

## **Society, Knowledge and Space in India during 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century: A Historical Analysis of Gulamgiri, Kisan Ka Koda, Karma Yoga and Annihilation of Caste**

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This paper aims to explore dynamics of society, knowledge and space in India during 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century with reference to four texts – *Gulamgiri*, *Kisan ka Koda*, *Karma Yoga*, and *Annihilation of Caste*. The text *Gulamgiri*, *Kisan Ka Koda* and *Karma Yoga* represent views of Mahatma Phule and Swami Vivekananda about human beings, social formation and participation in public space. Similarly, the text *Annihilation of Caste* reflects views of Dr. Ambedkar on caste system; this text also provides a very rare insight about construction of knowledge and space in 20<sup>th</sup> century through dialogue, convergence and difference of opinion among Jat-Pat-Todak Mandal (Arya Samaj), Dr. Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi. Further, it deals with the issue of social formation, knowledge and space into the mainstream of 20<sup>th</sup> century. The methodology of the paper is to examine texts written by intellectuals from different segments (both with reference to social as well as occupational) in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. The texts *Gulamgiri*(1873), *Kisan ka Koda*(1883), *Karma Yoga*(1896) were written in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and *Annihilation of Caste*(1936) was written in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The writers of these texts not only belonged to different segments of society, but also, their pattern of epistemology reflects various contexts of knowledge production in India during 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. The epistemology of Mahatma Phule, Swami Vivekananda and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was rooted in questioning existing social practices and exploitation, through Sanyasi practices and its application, and from the modern education system and its application to experiences respectively. This paper aims to examine change and continuity about understanding of social formation in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. It examines the centrality of discourse in three different types of knowledge systems in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century and traces lines of convergence about public space. Further, this paper also explores nature and construction of space in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century with reference to dialogue among Jat-Pat-Todak Mandal (Arya Samaj), Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi. Moreover, this paper underscores relevance of texts

in writing history about dialogue, process of knowledge production & dissemination as well as shaping contours of space.

### 1. **Relevance of Texts- Gulamgiri, Kisan ka Koda, Karma Yoga and Annihilation of Caste**

The texts *Gulamgiri*, *Kisan ka Koda* and *Karma Yoga* primarily focus on liberation of human beings from superstition and treat all human beings equal. These texts vehemently reject the social formation based on caste and caste based hierarchies. The epistemology of *Gulamgiri* and *Kisan ka Koda* is constructed by exposing corrupt practices of priestly classes and arguing discrimination as a social construction. Infact, The text “*Gulamgiri*” and “*Kisan ka koda*” clearly analyze the social formation constructed on the basis of caste system as a negative and exploitative system. These texts argue that caste system is not a gift of god; rather it is a creation of a society. Challenging the established notion of caste system, these texts were, infact, beginning of a revolution as the existing social forces could not stop injustices and differentiated behavior emerging out of caste based system was not accepted as discrimination. On the one hand, the text ‘*Gulamgiri*’ discusses, in detail, about the mechanism of controlling education by selected few and paving the way towards the creation of a brutal exploitative social system. On the other hand, the text ‘*Kisan ka Koda*’ intensively analyses the processes which lead to socio-economic exploitation of peasants.

Beyond framework of liberation from structured control, from the epistemology of *Karma Yoga* is based on realization of Self through character building process under guidance of Guru( universal identity-does not belong to any identity) and a Self without any attachment creates individuals who are not controlled by any priestly class/desires/attachment to materialism. This epistemology is constructed on the basis of natures of emotions in human beings, experiences of life and through experiences, while remaining committed to given responsibility, a true and timeless knowledge emerges from within the human beings. Accordingly, this true knowledge creates a society free from conflicts and fundamentalism, having innumerable points of contact among social forces and path of ultimate liberation from worldly life.

