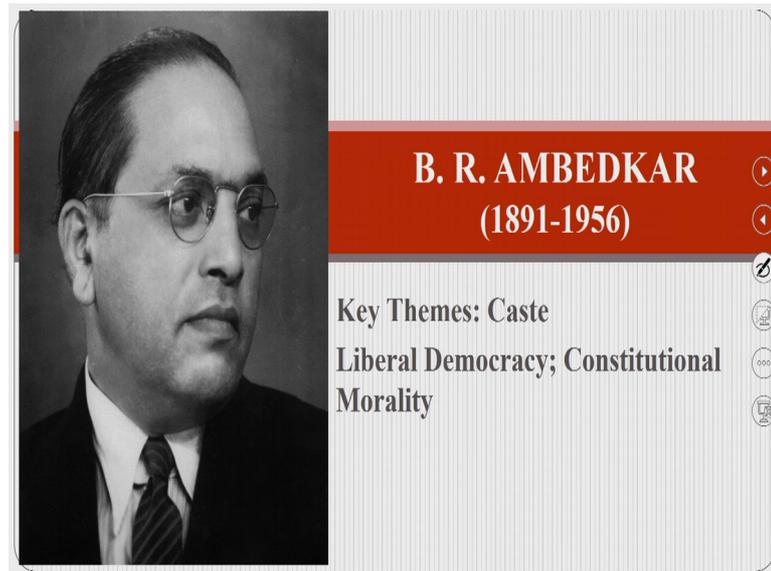


**Introduction to Modern Indian Political Thought**  
**Dr. Mithilesh Kumar Jha**  
**Department of Humanities & Social Sciences**  
**Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati**

**Lecture – 24**  
**B.R.Ambedkar: Liberal Democracy and Constitutional Morality**

(Refer Slide Time: 00:27)



Hello and welcome friends to this third and concluding lecture on B. R. Ambedkar. In this lecture we are going to discuss his views on Liberal Democracy and Constitutional Morality.

In previous two lecture we have basically discussed his views on caste and untouchability and how to annihilate caste or remove untouchability from the society and how an ideal society which is based on the principle of liberty, equality and fraternity is impossible to construct without annihilating the caste or the caste system. And, what are the methods or how that exploitative system of caste have justification even in the contemporary times; and how effectively that can be in annihilated that we have discussed through his writings primarily his text annihilation of caste. Today, we are going to discuss his views on liberal democracy and constitutional morality.

So, remember there are different strands of thought in Ambedkar and basically some scholars have argued and in reception or in identifying Ambedkar merely as a caste thinker or a leader who was trying to eradicate untouchability do not do justice to the

role of Ambedkar as a national leader as a democratic thinker. Or someone who was a deeply or intellectually involved in the making of a country or a society which should be based on the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity; and the interrelationship between these three principles are necessary not just in political life or in the legal sphere, but also in the social and economic sphere.

So, for him democracy is all encompassing way of life; a mode of associated living where the mutual respect or a respect of others the compassion or the fellow feeling is the basis for the formation of such society which is for him an ideal society. So, Ambedkar was deeply involved or consists of the challenges or the obstructions and impediments in the realisation of a such society. And he said with many scholars about the sceptical; scepticism about the possibility of India as a Nation or Indian Nationalism which is inherently divided into different groups different sections and it treats each other with contempt or there is graded hierarchy.

So, in such condition how a state or how a government or a democratic government can sustain itself and that is the challenge which Ambedkar was trying to, (Refer Time: 04:03) trying to understand and also provide solution to. And he considered liberal democracy; and by liberal democracy and the method that he has used is always non violent or a kind of Satyagraha; in his own way to fight for the legitimate rights of the untouchables or the Dalits; and also to resolve the social issues or the challenges through the peaceful method through the constitutional method when it is available.

When it is not available then one can understand the politics such as extra constitutional politics of say non corporation or other modes of hesitations, but when the constitutional methods are available then a society must proceed by following that method; that process of constitutional method to resolve its issues to address its concerns. So, Ambedkar was trying to understand the feasibility or the appropriateness of such constitutional method in a society which is deeply divided on caste lines, on religious lines and there is a graded hierarchy which prevent it to develop a kind of fellow feeling or mutual respect to different sections or different groups.

So, for Ambedkar in that sense democracy needs to be supplemented or political democracy needs to be supplemented with the social democracy and social democracy. In that sense remains the best for the liberal political democracy to sustain or to continue.

(Refer Slide Time: 06:08)

**Liberal Democracy**

*A democratic form of Government presupposes a democratic form of a society; the formal framework of democracy is of no value and would indeed be a misfit if there was no social democracy.*

- Ambedkar -

- Ambedkar was one of the passionate supporters of liberal democracy in the Constituent Assembly. Liberal democracy in its form and practice was the ideal form of government for him.
- He had a comprehensive understanding of liberal democracies; its practices; and also its limitations. He believed in the representative form of government. But, democracy for him was much more than mere representation. In his own words: *Democracy is not merely a form of government. It is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience. It is essentially an attitude of respect and reverence towards fellowmen.*

2

He writes on a liberal democracy that, a democratic form of Government presupposes a democratic form of a society now which is missing in India; and that is the challenge how to overcome these discrepancies in the political democracy and absence of social democracy. So, a democratic form of Government presupposes a democratic form of society. The formal framework of democracy is of no value and would indeed be a misfit if there was no social democracy.

