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### Research Article

# Inclusion Discourse Amidst Changing Notions of the ‘Idea of India’ Ambedkar’s Legacy and its Relevance Today

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### ABSTRACT

Atrocities on Dalits have been a permanent phenomenon in Indian social and political context. Only the scale of atrocities varies at different times. Ambedkar worked for it both theoretically as well as practically on the ground. The notions of ‘Idea of India’ have been changing with changing regimes. Yet, none of those ideas could be translated meaningfully to be completely inclusive of all differences at the social level. This paper is an endeavour to enumerate the changing notion of those ideas and explore if they were inclusive at any time in the aftermath of Ambedkar? The paper then highlights the legacy of Ambedkar amidst the growing atrocities on Dalits. Author reiterates towards the end as to how Ambedkar is more relevant today than he may have been during his own days.

**Keywords:** Dalits; Ambedkar; India; Social Reforms

### INTRODUCTION

Changing notions of the ‘Idea of India’ has necessitated increased attempt at making India increasingly inclusive and minimizing exclusion in Indian society. The ‘Idea of India’ has undergone considerable change yet at the core of each such ideas the existing political leadership has ensured policy and legal interventions to make India more and more inclusive and mitigate divisive forces that lead to exclusion. The ‘Idea of India’ has traversed from ‘Nehruvian Socialism’, to ‘India Shining’ to ‘New India’ under the present political dispensation. However, each of these ideas has been inclusive of policies for upliftment of not only the downtrodden of the society but all the sections of the society. The “Ideas of India” have been changing but not the social structure and social stratification. Caste continues to be the defining feature and social infrastructure of politics even

today. Rhetoric never matches reality. Reason being that the crime against the downtrodden, especially the dalits have been on the rise. This has led to the prominence of inclusion debate every now and then within the academics, policy makers, and the media.

The atrocities on Dalits at Una<sup>1</sup> (Gujarat), the institutional murder of Rohit Vemula, and ever growing crimes against Dalits along with the statements against reservations by RSS leaders Mohan Bhagwat and Vaidya, brought once again the issues of Inclusion, Dalit emancipation and caste discrimination on the fore as part of an on-going national debate since independence. Bhima Koregaon incident has quite often been on the boil owing to its politicization and claims and counterclaims. While a group of educated Dalits have started raising their voice against Hindutva worldview, claiming that in Hindutva scheme of things they have no place; on the other a group of Dalit scholars, political leaders



and ideologues have started claiming that a substantial change has been made possible with the rise of Hindutva brigade. Appropriation of Ambedkar's legacy by the present political dispensation is writ large on the horizons of Indian politics; sometimes in an explicit manner like the use of Bhim app etc. Opposition has taken the cudgels against the same, claiming it as misappropriation of Ambedkar's legacy for political vote-bank. Fact remains that these are mere symbolic in approach and a concrete step towards mitigation of atrocities on Dalit are still an unfinished task, which requires to be taken to its logical conclusion. Unfortunately, Dalits continue to be a victim of traditional caste-community and vote-bank politics of political parties of all shades. Once again Dalits are at the cross-road of 'Ambedkar's legacy'; appropriation and misappropriation of Ambedkar's legacy; and so-called onslaught of Hindutva. There could be no denying the fact that the atrocities on Dalits has been on the rise.

This rise is quite heartening in view of the kind of social, political, economic and cultural modernization that post-independence India has experienced. The 'Idea of India' may have undergone changes from Nehruvian socialism to Modi's 'New India' yet each successive governments have vowed both in their manifesto as well as through their policy interventions to mitigate the caste related discrimination and establish an egalitarian society. However, there seems to be a huge gap between the promise and the action initiated towards the task of establishing an inclusive India. The inclusion debate thus need to be deciphered, analysed and understood in context with changing notions of 'Idea of India' with changing political dispensations in India. This paper is an attempt to discuss the different stages of the debate and the way it has guided or misguided the movement for Dalit's emancipation. The paper would also make an endeavour to highlight as to where what has gone wrong and what needs to be done?

