

# Ambedkar's Critique of Recognition

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[journals.sagepub.com/home/inp](http://journals.sagepub.com/home/inp)**Jadumani Mahanand<sup>1</sup>**

## Abstract

Despite the democratic upsurge, the traditional social value system perpetuates oppression, humiliation and violence against the oppressed communities, groups and individuals. The oppressed community's struggle for recognition then becomes necessary in order to be able to live a good life. The various theories of recognition aim towards establishing human good as a normative ethical ideal. However, the scope of existing theories of recognition is limited as they propose new values without adequately displacing the old ones. This creates a contradiction or incoherence within the theory. B. R. Ambedkar's *Annihilation of Caste* exposes such a gap and seeks to devise a more capable normative alternative theory. The first part of this paper tries to problematize the idea of recognition. In the second part, it interrogates and engages with the different discourses of recognition. Finally, in the third part, it presents Ambedkar's theory of recognition as a normative ideal, which encapsulates the project of emancipation.

## Keywords

Recognition, equality, difference, respect, caste, Ambedkar, Taylor, Honneth, Fraser

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

This paper makes an attempt to interrogate the different theories of recognition from an Ambedkarite perspective so as to provide a coherent alternative. The first section of the paper problematizes the concept of recognition. The second section critically examines various discourses on recognition. The third section lays out Ambedkar's problematization of the idea of recognition. In doing so, this paper is

<sup>1</sup> This paper is part of my M.Phil. dissertation titled, 'Politics of Recognition and the Issue of Dalits: Reading from Ambedkar', submitted to the Department of Political Science, University of Hyderabad in June 2013. I have further presented these ideas in multiple seminars. I am thankful to my then supervisor Prakash C. Sarangi and Dr. Ram for their guidance during the course of my M.Phil. I would also like to thank Vidhu Verma and Aakash Singh Rathore for their continuous encouragement. I am also thankful to the editor of Studies in Indian Politics, Suhas Palshikar for his valuable comments.

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attempting to respond to the existing theories of recognition and provide an alternative *interpretation*. Firstly, I argue that Ambedkar's theory of recognition is a revolutionary project, presented in his *Annihilation of Caste*. In *Annihilation of Caste*, Ambedkar proposes equality as a moral virtue and an ethical normative principle, which will lead towards self and social realization required for emancipation. Secondly, I argue that *distribution is embedded in recognition* in caste-ridden society like India. Thirdly, I argue that recognition is possible only when 'social equality-freedom and respect' is pre-conditioned.

In the 1970s, social and political theorists articulated the idea of equality in terms of 'recognition and difference' by taking into consideration the diverse and heterogeneous groups in society.<sup>2</sup> The discourse on recognition was a response to discrimination on the basis of race, class, ethnicity, gender, caste and sexuality. There is vast scholarly work which frames the question of identity, indicated through criteria such as caste, gender and race, as a structural problem. The question of identity is debated in order to identify oneself as a distinctive person from others. Making distinction from others is rational thinking of oneself. But the inquiry about identity is not merely a quest for the existential realization of one's self or just a matter of making a distinction from the other; the construction of identity is a social, historical, philosophical, cultural and political question, as far as recognition of identities is concerned. In other words, identities are formed through social and cultural situatedness of the communities or a group. This attribution of identity may either be an imposition or a choice, based on the distinctive character of the subject or a group.

It is interesting to ask the following questions: why is there a need for recognition? Can human society survive without name or identity? Assigning a name or label becomes indispensable to be able to distinguish one subject from another. The distinction offered by a name or label serves two functions: (i) it offers a sense of individuality and (ii) it can be used as a tool to maintain social differences and inequality. Naming oneself is problematic, but without a name, a person would find it difficult to identify himself or herself. Furthermore, a name imposed on a subject can become the means through which stigmatization and humiliation occur. At the same time, identity is a matter of pride, purity and superiority for some groups. I call this a 'puzzle' in the theories of recognition.

The core debates on recognition and identity draw and developed from Johann Gottlieb Fichte and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel in the later discourse. The debate is on whether human beings are by their very nature equal, unequal or different. The problem is on what basis humans would be recognized seem to be an important question. The aforementioned contrast within modern political philosophy acts as the ground for investigating different conceptions of recognition. In his work *Sources of the Self*, Charles Taylor writes, 'the full definition of someone's identity thus usually involves not only his stand on moral and spiritual matters but also some reference to a defining community' (1989, p. 36).<sup>3</sup> In his *Politics of Recognition*, Taylor understands the 'self' as possessing moral agency, which allows for communication with the others, in order to define oneself. This idea led him to formulate that human beings differ in their practices in relation to their particular cultural values, traditions, beliefs, language, and so on. Therefore, individuals or communities have cultural differences of their own social embedding. These differences must be equally respected. He called this multiculturalism (Taylor, 1995, pp. 225–256). In *The Politics of the Human*, Anne Phillips argues that human beings may be different from a bodily and cultural point of view. However, she argues that, in essence, all humans are equal (Phillips, 2015). For Iris Marion Young, social groups like leftists, gays and Blacks are diverse and different from one another, possessing different levels of power and privilege. These differences lead to the entrenchment

<sup>2</sup> Charles Taylor, Iris Marion Young, Axel Honneth, Nancy Fraser and Anne Phillips have written on recognition and difference.

<sup>3</sup> Here, my objective is to mention the earlier work of Taylor, and focus on Politics of Recognition.

of injustice (Young, 1990). She says, 'social justice requires explicitly acknowledging and attending to those group differences in order to undermine oppression' (Young, 1990, p. 3). Critical theorist Axel Honneth draws from a Hegelian perspective to engage with the issues of disrespect, humiliation and misrecognition. He proposes the idea of intersubjectivity as ethical and normative claim for recognition in social-political life. The question of materiality becomes the central argument in Nancy Fraser's interpretation of redistribution and recognition.

In the above theoretical development on recognition, it is important to bring Ambedkar as to ask: how does he comprehend the question of identity? In Ambedkar's writings, identity is not an autonomous entity. Each identity is constitutive of caste, culture, religion, region and language. The most important part of identity construction is *caste* according to Ambedkar. He conceptualized 'caste as a system of graded inequality' in which identity is manifested through the gradation of castes. Caste propounded upon the 'gradation laid down, fixed and permanent, with an ascending scale of reverence and a descending scale of contempt' (Ambedkar, 1979, p. 26). Caste does not allow for equal status. It facilitates a stringent hierarchy where one person is placed above another. Similarly, the suppression of women, in which caste and patriarchy are entrenched, prescribed by the religious code.<sup>4</sup> Caste is essentially concomitant with the politics of power where the upper caste is highly respected and powerful, and the lower caste is bound to powerlessness and disrespect. How then does a lower caste member, an untouchable or a woman claim recognition?