So, understanding of Ambedkar is very comprehensive as to what is the role of democracy and he tries to strengthen or tries to question the; a policy makers in the Constitution Assembly. And one of the quote we will discuss later, where he clearly express or assert this life of contradiction for the democracy in post independent India and how to eradicate such contradictions. So, for Ambedkar then the liberal democracy or the political democracy is not something which is complete in itself if there is absence of social democracy. So, social democracy or the social economic democracy is the base on which political democracy can flourish. So, this is absolutely necessary in his conception of democracy.

He was one of the passionate supporter of the liberal democracy which treats individual on the basis of his or her worth and not on the basis of his or her inheritance or his station of life in the hierarchy. But on the basis of the merit or the worth of individual and the free discussion or deliberation as the basis or as the method of social progress or social economic change and that Ambedkar wholeheartedly accepted; and also therefore, he criticize many ideologies certainly communist socialist and also the conservative Hinduism or separatist Muslims. His belief in liberal democracy and deliberative process of resolving conflict, resolving concerns allowed him to criticize or the communist socialist and also the cultural chauvinistic organisation, such as Hindu Mahasabha or Muslim league or many such organisations which believed in some kind of revivalist politics or extra constitutional means to create (Refer Time: 08:46) or to create an ideal society.

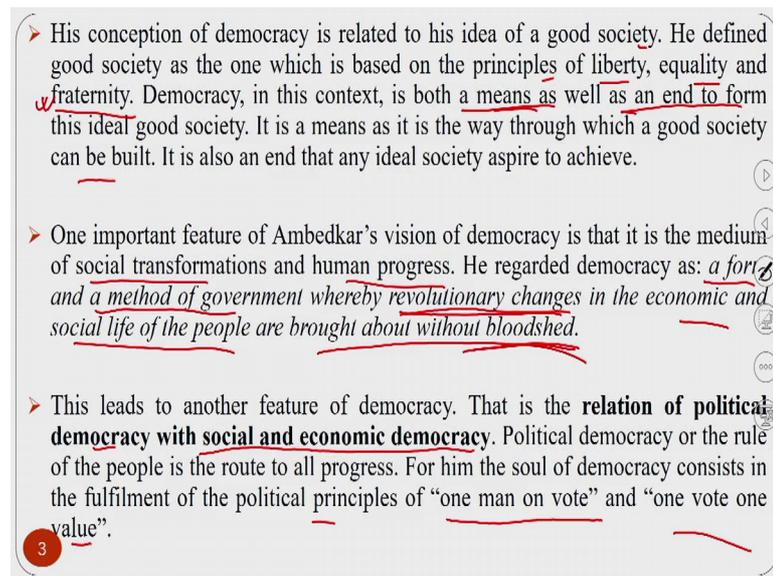
For Ambedkar the ideal society or the modern religion should be based on the tripartite relationship between the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity; and that becomes the very basis for his idealization of society as well as the a state or the form of government. So, Ambedkar have a very comprehensive or a kind of very passionate support for liberal democracy or deliberative modes of resolving conflict or asserting rights even by those who are disposes. So, he reject any violent modes of agitation and politics in support of liberal constitutional or parliamentary mode of politics.

So, his support for liberal democracy is both in its form and practice was the ideal form of government for him. And he had a very comprehensive understanding of liberal democracies, its practices and also its limitations. So, he believed in the representative form of government, but democracy for him was more than mere representation. In his own words democracy is not merely a form of government it is primarily a mode of associated living of conjoint communicated experience. It is essentially an attitude of respect and reverence towards fellowmen.

So, that is a kind of all encompassing definition and understanding of democracy in Ambedkar which is much more than a form of government or nearly a form of government which ensure representation. For Ambedkar democracy is something which enables a kind of associated life which help in a creating a culture of mutual respect, and reverence among the fellow men and men and women.

Why I have said that he when he is aware of the value or the application of liberal principles or liberal democracy, when a society like India which is divided on caste lands, linguistic lands or religious lands. He is also equally aware of its limitation where there is a lack of focus on the equal equality. And this point we will discuss later certainly in the context where he is arguing about this absence of social and economic democracy will lead to the partial of liberal democracy or the window dressing merely.

(Refer Slide Time: 11:47)



- His conception of democracy is related to his idea of a good society. He defined good society as the one which is based on the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity. Democracy, in this context, is both a means as well as an end to form this ideal good society. It is a means as it is the way through which a good society can be built. It is also an end that any ideal society aspire to achieve.
- One important feature of Ambedkar's vision of democracy is that it is the medium of social transformations and human progress. He regarded democracy as: *a form and a method of government whereby revolutionary changes in the economic and social life of the people are brought about without bloodshed.*
- This leads to another feature of democracy. That is the **relation of political democracy with social and economic democracy**. Political democracy or the rule of the people is the route to all progress. For him the soul of democracy consists in the fulfilment of the political principles of "one man one vote" and "one vote one value".

So, his conception of democracy is related to his idea of a good society that treats everyone with equality and with dignity and without contempt. So, he defined good society as the one which is based on the principle of liberty, equality and fraternity. So, this becomes the very basis of his politics and political philosophy or his idea of a good society or a good country.

So, democracy in such ideal society constituted or based on the principle of liberty equality and fraternity is both a means as well as an end to form such society. It is a means as the way through which a good society can be built. So, democracy is a basis or is a way forward to create such society to construct such society, and it also an end as all society aspire for such ideal or such a democracy to be the modes of their governance or their governing.