Again exposing structured control of society, the epistemology of the text “*Annihilation of Caste*” is based on liberty, equality and fraternity constructed on principles of modernism. For the first time, it emerged as a document which classified caste as a structured exploitative system, and also critically analyzed various approaches to

caste system. The historical importance of text is evident as interactions among Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Arya Samaj organisation- Jat Pat Todak Mandal and Mahatma Gandhi is very well documented. It includes the letters exchanged between Jat –Pat-Todak Mandal, Dr. Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi directly or via newspapers on the issues of caste system and Varna system. The text was originally drafted as a speech to be delivered in a conference organized by Jat-Pat Todak Mandal, an organisation of Arya Samaj. Prior to the date of program, the Jat-Pat Todak Mandal became apprehensive about the ideas of the speech and requested Dr. Ambedkar to change the so-called ‘objectionable ideas’. Although the Jat-Pat Todak Mandal wanted to end injustice arising out of caste system, it was also afraid of radical ideas suggested by Dr. Ambedkar. Though, the same was rejected by Dr. Ambedkar argued that, as a chairperson of the conference, he had every right to speak reasonably and logically. He refused to change even a comma or full stop and asserted his freedom of expression as the chairperson of the conference; difference of opinion on ideas led to cancellation of conference by the Jat-Pat Todak Mandal. Historical study of these texts shows that the main concern of society and intellectuals was to revisit issue of society (caste system) and public space.

## 2. Questioning Social Formation

### 2.1. Historical Background of Questioning Social Formation

These texts carry forward the legacy of questioning social order and show continuity of critical approach in Indian society. No doubt, the history of questioning may be traced in ancient periods in Upanishads or Buddhist writings etc., but a very different type of critical questioning can be traced in medieval period. This critical questioning was centered on caste based social order and all types of hierarchical relations. The singular interpretations of Shastras crafted in Manusmriti, was challenged by various forces through oral traditions such as Guru Nanak, Saint Ravidas, Saint Kabir, Chokhamela etc from 13<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> century. As visible in oral traditions, Saint Ravidas argued for Begumpura ( a place where there is no pain and everybody gets food), Guru Nanak argued common source of origin for all human beings and Saint Kabir argued to treat a person on the basis of performance. These oral traditions of questioning were transformed into written traditions by Saint Tukaram during 17th century. Initially, the writings of Saint Tukaram were vehemently opposed ( as he belonged to Shudra social order) and his texts were ‘thrown in the Indrayani River’<sup>1</sup>; later on, Rameshwar Bhatt accepted his miracles and Tukaram

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Eaton, A Social History of the Deccan 1300-1761( New Delhi; Cambridge University Press, 2005),135.

continued writings about critical questioning. For example, he deconstructs the idea of Brahmin following discriminatory practices- Tukaram says,

“The Brahmin who flies into a rage At the touch of a Mahar( low caste)

- That is no Brahmin
- The only absolution for such a Brahmin
- Is to die for his own sin
- He who refuses to touch a chandal
- Has a polluted mind”<sup>2</sup>

Obviously, the 17th and 18th century in India witnessed questioning of social order by various saints and , as a result, crystallization of various new social groups claiming egalitarian ethos. The emergence of Sikh community, Satnamis and new social identity centered on Pandharpur in Deccan etc., are reflections of critical questioning. Referring to revolts by Satnamis (new religious sect centered around egalitarian ethos) in 1672 in Narnawl, Wilfred Cantwell Smith refers to Mustai’idd khan and Kafi Khan, “ Mustai’idd khan describes them as ‘goldsmiths, carpenters, sweepers and other ignoble beings. Kafi Khan says that they were householders who carry on agriculture and trade ....”<sup>3</sup> Similarly, the questioning of social order witnessed in the form of Papadu<sup>4</sup> who refused to follow traditional occupation liquor seller and became a Social bandit, later on given khilat ( robe of honour) by Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah in 18th century. It can be argued that the context of critical questioning prior till 18<sup>th</sup> century was located in the framework of religion.

## 2.2. Questioning Social Order in 19th & 20th century

The context and nature of questioning social order changed in 19th and 20th century. Along with the context of questioning also continued in framework of religion, the 19th & 20th century witnessed the emergence of another context of questioning rooted in social and political framework. The epistemology of Swami Vivekanand was based on Detached Karma independent of any religion/superstition /man made structure. He called for a human care centric world without any desire for Self as a condition for actualisation of human potential and this world view

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 129.