In the struggle for recognition, untouchables identify themselves as Dalits and Buddhists as a way of politically asserting their right to gain self-respect, autonomy and authenticity. However, there are also untouchables who take pride in their cultural past. For instance, the *Mahars* and *Chamars* take pride in their valour.<sup>5</sup> Through this assertion, the Mahars or Chamars question the power structure of upper caste hegemony. However, *Mahar* or *Chamar* is imposed as an identity, it carries a social stigma with the label. Such impositions also lead to entrenchment of caste. It is difficult to preserve a distinct identity within Brahminism as far as Dalit struggle for recognition is concerned. Hence, multiculturalism proves to be an inadequate solution to the problem of caste. It is interesting to explore Ambedkar's theorization of the idea of recognition within an anti-social (caste) public sphere.

Indian democracy has created a puzzling situation where Dalits are 'equal by law unequal by castes' (Nurula, 2008, p. 255). The question then is how should we understand the politics of recognition in this framework, where there is legal equality but not social equality? For instance, citizens who are identified through the state-given categories like the SC, ST and OBC are subject to stigmatization. Some scholars argue that state-given categories retain the stigmatization of identity through caste. A process of re-stigmatization takes place through which castes perform as system of governmentality and category.<sup>6</sup> For example, the idea of reservation and social justice ministry is stigmatized because it is often headed by Dalits (Guru, 2007, pp. 212–238). This is called social pathology. Thus, it is difficult to differentiate

<sup>4</sup> In many of his works, Ambedkar has dealt with the issue of subjugation of women. For instance, see *Riddles in Hinduism*, *Hindu Code Bill*, and *The Rise and Fall of Hindu Women*. According to him, women are subjugated by Hindu social structure which is further sanctified by religious code. For more details, see Rege (2013).

<sup>5</sup> In the battle of Koregoan, 500 *Mahars* defeated around 20,000 *Peshwa* soldiers. In North India, particularly in Punjab and Uttar Pradesh, the Chamars assert their caste to fight against caste hegemony of *Jats*, *Rajputs* and *Thakurs* (*dominant castes in Northern India*). Recently, the Bhim army asserted their *Chamar* identity to challenge the *Thakur* domination. The assertion of *Great Chamars* has become popular in the song of Gini Mahi. Asserting one's caste identity does not consolidate or address the sub-caste issue or create solidarity among the Dalits.

<sup>6</sup> Anand Teltumbde, Ajay Gudavarthy and others. Here I would like to raise a question about the presence and dominance of upper castes in the democratic institutions. Are they secular and exercise their agency without cultural capital? Why their identities are not stigmatized?

between real recognition, whether it is constitutional or cultural recognition. This inherent, intrinsic and systematic denial of recognition leads to multiple forms of *humiliation* (Guru, 2008, pp. 1–23). Moreover, it is supplemented with unequal distribution of resources. In other words, misrecognition becomes a fundamental characteristic of unfreedom and inequality *in all spheres of Dalits life*. Thus, *misrecognition is the ethical dearth and wound*. In order to assert against caste, Ambedkar gave primacy to the individual in a democracy whereby each person is respected as equal and accorded dignity through the principle of civic virtue. Such an ethical claim aimed at creating a social fraternity based on common good. Therefore, Ambedkar seeking *Annihilation of Caste*, through his renunciation of Hinduism, conversion to Buddhism, and endorsement of the democratic State is what I call the Ambedkarite perspective.<sup>7</sup>

## Discourse of Recognition

This section explores the different ways through which theories of recognition have been articulated. In the eighteenth century, Hegel conceptualized the concept of recognition in terms of the ‘master-slave dialectic’. He described the relationship between the ‘self’ and the ‘other’ as the fundamental characteristic of human activity in which self-consciousness plays an active role.

The contradiction underlying this is the following: men strive for recognition, for only in this way can they achieve integrity. But recognition must be mutual. The being whose recognition of me is going to count for me must be one that I recognise as human. (Taylor, 1975, p. 153)

Therefore, Hegel’s idea of recognition is an ethical principle that primarily deals with freedom and autonomy, to seek for mutual recognition between the self and the other. The consequent theories of recognition have been built on this premise (drawing from Hegel and Fichte), and developed and debated in contemporary political philosophy. Here I will only discuss the contributions of Taylor, Honneth and Fraser towards theorizing recognition.

Taylor’s *Politics of Recognition* contributed significantly to the political debate in Western liberal democracies. To him, misrecognition of any identity, culture or community leads to mistreatment and humiliation of those who are misrecognized. He argued for equal recognition for minorities or subaltern groups. Taylor explained the problem of low self-esteem and inferiority complex amongst communities and groups by taking the example of women, who are dominated by men, and Blacks, who are demeaned by Whites. He writes, ‘misrecognition shows not just a lack of due respect, it can inflict a grievous wound, saddling its victims with a crippling self-hatred, therefore recognition is a vital human need’ (Taylor, 1997b, p. 226). In liberal tradition, equal recognition and dignity are the foundational principles according to Kant. On the contrary, Taylor’s politics of recognition is contingent upon the idea of difference, in which each individual discovers the importance of oneself as a distinct person, associates himself or herself with the cultural past of his or her respective community and attempt to preserve its values in order to gain recognition. Taylor calls it the ‘politics of difference’. Taylor is mildly critical of the liberal idea of ‘equal dignity’ as it is oblivious to the cultural differences among different groups and communities. While advocating the politics of difference, Taylor seeks to preserve the distinctiveness of individual and his or her identity which is embedded in particular. Therefore, cultural and distinctive

<sup>7</sup> Frantz Fanon’s approach has a similar connotation. But Ambedkar moved to a deeper philosophical question. Moreover, Communitarians, Gandhians and even liberals will disagree with Ambedkar’s proposition.

values of individual must be respected in a multicultural society which protects and nurtures the politics of difference. While this is an important proposition in a diverse society, it remains flawed in some ways. For example, Taylor is blind to power hierarchies between competing and different cultures. His proposition does not explain the internal contradiction of a culture or tradition, contradiction between modernity, democracy and tradition.