So, democracy in such context is both a means in the social economic aspire, and also an end to achieve that democracy in the political deliberative aspire as well. So, one

important feature of Ambedkar's vision of democracy is that it is the medium of social transformations and human progress especially in a country like India. So, democracy then there is not merely a kind of modes of government or the form of government, but also a tool for social and economic transformation or to ensure human progress or human empowerment.

So, he regarded democracy as a form and a method of government method of government whereby revolutionary changes in the economic and social life of the people are brought without bloodshed or without violence agitations or resorting to violent politics. So, Ambedkar believes in the liberal democracy or democratic form of government is not just because, it helps in governing a country or a society in a particular way, but it can also be the tool or means to social and economic transformation which is revolutionary accomplishment without resorting to the violent or the bloodshed or the violent politics of any kind or the revolutionary politics.

So, Ambedkar believes in the democracy and democratic modes of government is not just to ensure a particular form of government or the political rule, but a means a method to also achieve social and economic revolutionary transformation without resorting to violence or bloodshed. So, this leads to another feature of democracy in Ambedkar that is the relation of political democracy with social and economic democracy. That we have also discussed in the beginning the quotation where the social democracy in Ambedkar's conception is the base on which political democracy can flourish.

So, political democracy or the rule of the people is the route to all progress. For him the soul of democracy consist in the fulfilment of political principles of one man one vote and one vote one value. So, that is the basis of democracy where everyone is treated equally have equal vote, and their vote has equal value. So, there is no differences in terms of their economic status or social status or religious status. So, political democracy treats every citizen equally they are entitled to same rights or equal rights without any discrimination on the basis of caste, creed, language, sex etcetera.

(Refer Slide Time: 16:05)

➤ But political democracy is nothing if there is no social and economic democracy. Social and economic democracy are the tissues and fibres of political democracy. The strength of political democracy, thus, depends on the strength of social and economic democracy.

➤ Democracy is intricately related to equality. So important equality is in Ambedkar's conception of democracy that he considered the lack of attention to the different aspects of equality as one of the major reasons for failure of parliamentary democracy in Western countries. He wrote: *Parliamentary democracy developed a passion for liberty. It never made a nodding acquaintance with equality. It failed to realize the significance of equality and did not even endeavour to strike a balance between liberty and equality, with the result that liberty swallowed equality and has made democracy a name and a farce.*

4

But, political democracy is nothing if there is no social and economic democracy, in other words social and economic democracy are the tissues and fibres of political democracy. So, without such social and economic democracy there is no strength, no effectiveness or no this very survival of political democracy is endangered. So, the strength of political democracy thus depends on the strength of social and economic democracy which is deeply interlinked.

So, democracy is intricately related to the vision of equality. So, important this conception of equality is in Ambedkar's conception of democracy that he considered the lack of attention to the different aspects of equality as one of the major reasons for failures of parliamentary democracy in Western country. So, basically the limitation of liberal democracy in Western country is that Ambedkar saw, or observed he believed was because of their lack of attention to the different aspects of social equality which is necessary which is required for a political democracy to be truly effective.

So, the idiom of equality not in the political or legal sense only, but also in the social and economic aspire is equally necessary. So, in that kind of conception the democracy then is not merely a form of government, but also encompasses all aspire of human life including social and economy. And that leads to a fraternity a sense of fellow feeling which will strengthen the nation and leads to empowerment or also the progress of the nation.

So, he wrote: Parliamentary democracy developed a passion for liberty. It never made a nodding acquaintance with equality. It failed to realise the significance of equality and did not even endeavour to strike a balance between liberty and equality. With the result that liberty swallowed equality and has made democracy a name and a farce. So, in many Western parliamentary mode of liberal democracy Ambedkar identify their limitation in a sense where emphasize or perhaps over emphasize on this question of liberty or individual freedom they do not understand. Or they do not recognise the equal significance of equality or perhaps the proper balance between liberty on the one hand, and equality on the other hand to have a society which would be more compass compassionate society which will leads to a more powerful democracy in the political aspire and ultimately to the strength and progress of a nation.

So, this he realized even in the Western conception. So, when he was articulating the democracy and democratic modes of governance in a post colonial society or a society like India divided on caste, religion, sex and creed and sex he was arguing for a kind of balance between equality liberty and fraternity. So, all the three principles are necessary or intertwined in his conception of democracy in India.

(Refer Slide Time: 19:48)

➤ Democracy is also linked to the practice of rationality and scientific outlook. These are the basis of public debate and discussion and leads to a participatory democratic discourse.

➤ Another distinguishing feature of his conception of democracy is its ethical dimensions. His emphasis on constitutional morality is closely connected to it.

**Practice of democracy in India**

➤ For him, democracy was not a new thing to India. It had experienced republics. It also experienced monarchies of limited and electoral nature. Giving the examples of Buddhist Sanghas, he stated that these were the representatives of modern forms of parliamentary democracy.

➤ But, unfortunately, India had lost its democratic system. One of the main reasons for this was the caste system. Caste with its graded inequality and moral degeneration has killed the democratic spirit in India.

5

So, for him or in his conception of democracy; democracy also link to the practice of a rationality or rational thinking or scientific outlook. These are the basis of public debate and discussion and leads to a participatory democratic discourse. So, his approach to the

social challenges or the economic challenges or different issues related to the public and political life of a society needs to be discussed, and deliberated upon through rationally or with his scientific outlook not with some kind of prejudice or a irrational approach or superstitious approach to these concerns. But it needs to be debated rationally or with a scientific outlook to arrive at a possible pragmatic solution to a such challenges.

