The forgotten history of the Dalit textile workers in Bombay in the pre-independent era and the economic philosophy of Dr. Ambedkar

-Dr. Avkash Jadhav

Department of History

St. Xvier's College Autonomous

Mumbai

Abstract:

As George Orwell has rightly said, 'the most effective way to destroy people is to deny and obliterate their understanding of their history'. The history of India till a few years back displayed the insights of the victorious or those in power. With the approach of subaltern writings becoming popular we now have the history of the ones who were equally integral parts of the system, but were marginalised and had no representation in the documentation. Their discontent and contribution equally faced neglect. The history of labour in India is one such area which needs further exploration and a micro approach to documenting the facts and figures based on social stratification. The textile industry of Bombay (now Mumbai) generally offers us the vibrant history of the capitalists' class, the European entrepreneurs, the indigenous mercantile class, the trade union leaders, the various legislations and Acts about the factories etc, but it has a void which needs to be filled now. The working class movement always had a broad classification, based on the haves and the haves not's, as the workers were collectively defined as the marginalised.

The fact remained that in our Indian society, the marginalisation further percolates to the layer of the caste system. The larger framework of the worker's struggles against their exploitative masters conveniently overshadowed the struggle of the Dalits or the members of the lowest strata against their Hindu brethren. The textile mills were inaugurated in Bombay in the 1860s and they soon opened a plethora of opportunities for migration and employment to the inhabitants of rural India. This systematic migration was controlled and channelized by the *Jobbers* who were the recruiting agents between the mills and the workers. The history of the workers has found narration and voices through various research angles, but the discrimination and the treatment of alienation felt by the Dalits in this new industrial age have lost their place in this transition.

As Herodotus rightly observed, 'very few things happen at the right time and the rest do not happen at all, the conscientious historian will correct these defects'.

This paper will attempt to document this forgotten history of the role and the contribution of the Dalits in the development of the textile era in Bombay. The paper will primarily focus on

the issues and challenges which they faced in availing the equal growth opportunities. It will also argue the role of *Jobbers*, who is from a specific caste, systematically alienated the Dalits and allowed the exclusive growth of certain communities. Though the social fabric of the city of Bombay was changing and there was no dearth of socio-economic upliftment for all, still we find these practices groping the newly urbanised society. The Royal Commission of Labour of 1931 also reported the migratory patterns and the positional status of members of various castes and regions in their study.

The economic thoughts of Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar will be the base of this paper and it would have strong reflections on his attempt to bring about socio-economic equity amongst the workers by taking up their cause systematically and paving the way for them constitutionally as well. The restructuring of society is only possible when we have an equal distribution of profits and this was perhaps what Dr Ambedkar strongly advocated. The paper will analyse his speeches and writings to develop his school of thought on the economic condition of India and safeguarding the rights of the dalit workers in India.

To aptly quote Thomas Paine 'we have it in our power to begin the world over again'.

Keywords: Ambedkar, Workers of Bombay, Millworkers of Bombay, labour movement, textile mills, scheduled caste, Dalit.

Background:

The city of Bombay (now Mumbai) offers a dynamic history of both political and economic overtones during the pre-independent era. Bombay was obtained by Britain from the Portuguese in 1665 as an archipelago of seven islands. Although Bombay possessed an excellent natural harbour, its location was far from convenient in terms of trade. The commercial hinterland of Bombay, for the first two hundred years or so, was Gujarat; and about Gujarat, Bombay was not well-situated (Kosambi, Meera: 1985). The rise of Bombay illustrates two distinctive features generally associated with colonial rule: the primacy of the colonial port cities and the substitution of the indigenous urban network with a new colonial urban hierarchy headed the major colonial port city. In 1901 Bombay was four times larger than Ahmedabad, five times larger than Poona, and almost seven times larger than Surat and Karachi. The second feature is its colonial urban transformation in Western India. Bombay thus played a significant two-fold role in the British colonial expansion, as a centre of commerce and conquest. Its success in both cases has usually been largely attributed to its locational advantages (Kosambi, Meera: 1985). It is essential to delve into the colonial imagining of urban space and governance.

