogamous a formal injunction against intermarriage with outside groups will be of no avail, especially if prior to the introduction of endogamy, exogamy had been the rule in all matrimonial relations. Again, there is a tendency in all groups lying in close contact with one another to assimilate and amalgamate, and thus consolidate into a homogeneous society. If this tendency is to be strongly counteracted in the interest of Caste formation, it is absolutely necessary to circumscribe a circle outside which people should not contract marriages.

16. Nevertheless, this encircling to prevent marriages from without creates problems from within which are not very easy of solution. Roughly speaking, in a normal group the two sexes are more or less evenly distributed, and generally speaking there is an equality between those of the same age. The equality is, however, never quite realized in actual societies. At the same time to the group that is desirous of making

itself into a caste the maintenance of equality between the sexes becomes the ultimate goal, for without it endogamy can no longer subsist. In other words, if endogamy is to be preserved conjugal rights from within have to be provided for, otherwise members of the group will be driven out of the circle to take care of themselves in any way they can. But in order that the conjugal rights be provided for from within, it is absolutely necessary to maintain a numerical equality between the marriageable units of the two sexes within the group desirous of making itself into a Caste. It is only through the maintenance of such an equality that the necessary endogamy of the group can be kept intact, and a very large disparity is sure to break it.

17. The problem of Caste, then, ultimately resolves itself into one of repairing the disparity between the marriageable units of the two sexes within it. Left to nature, the much needed parity between the units can be realized only when a couple dies simultaneously. But this is a rare contingency. The husband may die before the wife and create a surplus woman, who must be disposed of, else through intermarriage she will violate the endogamy of the group. In like manner the husband may survive, his wife and be a surplus man, whom the group, while it may sympathise with him for the sad bereavement, has to dispose of, else he will marry outside the Caste and will break the endogamy. Thus both the surplus man and the surplus woman constitute a menace to the Caste if not taken care of, for not finding suitable partners inside their prescribed circle (and left to themselves they cannot find any, for if the matter be not regulated there can only be just enough pairs to go round) very likely they will transgress the boundary, marry outside and import offspring that is foreign to the Caste.

18. Let us see what our imaginary group is likely to do with this surplus man and surplus woman. We will first take up the case of the surplus woman. She can be disposed of in two different ways so as to preserve the endogamy of the Caste.

19. First: burn her on the funeral pyre of her deceased husband and get rid of her. This, however, is rather an impracticable way of solving the problem of sex disparity. In some cases it may work, in others it may not. Consequently every surplus woman cannot thus be disposed of, because it is an easy solution but a hard realization. And so the surplus woman (= widow), if not disposed of, remains in the group: but in her very existence lies a double danger. She may marry outside the Caste and violate endogamy, or she may marry within the Caste and through competition encroach upon the chances of marriage that must be reserved for the potential brides in the Caste. She is therefore a menace in any case, and something must be done to her if she cannot be burned along with her deceased husband.

20. The second remedy is to enforce widowhood on her for the rest of her life. So far as the objective results are concerned, burning is a better solution than enforcing

widowhood. Burning the widow eliminates all the three evils that a surplus woman is fraught with. Being dead and gone she creates no problem of remarriage either inside or outside the Caste. But compulsory widowhood is superior to burning because it is more practicable. Besides being comparatively humane it also guards against the evils of remarriage as does burning; but it fails to guard the morals of the group. No doubt under compulsory widowhood the woman remains, and just because she is deprived of her natural right of being a legitimate wife in future, the incentive to immoral conduct is increased. But this is by no means an insuperable difficulty. She can be degraded to a condition in which she is no longer a source of allurement.

21. The problem of the surplus man (= widower) is much more important and much more difficult than that of the surplus woman in a group that desires to make itself into a Caste. From time immemorial man as compared with woman has had the upper hand. He is a dominant figure in every group and of the two sexes has greater prestige. With this traditional superiority of man over woman his wishes have always been consulted. Woman, on the other hand, has been an easy prey to all kinds of iniquitous injunctions, religious, social or economic. But man as a maker of injunctions is most often above them all. Such being the case, you cannot accord the same kind of treatment to a surplus man as you can to a surplus woman in a Caste.