<sup>3</sup> Wilfred Cantwell Smith, “Lower Class Uprisings in the Mughal Empire” in Muzaffar Alam & Sanjay Subramanyam( ed), The Mughal State 1526-1750( New Delhi;O.U.P, 1998).333

<sup>4</sup> Richard Eaton, A Social History of The Deccan 1300-1761,.155-160.

challenged the existing notions of birth based society. Explaining the methodology, he argued that ‘ Any human being, belonging to any religion or not following any prescribed practices of religion was equally capable of achieving human potential through Karma. He said, ‘ All knowledge, therefore, secular or spiritual, is in the human mind. In many cases it is not discovered, but remains covered, and when the covering is being slowly taken off, we say, "We are learning," and the advance of knowledge is made by the advance of this process of uncovering.’<sup>5</sup> Therefore, he restored the potential of human development to all human beings without making him dependent on religion.

The radical contribution of Swami Vivekananda was liberating the mind of people from control of superstition and priestly class. Rejecting the role of external power (priestly) on development of human beings taking the example of Jesus & Buddha, he said, ‘ The men of mighty will the world has produced have all been tremendous workers-- gigantic souls, with wills powerful enough to overturn worlds..... Millions and millions of petty kings like Buddha's father had been in the world. If it was only a case of hereditary transmission, how do you account for this petty prince, who was not, perhaps, obeyed by his own servants, producing this son, whom half a world worships? ’<sup>6</sup> He locates the source of making any human being as extraordinary in diligent and detached nature of duty (Karma). In this context, he empowers all human beings with potential of becoming great; rejecting birth based merit system, he challenged the limitations of caste based social structure. He questioned the colonised and submission oriented mindset of people and aimed to strengthen the “will power of people”<sup>7</sup>. Questioning superstitions of society, he said, ‘A superstitious person cannot do real karma and if somebody considers that superstition can lead to creative work, it is foolishness. In the absence of superstition, the world may prosper speedily. Contrary to progress, superstition leads to destruction and also creates various destructive emotions forming web of unending struggles’<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Swami Vivekananda, *Karma Yoga*, trans. Ram Vilas Sharma ( Lucknow; Sarswati Pustak Bhandar, 2000), 12..

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 13

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 88

In case of Mahatma Phule, epistemology is constructed by questioning outdated social practices, and on the basis of experience, he started process of knowledge production. These outdated practices were related to exploitation of women, peasants and deprived sections. Tracing source of exploitation which determined unopposed submission of people to exploitation, Mahatma Phule argued that spread of superstitions and denial of education created a slave oriented mindset among people. He argued that the priestly class deprives the children of peasants outside the domain of education and engages the peasants in various acts of rituals for taking away the savings of peasants such as rituals to keep away evils, pilgrimages etc. Further, the taxes imposed on the peasants are also a source of exploitation of peasants as they are forced to take loan from merchants for payment of taxes in cash. Mahatma Phule refers one classic exchanges between peasants and Sahukars, ‘due to state law, we cannot give you loan by keeping your farm on bondage, thus, you have to handover your farm to us and we will return your farms back as soon as you return the loaned amount’<sup>9</sup>. Mahatma Phule argues, ‘there are so many peasants who cannot pay taxes without taking loan, the poor peasants are not able to organise marriage ceremony of daughters without taking loan of rupees twenty to twenty five’. Raising the issue about exploitation of women, Mahatma Phule argues that woman do face exploitation within and without caste system. He says, “Brahmins’s orphan....widow woman are forced to witness exploitation of rape etc, and also forced to infanticide or kill pregnancy.”<sup>10</sup>

As intellectual skilled with the modern knowledge system, the epistemology of Dr. Ambedkar is constructed around social structure and its impact on construction of space. He argued that the structure of society based on caste system was hierarchical and exclusive in nature leading to structured control on mobility of capital and labour. He argued, “An ideal society should be mobile, it should be equipped in such a manner that any transformation in one part of society may easily be transferred to other part of society. An ideal society should be full of facilities which can successfully be exchanged. There

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<sup>9</sup> Jyotirao Govindrao Phule, *Kisan ka Koda*, trans. Sanjay Gazbhiye( New Delhi ; Samyak Prakashan, 2012 ),39

<sup>10</sup> Jyotirao Govindrao Phule, *Ghulamgiri*, trans. Dr. Vimalkirti( New Delhi; Samyak Prakashan, 2012 ),77.

should be different and independent points of contact in the society.”<sup>11</sup> Also, he clarified that formation of all exploitation oriented systems such as patriarchy, colonialism, casteism, racism etc., is outcome of structured control over capital and labor. Therefore, he says, "caste system is not a division of labour rather it is division of labourers."<sup>12</sup> Analyzing the impact of structured control on human potential, he said, “ By not permitting readjustment of occupations, caste system becomes a direct cause of much of the unemployment.....What efficiency can be there in a system under which neither men’s heart nor their minds are in their work.”<sup>13</sup> So, he situated the caste system against the creativity of minds, against innovative changes and thus against modernism.

