Seminar Proposal
Two-Day National Seminar on
“Discrimination, Identity and Philosophy of Dr. Ambedkar”
8th-9th April 2013

Dr. Ambedkar Studies Centre (ASC) and Department of Sociology, Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University (A Central University established in 1996) Lucknow propose to organise a National Seminar on “Discrimination, Identity and Philosophy of Dr. Ambedkar” on 8th-9th April 2013. Main objective of the seminar is to create a national level platform to discuss Indian social reality of identity based discrimination and philosophy of Dr. Ambedkar. As discourse of democratic society becomes a prominent paradigm in contemporary India, ideas of Dr. Ambedkar become more relevant. In this backdrop, the proposed seminar is an attempt to understand philosophical and liberating ideas of Dr. Ambedkar towards building an egalitarian and democratic society -- a society that overrides man-made differences and ensures inclusion in the restricted areas enshrining equality of opportunity as well as actual opportunities among the members of the society -- which is essential for building a healthy nation and democratic principles.

Concept note of the Seminar

Indian society is undergoing a sea change and there is a tremendous socio-economic transformation taking place within it, but it has also given rise to a kind of mechanism which discriminate its people on the basis of identity, accepts oppression and exploitation of certain sections of society. Hence, caste and caste based discrimination continues to be a reality. The doctrine of inequality is the core and heart of the caste system. Supported by philosophical elements, it constructs the moral, social and legal foundations of Hindu society. The UN defines this kind of problem as ‘discrimination on the basis of work and descent’. It is an ancient form of oppressive, hierarchical social organisation that ordered people according to their family of birth. It has remained in place despite its legal abolition because of its religious sanction, the social and economic persecution of those who broke caste ‘rules’ defining the work done and the segregation between castes. Human Rights Watch mentions that “despite the fact that “untouchability” was abolished under India’s Constitution
in 1950, the practice of “untouchability” - the imposition of social disabilities on persons by reason of their birth in certain castes – remains very much a part of rural India. “Untouchables” may not cross the line dividing their part of the village from that occupied by higher castes. They may not use the same wells, visit the same temples, drink from the same cups in tea stalls, or lay claim to land that is legally theirs. Dalit children are frequently made to sit in the back of classrooms, and communities as a whole are made to perform degrading rituals in the name of caste”. A report on Dalits of India states that -

“IN GOVERNMENT SERVICES: Despite being charged with a constitutional mandate to promote social justice, various local institutions of the Indian State clearly tolerate and even facilitate the practice of untouchability: 37.8% of the villages: Dalits made to sit separately in government schools, 27.6% of the villages of Dalits: prevented from entering police stations, 25.7% of the villages of Dalits: prevented from entering ration shops 33% of the villages: public health workers refuse to visit Dalit homes 23.5% of the Dalit villages: don’t get mail delivered to their homes 14.4% of the Dalit villages: Dalits not permitted to enter the „panchayat” local government building 12% of the Dalit villages: Dalits denied access to or forced to form separate lines at polling booths 48.4% of the Dalit villages: denied access to water sources. IN MARKET ACCESS: 35% of villages surveyed: Dalits barred from selling produce in local markets 47% of villages with milk cooperatives prevent Dalits from selling milk, and 25% prevent Dalits from buying milk, IN WORK: 25% of villages: Dalits paid lower wages than non-Dalits, work longer hours, have more delayed waged and suffer more verbal and physical abuse 37% of villages: Dalit workers paid wages from a distance to avoid physical contact, IN RELIGION AND RITES: 64% of Dalits: restricted from entering Hindu temples Almost 50% of villages: Dalits prevented from accessing cremation grounds, IN THE PRIVATE SPHERE: 73% of villages: Dalits not permitted to enter non-Dalit homes 70% of villages: Dalits and non-Dalits cannot eat together, 35.8% of Dalits: denied entry into village shops”: (http://www.indianet.nl/pdf/CastAnEye.pdf).