Taylor maintains that an individual is a social being, whose life acquires meaning by living in his or her own community or culture. I disagree with Taylor's romanticization of the idea of cultural difference whereby he argues that each culture has its own importance and should be understood as an alternate way of life. By proposing such an argument, Taylor is being insensible to the hierarchy of cultures. Cultures are not only different, but also carry the notions of high and low, purity and pollution. Conversely, culture is deeply attached to community that always plays a determining role in civil society. Hence, culture cannot be studied in isolation, but in relation to the rest of the society. Cultural past is a history of conflict between race, ethnicity, community and groups. Culture is inextricably attached to notions of pride, power, wealth, status and privileges, which are sources of inequality. This can be exemplified by understanding the plight of the Blacks in America and Dalits in India, two groups who are subjected to continuous discrimination despite the protective measures taken by the liberal constitutional state. Taylor's argument celebrates cultural differences without considering the inherent tendencies of cultural domination whereby one culture dominates another. Dominant culture maintains hegemony by perpetuating the differences in democracy. This is the crux of the problem. To put it differently, inherited inequality is maintained by preserving different cultural values. This is the inherent contradiction associated with 'idea of difference', an impediment in achieving equal cultural recognition. In other words, how can the 'idea of difference' be a normative principle for equality? The 'idea of difference' only provides scope to maintain inequality. If difference is ethical and normative, why is hierarchy in civil society determined by cultural practices?

Firstly, if the 'idea of differences' is being celebrated without making equality as a pre-condition, it is a mistake. For example, in civil society, individuals treat each other according to their positions within a culture and not merely by democratic ethos. We may find people from different countries meeting and interacting with each other while accommodating their differences, which is the guiding premise of any multicultural society. However, this does not imply that they are free from old prejudices of high and low, superior and inferior deeply ingrained in every culture, region and nation. England, for instance, is a multicultural society, where a migrant Dalit from India is discriminated by another upper-caste Indian migrant. These issues remain untouched by multicultural theorists (Dhanda, 2013). Invisible forms of caste discrimination are found in the USA as well; according to the report published by Equality Lab.<sup>8</sup> This indicates a fundamental difference between the cultural norms of civil society and its constitutional ethos as far as social interactions are concerned.

Secondly, Taylor's critique of the idea of equal dignity in liberalism is inadequate in a society where entrenched inequality is attached to birth in a specific caste. Taylor's position can be countered by highlighting the example of caste-ridden and race-ridden societies where the politics of equality become unavailable and inaccessible for African-Americans and Dalits. Taylor describes good life as maintaining dignity connected to culture of a community. It raises the question—is there a possibility of good life for an individual practicing his or her culture and tradition, the roots of which lies in treating the individual from a particular community as superior and another as inferior on the basis of his or her birth in the particular community? If the good life is a matter of spirituality and morality advocated through religion which is embedded in culture and tradition, then this is a problematic stand. In the case of India,

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.equalitylabs.org/caste-survey-2018/>. Retrieved on 5 May 2018.

Hinduism is the source of problems, neither does it allow one to have a good life (without discrimination), nor does it have the scope for equal dignity for all. Good life in such a setup is possible only if each caste maintains its mode of life within the framework of graded inequality. Therefore, demanding equal dignity is counter to misrecognition, not distinctive recognition. Just as in the case of African-Americans, as Toni Morrison says, Blacks cannot grow in the eyes of Whites; similarly, Dalits cannot grow in the eyes of twice-born.<sup>9</sup> It is not to homogenize or endorse the totalitarian idea of common good as questioned by Taylor, but religion, culture and tradition cannot be defended in the name of diversity of difference, without considering the structural problem of inequality.

Honneth's contribution in the domain of recognition is widely acknowledged. He interprets Hegelian intersubjectivity claiming recognition as normative theory. Honneth's intersubjectivity has to be understood as *love*, *rights* and *solidarity* which are basic principles of recognition deeply embedded in individual, state and society (Honneth, 1995, pp. 92–131). Love is the primary relationship for human bonding, whereas rights ensure moral responsibility towards each other. Rights are fundamental to the legality of the state. Equal respect and freedom are possible only through rights. Through regime of rights, citizen interact with each other. Rights protect the excluded people. Solidarity is related to recognition of our traits and abilities, through which individuals pursue self-esteem. Love, rights and solidarity are important aspects of being human, it can be realized only through intersubjectivity. Love, rights and solidarity challenge normatively the idea of entrenched injustice and offer a critique to the social pathology. This is the ethical and normative proposition in post-traditional societies. But how does intersubjectivity work in a structurally unequal society? How does intersubjectivity counter the entrenched power structure of inequality? These are the questions I would like to discuss in Honneth's theory of recognition.

Intersubjectivity is a process of self-realization between two subjects. It, of course, brings two subjects to mutual recognition. However, subjects are unequal, each subject has its power location. Therefore, they are rooted in an unequal relationship. This observation links to the post-traditional society that Honneth did not pay attention to. Hence, it is crucial to understand the extent to which the post-traditional society adopted modernity in order to challenge the traditional social structure. Tradition has not been completely rejected by modern societies. It has rather got its own space in modernity, which Habermas identifies as 'unfinished modernity'. The question is: how does intersubjectivity challenge the social structure? Honneth does not directly answer this question. For example, the idea of intersubjectivity has been discussed in master-slave dialectic, where the master is guilty of being a master, because he does not understand the experience of a slave. Honneth overlooks this power relation between subjects. Individual is not unencumbered but socially and culturally imbricated and therefore power is intrinsic to them. Therefore, the question is, how will individual's worth be recognized in a structural society? It cannot be mutual recognition. Mutual recognition implies recognition of the position that one has already occupied. Mutual recognition is an understanding between two subjective positions, however, love is another category Honneth offers. Intersubjectivity is workable, when society is equal in which love as emotive humanistic category to be developed in individuals to respect each other. Recognition is not a one-way process; it is a two-way process as Honneth has pointed out in my view love and respect has greater role to play, however, Honneth's normative is reasonably answer the structural or a post-structural society. The main question to ponder over is 'how can one de-stigmatize the subject without displacing a structure?' I ask this because subjects are matter of identity, whether individual love and respect the identity or person as equal human, it needs further clarification.

<sup>9</sup> I borrowed this phrase from Gopal Guru, who speaks of this concept, very often in public meeting. [http://roundtableindia.co.in/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=4512:power-of-touch&catid=118:thought&Itemid=131](http://roundtableindia.co.in/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=4512:power-of-touch&catid=118:thought&Itemid=131). Retrieved on 12 June 2019.