Urban Spatiality:

The highlight of Bombay city's development is its Colonial Urban Spatiality which is a distinct feature of the city. The contention that urban planning was used by colonial administrators to consolidate and perpetuate power is common in the contemporary historiography of colonial urbanism. The creation of dual cities based on racial segregation of the natives from the Europeans is most often regarded as a prime example of the use of urban planning as a medium

of inserting colonial domination (Parpiani, Mansi:2012). Brown asserts that it was not the case that colonial officials were not aware of the "ambiguous and mixed character of colonial cities". She regards the creation of a dichotomous model as a result of the "discursive need for the stark division that dictated the differentiated between the black town and the fort. The "discursive" need of the colonial state to create and maintain a consistent grammar of narrative of difference across all discussion of urban space and civic reform is indicative of the imaginaries that the colonial state consciously sought to impose on the city and its inhabitants. The philosophy of urban planning, as developed by the colonial state in Mumbai was based on upholding dichotomies of control over and above ground realities. They were not always motivated by agendas of establishing hegemony, but instead through models of convenience combined with the discursive needs of creating a mirage of control(Brown:2003.pp. 157-58).

Similarly, James Scott's work (Seeing Like a State 1998) is effective in this case, as he provides a rich analysis of the concept of "high modernity" that the colonial state continually sought to represent. This promise of modernity appears to have two important characteristics. The first was its claim to speak about the improvement of the human condition with the authority of scientific knowledge. The emergence of a complete philosophy of town planning under the aegis of an expert was a manifestation of this feature. The "systematic" often geometric drawing out of town plans preserved full faith in the expertise of the individual, based on post-Enlightenment scientific rationality. Town planning was thus a science that only those who had mastered it could exercise.

The second important feature of the promise of modernity was the perception of the past as an impediment, in history that must be transcended (Parpiani, Mansi: 2012). By shifting the onus of accountability of urban planning onto the local self-governing bodies, the colonial state freed itself from any direct criticism. Further, it completely failed to provide any kind of assistance to these bodies often quoting the provisions "by statute" and on other accounts through reports of the development committees. Urban plans were after all. As Bissell (2011: p.5) points out, creations of "social and bureaucratic processes", reported in rigorous bureaucratic exercises of minute-taking and the maintenance of regular correspondence between metropolis and colony.

Social Polarization:

The city of Bombay witnessed Social Polarization. Social polarization is a process whereby a social unit is divided into two opposed sub-units, such as in-group and out-group or what Merton calls `insiders' and 'outsiders'.' This leaves little space for the individual members to remain neutral, or to hold the intermediate position. In such a situation each sub-unit tries to sharpen its boundary. Thus, social polarization is accompanied by cognitive, ideological, and intellectual polarization. As a result, the social polarization within the unit gets reinforced and the sub-units are emotionally compartmentalized into "we" and "they" or, in the case of industrial conflict, into "anti-establishment" and "pro-establishment" cleavages.

For instance, Karl Deutsch describes mobilization as a macro-level process by which a people's traditional commitments, such as social, economic, and psychological, are eroded for socializing them in a new pattern of behaviour. Moreover, the concept of mobilization is also

used to explain large-scale movements or revolutions. In whatever context it is used, the concept of mobilization denotes, in general, a process through which private resources, diffused in several sub-units, are made available for the collective use of a unit to enhance its power and capability to act. The resources mobilized may be of different types, ranging from human power (in terms of number) to material (such as money and other assets), to psychological.

Andre Beteille has provided insight into the exploitation of caste loyalties as an instrumentality for the furtherance of their class interests by the top groups of the emerging agrarian hierarchy. To quote:

Thus, the top of the emerging agrarian hierarchy consists of a set of individuals having certain common social and economic properties, linked together in loose-knit networks and becoming increasingly aware of their common economic and political interests. Those at the top have advantages of both resources and skills. Sociologically the most distinctive feature of the progressive framers is that they combine ownership of land capital with skills in manipulating both 'traditional' and 'modern' institutions" (Beteille: 1974.p.112)

He thus calls this new class 'ambidextrous" and notes "the decline of the community" as a consequence of the consolidation of this new class.

TABLE: I

District	Distance from Bombay (miles)	Per cent of total mill hands		
		1911	1921	1931
Ratnagiri (Konkan)	(101-200)	49.16	35.53	25.37
Satara (Deccan)	(101-200)	7.27	6.63	5.15
Kolaba (Konkan)	(1 –100)	6.22	4.47	3.04
Poona (Deccan)	(101-200)	5.65	6.18	5.72
Kolhapur (Deccan)	(301-400)	3.07	1.85	0.51
Ahmednagar (Deccan)	(201-300)	1.46	2.99	2.01
United Provinces	(Over 750)	3.05	9.42	11.82
Total of the above districts		75.83	67.07	53.62

Source: (Morris, David, Morris: 1965.p.63).

TABLE: II

The proportion of the Total Bombay Population and Mill Hand Born in Bombay 1911-1931

Year	Total Population (Percent)	Total Mill hands (Percent)
1911	19.6	10.92
1921	16.0	18.37
1931	24.6	26.33

Source: Census 1931, IX, Part I, p. 14.