22. The project of burning him with his deceased wife is hazardous in two ways: first of all it cannot be done, simply because he is a man. Secondly, if done, a sturdy soul is lost to the Caste. There remain then only two solutions which can conveniently dispose of him. I say conveniently, because he is an asset to the group.

23. Important as he is to the group, endogamy is still more important, and the solution must assure both these ends. Under these circumstances he may be forced or I should say induced, after the manner of the widow, to remain a widower for the rest of his life. This solution is not altogether difficult, for without any compulsion some are so disposed as to enjoy self-imposed celibacy, or even to take a further step of their own accord and renounce the world and its joys. But, given human nature as it is, this solution can hardly be expected to be realized. On the other hand, as is very likely to be the case, if the surplus man remains in the group as an active participator in group activities, he is a danger to the morals of the group. Looked at from a different point of view celibacy, though easy in cases where it succeeds, is not so advantageous even then to the material prospects of the Caste. If he observes genuine celibacy and renounces the world, he would not be a menace to the preservation of Caste endogamy or Caste morals as he undoubtedly would be if he remained a secular person. But as an ascetic celibate he is as good as burned, so far as the material wellbeing of his Caste is concerned. A Caste, in order that it may be large enough to afford a vigorous communal life, must be maintained at a certain

numerical strength. But to hope for this and to proclaim celibacy is the same as trying to cure atrophy by bleeding.

24. Imposing celibacy on the surplus man in the group, therefore, fails both theoretically and practically. It is in the interest of the Caste to keep him as a Grahastha (one who raises a family), to use a Sanskrit technical term. But the problem is to provide him with a wife from within the Caste. At the outset this is not possible, for the ruling ratio in a caste has to be one man to one woman and none can have two chances of marriage, for in a Caste thoroughly self-enclosed there are always just enough marriageable women to go round for the marriageable men. Under these circumstances the surplus man can be provided with a wife only by recruiting a bride from the ranks of those not yet marriageable in order to tie him down to the group. This is certainly the best of the possible solutions in the case of the surplus man. By this, he is kept within the Caste. By this means numerical depletion through constant outflow is guarded against, and by this endogamy and morals are preserved.

25. It will now be seen that the four means by which numerical disparity between the two sexes is conveniently maintained are: (1) burning the widow with her deceased husband; (2) compulsory widowhood—a milder form of burning; (3) imposing celibacy on the widower; and (4) wedding him to a girl not yet marriageable. Though, as I said above, burning the widow and imposing celibacy on the widower are of doubtful service to the group in its endeavour to preserve its endogamy, all of them operate as means. But means, as forces, when liberated or set in motion create an end. What then is the end that these means create? They create and perpetuate endogamy, while caste and endogamy, according to our analysis of the various definitions of caste, are one and the same thing. Thus the existence of these means is identical with caste and caste involves these means.

26. This, in my opinion, is the general mechanism of a caste in a system of castes. Let us now turn from these high generalities to the castes in Hindu Society and inquire into their mechanism. I need hardly premise that there are a great many pitfalls in the path of those who try to unfold the past, and caste in India to be sure is a very ancient institution. This is especially true where there exist no authentic or written records or where the people, like the Hindus, are so constituted that to them writing history is a folly, for the world is an illusion. But institutions do live, though for a long time they may remain unrecorded and as often as not customs and morals are like fossils that tell their own history. If this is true, our task will be amply rewarded if we scrutinize the solution the Hindus arrived at to meet the problems of the surplus man and surplus woman.

27. Complex though it be in its general working the Hindu Society, even to a superficial observer, presents three singular uxorial customs, namely:

(i) Sati or the burning of the widow on the funeral pyre of her deceased husband.

