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RESEARCH ARTICLE

IDEOLOGY OF B.R. AMBEDKAR AND HIS SOCIAL REFORMS

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ABSTRACT

Bhīm Rao Ambedkar was a reformer, he changed the society by his thoughts. In this paper has described the efforts to change the life of people and briefly study how he changed his own life and how many efforts he made. B.R Ambedkar faced many challenges by society for brought changes. He made many attempts for uplifting the society. His efforts for liberal societies are uncountable. Briefly read about the attempts made by him for the welfare of Indian society also.

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INTRODUCTION

A discussion of Dr. Ambedkar's vision of development of Dalit's would cover his ideology, programme, strategy and action in this matter. And the analysis would be done from a historic-sociological perspective. There were two major types of contradictions of interest prevailing during the British period. One, there was a contradiction between the British Colonial interest and interests of the whole of the Indian people, the former flourished at the cost of the latter. The British exploited both the material and human resources of India for benefiting their own country, mainly their privileged class. The nature of this contradiction of interest was irreconcilable. This was regarded as the primary contradiction by the Indian nationalist forces struggling for independence of the country from colonial rule. Here, it needs to be noted that this contradiction had a narrow historical roots, being just around a century old phenomenon. The internal social contradictions were either overlooked or considered secondary in the nationalist agenda of struggle. The Congress party and its most popular leader Gandhi the major contradiction under

the colonial rule was between the British interest and the Indian national interest. They regarded the internal social contradictions as of secondary importance. Hence, they gave first priority to struggle against the British. The programme for internal social self are and reform, were generally adopted by them when the political struggles against British used to be dull. They had no (immediate) programme for social restructuring of the Indian Society for betterment of the deprived and oppressed people¹. Having born in a Dalit (SC) family and also suffered numerous indignities as a result, Dr. Ambedkar had a different perception and understanding of the existing contradictions in India during the colonial period and also before and after this. To him, the basic primary contradiction in India was internal, between the conflicting interest of the Dalit untouchables and the other castes particularly the upper ones. This problem, in his view, had its roots in the Brahminical ideology of caste and Varna which was obnoxiously inhuman and oppressive of the untouchable castes, and favored the upper castes. The untouchable castes suffered for ages under the exploitative, oppressive and in

¹S.Paramji, *Caste Reservations and performance*, Mamta Publications, Warangal, 1985, p.56

egalitarian Varna caste-system. Several waves of invasions had taken place and India was ruled by many foreign rulers, though most of them settled down here. But the untouchables continued to suffer under the caste²-Varna order of Hindu society. In such a scenario, Dr. Ambedkar very justifiably thought that the conditions of untouchables would not improve significantly even if the British left India. So, he made his first commitment to the cause of betterment and emancipation of the Dalit's in the country. Struggle against the British became secondary in his agenda. In fact, the struggle which he stated for restructuring of the Hindu society was probably more complex and stupendous as it involved transformation of an age-old mind set as well as the pattern of social relationships was probably much simpler as there was just one common enemy with a narrow historical base of ruling the country.

Caste: Dr. Ambedkar envisioned a casteless society. He held that 'In the Indian society, caste is the monster that crosses your path in whichever direction you turn'. He affirmed that the caste system created nationalism, exclusiveness and an anti-social spirit among the Hindus themselves. It represented a 'closed hierarchical system of graded inequalities and privileges in socio-economic and political life among the people belonging to different caste groups. The membership of caste was based on birth. Sever restrictions were put on inter-caste interactions through imposing prohibition on inter-caste dining and marriage, and fixity of caste specific occupations. These structural features of caste promoted intra caste solidarity and exclusiveness, but inter-caste distance and isolationism. So, Dr. Ambedkar held that Hindu society is a myth. It is mainly a collection of castes characterized by separate consciousness of castes rather than a common "Consciousness of kind". Dr. Ambedkar observed ", men do not become a society by living in physical proximity among more..... Secondly, similarity in habits and customs, beliefs and thoughts is not enough to constitute men into society. Men constitute a society because they have things which they possess in common to have similar things is totally different from possessing things in common. And the only way by which men can come to possess things in common with one another is by being in communication with one another what is necessary is for a man to share the participate in a common activity so that the same emotions are aroused in him that animate the others. Making the individual a shared or partner in the associated activity so that he feels its success as his success, its failure as his failure, is the real thing that binds men and makes a society of them. The caste system presents common activity and by preventing common an activity it has prevented the Hindus from becoming a society with a unified life and a consciousness of its own being".