Migration:

Migration has been dependent upon opportunity. It is noteworthy, for example, that where a connection was established between a factory and a particular village or group of villages, recruits would continue to come from these, while adjacent areas yielded none.

The textile mills have many weavers drawn from families that, for generations previously, worked at handlooms; the village worker in hides and leather, the carpenter and the blacksmith are all being subjected to pressure from the factory. In many cases, the easiest, perhaps the only, way out of the difficulty is for the village craftsman to transfer his allegiance to the rival who is supplanting him. Poverty, though it is the most important, is not the only disability which drives the villager to the factory. The lower castes and those who are regarded as outside the pale of Hindu society find that in the industrial areas caste disabilities lose much of their force. With the growing realisation of the humiliation of their position and the freedom which industry offers, there is an increasing readiness to migrate to industrial centres. But every disability to which men are subjected in the village adds attractions to the avenues of escape which industry offers.

In 1921 there were in Bombay eighty-five cotton spinning and weaving factories, employing a daily average of 146,000 persons. The only other centre in India with a large concentration of cotton mills is Ahmedabad. Just as Bombay was the chief gateway of the foreign trade of India, it was also the gateway for the introduction of diseases into the land, all the dangers to which ports were exposed, the congested condition of the city and how the majority of its inhabitants lived made it an admirable centre for breeding and distributing disease throughout the country (Hurst, Burnett: 1925).

From the 1921 census, it was ascertained that the birthplaces of 84 per cent of the inhabitants were outside the city. Ratnagiri district was the chief source of Bombay's labour supply. In 1921 the native place of one-fifth of the inhabitants of the city was Ratnagiri; in fact, the immigrants from this district outnumber the Bombay-born residents. There are three other aspects of the migration of labour to Bombay which should be studied before we leave the subject, viz. : (1) the caste of the worker-immigrants ; (2) the extent to which they are accompanied by their wives and children; and (3) the relationship between the occupations which the migrants assume when they reach the city and the districts from which they come.

Caste Hierarchy:

The principal castes which engage in industrial labour are (a) Marathas, (b) Dheds and Mahars, (c) Chambhars and Mochis, and (d) Mohammedan Sheikhs. The Marathas are by far the most numerous. They are drawn chiefly from Poona, Satara and other districts of the Deccan, and Ratnagiri. (Hurst, Burnett: 1925) Persons of the "depressed" and "backward" classes (i.e., Mahars, Chambhars, and Dheds) frequently find great difficulty in obtaining accommodation, as no other community will live near them. When they cannot find room in the chawls set apart

for them, they live in sheds or huts. The "Zaveli sheds" are occupied chiefly by Ghati carters, who not infrequently share them with their domestic animal's cows and calves. The "chawls," or tenements, consist usually of single rooms, sometimes of double rooms or "Gallas," but never of more than two rooms. These chawls, which differ considerably in appearance, construction and size, all have for their object the hosing – one is almost tempted to use the expression "warehousing" – of large numbers of the labouring classes in as cheap a manner as possible. A few chawls are inhabited by persons who are all following the same occupation, e.g., policemen, sweepers, etc., but the tenants of most of them are engaged in diverse callings.

Dhavta Dhota is set in 1917-18 a period when increased hours of work due to the first world war had not yielded higher wages, the protagonist of the novel, radical labour leader Baba Shigvana asks Kanhoba, his guest and prospective sub-tenant, "Tujhi jaat kona?" (What is your caste?). When Kanhoba answers that he belongs to the kulavadi caste, the same caste as Shigvana, he takes him to his one-room tenement in a chawl in the mill district and also helps him find work in the mills. The importance of caste and kinship ties in these relationships is also supported by the social histories of the Mumbai working class. Varerkar's depiction of the localities of Mumbai sheds light on the social relationships and identities produced within them. By the 1920S, the mill district of central Mumbai, popularly known as girangaon (village of mills), came to be represented as a distinct locality of mill workers (Sheikh, June: 2001). These backward classes form a large section of our population. In Bombay alone, 104,977 persons are belonging to these classes. Of these, 61,564 are males and 43,413 are females (Census:1931. p.42).

The Bombay working class cost of living index number, which stood at 40% over the 1914 level in July 1930, had fallen to 22% in December. In the Bombay Presidency where over 80 per cent of the workers were employed in the cotton mills, their physical condition was poor. An investigation carried out showed that these mill workers had a noticeably low average weight as compared with other classes of labour. As rightly observed by the Royal Commission on Labour 'Labour is weak, leaders are few, and the training of members in trade unionism must in many cases involve a diminution, for the time being, in the effectiveness of a union to protect its members. But the movement cannot prosper if it is allowed to depend almost entirely on a stimulus from the top; there must be an internal collective will' (RCL,1931).