The Dalit revolution that was initiated by Ambedkar and taken forward by his followers seems to be searching for a new leadership with a renewed agenda of their social emancipation in real sense of the term. The erstwhile post-Ambedkar Dalit leaders have become a victim of power approach to politics and seem to have betrayed the cause of Dalit's emancipation and annihilation of caste-discrimination in Indian society. Today, Dalit's revolution is rudderless and awaiting the transformation of Ambedkar's teachings into living realities. This backdrop has led to Dalit's assertions with consequent suppression by the upper caste in different parts of country. This paper is also an endeavour to relook into Ambedkar's legacy and its relevance in the backdrop of recent Dalit backlash.

### ***Social Reforms—Pre-independence to post-independence***

Structural changes of society have been one of the most important agenda since pre-independence days in India. Indian society has produced a host of social reformers since the days of B. R. Ambedkar or even before him, who devoted their life and resources for reforms like abolition of sati, child marriage, female infanticide, imparting education to women, emphasis on widow remarriage, use of swadeshi, and removing of untouchability etc. Some of these social anomalies or age-old traditional practices stands abolished because of lack of any logic behind the same; and some are gradually on the verge of extinction owing to social, political and economic modernizations of our polity. Atrocities on Dalits (downtrodden castes) have been an equally rampant anomaly in Indian society. Reformers and governments since pre-independence days have been endeavouring to mitigate it. Policy interventions and legal protections have been made both by Central and State governments in the aftermath of independence. Academicians have analysed the forces of exclusion and subsequently emphasised for making the Indian society and polity increasingly inclusive. However, the different parts of country have been a witness to atrocities on Dalits and caste-based discrimination in spite of tremendous efforts at its mitigation. Therefore, frequent eruptions of the problem of atrocities on Dalits have been raising many pertinent questions about the education system, policy interventions, and implementation of legal provisions to this effect enlivening the 'inclusion debate' every now and then. It makes it imperative to explore the teaching and preaching of our leaders like Ambedkar, Gandhi, Phule, Jagjeevan Ram, and Kanshi Ram to name but a few. A number of cases of such atrocities have been observed even under the present political dispensation at the centre, especially when its leaders are all out to appropriate the legacy of Dr. Ambedkar. Therefore, as stated above author makes an endeavour to re-look at the role of Ambedkar towards upliftment of Dalits in India and what has gone wrong with it?

### ***Increasing Incidence of Crimes against Dalits***

Despite the passage of the Anti-Untouchability Act of 1955 and the major Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act of 1989, crimes against Dalits are still a major social problem, and Caste-based discrimination is widespread in different parts of the country. According to 2011 census, the total population of Dalits or the Scheduled Castes (SCs) is 16.6% of total population of India and that of Scheduled Tribes (STs) is 8.6%. Together it comprises about 25 percent of the total population of India. Indian government has constituted many laws and policies to help the Dalit population; yet atrocities and injustices are quite common all over the



country. India has been experiencing and increasingly growing wary of Dalit backlash. The age-old social issue keeps coming again and again on the fore.

National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data for Crimes in the country in 2015 reveals that the year 2015 saw a staggering 45,003 cases of crimes against individuals belonging to Scheduled Castes, which works out to a crime rate of 22.3 per 100,000 persons. Crimes against individuals belonging to Scheduled Tribes were 10,914, which amounts to 10.5 per 100,000.<sup>2</sup> According to the same source Rajasthan saw the highest rate of Crime against SCs which was 57.3, followed by Andhra Pradesh 52.3, Bihar 38.9 and Madhya Pradesh 36.9 per 100,000. There has been anomaly and sudden increase in crimes against people belonging to SCs in Gujarat and Chhattisgarh. Gujarat and Chhattisgarh have reported the highest crime rate of 163.30% (6,655 cases) and 91.90% (3,008 cases) respectively against members of SC community during the last year.<sup>3</sup> According to yet another source, though couple of years old; every day, four Dalit and adivasi women are raped while eleven Dalits and adivasis are beaten up in the country. Further, every week, 13 Dalits and adivasis are murdered, five Dalits and adivasi homes are set on fire and six Dalits and adivasis are kidnapped.<sup>4</sup> By 2020 the fact states that “A schedule caste person faced crime every 10 minutes in India, cumulating to a total of 50,291 cases registered in 2020, which is an increase of 9.4% from the pervious year”, as per NCRB report.<sup>5</sup> Thus, one may explore the rising cases of atrocities against Dalits in yearly reports of NCRB.