The caste system maintained the privileges of the upper castes at the cost of the disposes and underprivileged lower castes. There was an attitude of indifference and tolerance of oppression in the system. The fragmentation of society into castes and sub castes obstructed fuller co-operation and organization of Hindu and led to psychic fragmentation of the people. There was a mutual reinforcing of structural and psychic fragmentation among the Hindus. This hampered the growth of larger loyalty and public opinion. Dr. Ambedkar stated, Public opinion is something impossible as for a Hindu, Public is his caste and his responsibility is only to his caste.

²NarendraYadav, *Dr. Ambedkar's Economic Thought and Philosophy*, Raghu Press, Bombay, 1993,p.31

Loyalty is restricted to caste and virtue has become caste-ridden and morality has become caste-bound. There is no sympathy to the deserving. There is no appreciation of the meritorious.³ Along with caste System, Dr. Ambedkar rejected the Varna order of society which was defended by its protagonist as being based on worth (quality) rather than birth. Varna was essentially some different name given to the phenomenon of caste. The 'social content' of both Varna and caste was the same. Caste system represented a social hierarchy of multiple castes and sub-castes. And the Varna system reflected a social gradation of people into four definite classes. The difference between Varna and caste was only quantitative, and not qualitative. Dr. Ambedkar affirmed, "To allow this chaturvarnya based on worth to be designated by such striking labels of Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra indicative of social divisions based on birth is a snare". He added, "To me, this Chaturvarnya with its old labels is utterly repellent and my whole being rebels against it". He held that the Varna system completely disabled the lower castes for direct action for their betterment. He firmly believed, "There cannot be a more dreading system of social organization than Chaturvarnya. It is the system which deadens paralyses and cripples the people from helpful activity⁴.

Hence, Dr. Ambedkar advocated the annihilation of both Varna and caste. In this respect, an important task, in his opinion, was to destroy the sanctity of Hindu religion which sanctified Varna and caste. This would require not only discarding the Hindu Shastras but also to deny their authority. He was very clear that the struggle against Varna caste system was not possible within the framework of Hindu religion and the religion of the Shruti and Smriti had to be destroyed. He thought that an ideal religion could be a matter of universal spiritual principles, and not a matter of ordinance. He opined that Hindu religious scriptures mainly represent a mix of sacrificial, social, political and sanitary rules and regulations. Universal spiritual principles did not constitute the governing part of a Hindu's life. Hindu dharma mainly meant commands and prohibitions invested with the character of finality and fixity for all generations. This tended to deprive moral life of less anxious and servile conformity to externally imposed rules. Therefore, Dr. Ambedkar had no hesitation in saying such a religion must be destroyed' and there was 'nothing irreligious in working for the destruction of such a religion. He added, "Unless the social order is changed, no progress could be achieved. The community cannot be mobilize either for defense or for offence. Nothing can be built on the foundations of caste. No nations, no morality⁵".

Further, Dr. Ambedkar had a vision of building and new society egalitarian democratic principles. He was fully committed to the case of equality. He held, "Equality may be a fiction but nonetheless, one must accept it as the governing principle"⁶. He clearly stated, "My ideal would be society based on liberty equality and fraternity" (cited in Kuber 1991:397). As against the "closed" caste system, such a society would be 'open' providing scope for social mobility and development to all. It would be characterized by fraternity manifested in a mode of associated, not segregated, living.

³PrahaladJoganand, *Dalit Movements in Maharashtra*, Kanak Publications, New Delhi, 1991, p.20.

⁴*Ibid*,p.24

⁵Ravindra Kumar, '*Gandhi, Ambedkar and the Poona pact*, Manohar Publications, New Delhi, 1994,p.10.

⁶*Ibid*, p.21.