The Indian constitution has certain important provisions to safeguard and promote the interests of Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribes and Minorities. Not only this oppressed people of our age-old Hindu society and culture had to have some movements and fought against the inhuman and humiliating behaviour of the upper caste Hindus. The role played by Dr. B.R.Ambedkar for the upliftment of the marginalized section cannot be forgotten by Indian history. He has been regarded as one of the doyens devoted to seeking equality and justice in Indian society. Dr. Ambedkar can easily be characterized as a philosopher deeply rooted in the modernist ideologies. His philosophy was
occupied with social amelioration, political enlightenment, spiritual awakening and economic well being of the masses. He had a deep faith in fundamental human rights, in the equal rights of man and women, in the dignity of individual, in socio and economic justice, in the promotion of social progress and better standard of life with peace and security in all spheres of human life. His study of social facts enriches his political philosophy. Dr B. R. Ambedkar left an indelible mark on Indian polity, society and economy with a broad range of scholarly work and rigorous political activism. While much is known, heard and written about his political, social and economic writings, there has been relatively less of an attempt at understanding the philosophical underpinnings and theoretical origins of his worldview. He was passionately critical of the Hindu caste system which is the basis of social, cultural, economic and political subjugation of those considered “lower castes”. In his struggle against caste based discrimination, Ambedkar held that emancipation of Dalits in India was possible only through the three-pronged approach of “education, agitation and organization”. His works are deeply embedded in a secular and modern understanding of human society. Moreover, they are also imbued with a strong sense of humanism and a belief in human dignity. His worldview was informed by not only a scholarly interest but a personal experience of discrimination and marginalization. The deep sense of injustice felt by him motivated Dr. Ambedkar to challenge all oppressive institutions of society.

Since 1990s, the Indian state has adopted neo-liberal paradigm and policies which is focused mainly on growth. This paradigm of development marginalises and excludes the marginalized people from equitably sharing the fruits of development and, thus makes it difficult to achieve socio-economic equality for building a healthy socialist democracy. In such a situation the ideas and views of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar acquire prominence and provide a viable alternative to problem to deal with the problems of Indian society, including the operational mechanism of caste system and its possible elimination. Dr. Ambedkar is the first thinker who systematically advocates for social justice on the principles of secular and democratic values. Regrettably, contributions of Dr. Ambedkar to the Indian society is often ignored as well as undermined by Indian academia dominated by caste prejudice. Dominant and caste-Hindu people in India view Ambedkar as a messiah of Dalit and untouchable leader. Rise of Dalit
assertion, however, has brought ideas of Dr. Ambedkar to limelight making it a strong discourse of social justice and quest for equality. This process provides a wider canvas to Dr. Ambedkar’s ideas and forces the Indian academia and political parties to recognise his contributions. The discourse of egalitarian Indian society is part of the large mission propounded and practiced by Dr. Ambedkar in his efforts to build Indian society imbued with the values of equality and social justice. Probably Dr. Ambedkar is the first person who seriously thought about social equality and inclusive Indian society as an essential feature for the emergence of a healthy nation-state and democracy. But most of his intellectual peers focused on economic, political and spiritual equality and ignored social inequalities. Due to this even after 65 years of independence caste based discrimination is applauded in society. However, vision of Dr. Ambedkar has been amplified through the discourse of egalitarian society based on the trinity of principles -- equality, liberty and fraternity.