It may be argued that Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Phule and Dr. B.R.Ambedkar questions social order from various contexts and suggest a social formation constructed around threads of committed character based on Karma Yoga and shared emotions(19<sup>th</sup> century), free from all types of superstitions(19<sup>th</sup> century) , and full of points of contact and mobility(20<sup>th</sup> century) respectively. Obviously, these different perspectives of questioning create new frameworks of knowledge production and dissemination in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### 3. Knowledge

#### 3.1. Knowledge as Freedom of Expression

The dominant feature of new frameworks of construction of knowledge was situating centrality of freedom of expression as an essential feature of social formation. Swami Vivekananda strongly defended a diversity oriented society and argued that, ‘ everybody should have clear cut understanding that societies do have different ethos and practices but these formations should not become a source of segregation as segregation leads to conflict among various castes of society.’<sup>14</sup> In order to have proper freedom of expression in society, Swami Vivekananda argues for interchange of experiences in society by various social groups as it leads to awareness about others. Questioning conflicts or hierarchies based on occupation, He said, ‘A king is as great as a person sweeping a path. If a king is asked to take the profession of sweeping, he may come to know about the actual challenges of sweeping, Similarly, if a sweeper is allowed to take responsibility for a King, he will better realise the challenges of King.’<sup>15</sup> Instead of profession, the dedication to work

<sup>11</sup> Dr. B.R.Ambedkar, *Annihilation of Caste*(New Delhi; Gautam Book Centre, 2008), 30

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 17

<sup>14</sup> Swami Vivekananda, *Karma Yoga*,.63.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 32



decides the Karma of a man and all human beings are equally capable of expressing emotions. He says that a society constructed on Niswarth duty is free from conflicts and a good space for freedom of expression. Further, he says, ‘ A Hindu considers that his religion is superior and those who don't follow his traditions are barbarians. Though, it is a natural mistake committed by human beings, but it is a big mistake as it main reason for unhappiness or conflict in society’<sup>16</sup> Thus, he clarifies that an assimilation oriented society provides maximum space for freedom of expression.

Analyzing the role of identities as the construction of society, Mahatma Phule considers education necessary for liberation of masses and brings issues of knowledge in the public domain. Already, Charles Darwin had started revolution in the 19th century by arguing that human beings are the creation of evolution and accordingly, transformed from *aadimanav* to *modern* human beings. Similarly, Mahatma Phule refers to Charles Darwin and says that “according to him, due to evolution, the human being emerged from *aadimanav*.”<sup>17</sup> He argued that social formation is a product of social processes and, due to this reason, he clarified that any change in society may be brought by making changes within the system of this society. Accordingly, the responsibility of change was shifted to institutions such as state, administration and religious structure and proper functioning of institutions could not be ensured without representation of various voices in the decision making process.

Analyzing caste system as a product of one sided thinking in the absence of representation, Mahatma Phule and Dr. Ambedkar argued that the monopolized way of thinking not only transforms a system into *Ekangi* system, but also, stops the process of formation of social capital paving the way to development of anti-national and anti-human traditions. Further, he observed, “When a person is liberated, he has the full rights to express feelings and ideas in front of others, but when he is not free, then he is unable to express ideas which are crucial in the interest of the masses. After passage of time, all those unexpressed ideas are lost”<sup>18</sup>. Due to loss of ideas (unexpressed ideas) and *Ekangi* thinking, points of contact and mobility are increasingly lost in society; Dr. Ambedkar said “Caste has killed the public spirit. caste has destroyed the sense of public charity.....Virtue has become caste-ridden and morality has become caste-bound.”<sup>19</sup> It shows the construction of knowledge as a tool of transformation for social relations and liberation of masses was emerging from

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>17</sup> Jyotiba Phule, *Kisan ka Koda*, 44.

<sup>18</sup> Jyotiba, *Ghulamgiri*, p.14.

<sup>19</sup> DR. B.R.Ambedkar, *Annihilation of Caste*, 29-30.



the 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century in mainstream society.