Everyone would have an attitude of respect towards fellow beings. Such a society would obviously put no restrictions on inter-caste dining and marriage and freedom in occupational matter. Moreover, he observed that inter-dining had not been able to eradicate the spirit of consciousness of castes. He thought, "The remedy is intermarriage. It will be vanished the spirit created by caste". It was held by Dr. Ambedkar that the task of annihilation of caste more challenging, difficult and complex, even more that the national case of attaining freedom from the British. He differed on this count from the communists/socialists who believed that the economic power and property is the sole source of power. The history of India, and even Rome showed, in his opinion, that religious authority has been more powerful than economic and political power. He observed, "The fallacy of the socialists lies in supposing that because in the present European Society property as a source of power is predominant, the same is true of India or that the same was true of Europe in the past" (cited in Mathew 1991:31). In India, the socio-religious system of Varna-caste divided society still prevailed. It was the major case of perpetuating discrimination, exploitation and oppression particularly of the traditional untouchable castes. So end of the Varna-caste order the society was essential and the first important task. In this undelivered presidential speech prepared for the conference organized by the *Jat-Pat-TodakMandal*. Lahore in 1936, he observed⁷. In the fight for Swaraj you fight with the whole nation on your side. In the struggle (against the caste), you have to fight against the whole nation and that too, your own. But it is more important than Swaraj. There is no use having Swaraj is the question of defending the Hindus under the Swaraj. In my opinion, only when the Hindu-society becomes a casteless society it can hope to have strength enough to defend itself. Without such internal strength, Swaraj for Hindus may turn out to be only a step towards slavery. This clearly shows how divisive and harmful he considered the caste system to the whole nation.

Socio-Economic Development: Dr. Ambedkar's socio-economic vision of development is reflected in categorical and compact manner in the memorandum "states and Minorities" the submitted to the constituent Assembly of India on behalf of the All-India Scheduled caste federation⁸. The memorandums not confined to addressing merely the concerns of Scheduled Castes. Rather, it gives the major outlines for socio economic reconstruction encompassing all sections of society. It is regarded as a model of state socialism which he wanted to be introduced through constitutional democratic way. The salient features of the model proposed by him are as follows:

- Industries which are key industries or which may be declared to be key industries shall be owned and run by the state.
- The industries which are not key industries but which are basic industries shall be owned by the state and shall be run by the state or by corporation established by the state.
- The insurance shall be in monopoly of the state and that the state shall compel every adult citizen to take out a life insurance policy commensurate with his wages as may be prescribed by the legislature.
- The agricultural industry shall be State Industry.

- The state shall acquire the subsisting rights in such industries; insurance and agricultural land held by private individuals, whether as owners, tenants or mortgagees and pays them compensation in the form of debenture equal to the value of his or her right in the land.
- The state shall also determine how and when the debenture holder shall be entitled to claim cash payment.
- The debenture shall be transferable and inheritable property but neither the debenture holder nor the transferee from the original holder nor his heir shall be entitled to claim the return of the land or interest in any industrial concern acquired by the state or is entitled to deal with it in any way.

The debenture-holder shall be entitled to interest on his debenture at such rate as may be defined by law, to be paid by the state in cash or in kind as the state may deem it fit. Agricultural industry shall be organized on the following basis.

- The state shall divide the land acquired into farms of standard size and let out the farm for cultivation to residents of the village as tenants (made up of group of families) to cultivate on the following conditions.
 - The farm shall be cultivated as a collective farm.
 - The farm shall be cultivated in accordance with rules and directions issued by Government.
 - The tenants shall share amount themselves, in the manner prescribed, the producer of the farm left after the payment of charges properly livable on the farm.
- The land shall be let out to villagers without distinction of caste or creed and in such manner that there will be no land lord, no tenant, and no landless labour.
- It shall be the obligation of the state to finance the cultivation of the collective farms by the supply of water⁹.
- Draught animals, implements, manure, seeds etc.

The state shall be entitled to:

- Levy the following charges on the produce of the farm.
- a portion for land revenue
- A portion to pay the debenture holders, and
- A portion to pay for the use of capital goods supplied b. to prescribe penalties against the tenants who break the conditions of tenancy or willfully neglect to make the best use of the means of cultivation offered by the state of otherwise act prejudicially to the scheme of collective farming¹⁰.