Honneth proposed that in a capitalist industrial society, individual wants recognition in the position they occupy and what they deserve (Fraser & Honneth, 2003, p. 140). There is an element of truth in this observation but recognizing what individual deserved creates class inequality in a capitalist society. Hence, unequal recognition continues to prevail. If this is to be applied in other cases, for example, if each person or group wants to be recognized for what they deserve, how equal recognition is possible, rather it will lead to communitarian and individualistic recognition. The idea of 'deserve' is a constructed category, connected to individual's merit or worth.

Has any society, whether capitalist or semi-capitalist, deviated drastically from traditional beliefs and structures? White Capitalism discriminates against the African-Americans on the basis of race. Racial discrimination remains a significant issue in the USA. The racial structure is entrenched, in which identity of the Blacks is stigmatized. Similarly, in India, caste has killed the individual merit. Individual is recognized by the caste he or she belongs to, but not on the basis of what he or she deserves. The worth of individual is judged through caste. The worth of an individual can never be recognized in a caste-ridden society. One must be recognized for what one deserves' however, it is difficult in racial and caste-ridden society. This is the complexity of recognition. However, Honneth argues that recognition is a question of justice and has always played an essential role in practical philosophy (Fraser & Honneth, 2003, pp. 171–179).

Fraser makes a powerful intervention by arguing that the politics of 'Recognition should be understood in relation to politics of distribution'. Fraser argues that these two 'politics' can be framed within the perspective of social justice. Politics of recognition, when reduced to identity politics, is exclusively concerned with injustices of gender, sexuality and race.

This view is erroneous and misleading ... It treats recognition-oriented currents within feminist, anti-heterosexist, and anti-racist movements as the whole story, rendering invisible alternative currents dedicated to gender, race and sex-specific forms of economic injustices that traditional class movements ignored. (Fraser, 2008, p. 5)

Fraser's critic of recognition as 'narrow identity politics' suggests that distribution is underestimated in the politics of recognition in a capitalist society. However, Fraser's point is valid in a capitalist society, where labour is exploited. But the critique of recognition as identity politics is preoccupied with class exploitation that does not capture victimization of identity in the industrial society. Arguably, racial discrimination is not a class category; it is a social and cultural category. Black lives are dominated by White supremacy on a day-to-day basis. Black identity is stigmatized in multiple ways. In an economy dominated by the Whites, Blacks were used as slaves and exploited for free labour, in a period which facilitated the growth of capitalism.<sup>10</sup> Thus, Fraser's critic is limited to economic exploitation. It does not dwell on how identity has social and cultural meanings in everyday life. Fraser's project seems to subsume recognition of identity under the carpet of capitalism. On the contrary, the aim of politics of recognition is to assert the identity for equal recognition, which challenges the structural hegemony (unlike Taylor's distinctiveness) and demand for equal distribution of resources. That is to say, identity is a cultural construction in which class (economics) is structured, identity is exploited and thus, misrecognized. I argue that it happens because marginalized groups are not equally recognized.

In response to Fraser's argument, Honneth clarifies that recognition precedes redistribution. Honneth writes, 'social movement is itself the result of an underground struggle for recognition conducted by groups or individuals afflicted by social suffering to make the public perceive and register their problems' (Fraser & Honneth, 2003, p. 120). Honneth takes social experiences of injustice such as social

<sup>10</sup> <http://bostonreview.net/race/walter-johnson-slavery-human-rights-racial-capitalism>. Retrieved on 15 January 2017.

disrespect and unequal distribution as issues that are deeply embedded within the social institutions. He criticizes Fraser's framework for understanding emancipatory movement as it fails to trace everyday experiences of injustice. Interestingly, in his response to Taylor and Fraser, Honneth understands the historical struggle for recognition as a phenomenon with a long history and not as something limited to a post-socialist period.

Honneth introduced the idea of 'history of social experience' in order to counter Fraser's orthodox position on Marx. Fraser's normative position is to eliminate both economic inequality and cultural humiliation in order to establish a just society. Her justification, for holding on to the Marxist framework, is to realize 'participatory parity' (Fraser & Honneth, 2003, pp. 28–36). It is a radical proposition which can be applied to the caste and class debate in India. Interestingly, Ambedkar had argued that 'Brahminism and Capitalism' are two enemies of the depressed classes. But Fraser's position remains problematic, as it does not consider the cultural entrenchment of economy. Oppression is not only a matter of economics, but cultural humiliation as well. Honneth asserts that 'the equality of social relations of recognition should represent the domain of a political ethics or social morality' (Fraser & Honneth, 2003, p. 185). This way of conceptualizing recognition is closer to Ambedkar's proposition, few similar points I have indicated between them in later part of the paper. In the following section, I discuss Ambedkar's response to the question of recognition.

## The Idea of Recognition: A Reading from Ambedkar

The above discussion makes it amply clear that there is some degree of unanimity among scholars regarding indispensable nature of recognition and its close association with an ethical life. Scholars also agree on the fact that social structure continues to exclude, demean, humiliate and discriminate certain groups. In this context, it is important to interpret Ambedkar's social and political philosophy from the perspective of recognition. To comprehend Ambedkar's theory of recognition, it is imperative to problematize how the idea of inequality, injustice and misrecognition is embedded. I proceed by considering some of the essential writings of Ambedkar as well as by demonstrating an example from his social-political movement to argue that Ambedkar's recognition theory is a claim for *human recognition* preceded by *Annihilation of Caste*, to offer a normative.