### **3.2. Knowledge as Instrument of Liberation**

From freedom of expression, it may be located that these texts develop the discourse on education on liberation of human beings. Swami Vivekananda is primarily concerned with liberation of Self from within whereas Mahatma Phule and Dr. B.R.Ambedkar is concerned with liberation from social structures. Swami Vivekananda proposes proper stages of human development & liberation as it facilitates expression of various emotions inbuilt in the human body. Recognising the existence of two models of human life such as Grihastha( Householder) and Sannyasin ashram( retiring from worldly affairs), he says that both models are distinct and any comparison is irrelevant. He says, ‘The responsibilities of Grihastha Ashram( Householder) provide opportunities for expression of emotion and realisation of detachment. It is a process of realisation from attachment to detachment. Through, expression of emotions and responsibility a better self may be created and such a person is not only liberated from various bondages but also facilitates a better society.’<sup>20</sup> Instead of considering any hierarchy among two systems, Swami Vivekananda says the key point for liberation is performing responsibility without any selfishness and attachment.

Another dimension of liberation was conceptualised by Mahatma Phule and Ambedkar around parameters of lack of education and social structure. They argued that the term development means ensuring availability of equal opportunity to all for actualization of human potential. Mahatma Phule clearly points out that ‘lack of education leads to lack of wisdom, lack of morals, the lack of progress, lack of money and the oppression of the lower classes. See what state of society one lack of education can cause.’<sup>21</sup> He considered controlled knowledge/lack of knowledge as the root of all injustices because it converts a human being into psychological slave and psychological slavery leads to physical slavery. Obviously,

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<sup>20</sup> Swami Vivekananda, Karma Yoga, 34-35.

<sup>21</sup> Jyotiba Phule, Kisan Ka Koda, 13

Mahtama Phule stood against all types of slavery in a much extended sense to cover oppressed people such as Shudra, women (widow Brahmin woman), peasants etc.

Similarly, Dr. Ambedkar deconstructed knowledge arising out of the caste system and all other forms of exploitative systems; he argued that, if singular meaning is imposed on any text, then, it will lead to the emergence of a new kind of ism. In this regard, Dr. Ambedkar referred to exploitation of women, Shudra and other deprived sections of society as a product of singular interpretation of knowledge or knowledge limited to a particular section of society. He argued that this limitation of knowledge could be due to patriarchy, racism, regionalism, casteism, fundamentalism etc. Moving ahead, he considered Brahmanism (controlled world view) as knowledge arising out of the caste system and argued that liberation of individuals is not possible without challenging the controlled worldview.

Arriving at a solution, Mahatma Phule and Dr. Ambedkar clearly argued that the state is a competent agency to challenge controlled world view and it of the state to provide public funded education to masses. Mahatma Phule applied cultural approach in the spread of education to the masses by saying that the pace of development may become representative of shudra, women, peasants etc by ensuring maximum spread of education among these segments due to which people from these categories will come forward and participate in large numbers. He said, “because when people from oppressed communities will be trained, it will lead to pride of that community and as a result they will play a catalyst role in spreading culture of learning among young generations. these people will motivate the young generations towards taking animals to grazing grounds.”<sup>22</sup> In this regard, the spread of education has been analysed as a process of cultural capital.

Emphasising institutional role for liberation, Dr. Ambedkar said that the participation of people in education should at least match the population. Knowing very well the hierarchical nature of society, he was totally against commercialization of education. They argued that education should be public funded, and further, Dr. Ambedkar argued on 1/10/1927, in Bombay Legislative Council that the universities should be given authority over financial support and control. He repeated the provisions of the Report of Royal Commission on Universities of London- ‘If education system is to run efficiently it is must that universities must have control over financial funding.’ Further, he argued in Bombay Legislative Assembly on 5/10/1927 that ‘universities are like a machine which should

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<sup>22</sup> Jyotiba Phule, Ghulamgiri, 90.

work to provide education to all who may use the opportunity of education, but they may not be able to avail opportunity of education in the absence of money'. He proposed that the state must fund the education system in proportion to collection of excise.