The scheme shall be brought into operation as early as possible but in no case shall the period extend beyond the tenth year from the date of the constitution coming into operation. Thus, he proposed abolition of private property in case of key and basic industries and also land ownership and control. Non-basic/key industries remained outside the state sector. But the whole agricultural land was placed in the state sector making all the people tenants of the state. The state would lease out land to groups of families in will ages who will cultivate collective farms receiving state support in different forms. It would collect some charges/revenue from the cultivators and the rest would be shared by them.

⁷R.K.Kshrisagar, *Dalit Movement and its Leaders 1857-1956*, M.D., New Delhi, 1992, p.110.

⁸K.S.Singh, *The Scheduled Castes*, vol .2, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1993,p.112.

⁹ *Ibid*, p.114.

¹⁰R.C.Prasad, *Preface to Ambedkarism*, Motilal Publishers, Banaras,1990,p.142.

This ends the existing unequally classes of landlords/owners, tenants and agricultural labors in the agrarian sector. Compulsory insurance for all it suggested as a financial tool to generate resources needed for both the industrial and agricultural development. People belonging to all castes, classes other traditional identities are placed at par in the agenda of socio-economic reconstruction of society¹¹. The agenda of change reflects a modified version of socialization. It proposes complete nationalization and collectivization of agriculture. But in industry, only key and basis industries are proposed to come under state ownership and control. The small and medium industries are left out for the play of individual entrepreneurship. So, there is only limited socialism advocated for the industrial sector. The main purpose in the context, according to him, was "to put an obligation on the state to plan the economic life of people on lines which would lead to highest point of productivity without closing every avenue to the private enterprise and also provide for the equitable distribution of wealth". The proposal made for the payment of compensation by the state for acquired property both in industry and land shows a limited acceptance of the capitalistic principle of private property. However, the plan as a whole is largely socialistic in nature and aims at eradicating the existing socio-economic inequalities in society on the basis on caste, tribe, sex, religion etc.

Dr. Ambedkar did not want to leave this scheme of state socialism to the will be the legislature. He wanted to make it a part of the constitution and thus to place it beyond the reach of a parliamentary majority to dilute or annul it. Also, a definite time frame was put for the state for implementation of this plan. The strategy was to secure state socialism through parliamentary means. He states, "It is only by this that one can achieve the triple object of namely to establish socialism, retain parliamentary democracy and avoid dictatorship".

Education: Another area of important concern for Dr. Ambedkar was education. His views regarding promotion of primary education is reflected in a statement submitted by him on behalf of BahishkritHitkariniSabha to the Indian Statutory commission (Simon Commission), 1928. The submission was made in the context of the transfer of education from the Education. Department to the School Boards by the Compulsory Primary Education Act (Bombay Act No. IV of 1923). He considered this transfer as detrimental to the interests of backward and depressed classes. The request made to the commission stated the following¹².

- Unless the compulsory Primary Education is abolished and the transfer of Primary Education to the School Boards is stopped, the Sabha rears that education of the depressed classes will receive a great set-back.
- Unless compulsion in the matter of primary education is made obligatory and unless the admission to primary schools is strictly enforced, conditions essential for educational progress of the backward classes will not come into existence.
- Unless the recommendations made by the Hunter commission regarding the education of the Muslims are

applied to the depressed classes their educational progress will not be an accomplished fact¹³.

Unless entry in the public service is secured to the depressed classes there will be no inducement for them to take education. He noted the extremely high degree of wastage in primary education as reflected in very high drop-out rate of children at this stage. He gave the then figures, 'out of every hundred children that enter a primary school only 18 reach the IV slandered, the rest of them, that is to say, 82 out of every 100, relapse into the state of illiteracy'. In its manifesto brought out on the eve of the General Election in 1937, the Independent Labor Party headed by Dr. Ambedkar gave its policy guidelines regarding educational problems. It stood for full and compulsory education and gave special emphasis on technical education. It wanted the state to offer scholarships to deserving students from the educationally backward communities. It favored legislation for reorganizing university education and establishing teaching universities. Dr. Ambedkar held that University education needed to be reorganized to meet the needs of the modern world, and to make the university a seat of knowledge and not center of training clerks. In such a situation, leaving education on the wishes and whims of minister was opposed. It was requested that the government employ certain inspecting agency under its direct control to ensure that the depressed classes were not neglected. Dr. Ambedkar was opposed to commercialization of education. It was found that the proportion of financing of education from fees out of total expenditures was 36% at college, 31% at high school and 26% at middle school levels respectively. He said, "This is commercialization of education". Education is something which ought to be brought within the reach of everyone. Education ought to be cheapened in all possible ways and to the greatest possible extent¹⁴.