(ii) Enforced widowhood by which a widow is not allowed to remarry.

(iii) Girl marriage. In addition, one also notes a great hankering after Sannyasa (renunciation) on the part of the widower, but this may in some cases be due purely to psychic disposition.

28. So far as I know, no scientific explanation of the origin of these customs is forthcoming even today. We have plenty of philosophy to tell us why these customs were honoured, but nothing to tell us the causes of their origin and existence. Sati has been honoured (Cf. A. K. Coomaraswamy, "Sati: A Defence of the Eastern Woman" in the British Sociological Review, Vol. VI, 1913) because it is a "proof of the perfect unity of body and soul" between husband and wife and of "devotion beyond the grave," because it embodied the ideal of wifehood, which is well expressed by Uma when she said, "Devotion to her Lord is woman's honour, it is her eternal heaven: and Maheshvara," she adds with a most touching human cry, "I desire not paradise itself if thou are not satisfied with me!" Why compulsory widowhood is honoured I know not, nor have I yet met with any one who sang in praise of it, though there are a great many who adhere to it. The eulogy in honour of girl marriage is reported by Dr. Ketkar to be as follows: "A really faithful man or woman ought not to feel affection for a woman or a man other than the one with whom he or she is united. Such purity is compulsory not only after marriage, but even before marriage, for that is the only correct ideal of chastity. No maiden could be considered pure if she feels love for a man other than the one to whom she might be married. As she does not know to whom she is going to be married, she must not feel affection, for any man at all before marriage. If she does so, it is a sin. So it is better for a girl to know whom she has to love before any sexual consciousness has been awakened in her" (History of Caste in India, 1909, pp. 2-33.). Hence girl marriage.

29. This high-flown and ingenious sophistry indicates why these institutions were honoured, but does not tell us why they were practiced. My own interpretation is that they were honoured because they were practiced. Any one slightly acquainted with the rise of individualism in the 18th century will appreciate my remark. At all times, it is the movement that is most important; and the philosophies grow around it long afterwards to justify it and give it a moral support. In like manner I urge that the very fact that these customs were so highly eulogized proves that they needed eulogy for their prevalence. Regarding the question as to why they arose, I submit that they were needed to create the structure of caste and the philosophies in honour of them were intended to popularise them, or to gild the pill, as we might say, for they must have been so abominable and shocking to the moral sense of the unsophisticated that they needed a great deal of sweetening. These customs are essentially of the nature of means, though they are represented as ideals. But this should not blind us from

understanding the results that flow from them. One might safely say that idealization of means is necessary and in this particular case was perhaps motivated to endow them with greater efficacy. Calling a means an end does no harm, except that it disguises its real character; but it does not deprive it of its real nature, that of a means. You may pass a law that all cats are dogs, just as you can call a means an end. But you can no more change the nature of means thereby than you can turn cats into dogs; consequently I am justified in holding that, whether regarded as ends or as means, Sati, enforced widowhood and girl marriage are customs that were primarily intended to solve the problem of the surplus man and surplus woman in a caste and to maintain its endogamy. Strict endogamy could not be preserved without these customs, while caste without endogamy is a fake.

30. Having explained the mechanism of the creation and preservation of Caste in India, the further question as to its genesis naturally arises. The question of origin is always an annoying question and in the study of Caste it is sadly neglected; some have connived at it, while others have dodged it. Some are puzzled as to whether there could be such a thing as the origin of caste and suggest that "if we cannot control our fondness for the word 'origin,' we should better use the plural form, viz. 'origins of caste.'" As for myself I do not feel puzzled by the Origin of Caste in India for, as I have established before, endogamy is the only characteristic of Caste and when I say Origin of Caste I mean The Origin of the Mechanism for Endogamy.