Since he was totally aware about multi-layered aspects of our society, he opposed commercialization of education. He pointed out that "every person should avail education. The education department is not a pro quid. All possible efforts may be directed in the manner that education is available to the masses at the cheapest rate."<sup>23</sup> Like Mahatma Phule, Dr. Ambedkar recommends that the responsible bodies of a university must ensure representation of background classes so that inclusive decisions making may become reality. It shows that the debate shifted from role of education to the responsibility of the State to provide accessibility to education from 19th to 20th century. .

#### **4. Space in 19th & 20th Century**

Along with shift in discourse about education, the construction of public space also witnessed emergence of different trends as early as 18<sup>th</sup> century. C.A.Bayly, Muzaffar Alam and other historians have argued that 18th century marked the emergence of new consciousness and articulation of identities into new frameworks. Due to this reason, the idea of centralisation in political power was replaced by decentralization of political power and its impact was visible at social and cultural levels. Muzaffar Alam says, "This shift from control of peripheries by the centre in the seventeenth century to control of centre by the provinces is significant"<sup>24</sup> Gradually, the emergence of social forces with new demands and ideas whether in the forms of revolts, new hybrid language-Urdu, literary writings etc., continued throughout the 18th century. At the same time, it also started new trends of questioning existing forms of social formation.

Swami Vivekananda stood for plurality of public space and argued that the construction of non-negotiable norms and values are creation of ignorance. He said, 'Two ways are left open to us--the way of the ignorant, who think that there is only one way to truth and that all the rest are wrong, and the way of the wise, who admit that, according to our mental constitution or the different planes of existence in which we are, duty and morality may vary. The important thing is to know that there are gradations of duty and of morality--that

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<sup>23</sup> Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches, Vol.2( New Delhi; Dr. Ambedkar Foundation, 1979)p. 40

<sup>24</sup> Muzaffar Alam, *The Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India: Awadh and Punjab-1707-1748*( New Delhi; Oxford University Press, 2010)p.17.

the duty of one state of life, in one set of circumstances, will not and cannot be that of another.’<sup>25</sup>

Situating the issue of ignorance in context of caste system, Mahatma Phule argued that ignorance and caste system make it impossible to establish any institution of modernism with fluidity in public space. According to him, the caste system stops communication and the educational institutions are worst hit leading to compartmentalization and zero exchange of ideas. This results in the restriction of evolution of transformation and modernism. Phule said, ‘the Sanskrit schools deny teaching of Sanskrit to children of shudras. How can the peasants have interaction with such Brahmins. Europe has created better technology due to interaction of knowledge, intelligence and experience.’<sup>26</sup> In fact, he observed that caste system does not allow evolution of progressive work culture in institutions and leads to emergence of corruption at a larger level. With reference to the education system, Mahatma Phule said that caste consciousness does not lead to evolution of consciousness of a teacher in any person. As a consequence, the teacher carries twin consciousness which not only leads to discrimination among students, but also, stops these educational institutions to emerge as discrimination free space.

Remarkably, Mahatma Phule questions curriculum, ‘the students are taught in a manner by teaching alphabets, mathematics, outdated scripts, outdated shlokas and songs of some films, so that they are trained in doing things as less as possible. The students do not get even education to calculate expenditure of the house. As a result, these children are not capable enough to become clerk in court of mamledars.’<sup>27</sup>

Aiming to build an inclusive public space and strong nation, Dr. Ambedkar said that no foundation is possible on the caste system. No nation can be established. Morality can’t be established. Anything established on the foundation of caste system can never be complete and bound to have ruptures. For Ambedkar, nation means a space where equality is established; the social forces have a sense of brotherhood and respect to each other. In totality, Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Phule and Ambedkar conceptualised space as plural, open to diversity and oriented to public spirit respectively.

#### **4.1. New Discourse in 20th century- Arya Samaj, Ambedkar and Mahatma**

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<sup>25</sup> Swami Vivekananda, Karma Yoga, 27.

<sup>26</sup> Jyotiba Phule, Kisan ka Koda, 85.

<sup>27</sup> Jyotiba Phule, Kisan Ka Koda, 19.

## Gandhi

The discourse of plurality, open to diversity and public spirit oriented space took centre stage in the making of the nation in India during 20th century and it can be analysed from the text *Annihilation of Caste*. This text documents the new discourse of Arya Samaj, Dr. Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi at two levels- first, Arya Samaj and Dr. Ambedkar, and second, Dr. Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi. Well, Arya Samaj, Dr. Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi wanted to liberate society from the structured control of caste system, the document has reflected convergence as well as divergence on the issue of Caste system. Dr. Ambedkar argues that annihilation of caste will ultimately lead to creation of social capital and public spirit. Infact, this document proves the importance of ideas beyond time & space, and written ideas are capable of establishing communication in any society and initiate transformation.