For promoting education, Dr. Ambedkar set up Siddharth College, Bombay in 1946 on behalf of the People's Education Society, Bombay. He argued that he could have named the college after a multimillionaire and taken millions of rupees for this. However, he did not follow that path and named the college after Buddha. This way he wanted to emphasize the ideal of Buddha, namely, searching the truth rather than making money. He favored community/people's initiative and efforts in spreading education. But he held that the government has the greater responsibility to provide education¹⁵. Special responsibilities on the part of the government were clearly stated in the memorandum submitted by him to the constituent Assembly, which stated.

- Government - Union and state - shall be required to assume financial responsibility for the higher education of the scheduled castes and shall be required to make adequate provisions in their budgets. Such provisions shall form the first charge on the Education Budget of the Union and state Government.
- The responsibility for finding money for secondary and college education of the Scheduled castes in India shall be upon the state Governments and the different states shall make a provision in their annual budgets for the said

¹¹ *Ibid*, p.147.

¹² Ghansyam Shah, *Social Movements in India: A Review of the Literature*, Sage, New Delhi, 1990, p.32.

¹³ *Ibid*, p.35

¹⁴ RamjiShinde, *Ambedkar Economic Thought and Philosophy*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1993, p.40.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p.49

purpose in proportion to the population of the scheduled castes to the total budget of the state.

- The responsibility for finding money for foreign education of the Scheduled Castes shall be the responsibility of the Union Government and the Union Government shall make a provision of Rs. 10 Lakhs per year in its annual budget on its behalf.
- These special grants shall be without prejudice to the right of the Scheduled Castes to share in the expenditure incurred by the State Government for the advancement of primary education for the people of the State. These provisions show his special concern for safeguarding the educational interests of scheduled castes.

Reservation: Dr. Ambedkar advocated affirmative action by the State for uplift of the depressed classes. In the Round Table Conference he projected special rights of the depressed classes and minorities for ensuring their adequate representation in the public sphere. But different Indian representatives did not agree on the electoral system. Finally, the British granted separate electorates to the depressed classes and the minorities. But, Gandhi indefinite fast on the issue forced Dr. Ambedkar to sign the Poona Pact which provided for joint electorates and also special measures for safeguarding and promoting the interests of depressed classes¹⁶. The Poona Pact stated-

- There will be no disabilities attaching to anyone on the ground of his being a member of the depressed classes in regard to any elections to local bodies or appointment to the public services. Every endeavor shall be made to secure fair representation of the depressed classes in these respects, subject to such educational qualifications as may be laid down for appointment to the public services.
- In every province out of the educational grant an adequate sum shall be earmarked for providing educational facilities to the members of the depressed classes.

The Government of India issued a resolution in 1934 providing for a fair degree of representation to the depressed classes. But it did not specify quota. But later in 1943 the Government of India made a reservation of 8.33% of the vacancies for the Scheduled castes. Further, Dr. Ambedkar proposed in the memorandum to the Constituent Assembly the following measures-

Right to Representation in the Services:

The quantum of representation of the SCs in the services shall be as follows:

- In the Union Services: In proportion to the ratio of their population to the total population in India of British India as the case may be.
- In the state and Group Services: In proportion to their population in the State or Union.
- In the Municipal and Local Board Services. In Proportion to their population in the Municipal and Local Board areas.

Provided that no minority is allowed to claim more than its population ratio of representation in the services.