Another distinguished feature of his conception of democracy is the ethical dimension and this ethical dimension leads to the question of constitutional morality. So, that we will discuss after we discuss his views on practices of democracy in India or practice of democracy in India and the challenges of a democratic polity or democratic culture in India.

So, peface of public debate or deliberation on any issue through rational or scientific outlook require a form of ethical approach or a kind of morality which he calls or expressed as the constitutional morality. So, in his conception of democracy there is a rational scientific as well as the ethical dimension of understanding democracy not merely to solve a problem or to achieve a desired objective of course; the whole structure is to achieve such and such objectives, but more than that there is a agreement to a process to a mode through which one is committed to arrive at solution to achieve certain objectives.

So, more than achieving the objects then the concern for adopting the method to achieve that objective is equally important. That he discusses as a constitutional morality which is not in it which need to be inculcated. So, we will discuss it in this. So, in his conception then briefly to sum up the political democracy needs to be supplemented or supplemented with social and economic democracy, and the approach to political debate and discussion should be rational and scientific with ethical dimension. And only when there is a kind of balance between liberty and equality on the one hand and fraternity on the other only then in ideal society can be achieved and democracy is a means and also an end to achieve that ideal society.

Now, to talk about practice of democracy in India for him democracy was not a new thing in India it had experienced republics and it also experienced monarchies of limited and electoral nature. He also give the example of Buddhist Sanghas he stated that these were the representatives of modern forms of parliamentary or participatory form of

governance. But, unfortunately India had lost its democratic system or democratic spirit. One of the main reason for this was according to Ambedkar the graded hierarchy of Indian society which is caste system.

So, caste with its graded inequality and moral degeneration has killed the democratic spirit in India and how it degenerate the moral and ethical or the democratic spirit of Indians, and how their morality and ethics is also bonded to their caste or to their sect is something we have discussed in previous lecture which we you can refer to. So, in Ambedkar's conception democracy and democratic modes of governing the self and community is not something new to India it to it already existed certainly the Buddhist Sangha or Ghana Sangha is the example of such republican form of government or participatory nature of governing.

But, gradually India lost it because of this graded inequality in the form of caste system which lead which kills public spirit which obstruct a common outlook, because the moral and ethical concern of the individual is bonded or limited to their caste and sects.

(Refer Slide Time: 25:01)

➤ With the liberal democratic Constitution, democracy is again sought to establish in India. However, Ambedkar was worried about losing democracy in India for the second time too.

**Maintaining democracy in India**

➤ Ambedkar offered three distinct ways through which democracy can be safeguarded in India.

➤ Firstly, he laid stress upon upholding **constitutional methods of politics**. He held that the Constitution provides enough means to address people's concerns and aspirations. He did not support the adoption of **unconstitutional methods** such as violent protests or demonstrations. He also referred to the use of non-cooperation, civil disobedience and *satyagraha* as extra-constitutional methods. He regarded them as the "**grammar of anarchy**" and stated that the sooner they are abandoned, the better it will be for the future of constitution and democracy in the country.

6

So, with the liberal democratic constitution, democracy is again sought to establish in India. However, Ambedkar was worried about losing democracy in India for the second time too, because there is a kind of contradiction in Indian life wherein politics or in legal sense everyone is equal, but in social and economic sense the inequality is widely prevailing.

So, how to maintain democracy or protect the democratic constitutional spirit in India? So, Ambedkar offered three distinct ways through which democracy can be safe guarded in India first he laid a stress upon holding constitutional method of politics. He held that the constitution provides enough means to address people's concerns and aspirations he did not therefore, support the adoption of unconstitutional or extra constitutional method such as violent protest or demonstrations.

He also referred to the use of non-cooperation, civil disobedience or satyagraha as extra constitutional methods. And, he regarded them as the grammar of anarchy in one of his speech in the constituent assembly, while presenting the draft of the constitution he considered these methods of politics as extra-constitutional uncalled for unrequired for when there is a constitutional method available to resolve people's concerns and to reconcile the differences.

So, he considered these modes of protest or politics as grammar of anarchy and stated that sooner they are abandoned; the better it will be for the future of constitution and democracy in India, so the emphasis. So, the democracy in India can survive only when different groups or parties follow the constitutional method of politics and abstain or restrain from following unconstitutional or extra constitutional modes of politics.

(Refer Slide Time: 27:06)

➤ Secondly, he cautioned against the **hero-worshipping**. He considered it as a threat to the future and survival of democracy. He stated: ...in India, Bhakti or what may be called the path of devotion or hero-worship, plays a part in its politics unequalled in magnitude by the part it plays in the politics of any other country in the world. Bhakti in religion may be a road to the salvation of the soul. But in politics, Bhakti or hero-worship is a sure road to degradation and to eventual dictatorship.

➤ Thirdly, he warned Indians not to be content only with political democracy but to **equally strive for social democracy**. Political democracy cannot survive without the presence of social democracy. He defined social democracy in the following words: It means a way of life which recognizes liberty, equality and fraternity as the principles of life. In Ambedkar's philosophy liberty, equality and fraternity constitute tripartite relationships and without the one, another cannot exist.