Settlements of the Dalits in the city:

According to Pradhan ' the Depressed Classes living in Bombay can be divided into two main sections on the linguistic basis: the Marathi-speaking and the Gujarati-speaking. The Marathi-speaking people come largely from the Konkan and the Deccan. Some even come from distant places like Nagpur and Berar. The Gujarati speaking people come from Gujarat, Kutch and Kathiawar'(Pradhan:1938.p.3).

When G.R.Pradhan undertook the survey, collected during the years 1933-35, 985 were collected from the Marathi speaking and 634 from Gujarati-speaking families in his book 'Untouchable Workers of Bombay City' he classified their areas of residency in the following localities(Pradhan: 1938. pp. 5-7).

The first statement is of the Gujarati and the second of the Marathi-speaking people.

STATEMENT No. 1.

(Gujarati Speaking People)

Centre	No. of Schedules
(1) Annesly Road	..22
(2) Arthur Road	..3
(3) Bhendi Bazar	..1
(4) Byculla	..19
(5) Chinchpokly	..4
(6) Dadar Main Road	..73
(7) Dadar Ry. Quarters	..4
(8) Elphinstone Road	..7
(9) Girgaum	..1
(10) J. J. Hospital Quarters	..5
(11) Gunbow Street	..1
(12) Mogul Gully	..8
(13) Mhatarpakhadi	..11
(14) Prabha Devi	..45
(15) Parel, Poibavadi	..31
(16) Sukhalaji Street	..46
(17) Tarvadi	..67
(18) Taikalwadi, Dadar	..69
(19) Umarkhadi	..27
(20) Walpakhadi	..187
(21) Worli	..2
(22) Wadi Bunder	..1
Total	634

STATEMENT No. 2.

(Marathi Speaking People)

Centre	No. of Schedules
(1) Agripada	 29
(2) Antop Hill	 41
(3) Byculla	 86

7

(4) Cotton-Green	..	..	..	..	25
(5) Delisle Road	..	..	..	..	114
(6) Dharavi	..	..	..	..	48
(7) Elphinstone Road	..	..	..	..	68
(8) Foras Road	..	..	..	..	24
(9) Kamathipura	..	..	..	..	100
(10) Labour Camp, Matunga	..	..	..	..	56
(11) Mang-Garudi Camp, Matunga	..	..	..	..	8
(12) Mazgaon	..	..	..	..	124
(13) Morland Road	..	..	..	..	34
(14) Naigaon Road, Dadar	..	..	..	..	72
(15) Nawab Street	..	..	..	..	15
(16) Parel, Poibavadi	..	..	..	..	46
(17) Parel Village	..	..	..	..	6
(18) Sewree	..	..	..	..	31
(19) Taikalwadi, Dadar	..	..	..	..	17
(20) Worli	..	..	..	..	41
				Total	985

The modern congested housing problem was the by-product of the Industrial revolution. Surveying this growth in the city, one noticed two main desires on the part of the population :

(1) The desire of the workman to stay near his workplace.

(2) The desire of the individual to stay near his narrow social group or caste, or community.

The first factor arose out of the poor economic condition of the workman and the absence of proper roads and cheap and adequate transport. The second factor from the desire for security and to maintain a continuity of social life and traditions. 80% of the city's population lived in one-room tenements. Defective and inadequate sanitary arrangements within and without the house were accompanied by neglect and bad management. Houses suffered from want of repairs for long periods (Mehta, Behram:1940).

Role of communist Leaders:

Amidst all this, we see a new ideological wave of communism in the city. It started influencing the cause of the textile workers and tried to instil in them the spirit of communism. The communist movement in the city encountered a long history of mobilising people along with the "cultural" affinities of caste. After the arrest of top communist leaders in the Meerut conspiracy case in 1929, the influential non-brahmin leader Bhaskarrao Jadhav, who was also a minister in the colonial government at the time, sought to promote non-brahmin leaders such as Arjun Alwe and G. R. Kasle to prominent positions in the Girni Kamgaar Union

(Chandavarkar:1994.pp.427-29). In the 1920s, Jadhav played a prominent role in the anti-brahmin movement and viewed the influence of communists in the trade union movement as evidence of the continued dominance of Brahmins in the region (Omvedt:1976.p.260).