- Their right to representation in the services shall not be curtailed except by conditions relating to minimum qualifications, education, age, etc.
- The conditions prescribed for entry in services shall not abrogate any of the concessions given to the SCs by the government of India in their Resolution of 1942 and 1945.
- The methods of filling up the vacancies shall conform to the rules prescribed in the Government of India Resolutions of 1942 to 1946.
- On every public service Commission of Committee constituted for filling vacancies, the SCs shall have at least one representative.

Thus, it is found that there were two major facets of Dr. Ambedkar's vision of development, during the British rule. One he had a vision of Socio-economic reconstruction of the whole society, i.e. a modified version of state socialism benefiting all the deprived sections of society irrespective of caste, tribe, region, religion etc. Two, he advocated special measures in the domains of education and representation in elected bodies and government services for the betterment of the condition of SCs. This would imply a gradualist approach for uplifting the SCs¹⁷. Dr Ambedkar, however, applied both the test of justice and the test of utility to judge the philosophy of Hinduism. He regarded the principle of justice as a compendious which included most of the principles of what has become the foundation of a moral order. Justice has always evoked ideas of equality, of proportion of 'compensation. Equity signifies equality. If all men are equal, then they are of the same essence and their common essence entitles them to the same fundamental rights and equal liberty. In a nutshell, justice is simply another name for liberty, equality and fraternity as far as Ambedkar was concerned. Lambently, he finds Hinduism wanting in these tenets since the Hindu social organization is based on caste system. Varna is the parent of caste and both uphold the principle of gradation and rank, in other words inequality. He says that this inequality in statuses is not merely the inequality that one sees in the warrant of precedence prescribed for a ceremonial gathering at a King's court. It is a permanent social relationship among the classes to be observed to be enforced-at all times and in all places. In order to further elaborate the absence of equality and liberty in the Hindu social system, he refers to the rules evolved with regard to slavery, marriage, rule of law, occupation and education. Quoting Manu and Narada, he says slavery was recognized by Hinduism. Manu confined it to Shudras. As the practice differed from the law of Manu, a new rule was enacted by Narada which obtained that would not be recognized by Hinduism. The same kind of asymmetry would underlie intermarriages, if at all such matings were to take place Rule of Law also did not mean equality before law, its guiding principle was discrimination based on Varna. Inequality was writ large in the Hindu criminal jurisprudence. Punishment his to be in proportion to the gravity of the offence; instead Man' penal code was based on inequality of punishment; the higher the caste, the less rigorous the punishment. In other words, social and religious inequality was embedded in the philosophy of Hinduism. It upheld privileges and caste-based immunities. All this, coupled with lack of economic independence and denial of access to knowledge created an environment where liberty was conspicuous by its absence whatever liberty did

¹⁶James Massey, *Indigenous People: Dalits*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1992, p.20

¹⁷Arvind Nirmal, *Toward a Common Dalit Ideology*, Gurukul, Madras, 1994, p.18.

exist, its praxis domain did not go beyond the contours well demarcated for each inscriptive group. Elaborating the case of Shudras vis-a-vis the savarnas, Ambedkar says that the rules not only put an interdict on the economic independence of a Shudra but also enjoined that he must serve others. Caste system was not a division of labor only but also a division of laborer's. Manu's law of wages is not the minimum wage law. It is the maximum wage law. It was also an iron law fixed so low that there was no fear of Shudra accumulating wealth and obtaining economic security¹⁸. The position with regard to access to education was still worse. Ambedkar contends that the ancient world might have been guilty of refusing to shoulder the responsibility for the education of the masses. But never has any society been guilty of closing to generality of its people, the study of the books of its religion. Never has any society been guilty of prohibiting the mass of its people from acquiring knowledge. Never has any society declared that any attempt made by the common man to acquire knowledge would be punishable as a crime. As such education came to be primarily restricted to the Brahmins who, being inalienably vested with the authority of learning, teaching and interpreting the shastras, became the repository of knowledge. No wonder many distortions crept into Hinduism. Even other dvija castes were marginalized in the field of education. In their case, education was mainly domestic; it was practical. It only increased the skill to do a particular thing.