Ambedkar examines the idea of inequality using multiple sources. In his book, *Who Were the Shudras* (1979, pp. 1–36), he traces the idea of inequality through history and religious texts of Brahminism. To him, *Chaturvarnya* (Graded Inequality) is the principal doctrine of Hinduism, which originated from the *Vedas*—the important philosophical and religious text of Brahminical tradition. According to *Rig Veda*, *Purusha Sukta* prescribes four-fold division of society called *Chaturvarnya*, which is based on one's birth and gradation from top to bottom known as *Brahmin*, *Kshatriya*, *Vaishya* and *Shudra*, later *Ati-Shudra* (untouchables) came into existence. Ambedkar called it as the graded inequality of caste system. This gradation is fixed and permanently enfolds with the position and status one has occupied in the system. According to him,

The warrant of precedence is based on the principle of graded inequality among the four classes, whereby it recognizes the Brahmin to be above all, the Kshatriya below the Brahmin but above the Vaishya and the Shudra, the Vaishya below the Kshatriya but above the Shudra and the Shudra below all. (1979, p. 26)

The existence of *Chaturvarnya* was a matter of *de facto* which got converted into *de jure*. Ambedkar found that divinity and infallibility are the essences of *Chaturvarnya* sanctified by *Purusha Sukta* (1979,



pp. 1–36). According to him, the lawgiver *Manu* defends the theory of *Chaturvarnya*. Interestingly, *Philosophy of Hinduism* (Ambedkar, 2008, pp. 1–92) another brilliant essay where Ambedkar examines *Manu dharma Shastra*, finds that the principle of justice, that is, equality, liberty and fraternity is inimical to Hinduism. *Manu Dharma* is the *law of inequality*. Ambedkar called *Manusmriti* as the *symbol of injustice*. According to him, *Manu* is the main progenitor, who systematically codified the caste system and made caste inequality as the centripetal force to be practiced. *Manu Dharma* is also known as the penal code of the Indian society, because in *Manu's* injunction, punishment is an essential criterion for those who break the law and order of the caste system. *Manu* termed them as criminal.<sup>11</sup> Ambedkar writes,

inequality designed not merely to punish the offender but to protect also the dignity and to maintain the baseness of the parties coming to a Court of Law to seek justice; in other words to maintain the social inequality on which his whole scheme is founded. (Ambedkar, 2008, p. 111)

Broadly, the principle of graded inequality of caste has affected the spiritual, moral, legal, psychological and economic aspects of Hindu social life. According to Ambedkar, there is no sphere of life which remains free from this principle of graded inequality. In the essay called, *Outside the Fold* (Ambedkar, 1989, pp. 19–26) Ambedkar made an anthropological study of spatial segregation between the touchables and untouchables in an Indian village. Sociologically, spatially and ontologically caste has created ghettos among the untouchables and touchables, there is a complete separation of communities from each other, I would argue that each caste has its own ghetto in a distinctive way,<sup>12</sup> however, the touchable society undeniably live together, but remain close to their affinity of caste in a singular way. Ambedkar described it as endogamous relationship within caste, which is to maintain the caste identity, hierarchy and inequality through endogamous marriage system (Ambedkar, 2010, pp. 5–22). But the untouchables are completely segregated and separated from the touchables. Ambedkar writes, ‘Psychologically, caste and untouchability are one integral system based on one and the same principle. If the caste Hindus observe untouchability it is because they believe in caste’ (1989, p. 101).

In the economic sphere, as Ambedkar argues, caste is not merely division of labour, but division of labourers (Ambedkar, 2008, p. 67). In Indian society, labour is not a free category or the labourer is not free to choose his or her occupation based on his or her choice and ability. Every occupation is demarcated in the given caste order. Labour is attached to the notion of purity and pollution. The occupations of untouchables are treated as impure, undignified and fixed with stigma. In addition to this, the guiding principle of caste may be described as social group having (a) belief in Hindu Religion and bound by certain regulations, (b) marriage, (c) food, (d) occupation, (e) no inter-caste marriage, (f) no inter-dining, (g) no associative life and (h) no intercourse (Ambedkar, 2008, pp. 103, 144). Ambedkar would conclude by saying that

A Hindu cannot change his status because he cannot change his caste. A Hindu is born in a caste and he dies a member of the caste in which he is born. A Hindu may lose his status if he loses caste. But he cannot acquire a new or a better or different status. (2008, p. 144)

<sup>11</sup> On punishment, penalty and crime, the detail description is available in BAWs 3, 4 and 7, in these volumes, Ambedkar provides a elaborative explanation as how caste is fundamental to sanctity of Hinduism, thereby plays a multifaceted role.

<sup>12</sup> Each caste has its own rituals, occupation, culture and a certain way of lifestyle, and also have spatial location in the village structure. However, among the touchable, there is communication, exchange of inter-dining, a sense of association, if not separation or ghettoization in a complete sense, yet each caste plays its own ascribed role separately.

It is evident that each caste community is marked by their cultural, occupational and spatial location. Therefore, the recognition of caste identity is the inherent character of Hindu social order. Lower castes are recognized with stigma of impurity and the caste status of the twice-born are respected with the notion of purity. One is born to be a priest (honourable) by birth and another is a scavenger (indignity) by the same criterion.

The individual is not free from the imposed obligation to fulfil the duty assigned to him. The moral questions like good and bad precede the religious code in determining good and bad. The perception of good and bad is not in accordance with the criterion of justice that Hindu religious norms explicitly prescribe, such pre-supposition fixed one's duty, obligation and attitude (2008, p. 22). Therefore, the individual is neither free nor equal. The scope for individual justice and merit is a complete negation. Individual suffers from wrong not because of his conduct, but the disability imposed upon the class he belongs (2008, pp. 99–100). The categorization of community manifests the rejection of individual's incommensurable value. This hierarchization is incompatible with individual recognition. The community and the individual (self) are contested categories, in which power, prestige and position are distributed based on their ascribed status in the scheme of *Varnashramadharmā*. The self is recognized by the cultural position given by birth within the system. The value of self is unequal in the conception of *Varna*, *Dharma* and *Karma*, thus, misrecognition is deeply embedded, in *inherited inequality*.

Ambedkar's theoretical exposition proves that misrecognition has been an innate and intrinsic characteristic of the Hindu social structure. This is not the case with just one caste or one community, but every caste and community is forced to live with their fixed identities on the basis of notions of purity and pollution, high and low, thus, misrecognition becomes the foundational rule of caste. The privileged upper castes (twice-born) exercise their status and position, acquire respect and power and claim superiority as their birthright, whereas the lower castes, particularly, the untouchables are subjected to contempt, hatred, inferiority and indignity.