7

Secondly: he cautioned against the hero worshipping. This is the biggest challenge for any democracy or for any democratic society where one man or a group of man are

considered or empower enough to jeopardise the whole structure of democratic governance. And also that may lead to a kind of authoritarianism or kind of undemocratic rule where the citizens are treated merely as the subject or as the tool. Whereas, democracy or democratic ways of governing or resolving conflict is to empower the individual and empowerment of individual will lead to the empowerment of society and empowerment of society will ultimately lead to the politics strength ultimately strengthen the political democracy and in the progress of nation.

So, this second challenge or the second caution that Ambedkar had was against the hero worshipping. He considered it as a threat to the future as well as the survival of democracy in India he stated in India, Bhakti or what may be called the path of devotion or hero worship plays a part in its politics unequalled in magnitude by the part it plays in the politics of any other country in the world.

Now, he is making a statement or profound a statement about the working of democratic politics in a society like India, where the idea is that all men shares the same rights or has the same right, yet in the actual practice of politics there is. So, much of hero worshipping or Bhakti to a particular leader to a particular party, that it can lead to or it can very well lead to a kind of authoritarian rule or jeopardise the whole structure of democratic form of governance. And it certainly obstruct the formation of a culture or a political culture which is essentially democratic. So, the focus should be on the institution or a method or a process rather than the individual or the group of individual or a party which is involved.

So, he is cautioning against this kind of hero worshipping in the politics which is unequalled in magnitude in India, than it is anywhere in the world. So, in the politics the hero worshipping and that we see even in our contemporary times. So, loyalty to the individual rather tend to the institution or to a process of governance is a challenge for our democratic structure or democratic modes of governance, where the individual or some individual or group of individual enjoy enormous power and which presents a serious threat or challenge to the democracy and its institution. And also put a threat to the individual liberty that is enshrined in such constitution he was cautioning against such form of hero worship which is so much pervasive in Indian politics.

He further writes that Bhakti in religion may be a road to salvation of the soul. But, in politics Bhakti or hero worship is a sure road to degradation and eventual dictatorship. So, this is the second caution he is giving for maintaining a democratic form of government or a liberal democracy in India for doing that it is necessary to restrain from any kind of hero worshipping. So, no matter how wise a person is one should not trust or be loyal to that person, but to the process of democracy which we have collectively adopted or agreed upon.

So, that remains the very prophetic caution that Ambedkar has given on the very foundation of or during the formation of constitution itself. But we continue to see such kind of undemocratic or undemocratic culture in India, where the loyalty to the person or a group or a party considered or rewarded more than loyalty to the constitution. And it is institution which is for Ambedkar surer route to degradation or may eventually lead to dictatorship or authoritarian form of government.

Thirdly, he warned Indians not to content only with political democracy, but to equally strive for social democracy, this is connected to his whole conception of democracy as such. So, political democracy cannot survive without the presence of social democracy. And he defined social democracy in the following words which for him means a way of life which recognises liberty, equality and fraternity as the principles of life. So, for him any ideal society or ideal democracy must include this principle of equality liberty and fraternity without the one other cannot survive. So, this philosophy of liberty, equality and fraternity in his thought constitute a tripartite relationship and without the one other cannot agree.

So, there cannot be in Ambedkar's conception a trade off between liberty and equality. So, without liberty equality has no meaning and without equality liberty, it is in itself is not sufficient or it cannot guaranty the success of a collective form of government such as a democracy without such form of liberty is available or accessible to everyone. And the two liberty and equality has no meaning unless it leads to a culture of fraternity where the compassion or the give respect or recognition of dignity of everyone is also ensured.

So, in this conception of social democracy or political democracy of Ambedkar the principle of liberty equality and fraternity; and all of them together constitute his ideals

of social and political democracy where there cannot be a trade off between liberty and equality or liberty and equality and fraternity all must go together. And there should be a kind of balance between these three principles in his conception.

(Refer Slide Time: 34:17)

➤ Ambedkar very succinctly expressed the inherent contradictions of democracy in India in the following words:

*...we are going to enter into a life of contradictions. In politics we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality. In politics we will be recognizing the principle of one man one vote and one vote one value. In our social and economic life, we shall, by reason of our social and economic structure, continue to deny the principle of one man one value. How long shall we continue to live this life of contradictions?*

➤ So, for Ambedkar in order to preserve and strengthen democracy in India one need to guard it against three things – a) extra-constitutional means of politics; b) Hero worship or devotion to a particular leader; c) Political democracy combined with social and economic democracy based on the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity.

8

So, Ambedkar very succinctly expressed the inherent contradictions of democracy in India in the following words. And this he stated when he was presenting the draft constitution he said: we are going to enter into a life of contradictions in politics. We will have equality and in social and economic life. We will have inequality in politics, we will be recognising the principle of one man one vote and one vote one value. In our social and economic life; we shall by reason of our social and economic structure continue to deny the principle of one man one value. How long shall we continue this life of contradictions?

So, this is the greatest challenge for Indian democracy according to Ambedkar where in the political life there is acknowledgement or recognition of equality that is to say one man one vote, one vote one value, but in social and economic life, because of our inherent social and economic structure. We will continue to deny such principle of one man one value. Ambedkar is cautioning the constitution maker or the policy maker that how long Indian democracy can survive if you continue to live in this life of contradictions.