Fraternity, which is another name for fellow-feeling, was also chained within the caste contours and religiously ordained rules regarding the performance of religious rites and ceremonies. Ambedkar points out that religion as a basis of rules of precedence manifests itself in three ways. Firstly, through religious ceremonies, secondly, through incantations that accompany the religious ceremonies and thirdly, through the position of the priest. Some castes are allowed to perform certain ceremonies, whereas others are prohibited, e.g. upanayana, wearing of the sacred thread, can be performed only by the people belonging to upper three Varna's. Precedence flows from this distinction: a caste which can perform all the ceremonies is higher in status than the caste which has a right to perform only a few. Turning to mantras, it is another source for rules of precedence. According to Hindu religion, the same ceremony can be performed in two different ways: (i) Vedokta and (ii) Puranokta. A caste which is entitled to use Vedokta form is superior to that entitled to use only Puranokta form

Not only this, Hinduism requires the instrumentality of a priest for the derivation of full benefits from the performance of a religious ceremony. The priest appointed by the scriptures is a Brahmin. A Brahmin, therefore, is indispensable. But the scriptures do not require that a Brahmin shall accept the invitation of any and every Hindu irrespective of his caste to officiate at a religious ceremony. By long and well established custom it is now settled at the invitation of which caste he will officiate and at which caste he will not. This fact has become the basis of precedence between castes. Another source for rules of precedence is commensality, viz., inter mixing, inter-dining, inter-marriage. The rules in the case of inter marriages are quite strict, whereas in the case of food these are somewhat relaxed but none the less rooted in the rules of precedence. One might take 'kachcha' food from a caste above but should not accept such food from those below.

¹⁸ Ibid, p.70.

Ambedkar regarded endogamy as the essence of the caste system. As already mentioned, rules regarding inter-marriages were required to be observed strictly Purity and pollution syndrome that governed the Hindu system has added a very oppressive dimension to the whole philosophy of Hinduism¹⁹. The mass of the people called untouchables, unapproachable, shadowables or even unsaleable are the bane of this syndrome. To sum up, it may be said that Ambedkar's appraisal of Hindu social order highlighted it's in equalitarian strands and nodal points from which these originated. He belonged to the reformist school of thought and drew significantly from the nineteenth-century academics and thinkers. The prominent of these have already been mentioned. Others included: Robertson Smith, Max Mueller, Herbert Spencer, J.S. Mill, Burke, etc. If at all, there was any filament which vibrated in him the revivalist thought, it were the Buddhist tenets. These emphasized the law of causality and rational thinking, challenged the Vedic dogma of divine creation of social order, and past karma theory. He might have also been influenced by some protest and dissent movements of the medieval period but this is not certain. However, his family belonged to the Kabir cult, and Maharashtra was a land blessed by saints like Chakaradhar, Ramananda, Kabir, Chaitanay, Eknath, Tukaram, Raidas and Chokhamela. Of course, as regards the nineteenth-century Indian reformists, he is indebted to M.G. Ranade and JotibaPhule²⁰.

Dr Ambedkar had a very sharp and analytical mind and made the best use of the sources he read during the course of his academic pursuits in India and abroad. He was a voracious reader and regarded books as his best companions. The knowledge which he acquired... he utilized for the amelioration, upliftment and service of the downtrodden. Moreover, he had the courage of conviction and a sense of purpose which never faltered even under insurmountable difficulties and strong pressures. Nothing could tempt him; nothing could make him compromise or betray the cause of his fellow brethren. He reveled in their service and made it a mission of his life²¹. Dr Ambedkar questioned each and every kind of theorization which denigrated or ostracized the depressed classes, or heaped contempt or humiliation on them. He also endeavored to discover alternative theories from within the vaults of his rich and vast knowledge and the realm of his analytical acumen. Who were the Shudras?; Untouchables; Caste in India; Annihilation of Caste; and his unpublished writings, now printed by the Maharashtra government such as Riddles in Hinduism; Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Ancient India; Buddha or Karl Marx; Untouchables or the Children of India's Ghetto and other Essays on Untouchables and Untouchability.

¹⁹S.N.Chaudary, *Changing Status of Depressed Castes of Contemporary India*, Daya, Delhi, 1988, p.32.

²⁰ Ibid, p.38.

²¹M.S.Gore, *Non- Brahman Movement in Maharashtra*, Segment Book Distributors, New Delhi, 1989, p.78.