31. The atomistic conception of individuals in a Society so greatly popularised— I was about to say vulgarised—in political orations is the greatest humbug. To say that individuals make up society is trivial; society is always composed of classes. It may be an exaggeration to assert the theory of class-conflict, but the existence of definite classes in a society is a fact. Their basis may differ. They may be economic or intellectual or social, but an individual in a society is always a member of a class. This is a universal fact and early Hindu society could not have been an exception to this rule, and, as a matter of fact, we know it was not. If we bear this generalization in mind, our study of the genesis of caste would be very much facilitated, for we have only to determine what was the class that first made itself into a caste, for class and caste, so to say, are next door neighbours, and it is only a span that separates the two. A Caste is an Enclosed Class.

32. The study of the origin of caste must furnish us with an answer to the question— what is the class that raised this "enclosure" around itself? The question may seem too inquisitorial, but it is pertinent, and an answer to this will serve us to elucidate the mystery of the growth and development of castes all over India. Unfortunately a direct answer to this question is not within my power. I can answer it only indirectly. I said just above that the customs in question were current in the Hindu society. To be true to facts it is necessary to qualify the statement, as it connotes universality of

their prevalence. These customs in all their strictness are obtainable only in one caste, namely the Brahmins, who occupy the highest place in the social hierarchy of the Hindu society; and as their prevalence in non-Brahmin castes is derivative, their observance is neither strict nor complete. This important fact can serve as a basis of an important observation. If the prevalence of these customs in the non-Brahmin Castes is derivative, as can be shown very easily, then it needs no argument to prove what class is the father of the institution of caste. Why the Brahmin class should have enclosed itself into a caste is a different question, which may be left as an employment for another occasion. But the strict observance of these customs and the social superiority arrogated by the priestly class in all ancient civilizations are sufficient to prove that they were the originators of this "unnatural institution" founded and maintained through these unnatural means.

33. I now come to the third part of my paper regarding the question of the growth and spread of the caste system all over India. The question I have to answer is: How did the institution of caste spread among the rest of the non-Brahmin population of the country? The question of the spread of the castes all over India has suffered a worse fate than the question of genesis. And the main cause, as it seems to me, is that the two questions of spread and of origin are not separated. This is because of the common belief among scholars that the caste system has either been imposed upon the docile population of India by a law-giver as a divine dispensation, or that it has grown according to some law of social growth peculiar to the Indian people.

34. I first propose to handle the law-giver of India. Every country has its law-giver, who arises as an incarnation (avatar) in times of emergency to set right a sinning humanity and give it the laws of justice and morality. Manu, the law-giver of India, if he did exist, was certainly an audacious person. If the story that he gave the law of caste be credited, then Manu must have been a dare-devil fellow and the humanity that accepted his dispensation must be a humanity quite different from the one we are acquainted with. It is unimaginable that the law of caste was given. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that Manu could not have outlived his law, for what is that class that can submit to be degraded to the status of brutes by the pen of a man, and suffer him to raise another class to the pinnacle? Unless he was a tyrant who held all the population in subjection it cannot be imagined that he could have been allowed to dispense his patronage in this grossly unjust manner, as may be easily seen by a mere glance at his "Institutes." I may seem hard on Manu, but I am sure my force is not strong enough to kill his ghost. He lives like a disembodied spirit and is appealed to, and I am afraid will yet live long. One thing I want to impress upon you is that Manu did not give the law of Caste and that he could not do so. Caste existed long before Manu. He was an upholder of it and therefore philosophised about it, but certainly he did not and could not ordain the present order of Hindu Society. His work ended with the codification of existing caste rules and the preaching of Caste Dharma. The