In 1924, Jadhav lobbied British officials to organise labour unions along the lines of caste and kinship to counteract the influence of the Congress party. He suggested a similar strategy against the communists and this policy resonated in the pages of Kaivari (one that propagates a cause and avenges wrongs), the newspaper of the non-brahmin movement in the region.

In Kaivari, the leaders of the non-brahmin movement emphasised their sensitivity to the cause of workers and denounced the "communist baths" (communist brahmins) for betraying the workers' movement, ridiculing them for their "caste elitism" (Omvedt: 1976.p.260). In the wake of the Meerut arrests, anti-brahmin leaders like Govindrao Shinde invoked the names of leaders of the non-brahmin movement such as Phule and Narayan Meghaji Lokhande to argue that non-brahmin leaders were the true representatives of the working class rather than the "middle-class brahmin leadership" (Omvedt:1976.p.260). According to Omvedt, leaders of communist trade unions like G R Kasle accepted this view and textile workers of the Delisle Road area of central Mumbai, who had hitherto been supporters of the radical red flag unions, were now mobilised under the banner of Bahujan samaj (the non-brahmin majority)

The Indian reformation by this time became four-dimensional – religious, social, economic and political. During the pre-independence days, though the social reformation was going on rather slowly, the economic reformation was neglected. We aimed at political democracy, but the very foundation of political and social democracy i.e. economic democracy was overlooked. The British rulers intervened very little to alter the economic structure of the country. This led to social and economic misery for the common man (Shashi(ed). Joshi: 1991).

Role of Dr B.R. Ambedkar:

Ambedkar's thinking arose out of his acute dissatisfaction with the anomalous treatment meted out to the people of his community. His mind was preoccupied with the social amelioration, political enlightenment, economic well-being and spiritual awakening of the downtrodden. He had a deep faith in fundamental human rights in the equal rights of man and woman, in the dignity of the individual, in the promotion of better standards of life and, above all, in peace and security in all spheres of human life. He was a champion of a revolution to be brought about by the dynamics of public opinion through a change in the laws of the land. He was not a Utopian, but a realist.

Ambedkar was parred excellence, a spokesman for ignored humanity of the worker small peasants and landless labourers. He expressed the sorrows of untouchables and tried sincerely to channel the activities of the depressed classes. In mobilising them he created a sense of self-respect and pride in them. He dedicated his life to the cause of the removal of untouchability and completely identified himself with the socially segregated section of Indian society. He categorically declared:

'It is my solemn vow to die in the service and cause of those downtrodden people among whom I was born. I was brought up and I am living' (Keer:1961)

Ambedkar was committed to the annihilation of the caste system. According to him, the caste system is not merely a division of labour but a division of labourers. It is a hierarchy in which the division of labourers is graded one above the other. This division of labour is based on neither natural aptitude nor the choice of the individual concerned. It is, therefore, harmful in as much as it involves the subordination of man's natural powers and inclinations to the exigencies of social rules. Ambedkar reiterated:

"The caste system prevents common activity and by preventing it, it has prevented the Hindus from becoming a society with a unified life and a consciousness of its own being" (Ambedkar:1936.p.28).

Ambedkar's great vision enjoined the abolition of casteism in every shape and form since he was opposed to all divisive forces and aimed at strengthening the impulse of national integration. The greatly cherished ideals of "fraternity and equality were the cement with which he wanted to bind together a cohesive nation" (Palkhivala: 1991.p.18)

As an intrepid iconoclast, Ambedkar exposed the numerous Hindu myths, mysticisms and mumbo-jumbos justifying the injustice of Indian society. He broke the shackles of traditionalism, religious orthodoxy and blind superstition. He bluntly "rejected the whole system of Brahminical religion – the infallibility of the Vedas, transmigration of the soul, the efficacy of rites and rituals, the moksha after the cycle of births, and Iswara is the creator of the universe. He also rejected the whole of Upanishadic thought as mere imagination" (Kuber: 1979.p.293). He opposed and out the chaturvarna system which was made a 'sacred institution' and a 'divine ordination'. He said:

'To me, the chaturvarna with its old labels is utterly repellent and my whole being rebels against it' (Ambedkar: 1936.p.42).

He believed caste is not merely a division of labour. It is also a division of labourers. Civilised society undoubtedly needs a division of labour. But in no civilized society division of labour is accompanied by this unnatural division of labourers into watertight compartments. The caste system is a hierarchy. The division of labourers is graded one above the other. In no other country, the division of labour is accompanied by this gradation of labour.