### ***Some Recent Instances of Atrocities***

Here are some instances of atrocities on Dalits in the recent past which has brought the issue of Dalit backlash on the fore, though it is not an exhaustive list; rather an indicative list. A Hindu caste person hacked to death a Dalit woman after her brother married and eloped with his daughter, in Tirunelveli, on March 14, 2016. A 30-year-old Dalit woman was allegedly raped and brutally murdered in Thiruvananthapuram on May 2, 2016. Another 22-year-old Dalit boy was killed in Tirupur (Tamil Nadu) allegedly for marrying a woman from the politically and socially dominant Thevar community, Kausalya on March 13, 2016. Around 100 children left a school in Kolar in Karnataka, refusing to eat the food dished out by a Dalit cook on March 13, 2015. Dalit house in Haryana's Ballabhgarh was set afire, 2 kids burnt to death on October 21, 2015. A 90-year-old Dalit man died after he was brutally attacked with an axe and set on fire for trying to enter a temple at Hamirpur in Uttar Pradesh on October 5, 2015. A Dalit student was thrashed by his teacher in Jodhpur for touching the mid-day meal plates on October 4, 2015. 17-year-old Dalit girl in Rajasthan's Bikaner district was raped and murdered by her PT teacher in college in March 2015.<sup>6</sup> In August 2015, a Jat Khap panchayat in Haryana ordered the rape of two Dalit sisters because their brother had love

affair with a Jat girl.<sup>7</sup> These are some isolated instances that took place in 2015-16. The important part of the saga is that such instances of atrocities on Dalits are happening almost every year. In June 2012, Mohan Paswan, a Dalit resident in the Parhuti village, Bihar, was lynched when he disobeyed a local thug by using a hand pump during the heat wave. Even today in Dholaria Shashan village in Rajasthan, Dalit people are scrutinised before entering the village. They are not allowed to wear shoes and headgear while passing any upper-caste area.<sup>8</sup> Again these may be only indicative list of instances.

Newspapers and magazines often carry news of discrimination against Dalits in different parts of the country. Even today Dalit children are made to sit separately for the mid-day meal in many schools across India. Also in some places students belonging to Hindu caste refuse to eat the food cooked by the 'lower caste' people. In some districts of Madhya Pradesh, Dalit children are reportedly served food from a distance. Such caste biases in school are not only depriving children of education but also filling their minds with pessimism about society at a very tender age.<sup>9</sup> Data from the House listing and Housing Census 2011 highlight the continued injustice done to Dalits through the demeaning practice of manual scavenging. These workers collect human excreta with their brooms and tinsplate and carry it for disposal. This work division continues based upon the traditional Hindu social order, which assigns to the Dalits the dirty, menial and baser jobs. A depressing fact as revealed in the 2011 census data on households is that an estimated 8 lakh people are traditionally engaged in manual removal of night soil—a great embarrassment to the State governments that are still in denial mode.<sup>10</sup> Crimes are being committed against Dalits almost in every nook and corner of the country.

### ***Steps Taken by Government***

The Government of India uses a system of reservations, similar to affirmative action programs in the United States, an endeavour to ameliorate the social and economic disparities resulting from the caste system. This system of reservation facilitates government-mandated numerical quotas in government employment and education programs. There are no reservation for Dalits in military and private sector. According to one school of thought on reservation, the system has only been partially successful in empowering Dalits, because they often discriminate against each other. As for example, in North India, a subgroup of Dalits known as the Jatevs has become very successful in the leather industry. This group of Dalits would never help other Dalit groups in the area, such as Bhangi, because they consider them lower. Therefore, due to many strata within each caste, the reservation system has created a 'creamy layer' of successful people within the Dalit community. Such groups within the Dalits, have focused more on solidifying their own positions



rather than helping to empower other Dalits.

According, to another school of thought existing legislations have to a large degree been successful in protecting Dalit rights. However, they further reiterate that India still has tremendous work to do to end discrimination. They advocate that this could be done through policy interventions towards increasing Dalit access to primary education. This is important because a vast majority of Dalits are denied upward socio-economic mobility due to lack of access to education, land, and capital. This school opines that the true basis of discrimination is economic in nature rather than caste-based, as the haves discriminate against the have-nots and use the caste system to perpetuate differences between economic groups.