spread and growth of the Caste system is too gigantic a task to be achieved by the power or cunning of an individual or of a class. Similar in argument is the theory that the Brahmins created the Caste. After what I have said regarding Manu, I need hardly say anything more, except to point out that it is incorrect in thought and malicious in intent. The Brahmins may have been guilty of many things, and I dare say they were, but the imposing of the caste system on the non-Brahmin population was beyond their mettle. They may have helped the process by their glib philosophy, but they certainly could not have pushed their scheme beyond their own confines. To fashion society after one's own pattern! How glorious! How hard! One can take pleasure and eulogize its furtherance; but cannot further it very far. The vehemence of my attack may seem to be unnecessary; but I can assure you that it is not uncalled for. There is a strong belief in the mind of orthodox Hindus that the Hindu Society was somehow moulded into the framework of the Caste System and that it is an organization consciously created by the Shastras. Not only does this belief exist, but it is being justified on the ground that it cannot but be good, because it is ordained by the Shastras and the Shastras cannot be wrong. I have urged so much on the adverse side of this attitude, not because the religious sanctity is grounded on scientific basis, nor to help those reformers who are preaching against it. Preaching did not make the caste system; neither will it unmake it. My aim is to show the falsity of the attitude that has exalted religious sanction to the position of a scientific explanation.

35. Thus the great man theory does not help us very far in solving the spread of castes in India. Western scholars, probably not much given to hero-worship, have attempted other explanations. The nuclei, round which have "formed" the various castes in India, are, according to them:

1. occupation;
2. survivals of tribal organization etc.;
3. the rise of new belief;
4. cross-breeding;
   and
5. migration.

36. The question may be asked whether these nuclei do not exist in other societies and whether they are peculiar to India. If they are not peculiar to India, but are common to the world, why is it that they did not "form" caste on other parts of this planet? Is it because those parts are holier than the land of the Vedas, or that the professors are mistaken? I am afraid that the latter is the truth.

37. In spite of the high theoretic value claimed by the several authors for their respective theories based on one or other of the above nuclei, one regrets to say that on close examination they are nothing more than filling illustrations—what Matthew Arnold means by "the grand name without the grand thing in it." Such are the various

theories of caste advanced by Sir Denzil lbbetson, Mr. Nesfield, Mr. Senart and Sir H. Risley. To criticise them in a lump would be to say that they are a disguised form of the Petitio Principii of formal logic. To illustrate: Mr. Nesfield says that " function and function only. . . was the foundation upon which the whole system of Castes in India was built up." But he may rightly be reminded that he does not very much advance our thought by making the above statement, which practically amounts to saying that castes in India are functional or occupational, which is a very poor discovery! We have yet to know from Mr. Nesfield why is it that an occupational group turned into an occupational caste? I would very cheerfully have undertaken the task of dwelling on the theories of other ethnologists, had it not been for the fact that Mr. Nesfield's is a typical one.

38. Without stopping to criticize those theories that explain the caste system as a natural phenomenon occurring in obedience to the law of disintegration, as explained by Herbert Spencer in his formula of evolution; or as natural as "the structural differentiation within an organism," to employ the phraseology of orthodox apologists; or as an early attempt to test the laws of eugenics—as all belonging to the same class of fallacy which regards the caste system as inevitable, or as being consciously imposed in anticipation of these laws on a helpless and humble population, I will now lay before you my own view on the subject.

39. We shall be well advised to recall at the outset that the Hindu society, in common with other societies, was composed of classes and the earliest known are

   (1) the Brahmins or the priestly class;
   (2) the Kshatriya, or the military class;
   (3) the Vaishya, or the merchant class;
       and
   (4) the Shudra, or the artisan and menial class.

Particular attention has to be paid to the fact that this was essentially a class system, in which individuals, when qualified, could change their class, and therefore classes did change their personnel. At some time in the history of the Hindus, the priestly class socially detached itself from the rest of the body of people and through a closed-door policy became a caste by itself . The other classes being subject to the law of social division of labour underwent differentiation, some into large, others into very minute, groups. The Vaishya and Shudra classes were the original inchoate plasm, which formed the sources of the numerous castes of today. As the military occupation does not very easily lend itself to very minute sub-division, the Kshatriya class could have differentiated into soldiers and administrators.