Further, Dr. Ambedkar’s lifelong battle has given a systematic direction to multiple strategies for development of the downtrodden and marginalised mass in general and Dalits in particular as a means to achieve a democratic society. The strategy adopted by Dr. Ambedkar encompasses constitutional safeguard, legislative measure, public policy measure, spiritual aspect and tireless battle for social justice and removal of oppression. This has a significant bearing on our present day society and polity. However, currently there is a need for reinterpretation of values of humanism, democracy, equality and liberty in Indian context. Even after more than six decades of independence India still finds difficult to answer some pertinent questions and attend to inherited problems: Does the Hindu society treat Dalits as equal to other citizens of our society? Why Dalits still languish in poverty, malnutrition and hunger? What does social justice mean to Dalits and is it only ornamental to our Constitution or has some significant bearing on us? Why does caste system persist even after 65 years of Indian’s independence and what is Ambedkar perspective on it? Why social exclusion persists in Indian society based upon caste, gender, age and religion? Answers to these complicated issues are only addressed by Dr. Ambedkar. Hence, the proposed seminar is an attempt to discuss about various aspects of Dr. Ambedkar's ideas with reference to identity based
discrimination in India. Moreover, it envisages generating intellectual discourse on the following objectives:

**Objectives of the Seminar**

1. To conceptualise and contextualise discrimination and identity in socio philosophical perspective.
2. To understand and analyse the concept of discrimination and identity in the philosophy of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar.
3. To discuss and deliberate upon the level of correlation between discrimination and identity in India.
4. To discuss and deliberate upon how Dr. Ambedkar’s philosophy helps to address problem of discrimination and identity in India.
5. To understand application of Dr. Ambedkar’s philosophy vis-a-vis its implication to develop a neo-ideology appropriate for contemporary India.
6. To delve upon Dr. Ambedkar’s philosophy as a potential-actual alternative to in contemporary-modern India.
7. Globalisation of Ambedkar’s thought and philosophy to resolve impeding social crisis in world order.

In this backdrop papers are invited from interested person to share their intellectual reflection on theme of the seminar. The papers should fall into the sub-themes mentioned as follows:

**Broad Sub-themes of Seminar**

1. Conceptual and theoretical aspects of the social philosophy of Dr. Ambedkar.
2. Dr. Ambedkar’s ideas on ‘discrimination and democratic and egalitarian India’ with reference to Indian economy, history, society and polity.
3. Dr. Ambedkar as a theoretician of Indian social system and his contribution to understand caste system and its operational mechanism for building a just society.
4. Relevance of Dr. Ambedkar’s ideas for the inclusion of the marginalised sections in general, and Dalits and women in particular.
5. Dr. Ambedkar’s philosophy and world view as inspirational source for the Dalit movement in post-independence India to achieve social justice.
6. Influence of Dr. Ambedkar’s philosophy on Indian academia -- economics, politics, law, anthropology, and sociology.

7. Globalisation of Ambedkar’s thought and philosophy as an alternative.

Rationale of the Seminar
Dr. Ambedkar’s thought; ideas and philosophy of democratic and egalitarian society are symbiotically related. He did not think only about betterment of Dalits but also fought relentlessly to see India as a fully democratic and welfaristic society. Dr. Ambedkar may be a messiah of Dalits across India but he also diffused modern values to all Indian people. He fought for parity and equality for all people. To him India cannot succeed to become a welfare state if it does not address and annihilate the old, perennial caste system. He held that modern-contemporary Indian society was beset with fathomless hierarchies and caste contradictions which hinder its growth, progress, development and change. These forces and outfits hindered nation building and renaissance among all people. Hence, Dr. Ambedkar’s ideas on law, liberty, equality and fraternity based on democratic, secular and rational values may usher in social justice and democratic society in India.

Expected Delegates
Expected resource persons include Prof. Mrinal Miri, Prof Pradeep Gokhale, Prof. A. Raghuramaraju, Prof. Rakesh Chandra, Prof. Gopal Guru, Prof. Y. Singh, Prof. Bhalchandra Mungekar, Prof. S.K.Thorat, Prof. T.K Ommen, Prof. Nandu Ram, Prof. Anand Kumar, Prof. Aveyjit Pathak, Prof. P.G. Jogdand, Prof. A. Ramaiah, Prof. Thangraj, Prof. B.K. Mallick, and Prof. L.A. Karunakarn. Several other delegates from university departments, colleges, research institutes, organizations are expected to participate.