Third school of thought advocates that globalization and economic liberalization have actually hurt Dalit prospects for progress and social mobility. This is because liberalization has the tendency to shift more of the economy from the public to the private sector, where hiring managers are almost exclusively from high castes and constantly discriminate against Dalits, denying them the opportunities guaranteed by reservations. Rapidly expanding private sector is under no compulsion to provide jobs to Dalits, while the public sector will have fewer jobs to offer. Such basis of caste-based discrimination is going to continue for next 50 to 100 years in India.

When the reports of incidents that certain persons or groups have taken law into their own hands in the name of protecting cows and have committed crimes appears, the Government of India and the relevant ministries were awoken. Union Home ministry issued an advisory in August 2016, asking states to have zero tolerance for self-proclaimed 'cow protection' vigilante groups. The advisory addressed a deep-rooted social prejudice that Dalits, above all, have routinely and historically been subjected to, when it urged states to protect subaltern groups and minorities from unscrupulous 'gau-rakshaks' and their ringmasters who use an emotive issue to achieve their criminal and political ends.<sup>11</sup>

The present government gave tickets to many Dalit communities like Khatiks and Dhobis, for whom present Prime Minister Narendra Modi became a symbol of aspiration. According to newspaper reports the 'Hindukaran' of Dalits is proceeding at a rapid pace in rural areas. In the Muzaffarnagar riots of 2013 Dalits participated in the attacks on Muslims, and in 2014 BJP got 24% of Dalit vote while BSP got 14%. A big chunk of the BSP vote shifted to BJP in 2014. Dalits are thus torn between the desire to declare their unique identity or to be accepted into the temples of Hinduism from where they were barred for centuries.<sup>12</sup> Same has been the story of Dalit political leaders as they get torn between seizing immediate power for office and the long term strategy and commitment to Dalit upliftment. A section of the Dalit class has tasted power and is unwilling

to accept any secondary status. They are largely middle class professionals belonging to Dalit community and have developed an inordinate sense of pride in their icons like Ambedkar, Kanshi Ram, Mayawati to name but a few. The young among Dalits want social justice and a modern equal opportunity. They are now craving for economic opportunities and modern education. Therefore, offer of mere sanscritization will not help social emancipation of Dalits.

### *Legacy of Ambedkar*

On January 31, 1920, Bhimrao Ambedkar started a fortnightly newspaper, the Mooknayak (Leader of the Dumb), with the help of Shahu Maharaj of Kolhapur, a sympathiser of the cause for the upliftment of the depressed classes. The Maharaja also convened many meetings and conferences of the 'untouchables' which was addressed by Ambedkar. In July 1924, Ambedkar founded the 'Bahishkrut Hitkaraini Sabha', to fight the evil of untouchability. The Sabha started free school for the young and the old and ran reading rooms and libraries. Ambedkar took the grievances of the untouchables to court, seeking justice and equality. Soon he became a father figure to the poor and downtrodden and was respectfully called Babasaheb.<sup>13</sup> Manusmriti, the age-old code of the Hindus that gave rise to the caste system, was ceremoniously burnt under the leadership of Ambedkar and he demanded in its place a new smriti, a law code that is devoid of all social stratification. Ambedkar was sceptical of the Congress's commitment to safeguard the rights of the depressed classes and he pressed for a separate electorate for the depressed classes. He also supported the British Simon Commission that was to look into setting up responsible Government in India in 1929, when Congress was against it. When a separate electorate (communal award) was announced for the depressed classes, Gandhiji went on a 'fast unto death' against this decision. Ambedkar too went for a counter fast when he was being pressurised to succumb to the psychological pressure of Gandhiji and others. Consequently, on September 24, 1932 Poona Pact was signed and the demand for separate electorate was replaced with special concessions like 'reserved seats' in the regional legislative assemblies and the Central Council of States, a practice that is continuing even today in a modified form. Poona Pact was a compromise which was regretted later by Ambedkar. Ambedkar also worked at local levels to eliminate many of the practices which were derogatory and exploitative of the Dalits like abolition of khoti system of land tenure in the Konkan region; the Mahar watan system of working for the government as slaves; etc.