Against this social injustice, Ambedkar built up a social-political movement. There was complete denial of *human rights and recognition* to the untouchables in Hinduism. Untouchables were treated less than a human (sub-human), less than animals, Dogs and Cats can drink water from the tank but not the untouchables (Ambedkar, 2003b, pp. 3–48). The public utilities like water, ponds, schools, roads were prohibited for them. In other words, ostracization was entrenched in untouchable lives, and it is not just confined to the physical corporeal body, but abuse, humiliation and subtle level of discrimination is committed against them. Every sphere of untouchable life was inflicted with indignities. Ambedkar told Gandhi '*I have no homeland*' (2003b, p. 51), he further reiterated in another context '*I am not a part of the whole; I am a part apart*' (Ambedkar, 1982, p. 261). The Kalaram Temple and Mahad Satyagraha movements were to ensure basic human rights. It was to establish the *norm of equality*. It is clearly suffice in his *Waiting for Visa*<sup>13</sup> to prove that the worth of an individual does not matter whether one is a doctor or a professor, discrimination and humiliation is levelled against him/her in each step, because the person is untouchable. Ambedkar argues,

There is another form of discrimination which, though subtle, is nonetheless real. Under it a systematic attempt will be made to lower the dignity and status of a meritorious Untouchable. A Hindu leader would be described merely as a great Indian leader. No one would describe him as the leader of Kashmiri Brahmin even though he be one. If a leader who happens to be an Untouchable is to be referred to he will be described as so and so, the leader of the Untouchables. (Ambedkar, 1989, p. 109)

At the end, Ambedkar reiterates that

<sup>13</sup> [http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00ambedkar/txt\\_ambedkar\\_waiting.html](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00ambedkar/txt_ambedkar_waiting.html). Retrieved on 10 June 2019.

I thought for long that we could rid the Hindu society of its evils and get the depressed classes incorporated into the terms of equality. That motive inspired the Mahad Chaudar Tank Satyagraha and Nasik Temple entry Satyagraha with the objective we burned the Manu Smriti and performed the mass thread ceremonies experience has taught me better. I stand today absolutely convinced that for the depressed classes there can be no equality among the Hindu because on inequality rest the foundation of Hinduism. (2003a, p. 236)

I argue that the philosophical foundation of caste is not only inequality, but misrecognition as well,<sup>14</sup> which is cardinal to Hinduism. In this context, Ambedkar's fight against caste can be regarded as an emancipatory proclamation, therefore, *Annihilation of Caste* becomes imperative to foreground his normative claim and pre-condition for recognition. In what follows I further critically discern the question of caste through the prism of recognition in colonial India, and discuss how misrecognition persisting in democratic India needs critical appraisal for the better understanding of *Annihilation of caste* which offers a condition for theory of recognition that is analysed in the last section.

## The Question of Recognition in Colonial India

Ambedkar's proposition for *Annihilation of Caste* was a challenge laid before the freedom fighters, such as Gandhi, Nehru and Patel from Congress; M. N. Roy and S. A. Dange from the communist camp; and Tilak and Savarkar from the right-wing camp. None of them considered 'Caste vis-a-vis Brahminism' as a national problem. All of them assumed caste as an ideal system for the smooth functioning of the society (Omvedt, 1994, pp. 167–187, 2009). Nevertheless, the debate between Ambedkar and Gandhi on caste and untouchability still triggers Indian political philosophy, although, Gandhi's effort for the abolition of untouchability has got enough space in academia. Scholars have tried to reconcile the ideas of these two thinkers on untouchability with an interpretative method without considering the factual, theoretical and practical contradictions in the thought and writings of these two thinkers.<sup>15</sup> D. R. Nagaraj's 'self-purification versus self-respect' provides a sophisticated, but elusive picture of reconciliation between Ambedkar and Gandhi. Nagaraj argues that Gandhi's conception of self-purification aims at convincing the upper castes to change their heart through an induced sense of guilt for practicing untouchability (Nagaraj, 2010, pp. 21–60). It is evident that Gandhi wanted to abolish untouchability, but uphold caste. It is assumed that in *Chaturvarnya* system each caste duties to have equal importance that inevitably leads to graded inequality (Gandhi, 2015, p. 116). It means upholding *Varnashramadharma* is for having *ideal* society according to Gandhi. A recent book on *Gandhi Against Caste* by Nishikant Kolge provided historical trajectory and changes that have taken place in Gandhi's position on caste. Interestingly, Kolge argued, Gandhi strategically fought against untouchability and caste (Kolge, 2017, pp. 98–225). Undoubtedly Gandhi was against untouchability, but his position on caste or Varnadharma is like a conservative and reformist. In my reading, Kolge takes on Gandhi against caste to explain how Gandhi wanted to reinterpret Varnadharma, to convince that each individual must perform his or her own duties, he wants everyone to be Shudra for the serving the society. To ask a question, caste does not

<sup>14</sup> There is a slight distinction between equality and recognition. In a democracy, all citizens are equal before the law, but in the society, all are not recognized equally, rather recognition takes place base on social status.

<sup>15</sup> D. R. Nagaraj, Ramchandra Guha and recently Gopal Guru. I take cue from Ambedkar's Book *What Congress and Gandhi have Done to the Untouchable*.

operate as individual entity rather than a part of social structure. The ethics of a Hindu is to practice caste, therefore, misrecognition takes place in each sphere of Indian life, it is explicit in Dalit life.<sup>16</sup>

Likewise, unending debate to be found between the Indian Marxists and Ambedkar known as ‘caste versus class’. Interestingly, Ambedkar had deeper engagement proclaiming that the emancipation of depressed classes could not be separated from caste and class. However, according to him, Indian Marxists are dogmatist. Marxist leaders and intellectuals like Roy and Dange were predominantly preoccupied with *class* analysis and in their understanding of base and superstructure debate, thus, the question of caste was cornered (Teltumbde, 2017, pp. 9–77). Around 1936, the activism of Independent Labour Party explicated Ambedkar’s understanding of caste and class for the emancipation of depressed classes. He was disenchanted with Indian Marxist leaders because of their disregard to Brahminism as the real obstacle to unite workers, though, they were against capitalism. Therefore, he drew the conclusion that as long as Brahminism persists, workers’ movement cannot be successful (2003c, pp. 173–192).

According to Gopal Guru, the Left’s concern over the caste question was reflected only post-2000s<sup>17</sup> which seems to be a correct observation. Nevertheless, the contemporary left scholarship reduced Dalits struggle against caste to mere identity politics. Even though Ambedkar viewed that the source of cultural and economic rights and duties of individuals are contingent upon the caste position of her or his community, which is sanctified by the doctrine of Hinduism, he was equally aware of oppressive system of capitalism. In other words, sanctioning of rights determine the material distribution as it is structured. One community is allowed to study, another is not, one is allowed to do business, another is not, this is called perennial system of caste, it means class is not an isolated category, as he pointed out, *caste is an enclosed class*. The distribution of material resources and rights are rooted in caste occupations that determine the economic status. I, therefore, argue that *distribution is deeply embedded in recognition* in which caste is considered to be a part of the superstructure in Marxist framework, but it works as the base in the Indian society. I will further illustrate in the next section as to illustrate how democracy, economic and social structure seamlessly operate in the existing caste system.