The introduction of the book offers two types of understanding. First, the Reform Oriented Upper Caste society was establishing points of communication and wanted to annihilate inequalities emerging out of social structure, caste system. Second, Dr. Ambedkar had also demonstrated that Caste system was not only due to stereotype understanding, but also, due to singular meaning of Shastras. As a result, he wanted 'interpretation of Shastras on the basis of freedom, equality and brotherhood' so that the consciousness of caste may be annihilated and it would ultimately lead to abolition of caste. The importance of the book is evident as three editions had been published from 1936 to 1944, and it got translated into various languages such as Marathi, Punjabi, Malayalam, English etc.

Initially, this draft developed as a speech to be delivered by Dr. Ambedkar as Chairperson in a Conference proposed in Lahore in 1936 by Jat- Pat –Todak Mandal( organisation of Arya Samaj). Later on, the Jat- Pat-Todak Mandal had reservations on certain ideas of Dr. Ambedkar and asked Dr. Ambedkar to remove objected ideas from the proposed speech. Contrary to this, Dr. Ambedkar asserted freedom of expression and right of Chairperson to share ideas, and consequently, rejected the demand of Jat- Pat- Todak Mandal followed by cancellation of the conference. Though, Dr. Ambedkar got the speech published as text and it also includes the letters exchanged between Jat-Pat-Todak Mandal, Dr. B.R.Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi(letters of Mahatma Gandhi included in second edition)

The vision, reflected in the letters exchanged between Jat-Pat-Todak mandal and Dr.

Ambedkar, shows that the 'Reform oriented Upper caste Hindus' were accepting Dr. Ambedkar as point of communication and source of shared tradition across the various sections of society. It also becomes evident from the letter of Jat-Pat-Todak Mandal, dated-12/12/1935, that the Jat-Pat-Todak Mandal had accepted Dr. Ambedkar as a Great Intellectual. This letter says, ".....none else has studied the problem of caste as deeply as you have...."<sup>28</sup> Hence, the Jat-Pat-Todak mandal had invited Dr. Ambedkar to clear objections raised by followers of Jat-Pat-Todak on various occasions. Though, Dr. Ambedkar was very well aware about the resistance to his ideas by some members of Jat-Pat-Todak mandal, still he accepted the invitation as he advocated that injustice based on caste may be better understood by communication. So, Jat -Pat-Todak Mandal and Ambedkar were unanimous on construction of public space through communication and dialogue.

By inviting him as Chairperson, the Mandal faced tremendous criticism from various corners. Still, the stand of Jat-Pat-Todak Mandal assumes significance as the representative of Mandal travelled from Lahore to Mumbai and it also shows that the Reform Oriented Caste society had started conceptualizing knowledge outside the domain of the caste system. Though, Dr. Ambedkar was positive towards any effort of Reform Oriented Caste society for tracing new possibilities of change, but the conference was cancelled due to divergence. On cancellation of Conference, letter of Mahatma Gandhi reported in this text says, "How far a Reception Committee is justified in rejecting a President of its choice because of his address that may be objectionable to it is open to question.....Nothing less than the address that Dr. Ambedkar had prepared was to be expected from him. The committee appears to have deprived the public of an opportunity of listening to the original ideas of a man, who has carved out for himself a unique position in society"<sup>29</sup> Obviously, the text shows dialogue between Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi on the issue of caste and rights of people. No doubt, continuity of Swami Vivekanand's thought such as assimilation and inclusion may be traced in Ideas of Mahatma Gandhi as he was very aware about works of Swami Vivekananda<sup>30</sup> and went two times to meet him, though Swami Vivekananda could not meet him.