Ambedkar also encouraged Dalits to shun Hinduism and adopt a religion that would treat them with equality. He though postponed it on the request of Gandhiji for 15 years. He himself, however, embraced Buddhism a little before his death in 1956. These are some of the action-oriented





interventions of Ambedkar towards emancipation of Dalits from the shackles of upper caste and the system as a whole. What is important is the legacy that he bestowed through his actions and protests. One thing that is sensed in Ambedkar's endeavour is that he understood quite well the dynamics of atrocities on downtrodden classes and exploitation of Dalits. He rightly pointed out that most social anomalies are rooted into the caste system of our society. Therefore, until the caste system is done away with, social reforms would not be successful. He understood well the 3,000 years of social tyranny and tried to look into its eye. It is in this context that Ambedkar becomes more relevant today than any other time, because of the fact that with growing education and social, political and economic modernization of Indian polity, the caste-system has got increasingly entrenched, and most distributions of resources and rewards of the state are organized in accordance with the hierarchical dominance of caste within the system. Therefore, Ambedkar was right when he visualised that atrocities and exploitation of Dalits could be mitigated only when caste-system is dissolved and mitigated.

### ***Ambedkar and the Contemporary Situation***

During the days of Ambedkar there was very small Dalit middle class and the Dalits were hardly present as a potential force. Whereas in the present society the middle class is largest overall as well as among Dalits the growth of middle class has been considerable. The socioeconomic conditions of Dalits have shown little success, and they continue to face severe economic and social discrimination.

Secondly, during the days of Ambedkar, the Dalit movement did not have an intellectual base or the backing of a strong organic intellectual class that could wage a successful movement by articulating its demands to be placed upon the system. There were just a few of them who have become an icon for the Dalits today. Owing to subsequent policy interventions and legal protection Dalit community has its own organic intellectuals from both within its own community as well as from other communities in contemporary India. Many of them have become a part of the system and have been able to occupy the highest offices. However, the voice of Dalits seems to have been on the wane and increasingly meek, with growing representation of their community within the system.

Thirdly, Ambedkar questioned and wanted dismantled the Indian regimented village system for which he was vehemently criticised. He projected the real image of the village to the Constituent Assembly when he said, "It is the very negation of republic. If it is a republic, it is a republic of touchable, by the touchable and for the touchable."<sup>14</sup> Today, the Indian villages have experienced a face-lift in the wake of programs like Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), Jawahar Rojgaar Yojna, Swarn Jayanti Swarojgaar

Gram Yojna, Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojna, Jan Dhan Yojana, Ayushman Bharat are to name but a few. However, the caste system has got entrenched in villages too and the practices that existed are being continued substantially. Ambedkar was of the opinion that the village as 'tiny republics' of India are an empire of the Hindus over the untouchables; and ironically it seems it is continuing the same even today. Reservations in the different offices of PRIs have constitutionally mandated, yet the discrimination continues.

Fourthly, during the days of Ambedkar Parliamentary Democracy was not adequately consolidated in India and was in its infancy. It was taking shape. Over the years, constitutional morality has been on the wane as adult suffrage and frequent elections are be all and end all of democracy in India. Parliamentary democracy ended in a disaster in Italy, Germany and Russia in the twentieth century because it could not create a government of the people or by the people; it was producing government of the hereditary ruling class. Today, in India though governing class is losing power owing to the reach of subaltern classes and the Dalits in the corridors of powers; yet the complete emancipation of Dalits has not been made possible. Rather the democracy stands degenerated today with over-doses of caste as infrastructure of political process.

Fifthly, during the days of Ambedkar equality, social, economic and political as enshrined in the Preamble of Indian Constitution was a motto and dream of political leaders. Today, it is mere slogan and is used as rhetoric by the Indian political leadership across all political parties. It is used as mere rhetoric, to raise sound and fury signifying nothing. Ambedkar was conscious enough of the fact that in an unequal society, equality of opportunity could lead to further production of inequality because those groups which were already ahead in the social ladder would always have an advantage. This is what has largely happened in India. He therefore, rightly enshrined in the constitution not only 'equality of opportunity' but also 'equality of condition meaning reservations for the Dalits'.