So, sooner this contradiction is removed the better it will be. Now, this is a matter of debate how far we have been successful in ensuring or strengthening social democracy in India. So, politically or in terms of elections or in terms of representation we may say we have achieved a level of democracy there is some maturity. But then, there are many challenges to a such democracy and this fundamental contradictions of a political democracy on the one hand and absence of social and economic democracy on the other is something which we have to still wonder upon or think about.

So, for Ambedkar in order to preserve or maintain and also strengthen democracy in India one need to guard it against three things basically – first, the extra constitutional means of politics such as non-cooperation satyagraha or violent modes of politics. So, the constitution or the politics must be guarded against extra constitutional methods of politics or means of politics. Second – hero worship or devotion to a particular leader, the third – political democracy combined with social and economic democracy based on the principle of liberty, equality and fraternity.

So, to do sum up so for the maintenance or preservation of or safeguarding Indian democracy one need to guard it against these three challenges or three threats to democracy in India.

(Refer Slide Time: 37:19)

**Constitutional Morality**

- Ambedkar offered an eloquent observation on the principle of constitutional morality in the Constituent Assembly. This was something very rarely discussed and the account of Ambedkar remained very crucial on this subject. In his speech on *The Draft Constitution* on 4<sup>th</sup> November, 1948, Ambedkar first introduced the constitution to the Assembly and then went on to invoke and discuss in details the concept of constitutional morality.
- While emphasizing the value of constitutional morality, he quoted George Grote: *The diffusion of 'constitutional morality', not merely among the majority of any community, but throughout the whole is the indispensable condition of a government at once free and peaceable; since even any powerful and obstinate minority may render the working of a free institution impracticable, without being strong enough to conquer ascendancy for themselves.*

Now, to discuss his views on constitutional morality he offered an eloquent observation on the principle of constitutional morality in Constituent Assembly this was something

very rarely discussed and the account of Ambedkar, remain very crucial on the subject. So, how a society which is graded in any quality or hierarchical society divided on caste, religious or sectarian lines will continue to follow a process which is enshrined in the constitution or how to make the functioning of democracy or democratic institution effective in a society which believes in different unconstitutional or even illegal practices such as untouchability and so on.

So, in such society, how trust or a belief in the constitutional method or parliamentary method can be made effective. So, there comes the ethical or the moral dimension of ensuring the success or effectiveness of a democracy which he explains through this concept of constitutional morality which is not widely discussed by then. So, his account in this context remains very crucial. So, in his speech on the draft constitution on 4th November, 1948, Ambedkar first introduced the constitution to the assembly and then went on to invoke and discuss in details this concept of constitutional morality.

Now, while emphasizing the value of constitutional morality he quoted George Grote and stated that; the diffusion of constitutional morality not merely among the majority of any community, but throughout the whole is the indispensable condition of a government at once free and peaceable. Since, even any powerful and obstinate minority may render the working of a free institution impracticable, without being strong enough to conquer ascendance for themselves.

So, this principle of constitutional morality is not something we should be imbibed by the majority community. But, even those in the minority or those who cannot on their own is sent to the power or require power can also render this constitution or constitutional mechanism impracticable or ineffective if the principle or the process which is enshrined in the constitution is followed by them all as well. So, the diffusion or this culture of trust or belief in the constitutional process of attaining certain objectives or resolving some differences is something which should be inculcated not just by the majority community. But also by those who are in the minorities and that is assuredly necessary for aim effective or for a strengthening of democracy and democratic rule in any society or the constitutional mechanism.

So, this imbibing of constitutional morality by every section, both majority and minority: something absolutely indispensable, for the working of constitution, or for making it effective form of governance.

(Refer Slide Time: 41:08)

➤ In defining constitutional morality, Ambedkar referred to Grote's definition again: *a paramount reverence for the forms of the constitution, enforcing obedience to authority acting under and within these forms yet combined with the habit of open speech, of action subject only to definite legal control, and unrestrained censure of those very authorities as to all their public acts, combined too with a perfect confidence in the bosom of every citizen amidst the bitterness of party contest that the forms of Constitution will not be less sacred in the eyes of his opponents than his own.*

**Ambedkar's views on constitutional morality**

➤ Constitutional morality can be interpreted in multiple ways. There are two popular usage of the term. Firstly, it means being governed by the substantive morality of the constitution. Secondly, it refers to being governed by the conventions and protocols in the grey areas of decision-making process.

10

In defining constitutional morality Ambedkar referred to Grote's definition again where Grote's write a paramount reverence for the forms of constitution in forcing obedience to authority acting under. And within these forms yet combined with the habit of open speech, of action subject only to definite legal control, and unrestrained censure of those very authorities as to all their public acts, combine too with a perfect confidence in the bosom of every citizen amidst the bitterness of party contest, and that the form of constitution will not be less sacred in the eyes of his opponents than his own.

So, this is basically about the faith or trust in a form or in a process which ensures free a speech or which ensures that, that they may differ in their opinion or in their approach to certain subject or that can be subjected to some forms of legal control. But, despite of their differences or bitterness or opponents to each opposition to each other the both party must consider or recognise the sacredness of the constitution or constitutional mechanism as it is there in the opponents.

So, this belief in the form or in the process of resolving conflict or attending objective which is the constitutional mechanism is something which is absolutely necessary for the constitutional morality to immerse. So, the emphasis here is again both by those who

enjoy authority or those who are in the opponents to the sacredness of the institution or the process. So, here again one can connect it to the question of hero worshipping or individual.