40. This sub-division of a society is quite natural. But the unnatural thing about these sub-divisions is that they have lost the open-door character of the class system and have become self-enclosed units called castes. The question is: were they compelled

to close their doors and become endogamous, or did they close them of their own accord? I submit that there is a double line of answer: Some closed the door: Others found it closed against them. The one is a psychological interpretation and the other is mechanistic, but they are complementary and both are necessary to explain the phenomena of caste-formation in its entirety.

41. I will first take up the psychological interpretation. The question we have to answer in this connection is: Why did these sub-divisions or classes, if you please, industrial, religious or otherwise, become self-enclosed or endogamous? My answer is because the Brahmins were so. Endogamy or the closed-door system, was a fashion in the Hindu society, and as it had originated from the Brahmin caste it was whole-heartedly imitated by all the non-Brahmin sub-divisions or classes, who, in their turn, became endogamous castes. It is "the infection of imitation" that caught all these sub-divisions on their onward march of differentiation and has turned them into castes. The propensity to imitate is a deep-seated one in the human mind and need not be deemed an inadequate explanation for the formation of the various castes in India. It is so deep-seated that Walter Bagehot argues that, "We must not think of . . . imitation as voluntary, or even conscious. On the contrary it has its seat mainly in very obscure parts of the mind, whose notions, so far from being consciously produced, are hardly felt to exist; so far from being conceived beforehand, are not even felt at the time. The main seat of the imitative part of our nature is our belief, and the causes predisposing us to believe this or disinclining us to believe that are among the obscurest parts of our nature. But as to the imitative nature of credulity there can be no doubt" (Physics and Politics, 1915, p. 60). This propensity to imitate has been made the subject of a scientific study by Gabriel Tarde, who lays down three laws of imitation. One of his three laws is that imitation flows from the higher to the lower or, to quote his own words, "Given the opportunity, a nobility will always and everywhere imitate its leaders, its kings or sovereigns, and the people likewise, given the opportunity, its nobility" (Laws of Imitation, tr. by E. C. Parsons, 2nd edition, p. 217). Another of Trade's laws of imitation is: that the extent or intensity of imitation varies inversely in proportion to distance, or in his own words "The thing that is most imitated is the most superior one of those that are nearest. In fact, the influence of the model's example is efficacious inversely to its distance as well as directly to its superiority. Distance is understood here in its sociological meaning. However distant in space a stranger may be, he is close by, from this point of view, if we have numerous and daily relations with him and if we have every facility to satisfy our desire to imitate him. This law of the imitation of the nearest, of the least distant, explains the gradual and consecutive character of the spread of an example that has been set by the higher social ranks"

42. In order to prove my thesis—which really needs no proof—that some castes were formed by imitation, the best way, it seems to me, is to find out whether or not the

vital conditions for the formation of castes by imitation exist in the Hindu Society. The conditions for imitation, according to this standard authority are:

(1) that the source of imitation must enjoy prestige in the group and

(2) that there must be "numerous and daily relations" among members of a group.

That these conditions were present in India there is little reason to doubt. The Brahmin is a semi-god and very nearly a demi-god. He sets up a mode and moulds the rest. His prestige is unquestionable and is the fountain-head of bliss and good. Can such a being, idolised by scriptures and venerated by the priest-ridden multitude, fail to project his personality on the suppliant humanity? Why, if the story be true, he is believed to be the very end of creation. Such a creature is worthy of more than mere imitation, but at least of imitation; and if he lives in an endogamous enclosure, should not the rest follow his example? Frail humanity! Be it embodied in a grave philosopher or a frivolous housemaid, it succumbs. It cannot be otherwise. Imitation is easy and invention is difficult.