Sixthly, Ambedkar engineered the Constitution and endeavoured to change the composition of the institutions of power with representation of marginalised sections. However, the fact remains that lot is yet to be done to achieve the dreams of Ambedkar as there is still a wide gap, as marginalized sections lag far behind despite their modest mobility, even to the highest offices of the country. Under such circumstances a divided society in terms of caste, religion and class can hardly be a strong nation and would always be struggling in its task of nation-building.

Seventhly, Ambedkar had a strong following when he was finding ways and means to emancipate the Dalits, and continues to have strong ideological followers even today; yet Dalits had to wage a battle to get Ambedkar's writings published in some parts of the country in the contemporary



India. Today, it seems there is Dalit backlash but it does not have an effective leadership of the stature of Ambedkar or even Kanshi Ram. The erstwhile leaders of Dalits have proved to be collaborator in the corridors of political power. Those who championed the cause of social engineering soon degenerated into engineers of political power and started hobnobbing with their rivals.

Eighthly, Ambedkar resigned as Law Minister as a mark of protest when the government failed to pass the Hindu Code Bill ensuring property rights, among other things, for women. Today, after seventy years India is still struggling to give its women their due place in social, political and economic space. Women Reservation Bill continues to be in doldrums. Crimes against women are on the rise in spite of number of stringent legislations. Therefore, the cause and plight of Dalit women continues to be a victim of the same political process even today.

Indian polity has undergone a sea change since the days of Ambedkar in almost all walks of its life. It has made considerable progress as well including in the field of science and technology. It has been able to build a strong international and regional personality of its own through its contributions in global concerns. However, with progress and prosperity India is still failing in its task of nation-building because of ever-deepening social cleavages along caste, religion and region. It is on this precisely that India need to learn from the understanding and advocacy of its forefathers and reformers of yester years.

### ***Ambedkar's Relevance in Contemporary India***

Given the social divisions and rampant caste-based discriminations within Indian society, one needs to relook at the advocacy and preaching of Ambedkar. Mere raising the statue of Ambedkar on highest pedestals and appropriation of his legacy by any political combination in Indian context would be not enough and would amount to betrayal with the cause for which he struggled. Therefore, below-mentioned are some such articulations and understanding of Ambedkar that requires due attention and imbibing to contain Dalit backlash in the country and contain the atrocities and exploitation of Dalits in different parts of contemporary India.

First, education is the most positive instrument of change. It has the potentials to engineer human nature. Discrimination against Dalits is a mental malady and it requires a mental medicine. Therefore, education is the mental medicine that can provide accurate and long-lasting cure to this mental malady. Probably, that is why, Ambedkar throughout his life advised Dalits to get educated before agitating for their rights. Hence, the vision of Ambedkar is strongly relevant today. Education though has been made a fundamental right; but its implementation is poor. Lesser said about the implementation of Article 21(A) of the Constitution is better in today's context. Therefore, it is of

utmost importance that both Dalits and upper castes must be provided with education. Education is relevant for Dalits so that they can understand their rights and could subsequently demand and struggle for the same once they stand genuinely educated, not merely literate. It is relevant for upper caste or to put it more precisely for the non-Dalits to make them aware about the fact of being a human being and equality among them, so that they refrain from discriminating against Dalits. Most experts believe the key to ending discrimination is a comprehensive education campaign starting at the primary level to teach acceptance of Dalits, a topic which is completely absent from India's public school system.

Second, Ambedkar said, in India, a man is not a scavenger because of his work. He is a scavenger because of his birth irrespective of the question whether he does scavenging or not.<sup>15</sup> The Employment of Manual Scavengers and Construction of Dry Latrines (Prohibition) Act in 1993 has provision of punishment, including fine, for employing scavengers or constructing dry toilets. However, manual scavengers are continued to be employed to this day by municipalities, the Railways and defence establishments. Therefore, such caste-based division of works requires to be addressed. Present government adopted programs like "Swachh Bharat Abhiyan" and "Har Ghar Sauchalaya" in an aggressive manner. Its implementation seems to be a success story according to government sources. In Indian context such success reports are refuted once the ruling party is out of power. Therefore, one needs to be really cautious to believe such reports. The fact remains that such aggressive policy and its whole-hearted implementation is the need of the hour and it must be taken to its logical conclusion. All such works requires to be identified where Dalits are forced to work for because of their caste identity. Technologically advanced India must adopt mechanisation of its sanitation and employ individuals in accordance with their skill and qualification even for the menial jobs rather than on the basis of caste.