Dr. Ambedkar argued that one sided interpretation of Shastras led to emergence of hierarchy in society, and this hierarchical system may be classified in five groups-

<sup>28</sup> Dr. B.R.Ambedkar, Annihilation of Caste, I

<sup>29</sup> Dr. B.R.Ambedkar, Annihilation of Caste, 66

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.dailypioneer.com/2015/columnists/the-swami-and-the-mahatma.html>

Brahmin, Kshatriyas, Vaisyha, Shudras and Antyaj. Outrightly, he said that taking varna as the basis of society is the beginning of inequality, and any effort of varna to protect corresponding social status would ultimately result into caste system. Due to this reason, Dr. Ambedkar said that varna system and caste system are the same. But, Mahatma Gandhi differentiated between Varna and Caste system and he argued, “Varna and ashram are institutions which have nothing to do with castes”<sup>31</sup> Jat-Pat Todak Mandal had agreed with Dr. B.R.Ambedkar on the issue of treating caste and varna as same and disagreed with Mahatma Gandhi, it argued (letter was published by Mahatma Gandhi, though this letter disagreed with Mahatma Gandhi), “Your theory of Varnavyasvasta is impracticable in this age and there is no hope of its revival in near future. But Hindus are slaves of caste and don't want to destroy it”<sup>32</sup> At the same time, Mahatma Gandhi said, “I have certainly meant when I have said that if Shastras support the existing untouchability I should cease to call myself a Hindu. Similarly, if the Shastras support caste as we know it today in all its hideousness, I may not call myself or remain in Hindu since I have no scruples about inter-dining or intermarriage”<sup>33</sup> On this issue, Dr. Ambedkar argued that the belief system of divine power provides a perspective to understand worldview and any process of reform has to pass through the process of reform in religion.

Further, the text shows growing possibilities of dialogue on the issue of caste system in public domain through newspapers and public meetings. Jat – Pat-Todak Madnal argued that Shastras cannot be source for removal of untouchability and documented, “To seek help of the Shastras for the removal of untouchability and caste is simply to wash mud with mud.”<sup>34</sup> At the same time, The text refers to the letter of Mahatma Gandhi drawing different interpretations about the issue of Ambedkar on Shastras, he says, “Shri Sant Ram likens the Shastras to mud. Dr. Ambedkar has not, so far as I remember, given any such pictures que name to the Shastras”<sup>35</sup>

Apart from divergence on the issue of Varna between Mahatma Gandhi and Ambedkar, the convergence was visible on the issue of Non-Violence. Mahatma Gandhi strongly institutionalized Non-Violence in public consciousness and Dr Ambedkar argued

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<sup>31</sup> Dr. B.R.Ambedkar, *Annihilation of Caste*, 69

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.



that violence is the backbone of the caste system. Dr. Ambedkar said that dignity and reputation is based on social status, therefore, every caste tries to keep the other caste in the prescribed boundary by using violence or any other coercive method. He clearly said that caste based society is violence based society and it never allows the upper caste largely to cherish any idea for upliftment of 'lower caste'. Consequently, a society divided on the basis of caste system can never have foundation of a strong social unit. Dr. Ambedkar said that the Hindu society was made weak due to the caste system. He said that till the Caste system exists, the Hindus may never have organization, and without organization, Hindus will always be weak. It shows consensus on making public space shaped by such as Karma Yogi Self( Swami Vivekananda), Non-Violence( Mahatma Gandhi) and space without restriction on mobility( Dr. B.R.Ambedkar) .

## 5. Conclusion

The historical analysis of referred texts shows continuous exchange of ideas, dialogue, divergence and convergence from 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century. The discourse of these texts is continuously updated with global developments of 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century. Though, the writers of these texts belonged to different social and occupational groups of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, but the different contexts and frameworks of knowledge productions show convergence on protecting liberty of human beings. Swami Vivekananda argued for psychological liberations as well as liberation from human weakness for a progressive public space. Mahatma Phule questioned social order and argued for state controlled education system for a better public space (19<sup>th</sup> century). On the one hand, Jat-Pat-Todak Mandal (Arya Samaj-20<sup>th</sup> century) demanded freedom from the caste system, on the other hand, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi converged on People centric state addressing issues of development and welfare. Infact, The Annihilation of Caste was written after the Poona Pact between Dr. Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi(1932), therefore, both had already agreed that representation in decision making bodies and democratic state can create a vibrant public space. Apart from state, Gandhi rooted the responsibility of open public space on every individual (also argued by Swami Vivekananda) by legitimizing Non-Violence and Satyagraha as tools of expression in difficult times. Therefore, historical analysis of these texts shows public space was getting transformed into a melting pot in India from 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century.