Ambedkar and the division of Labour:

The division of labour represented by the caste system is not spontaneous. It is not based on natural aptitudes. Social and individual efficiency requires developing the capacity of an individual to the point of competency to choose and make his career. 'As an economic organisation Caste is, therefore, a harmful institution, in as much as, it involves the subordination of man's natural powers and inclinations to the exigencies of social rules' (Ambedkar:1936.pp.75--77)

10

Ambedkar in one of his speeches in the Constituent Assembly referred to the contradiction between the democracy enshrined in the Constitution and the inequalities in our society. Unless these contradictions were resolved, he said, democracy in India would be like a palace built of cow dung. The foundation may be sacred but it would be feeble and shaky. He also asserted that to try to establish democracy or socialism in our country without attacking the caste system is pursuing a chimera. Attacking the caste system does not mean mere verbal condemnation or actual violent attacks, but a systematic undermining and eradication of it by a combination of the social-economic, political and psychological methods and processes(Narayan:1981.p.7).

Dr Ambedkar believed that the removal of social and economic inequalities would strengthen the unity and integrity of the nation. He was a nationalist dedicated to freedom, democracy and unity of the country. In 1930 he said "to say that this country is divided by castes and creeds and that it cannot be united unless adequate safeguards for protection of minorities are made a part of the Constitution. But the minorities must bear in mind that although we are today driven by sects and atomised by castes, our ideal is a united India. That being so, it follows that every minority in formulating the safeguards it needs must take care that they would not be incompatible with the realisation of that ideal(Narayan:1981.p.7).

The disease should be cured without impairing the condition of the patient, he concluded (The Bahishkrit Bharat, 31st May 1929). Ambedkar, with the other two labour leaders, Mr Bakhale and Mr Parulekar, carried very extensive propaganda to counteract the propaganda of the Girni Kamgar Union. The Textile Labour Union had called a meeting of workers on April 29, 1929, at the Damodar Hall, Bombay. Ambedkar presided over the meeting which concluded after passing a resolution against launching the strike in 1929.

While addressing a conference of the untouchables at Manmad on 12th -13th February 1938 he said, there were two enemies of the working classes in the country and they were Brahminism and Capitalism. "By Brahminism" he stated, "I do not mean the power, privileges and interests of the Brahmins as a community. That is not the sense in which I am using the word. By Brahminism, I mean the negation of the spirit of liberty, equality and fraternity. In that sense, it is rampant in all classes and is not confined to Brahmins alone though they have been its originators. The effects of Brahminism were not confined to social rights such as interdining and inter-marrying. It also denied them civic rights. So omniscient is Brahminism, that it even affects the field of economic opportunities (The Times of India, 14th February 1938).

Ambedkar then asked the Untouchable workers to compare the opportunities of their class with those of a worker who was not an untouchable, and said that the untouchable workers had fewer opportunities of obtaining work, securing service or advancement in their respective occupations. He observed that it was notorious that there were many appointments from which a Depressed Class worker was shut out because he was an Untouchable. A notorious case in point was that of the textile industry.

Ambedkar and the Labour movement:

Meanwhile, the consideration of the Industrial Disputes Bill was taken up in September 1938, by the Bombay Legislative Assembly. Ambedkar and Jamnadas Mehta opposed the Bill tooth and nail. Ambedkar described the Bill as bad, bloody and bloodthirsty in as much as it made a strike under certain circumstances illegal and affected the right of the labourer to strike. Moreover, it did not ask the employer to disclose his budget and sought to use police force against the workers.

Ambedkar stated that according to him strike was a civil wrong and not a crime, and making a man serve against his will was nothing less than making him a slave. To penalise him was to make a worker slave and as defined, he proceeded, in the constitution of the United States; 'slavery was nothing less than involuntary servitude'. He then observed that a strike was nothing else than the right to freedom of one's services on any terms that one wanted to obtain. If the Congressmen accepted that the right to freedom was a divine right, then, he contended that the right to strike was a divine right (Keer: 1962).

The Bill, he continued, ought to have been called 'the Workers' Civil Liberties Suspension Act'. Being retrograde and reactionary, it restricted the right of the labourer to strike and made the strike illegal and impossible. In other words, he told the workers that they must uproot Brahminism, the spirit of inequality, from among the workers if the ranks of labour were to be united. He then referred to trade unionism in India and said that it was in a sorry state. It was a stagnant and stinking pool because its leadership was timid, selfish or misguided. The warfare between different unions was far more deadly than what existed, if any at all, between workers and owners (Keer: 1962).