43. Yet another way of demonstrating the play of imitation in the formation of castes is to understand the attitude of non-Brahmin classes towards those customs which supported the structure of caste in its nascent days until, in the course of history, it became embedded in the Hindu mind and hangs there to this day without any support—for now it needs no prop but belief—like a weed on the surface of a pond. In a way, but only in a way, the status of a. caste in the Hindu Society varies directly with the extent of the observance of the customs of Sati, enforced widowhood, and girl marriage. But observance of these customs varies directly with the distance (I am using the word in the Tardian sense) that separates the caste. Those castes that are nearest to the Brahmins have imitated all the three customs and insist on the strict observance thereof. Those that are less near have imitated enforced widowhood and girl marriage; others, a little further off, have only girl marriage; and those furthest off have imitated only the belief in the caste principle. This imperfect imitation, I dare say, is due partly to what Tarde calls "distance" and partly to the barbarous character of these customs. This phenomenon is a complete illustration of Tarde's law and leaves no doubt that the whole process of caste-formation in India is a process of imitation of the higher by the lower. At this juncture I will turn back to support a former conclusion of mine, which might have appeared to you as too sudden or unsupported. I said that the Brahmin class first raised the structure of caste by the help of those three customs in question. My reason for that conclusion was that their existence in other classes was derivative. After what I have said regarding the role of imitation in the spread of these customs among the non-Brahmin castes, as means or as ideals, though the imitators have not been aware of it, they exist among them as derivatives; and, if they are derived, there must have been prevalent one

original caste that was high enough to have served as a pattern for the rest. But in a theocratic society, who could be the pattern but the servant of God?

44. This completes the story of those that were weak enough to close their doors. Let us now see how others were closed in as a result of being closed out. This I call the mechanistic process of the formation of caste. It is mechanistic because it is inevitable. That this line of approach, as well as the psychological one, to the explanation of the subject has escaped my predecessors is entirely due to the fact that they have conceived caste as a unit by itself and not as one within a System of Caste. The result of this oversight or lack of sight has been very detrimental to the proper understanding of the subject matter and therefore its correct explanation. I will proceed to offer my own explanation by making one remark which I will urge you to bear constantly in mind. It is this : that caste in the singular number is an unreality. Castes exist only in the plural number. There is no such thing as a caste: There are always castes. To illustrate my meaning: while making themselves into a caste, the Brahmins, by virtue of this, created non-Brahmin caste; or, to express it in my own way, while closing themselves in they closed others out. I will clear my point by taking another illustration. Take India as a whole with its various communities designated by the various creeds to which they owe allegiance, to wit, the Hindus, Mohammedans, Jews, Christians and Parsis. Now, barring the Hindus, the rest within themselves are non-caste communities. But with respect to each other they are castes. Again, if the first four enclose themselves, the Parsis are directly closed out, but are indirectly closed in. Symbolically, if Group A wants to be endogamous, Group B has to be so by sheer force of circumstances.

45. Now apply the same logic to the Hindu society and you have another explanation of the "fissiparous" character of caste, as a consequence of the virtue of self-duplication that is inherent in it. Any innovation that seriously antagonises the ethical, religious and social code of the Caste is not likely to be tolerated by the Caste, and the recalcitrant members of a Caste are in danger of being thrown out of the Caste, and left to their own fate without having the alternative of being admitted into or absorbed by other Castes. Caste rules are inexorable and they do not wait to make nice distinctions between kinds of offence. Innovation may be of any kind, but all kinds will suffer the same penalty. A novel way of thinking will create a new Caste for the old ones will not tolerate it. The noxious thinker respectfully called Guru (Prophet) suffers the same fate as the sinners in illegitimate love. The former creates a caste of the nature of a religious sect and the latter a type of mixed caste. Castes have no mercy for a sinner who has the courage to violate the code. The penalty is excommunication and the result is a new caste. It is not peculiar Hindu psychology that induces the excommunicated to form themselves into a caste; far from it. On the contrary, very often they have been quite willing to be humble members of some caste (higher by preference) if they could be admitted within its

fold. But castes are enclosed units and it is their conspiracy with clear conscience that compels the excommunicated to make themselves into a caste. The logic of this obdurate circumstance is merciless, and it is in obedience to its force that some unfortunate groups find themselves enclosed, because others in enclosing, themselves have closed them out, with the result that new groups (formed on any basis obnoxious to the caste rules) by a mechanical law are constantly being converted into castes to a bewildering multiplicity. Thus is told the second tale in the process of Caste formation in India.