## State and Democracy

The above discussion makes it clear that neither Gandhi nor the communists considered misrecognition as a problem in the Indian society. Ambedkar had warned that post-independence Indian State will suffer from the contradictions of political democracy on the one hand and socio-economic inequality on the other. Political democracy guaranteed the right to vote without attributing the value attached to the vote. For example, the law guaranteed various rights, but society does not allow individuals to exercise those rights. Ambedkar’s critique of political democracy is relevant here, ‘the right which is guaranteed by law but is opposed by the society is of no use at all’ (2003c, p. 127). Guru observes that ‘desire for recognition or elevation logically assumes corresponding reduction, rejection, cancellation, and annihilation of certain human being’ (Guru, 2008, p. 210). Guru writes,

the blacks and the Dalits still appear in public life with prefixes like Dalit president, Dalit intellectual, or black president or black intellectual. This use of attributions with a prefix is humiliating. It involves an attempt to socially bracket a modern status or position with the caste background of a person. (Guru, 2008, pp. 219–220)

<sup>16</sup> The rampant caste atrocity and violence perpetrated against Dalits life by Caste Hindus, which includes upper-castes and middle-caste Shudra (OBCs). Hindus practice caste, because Hindu religion sanctifies their caste as religious ethics.

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.thehindu.com/2000/12/20/stories/05202524.htm>. Retrieved on 30 April 2018.

In other words, one can become the head of the state, but still be reduced to identification with negative connotation. Similarly, on the question of economics, capitalism is supposed to control the means of production for the market to flow. It is more complicated in India, because the Indian economy is largely socially regulated. Gender, caste, religion and class, though understood as part of the informal economy, continue to play a bigger role than the state or market capitalism. Barbara Harriss White observes, ‘the modern Indian economy is regulated in significant ways by social institutions derived from “primordial identity” and that, (although continually contested), they are resistant or immune to change by means of macroeconomic policy’ (White, 2007, p. 5). The book *Blocked by Caste*, explicates the theoretical and empirical aspects of caste discrimination in the Indian economy that exists in the urban and rural labour market, in private ownership and in public services (Thorat and Newman, 2010, pp. 1–29). In a recent study, David Mosse elaborated upon how caste continues to influence in post-liberalization rural inequality, in urban labour markets and in the business economy (Mosse, 2018).

Sometimes, respect, position, power and social status underestimate the influence of material condition. Whereas economic and social status are generated through the social structure. For example, Brahminism is a social structure in which the person is twice-born to acquire respect, status and capital. It is interesting to examine the role of capitalism and modernity in the Indian society. It was assumed that modernity would create a backdrop for capitalism to dismantle the fixed identities and the feudal structure. However, it is evident that caste still remains the base for capital. Therefore, *caste-capitalism* is largely dominated by the Vaishya community in India (Ilaiah, 2009, pp. 159–168). Moreover, economic rights are a precondition to the unequal division of castes. Therefore, unequal distribution of resources is entrenched. Everyday life experiences of Dalits include poverty, hunger and social discrimination in which humiliation and hatred are embedded. Both hunger and humiliation are endemic to Dalit lives (Thorat, 2019, p. 274). To argue that *the material distribution is embedded in recognition is to say that social status dictates material life*. Here Honneth’s conception of redistribution as recognition is analogous to that of Ambedkar.

In *State and Minorities* (2010, pp. 381–453), Ambedkar predicated that basic key industries and agriculture be owned by the state through which equitable distribution of material resources would become possible. Furthermore, he believed that democracy, state and constitution are inevitable to ensure distributive justice, in which reservation or representation is to redress the social and economic inequality. To Ambedkar, the idea of representation was to create a rupture in the existing power hierarchy. Though a Dalit is not recognized as respectful and autonomous being in social sphere of life, a political representative exercises certain amount of political power in representative democracy (Jensenius, 2017, pp. 146–162). It is often seen that Dalit representatives are hindered from expressing their autonomy. Therefore, I argue that there is representation but not recognition.

## Ambedkar’s Negative Rendering as Ethical Emancipatory Project

In the initial sections of this paper, I have pointed out how Hegel’s idea of intersubjectivity has asymmetrical power relation between two individuals. This relationship may not be equal, but helps us to understand the importance dialectic of recognition. Honneth draws from Hegel to propose that recognition is an intersubjective relation between individuals. Thus, according to Honneth, *self-realization* becomes imperative for ethical normative claim to have love, rights and solidarity. Taylor defended multiculturalism in order to recognize the cultural differences. In this context, individual’s ‘agency’ becomes crucial to his or her ability to live a good life. However, structure, culture and power relations of the society influence human agency. Therefore, in social ontology, the original position of an individual is determined by given cultural position, which is essentially an unequal relationship. In this context, how do we comprehend the *Annihilation of Caste (AOC)* as far as recognition is concerned?

History of Blacks' struggle is filled with the use of negative language of self-expression as a form of narrative. According to Melvin Roger, Du Bois and Fanon, the idea of recognition is sensitive enough to address the ontological status of one's identity. The individual is shaped through a relationship of dependency, in which a powerful individual may place himself in an authoritarian way, thus seeking recognition from powerful person; one cannot exercise sovereignty over their self-understanding (Roger, 2009). Similar genres are available in Dalit writings as well. Negative language is the self-expression against structural injustice as encapsulated in the entire anti-caste tradition (Phule, Ambedkar and Periyar).<sup>18</sup> There is a commonality between the Dalits and the African-Americans as far as the problem of dependency is concerned. Both groups reject seeking recognition from dominant groups, though it is difficult to escape that paradigm of thought. Ambedkar cites Thucydides, 'it may be in your interest to be our masters, but how can it be ours to be your slaves?' (Ambedkar, 1991, p. xi).<sup>19</sup>

In fact, Ambedkar's unfinished dialogue with Du Bois is prominent among Dalit and African-American scholars (Kapoor, 2003). Here the question is how Ambedkar's approach would help us to understand recognition in the case of racism against the Blacks. Ambedkar said that inequality is the doctrine of Hinduism, which is not the case with the Blacks. The bigger issue is 'perpetual stigma' attached to Dalit and African-American lives. Ambedkar would ask a question, can race be annihilated as he proposed in the case of caste—as both face the structural problem. As 'caste is an ideology', similarly, 'race is an idea'. Gyanendra Pandey's comparative analysis of Dalits and African-Americans is an interesting engagement. But calling Ambedkar's conversion to Buddhism as politics of difference and equating it with African-American life in the angle of politics of difference would lead towards multicultural claims (Pandey, 2010). Here the important question is not about recognition of cultural differences, but recognition in terms of freedom and equality with respect. Equally, Ambedkar problematized the women question, patriarchy and caste are entrenched, it is beyond my scope to discuss.