So, in the democratic functioning or the role of constitution and constitutional mechanism is to ensure this sanctity or this sacredness of the mechanism or the process in the eyes of both those who are in the power; those who are in the authority or those who are questioning that authority or opposing that authority for both of them the sacredness or the sanctity of the constitutional process should be equally respected or recognised.

So, to look at Ambedkar's views on constitutional morality which can be interpreted in multiple ways, there are two popular uses of the term. Firstly, it means being governed by the substantive morality of the constitution; that is, to abide by the constitutional mechanism of conducting politics or resolving the difference or acquiring the power to attend certain objectives or agenda of different groups. And there are the constitutional mechanism available for attainment of such objectives and agenda. So, the first uses of this term constitutional morality in tell abiding by the constitutional mechanism or substantive morality that is enshrined in the constitution.

The second refers to being governed by the convention and protocols then this is the question of proprietorship or a kind of discretion which follow the convention and protocols in grey areas of decision making process. So, where constitution is silent or ambiguous in such moments or on such occasions, there has to be a guide by following certain convention and protocol which strengthen or which empower the constitutional morality where it is not explicitly there.

(Refer Slide Time: 45:15)

Ambedkar was more concerned with the second usage of the term.

- In similar line with Grote, Ambedkar also held that constitutional morality is not commonly observed but rare. It is not natural but something that needs to be cultivated. People of India are yet to learn and develop constitutional morality. 'Democracy in India is only a top-dressing on an Indian soil, which is essentially undemocratic'.
- For Grote, constitutional morality primarily referred to freedom and self-restraint. Freedom is guaranteed by the practice of self-restraint. Therefore, the presence of constitutional morality in this sense totally wipes out the presence of revolutionary methods. Ambedkar follows Grote; when he rules out the practices or politics of unconstitutional methods.
- Ambedkar criticized the use of a vast range of political actions (including satyagraha and non-cooperation) in the independent India that were popular during the freedom struggle. These are criticized for being incompatible with the observance of constitutional morality. This indicates his emphasis on self-restraint as a component of constitutional morality.

11

Ambedkar was more concerned about this second uses of the term. So, in similar line with the Grote, Ambedkar also held at constitutional morality is not commonly observed. So, it is not automatic, it is not naturally available in any society or any community, it has to be constantly or continuously nurtured. So, it is not natural, but something that needs to be cultivated. People of India are yet to learn and develop constitutional morality. So, especially where democracy in India is only a top-dressing on an Indian soil which is essentially undemocratic divided on so many cast lines or religious lines. So, this culture of constitutional morality something which needs to be cultivated, it is not naturally available, it is not automatically available to any society or community; but however, for the effective functioning of the constitution, the constitutional morality absolutely necessary for a society.

So, for Grote constitutional morality primarily referred to freedom and self restraint. Freedom is to express or articulate ones position or approach to politics in a particular way and they may differ from the other groups or other organisation, but also the self restraint that is to abide by a commonly agreed process or the mechanism which is there in the constitution. So, freedom is guaranteed by the practice of self restraint. So, it is not mutually exclusive. Therefore, the presence of constitutional morality, in the sense totally wipes out the presence of revolutionary politics or revolutionary methods of politics.

Ambedkar follows Grote when he rules out the practices or politics of unconstitutional methods. So, Ambedkar criticizes the use of a vast range of political actions including Satyagraha or non-cooperation or many modes of Gandhian politics in the independent India. However, those methods were very popular during the anti colonialist struggle or the freedoms struggle these are criticized for being incompatible with the observance of the constitutional morality. So, for Ambedkar such modes of extra constitutional politics is a grammar of anarchy and it weakens the constitution and constitutional morality in the country. And therefore, he wanted or he coarsened the political leaders and parties to abdicate or refrain from using such extra constitutional modes of politics.

This indicates is emphasis on self-restraint as a component of constitutional morality. So, constitutional morality is not just about the freedom or the autonomy to conduct one politics or to develop certain articulation of political or social issues, but also to abide by restrain by the mechanism or the process which is already available or enshrined in the constitution.

(Refer Slide Time: 48:29)

➤ Another important element of constitutional morality is the recognition of plurality. Management and adjudication of difference remains crucial here. Non-violent resolution of the problems of differences demand the existence of a congruent constitutional process which can/should arbitrate these difference. These processes may be entailed in the practices of parliament and courts. Therefore, constitutional morality demands the obedience to these institutions.

➤ People may not be content with the substance or results of these processes; what constitutional morality demands is their allegiance to the forms or the processes of adjudications and not necessarily to the outcomes.

➤ Constitutional morality is skeptical of any personification of authority. This is related to the claim of popular sovereignty. It does not matter how popular one authority is constitutional morality forever questions its claim to singularly representing the will of all the people. Thus, the question of representation is one critical element that constitutional morality deals with.

12

Another important element of constitutional morality is the recognition of plurality and management and adjudication of differences remains crucial in this understanding of constitutional morality. Where, there is no one point of view homogeneity award or homogeneous approach to politics to society or to certain policy issue. Those differences are recognised acknowledged and respected. However, how to resolve such differences

or reconcile such differences is something which can be done or arbitrated through the constitutional morality.

So, the non-violent resolution of problems of differences demand the existence of a congruent constitutional process which can and should arbitrate. These differences these processes maybe entailed in the practices of parliament and courts. And therefore, constitutional morality demands the obedience of these institutions or a mechanism or a process through which differences or the conflict or contradictions in society or in opinions can be arbitrated or reconciled.