Call for papers and deadline
Papers are invited from academicians, social activists, research scholars and policy makers on the theme of the seminar. Abstracts, individual or joint, in English or Hindi (maximum 500 words) should be submitted by 25th March 2013. Author (s) of accepted abstracts shall be intimated by 29th March 2013 and they need to submit full papers (approximately 10-12 pages/ 5,000 words) in both hard and soft copy to the conference organiser by 5th April 2013. Papers presented in the seminar will be published as a seminar volume.
Abstract and Full Paper can be sent via email on ascseminar13@gmail.com /
**bbmalik57@gmail.com** Cash payment registration will be available at the conference venue.

**Special call to Directors**

Directors of all Ambedkar Centres in universities/colleges/institutions are encouraged to participate and present action plan and programme of their centres to strengthen the agenda of social justice/democratic society and remove caste and identity based discrimination in India.

**Travel allowance and accommodation**

Authors of the accepted papers and invited participants/resource persons shall be provided boarding and lodging on the university campus/nearby locality. Given budgetary constraint, all participants are requested to arrange travel and other expenses from their organisation and institution. No T.A. & D.A. shall be provided to delegates by the organizers.

**Registration fee**

A nominal registrations fee of Rs.600/- (Rupees six hundred only) should be paid in the form of demand draft along with registration form. Demand Draft is to be drawn in favour of “Director, Dr. Ambedkar Studies Centre, BBAU”, payable at Lucknow.

**About the Centre**

Dr. Ambedkar Studies Centre (ASC), Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University, Lucknow was set up in the year 2005. The activities undertaken by the Centre include: inaugural Lecture delivered by Hon’ble Mata Prasad Ji on 02.03.2006, Orientation Course from 08.03.2006 to 14.03.2006 on “Ambedkar’s Life and Thought“, Establishment of library-cum-reading room by procuring books and journal, conducted Three National Seminars on 14-15 April 2006, 29-30 November 2006 and 25-26 February 2011 on the theme “B.R. Ambedkar: Vision and Reality - 50 Years of Post- Ambedkar India”, “Dalits and Human Development: Contemporary Issues and Emerging Patterns” and “Dr. B.R. Ambedkar: Problem of Societal Exclusion and Construction of Inclusive Society” respectively. Apart from this Ambedkar Memorial Lecture Series was also organized in 2006-2007 and 2010-11. This centre has unique characteristics which include not only disseminating the ideas and thought of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar to students and faculties of the university but also sensitizing people of nearby locality and areas about the relevance of Dr.
Ambedkar’s ideas for the betterment of people’s lives. The centre undertakes theoretical and action oriented research on relevant themes.

**About the Department of Sociology**

The Department of Sociology is engaged in Post-graduate teaching and research. It is being developed as a centre of excellence in the area of Sociology. The department provides students a solid grounding in sociological theory, thought and research methodology. In addition, it offers optional courses of applied nature. It has highly qualified and dedicated faculty members who closely interact with the students and provide them continuous feedback to improve their performance, achieve their career goals and also contribute to the development of society with a focus on the marginalized sections. The UGC sanctioned Special Assistance Programme (DRS-I) to the department in the year 2011-12 in the thrust area, “Globalisation, Social Transformation & Environment”.

The proposed National Seminar on the theme on “Discrimination, Identity and Philosophy of Dr. Ambedkar” expects about 100 participants from different parts of the country to participate and have a holistic and meaningful dialogue, debate and discussion. Moreover, the seminar shall also focus on problems of development of Dalits, and ways proposed by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar to fulfill the dream of achieving equality, liberty and fraternity based society.

**Address for Communication**

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REGISTRATION FORM

Two-Day National Seminar on
“Discrimination, Identity and Philosophy of Dr. Ambedkar”
8th-9th April 2013

Dr. Ambedkar Studies Centre (ASC) and Department of Sociology,
Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University (A Central University) Lucknow.

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