It is evident from the above discussion that recognition is contingent upon caste and gender identity, cultural prejudices and presuppositions that one has inherited. Even the state-given categories for achieving social justice are stigmatized. I argue that *as long as caste persists misrecognition will endure*. It is difficult to escape the prejudices and biasness that come as part and parcel of an individual's caste identity. Thus, what Ambedkar asserted in *AOC* can be considered as a radical emancipatory proclamation—it challenges stigmatization, misrecognition, inequality and unfreedom.

This means a complete change in the fundamental notions of life. It means a complete change in the values of life. It means a complete change in outlook and in attitude towards men and things. It means conversion—but if you do not like the word, I will say it means new life. But a new life cannot enter a body that is dead. New life can enter only into a new body. The old body must die before a new body can come into existence and a new life can enter into it. To put it simply: the old must cease to be operative before the new can begin to enliven {=to live} and to pulsate. This is what I meant when I said you must discard the authority of the Shastras, and destroy the religion of the Shastras. (2010, p. 78)

In stating this Ambedkar does not endorse the totalitarian views, rather he offers an alternative perspective to deal with the question of recognition. Taking cue from Ambedkar I pose a moral question: in the last 70 years of Indian democracy, caste atrocities on Dalit bodies could not be stopped, rather increased,

<sup>18</sup> Dalit literature, autobiographies and poetry bear semblance to the Black writings.

<sup>19</sup> I would like to add that in various public speeches Ambedkar reiterated that 'your (Dalit) emancipation lies not in temple entry, worshipping God or believing Mahatma but in your own struggle', that is how Ambedkar believed in self-help, self-respect and struggle for emancipation. It is clear that recognition is a struggling concept as Honneth argued long back Ambedkar invoked the same language.

how does one understand this endemic minimum misrecognition? Thus, *AOC* goes beyond the idea of *state*. It gives a complete shape to his normative ethical claim. Ambedkar writes,

an ideal society should be mobile, should be full of channels for conveying a change taking place in one part to other parts. In an ideal society, there should be varied and free points of contact with other modes of association. In other words, there must be social endosmosis. (2010, p. 57)

For Ambedkar, Buddhism as a philosophy that seeks a new cultural and political relationship in social life. Buddhism as a normative philosophy entails righteous relationship among individuals is minimum recognition of a human being. Therefore, the *AOC* tries to instil the spirit of revolutionary virtue for an ethical project of emancipation. It can be considered as an ultimatum for complete transformation, which affirms equal recognition of each individual as human. This position will not be acceptable to communitarian, communist, liberals and conservative thinkers. None of them would agree to this ethical force. Thus, Ambedkar proposes a new method where he moves from particular to universal for the reclamation of human recognition.

Arguably, dialogue is an indispensable part of human life and it becomes meaningful only when equality becomes a norm. As long as social and cultural relationships are unequal and undignified, inter-community communication—the relationship unfolds misrecognition, so there would be less room for any persuasion. In replying to S. Radhakrishnan, Ambedkar writes,

the question is not whether a community lives or dies; the question is on what plane does it live. There are different modes of survival. But all are not equally honourable. For individual and society, there is gulf difference between merely living and living worthily. (2010, p. 66)

In the Hindu modes of life, only a few are allowed to live a worthy life, the rest are dishonoured. Thus, *AOC* has to precede democracy as an ethical force to create a space and scope for debate as well as meaningful dialogue. Good life is possible only when one is recognized as a free and equal individual with respect. In other words, the ethics of recognition is plausible not through identity, but worth of a person.

## Conclusion

In the paper, an effort has been made to develop Ambedkar's theory of recognition. To this end, I have dealt with the question of graded inequality of *caste* as a methodological vantage point to comprehend recognition from Ambedkar's perspective in a limited way. I have discussed how the problem of recognition has been a central focus for Ambedkar in a caste-ridden society. His idea of graded inequality of caste applies to each aspect of Hindu society, where recognition is premised. For example, the idea of reverence and contempt remain central to upper castes and lower castes respectively, which further leads to positive and negative effects of recognition attached to the caste that one belongs to. On the above foundation, I propose Ambedkar's theory of recognition that has been implicitly discussed in the paper. I outline six kinds of recognition: firstly, recognition of the given or imposed identity which has a material as well as cultural base—therefore, it is difficult to separate recognition and distribution. Secondly, in the logic of graded inequality, a person is recognized according to the gradation of castes. Thirdly, recognition is deeply attached to culture and identity despite a person's merit, rights and good human action. Recognition attributed to Dalits, lower castes and women is subjected to negative recognition.

For example, Dalits become the head of the state or chief minister of the state, their names are prefixed with negative attribution as Dalit president and Dalit chief minister. Fourthly, there is a deeper connection between rights and recognition as far as Dalits idea of recognition is concerned, rights are political as well as moral, the moral rights are analogous to recognition, akin to Honneth's argument. Fifthly, to pursue a good life, recognition is an essential ethical normative principle. Recognition is important for pursuing a righteous relationship in human society, whereby the individual would be recognized as worthy of self-respect and dignity. This normative claim offers an opportunity for the individual and community to get equal social recognition without prefixing their primordial identity. In such situation, the equitable distribution of resources would allow freedom and equality to thrive in the society. Thus, recognition prioritizes the question of equality and freedom beyond any identity. Sixthly, in order to balance equality and freedom, Ambedkar's ethics of recognition prioritizes the idea of fraternity. The spirit of fraternity recognizes equality as a moral norm. It lays emphasis on 'fellow-feeling' or 'friendship' of humanness to recognize the worth of an individual.

This conceptualization of recognition is limited to Ambedkar. There is a wider scope for such a theme. Misrecognition of an individual is harmful to pursue a good life. Recognition and redistribution are contingent upon and are deeply embedded in power relations in a given society. Recognition shall not only be looked at as a psychological problem of an individual. Individual wants respectful recognition because he or she lives in society, therefore, recognition is a moral and political concept deeply embedded in struggle.

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