Ambedkar and the economic equity in the Constitution:

Dr Ambedkar was out and out a Socialist. In 1947 he prepared a Memorandum on the safeguards for the Scheduled Castes for submitting to the Constituent Assembly on behalf of the All India Scheduled Castes Federation. The Memorandum was drafted in the form of articles of the Constitution. One can read the mind of Dr Ambedkar through this Memorandum. According to him, political democracy rests on four premises viz.

(1) The individual is an end in himself.

(2) That the individual has certain inalienable rights which must be guaranteed to him by the Constitution.

(3) That the individual shall not be required to relinquish any of his Constitutional rights as a condition precedent to the receipt of a privilege

(4) That the State shall not delegate powers to private persons to govern others.

   (Ambedkar, Writings and Speeches Vol. I. 1979.p. 409)

From these premises, it logically follows that according to Dr Ambedkar to treat an individual as an end in himself, economic democracy must be the foundation of political democracy. In this connection, he has cited the cases of unemployed and employed persons, advocated State

Socialism with Parliamentary Democracy, advanced reasons for the nationalization of industry and agriculture, advocated the provision of these as a part of the Constitutional Law of the land giving reasons for not leaving them to the Legislature to bring them into practice by the ordinary process of Law (Ambedkar:1979.p.408)

It is worth noting that as revealed in the proposed Preamble (Ambedkar:1979.p.387). Dr Ambedkar wanted to make it possible for every subject to enjoy freedom from want and freedom from fear and therefore in the body of the proposed Constitution of the Union of India, he has taken both negative and positive approaches. The negative side of it is that he has very wisely not included the problem of compensation if the private property is acquired by the State for public purposes. Positively he has demanded the nationalization of land and industry. Thus clause IV in Section II of Article II says:

(1) That industries are key industries or which may be declared to be key industries shall be owned and run by the State.

(2) The industries which are not key industries but which are basic shall be owned by the State and shall be run by the State or by Corporations established by the State.

(3) The insurance shall be a monopoly of the State and 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.

(4) That agriculture shall be a State industry.

(5) That State shall acquire the subsisting rights in such industries, insurance and agricultural land held by private individuals (Ambedkar: 1979.p.396).

While addressing a gathering at Sholapur on 4th January 1938 he stated "Democracy must learn to give a respectful hearing to all who are worth listening to" (The Times of India, 4th January 1938).

Conclusion:

The Dalit textile workers in Bombay were mobilized and consolidated under the Independent Labour part. The constitutional provisions which he introduced empowered the Dalits and the scheduled caste under various occupations and professions. The Dalits even today in India have to struggle to get equal social status. The workers in contemporary Mumbai erstwhile Bombay have seen sweeping changes in terms of the demographic shift of the textile workers. The original mill lands have become luxurious landscapes for the affluent. The marginalised with the marginalised is more difficult to locate as the isolation is very subtle and invisible.

References:

Books.

Adhikari, Gangadhar(trans) (1931). Kamyunista Juhirnama. (Mumbai: Kamgaar Vangmaya Prasaraka Mandala) - ed. (1978). Documents of the History of the Communist Party of India. Vol III A (New Delhi: People's Publishing House.

Ambedkar, B, R. (1935). Annihilation of Caste. Lahore. Address before the Annual Conference of Jat-Pat-Todak Mandal.

Ambedkar, B, R. (1979). Writings and Speeches, Bombay, Education Department, Government of Maharashtra. Vol. I.

Beteille, Andre (1966). Caste, Class and Power. Oxford University Press, Bombay, also (1974). Studies in Agrarian Social Structure, Delhi OUP.

Bhabha, Homi (ed). (1997): Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse". Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler.

Bissell, William, Cunningham. (2011). Urban Designs, Chaos and Colonial Power in Zanzibar. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Bhora, Parvatibai (1977): Eka Rannaraginichi Hakikata.Mumbai. Lok Vangmaya Griha.

Census Reports.1881- 1931.

Chakrabarty, Dipesh (1989). Rethinking Working-Class History: Bengal 1890-1940 (Princeton: Princeton University Press).

Chakravarty, Dipesh (2000). Provincialising Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference (Princeton: Princeton University Press).

Fergusson, James (1994). The Anti-Politics Machine: "development", Depoliticisation and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho. Minneapolis and Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.

Hazareesing, Sandip (2007).The Colonial City and the Challenge of Modernity: Urban Hegemonies and Civic Contestations in Bombay City 1900-1925 New Delhi. Orient Longman.

Hurst, Burnett, A, R, (1925) Labour and Housing in Bombay. A Study in the Economic Conditions of the Wage Earnings Classes in Bombay. London. P.S. King & Son.

Keer, Dhananjay (1961). Ambedkar: Life and Mission, Bombay. Popular Prakashan.