46. Now to summarise the main points of my thesis. In my opinion there have been several mistakes committed by the students of Caste, which have misled them in their investigations. European students of Caste have unduly emphasised the role of colour in the Caste system. Themselves impregnated by colour prejudices, they very readily imagined it to be the chief factor in the Caste problem. But nothing can be farther from the truth, and Dr. Ketkar is correct when he insists that "All the princes whether they belonged to the so-called Aryan race, or the so-called Dravidian race, were Aryas. Whether a tribe or a family was racially Aryan or Dravidian was a question which never troubled the people of India, until foreign scholars came in and began to draw the line. The colour of the skin had long ceased to be a matter of importance" (History of Caste, p. 82). Again, they have mistaken mere descriptions for explanation and fought over them as though they were theories of origin. There are occupational, religious etc., castes, it is true, but it is by no means an explanation of the origin of Caste. We have yet to find out why occupational groups are castes; but this question has never even been raised. Lastly they have taken Caste very lightly as though a breath had made it. On the contrary. Caste, as I have explained it, is almost impossible to be sustained: for the difficulties that it involves are tremendous. It is true that Caste rests on belief, but before belief comes to be the foundation of an institution, the institution itself needs to be perpetuated and fortified. My study of the Caste problem involves four main points:

  (1) that in spite of the composite make-up of the Hindu population, there is a
      deep cultural unity;
  (2) that caste is a parcelling into bits of a larger cultural unit;
  (3) that there was one caste to start with; and
  (4) that classes have become Castes through imitation and excommunication.

47. Peculiar interest attaches to the problem of Caste in India today; as persistent attempts are being made to do away with this unnatural institution. Such attempts at reform, however, have aroused a great deal of controversy regarding its origin, as to whether it is due to the conscious command of a Supreme Authority, or is an unconscious growth in the life of a human society under peculiar circumstances. Those who hold the latter view will, I hope, find some food for thought in the

standpoint adopted in this paper. Apart from its practical importance the subject of Caste is an all-absorbing problem and the interest aroused in me regarding its theoretic foundations has moved me to put before you some of the conclusions which seem to me well founded, and the grounds upon which they may be supported. I am not, however, so presumptuous as to think them in any way final, or anything more than a contribution to a discussion of the subject. It seems to me that the car has been shunted on wrong lines, and the primary object of the paper is to indicate what I regard to be the right path of investigation, with a view to arrive at a serviceable truth. We must, however, guard against approaching the subject with a bias. Sentiment must be outlawed from the domain of science and things should be judged from an objective standpoint. For myself I shall find as much pleasure in a positive destruction of my own ideology, as in a rational disagreement on a topic, which, notwithstanding many learned disquisitions, is likely to remain controversial forever. To conclude, while I am ambitious to advance a Theory of Caste, if it can be shown to be untenable I shall be equally willing to give it up.

2.3 LET'S SUM UP

Ambedkar himself was instrumental in the establishment of People's Education Society as an alternative agency for education of the depressed classes. A study can be undertaken to exhume the philosophy, aims, functioning and achievement of the People's Education Society with regard to the education of the Dalits and the backward sections of the society.

Ambedkar was a strong advocate of affirmative action for the progress of the downtrodden people. Keeping this in mind the social and educational progress achieved by the Dalits in free India can be studied by using a multiple research design to ascertain the mechanism and effectiveness of implementation of affirmative action in India.

2.4 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1) Education is not only a source of power but it is also an instrument of social change. Elucidate

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2) Ambedkarism is a living force in India and that force defines the ideology of the Dalit movements. Justify

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3) Ambedkar's conception of education as power, as a tool for the development of the individual as well as the society. Explain

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