Thirdly, technology can play a considerable role. There are certain works related to sanitation and processing process in industries of all sorts. Such works are often expected to be executed by people belonging to Dalit community. Today, there are tremendous developments in the field of technology. Developed countries are handling such works through technological interventions. India too could adopt such technology in those work-areas which are Dalit-oriented with a pragmatic approach. Slowly and gradually the increasing use of technology and mechanization will emancipate Dalits and attract people from other caste blurring the societal division in accordance with job-role.

### **CONCLUSION**

Ambedkar is more relevant today than he may have been during his own time. Political parties are competing to appropriate and misappropriate his legacy. This has led to adoption of his ideas only symbolically and theoretically to



achieve political mileage, but not in practice. This becomes evident from the fact that Ambedkar is being dishonoured and insulted in the very constituency of Prime Minister of India, i.e. Varanasi. According to newspaper reports, PM adopted a village Jayapur in Varanasi district where he erected a giant statue of Ambedkar in the Harijan quarter. Yet the paint on the statue is peeling badly, the solar lamp that illuminates it, is out of battery. This reveals the hollowness of the appropriation of iconic personality of Ambedkar by political leaders and parties. This establishes the commitment, faith and trust of leaders in the ideas and advocacy of such icons; and what they mean when they try to appropriate their legacy. Their concern is only the Dalit vote bank and not the cumbersome task of Dalit empowerment and upliftment.

There is no doubt that a small segment of Dalit population has been able to enter into the elite club of the country at different levels. Jeans clad Dalit millennial are rightly pointing out that their forefathers had brooms in their hand, but they have a smart phone or a laptop. This shows that there is change within a significant number of Dalits and their families, which now constitutes elites within the Dalit community and they need to take the cudgels of Dalit emancipation. They need to act as an organic intellectual in Gramscian sense to articulate the need, aspiration and demands of their brethren and take it to its logical conclusion. They must understand, they have achieved, what they are today, owing to the struggle waged by Ambedkar, at one point of time; now is the time they must work for the fulfilment of the dream of Ambedkar.

What India needs today is the annihilation of the caste system and not social reforms or educating people about humanity or human rights. Ambedkar was quite clear in his conviction that the caste institutions affected Dalits differently; hence he wanted to end the caste system itself. It is in accordance with this conviction that Ambedkar becomes more relevant today than he was during his days. The reason being that during the past seventy years of India's independence, the caste system has got further entrenched and has developed as social infrastructure of politics as Rajni Kothari advocated in his magnum opus *Caste in India*. The standard suggestions like questioning the sanctity of Hindu sacred texts, institutionalizing inter-caste marriages and inter-dining, and dismantling the hereditary priesthood; were existing then and are being advocated even today. However, such suggestions have not delivered substantially as it has addressed the problem to an extent yet a lot more requires to be done even today. Ambedkar saw that democracy would ensure equality, liberty, fraternity, prosperity and happiness to common man. Therefore, he emphasized that social and economic democracies are *sine qua non* for a successful political democracy. Therefore, India requires coming out of the clutches of crony capitalism else the economic democracy would continue to be a dream

with consequent social consequences.

India today is strongly in the grip of populist nationalism. This is because, blurring the line between blatant acts of criminality, deep-rooted social prejudice and the emotive issue of cow among Hindus is the modus operandi of parties which sense a huge political opportunity in fanning up the flames. Exploiting Dalit anger is of course a legitimate political ploy but it does little to address the historical, traditional and cultural discrimination that Dalits have faced and are facing today. Mere political clarity, rhetoric, enactment, populist policies or administrative reforms cannot shape a country, given the kind of diversity that Indian society is ridden with. Ambedkar and his vision continue to be relevant even today. He and his works have emerged as an important symbol of Dalit movement, and thus difficult in the recent times. Outstanding tribute to Ambedkar could be not only to continue his efforts of empowering the Scheduled Castes and helping them overcome the vicious cycle of caste and cultural barrier, but also to take the same to its logical conclusion of mitigating caste as a factor in Indian society and polity.

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