Kuber, W, N (1979). Dr Ambedkar: A Critical Study. New Delhi.People's Publishing House.

Mehta, H, Behram. (ed) (1940). Housing for the Working Classes in Bombay. Bombay. The Sir Dorabji Tata Graduate School of Social Work.

Morris, David, Morris. (1945). The Emergence of an Industrial Labour Force In India A Study of the Bombay Cotton Mills,1854-1947. Bombay. Oxford University Press.

More, Satyendra (2003): Kamred R B More: Dalit Va Kamyunista Calavalica Sasakta Duva.Mumbai. Paryaya Prakasana.

Narayan, K, R.(ed) (1981). The Rebel" in B. R. Ambedkar and Human Rights.Delhi. Vivek Publishing Company.

O'Hanlon, Rosalind (1985). Caste, Conflict and Ideology: Mahatma Jotirao Phule and Low-Caste Protest in Nineteenth-Century Western India. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Omvedt, Gail (1976). Cultural Revolt in a Colonial Society: The Non-Brahman Movement in Western India: 1873 to 1930.Bombay: Scientific Socialist Education Trust.

Nani Palkhivala. (1991). The Messiah and the Testament", The Illustrated Weekly of India, February 23-March 2, 1991.

Potkar, M (1935). Ko Dange YanceJangiJahira Svagata . Bombay. Vikram P Press.

Pradhan, G, R.(1938). Untouchable workers of Bombay City, Bombay. Karnatak Publishing House.

Royal Commission of Labour (RCL). (1931).

Scott, James. (1998). Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed. New York: Yale University Press.

Stoler, Ann Laura. (2009). Along the Archival Grain Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense Princeton: Princeton University Press.

S, S, Shashi. (ed) (1991). Ambedkar and Social Justice. Vol.II, B, R, Joshi. Crypto-Capitalistic Constitution of Indian and Socialist Ambedkar. New Delhi. Collected Works National Seminar.

S, S, Shashi. (ed) (1991). Ambedkar and Social Justice. Vol. II. Nancharaiah, G. Dr Ambedkars Social, Economic and Political Thought. New Delhi. Collected Works National Seminar.

S, S, Shashi. (ed) (1991). Ambedkar and Social Justice. Vol.II, Reddy, Venkata, K. B.R.Ambedkar and Beyond. New Delhi.Collected Works National Seminar.

Upadhyay, Shashi, Bhushan. (2004). Existence, Identity and Mobilisation: The Cotton Millworkers of Bombay, 1890-1919. New Delhi. Manohar.

 Varerkar, Mama (1972). Dhavta Dhota .Mumbai.Abhinava Prakasana.

II. Articles:

Brown, Rebecca (2003). The Cemeteries and the Suburbs: Patna's Challenges to the Colonial City. South Aisa Journal of Urban History, Vol. 29. (pp. 151-73).

Deutsch, Karl. (1961, September). Social Mobilisation and Political Development', American Political Science Review. (Vol.55:3. pp. 193-97).

Joshi, P, C. (1979, February). Perspectives of Poverty and Social Change, The Emergence of the Poor as a Class, Economic and Political Weekly. (Vol. XIV. Nos 7-8).

Kosambi, Meera. (1985, January) Commerce, Conquest and the Colonial City, Role of Locational Factors in the rise of Bombay. Economic and Political Weekly. (Vol. XX No.1).

Merton, Robert K. (1972, July) Insiders and Outsiders: A Chapter in the Sociology of Knowledge. The American Journal of Sociology. (Vol.28:1 pp 9-47)

Parpiani, Mansi. (2012, July). Urban Planning in Bombay(1898-1928) Ambivalences, Inconsistencies and Struggles of the Colonial State, Economic and Political Weekly. (Vol. XLVII No.28).

Patel, Pravin. (1997, September). Trade Unions and Class Mobilisation of Workers, Towards a Theory of Social Polarisation and Mobilisation. Economic and Political Weekly. (Vol. XXXII No.35).

Sheikh, Juned, Translating Marx: Mavali, Dalit and the Making of Mumbai's Working Class, 1928-1935. Economic and Political Weekly. (Vol. XLVI No.31).

Srikantan, K, S (1940, July). Indebtedness of the Mill Worker. Indian Journal of Economics. Department of Economics and Commerce, University of Allahabad. (Vol. XXI-.No.80).

Newspaper Articles.

The Times of India, 4 January 1938.

The Janata, 31 December 1938

The Times of India, 14 February 1938.

The Bahishkrit Bharat, 31 May 1929.

****