So, the freedom the autonomy to articulate ones opinion and differ from each other is perfectly or accepted acknowledge if they abide by a particular mechanism or process which should be abiding for everyone or a different parties or groups having difference of opinion. So, what it actually says that people may not be content with the substance or outcomes of these processes what constitutional morality demands is that their allegiance to the form or the processes of adjudication and not necessary to the outcomes.

The constitutional morality focuses or therefore, on the mechanism or the forms or the processes of achieving certain objectives or at attainment of certain objectives or formulating or implementing certain policies. So, people are entitled to not to be content with the outcomes of a policy, but they must abide by the constitutional process and that is the demand of the constitutional moralities, not about what is the outcome or what is them a result of this process on which people or groups may differ, but they must abide or so, allegiance to the forms and the process of adjudication. So, constitutional morality is skeptical of any personification of authority therefore, the process the forms matters more than the individual or the personality.

So, this is related to the claim of popular sovereignty it does not matter how popular ones authority is constitutional morality forever questions it is claim to singularly representing the will of the people. Thus, the question of representation is one critical element that constitutional morality deal with. So, no group, no individual can claim in itself that it singularly represent the popular will or the will of the people that may can be contested within the restrains of the constitutional mechanism or constitutional morality.

So, constitutional morality deals with the question of popular sovereignty as well where there may be some groups or individual claiming that they; and they alone represent the

will of the people, but within the prim structure or the premise of constitutional morality there are the a space for contestation of such claims. But, those who are claiming or those who are contesting both must abide themselves within the mechanism which is the constitutional mechanism and that is the demand of constitutional morality.

(Refer Slide Time: 52:43)

➤ Constitutional morality is more realized by the observance of the processes of doing certain things; and not really by the things themselves or the objectives of doing those. So, the emphasis is on the form – on the processes of working.

➤ Constitutional morality allows the growth of a constitutional culture; which is abstract and based on cooperation. This is the process which helps individuals to surpass their immediate identity and adhere to a shared process of adjudication. Despite all the differences, they all become part of a common culture.

➤ Caste, in this context, puts an inherent threat to constitutional morality. Because it prevents surpassing these immediate identities. Working as a tool of divide, caste does not allow the formation of a common deliberative culture that is based on equality. It is, therefore, biggest impediments in India in the formation and development of constitutional morality.

13

So, constitutional morality is more realised by the observance of the processes of doing certain things and not really by the things themselves or the objectives of doing those. So, the emphasis is on the form or the processes of working and not the outcome or the consequences of such working on which people or group may differ.

So, constitutional morality allows the growth of a constitutional culture which is abstract and based on cooperations and which needs to be inculcated or a strengthen. This is the process which helps individuals to surpass their immediate identity and adhere to a shared process of adjudications despite all the differences. They all become part of a common culture to form a common culture or a unified culture or sense of self there is a need to surpass or transcend ones immediate identity be it caste religion and so on and so forth.

So, he recognise cost in this context put an inherent threat to constitutional morality because it prevents surpassing or transcending these immediate identities of birth or descriptive identity of caste. So, working as a tool of divide, caste does not allow the formation of a common deliberative culture that is based on equality. It is therefore,

biggest impediments or what you call antinational in India in the formation and development of constitutional morality. So, caste or caste system is the greatest impediments, because it reduce the individual work through his or her caste status and does not really help in creating a equal society or egalitarian society.

(Refer Slide Time: 54:38)

**Conclusion** Mahar

- Eleanor Zelliott viewed Ambedkar as the performer of three roles- 'the caste leader'; 'an untouchable spokesman'; and 'a national statesman'.
- As the caste leader, Ambedkar was the guide and decision maker for the Mahars. In his second role, he was the spokesman of the untouchables and negotiated with all other organizations and government for the causes of the Untouchables. As a national statesman he played a critical role in the making or drafting of the constitution. In playing all three roles, Ambedkar was often bound by the circumstantial limitations and this limited the realization of his objectives.
- However, he was prophetic in so many ways. Regarding maintaining a common culture and united India he wrote: I do not want that our loyalty as Indians should be in the slightest way affected by any competitive loyalty whether that loyalty arises out of our religion, out of our culture or out of our language. I want all people to be Indians first, Indian last and nothing else but Indians.

14

So, that is the biggest challenge for the emergence of constitutional morality in a country like India. So, to conclude his thought or to his arguments on liberal democracy or constitutional morality and also what we have discussed his views on caste. We can take it from the Eleanor Zelliott assessment of Ambedkar as the performer of three roles – one as the cast leader where is representing the concern of Mahar spokesperson of the untouchables and also as a national a statemans. So, you may find in contemporary discourse on Ambedkar that all the parties. And this I will come to discuss in a minute, but there is a kind of segregation of Ambedkar nearly as a caste leaders or the spokesperson of the untouchables and very less and less on the Ambedkar as a national leader or as democratic thinker or a kind of all India or a nationalist person.

So, many parties and groups may question Ambedkar and his politics during his time, but in contemporary time certainly the re-emergence of Ambedkar gives us a different picture of Ambedkar which I will discuss. So, we can find in him three kind of roles – as a caste leaders as a spokesperson of untouchables and also as a national leader. So, as the cast leader Ambedkar was a guide and decision maker of the Mahar communities. In his

second role he was the spokesperson of the untouchables and negotiated with all the organisations and government for the protection or for safeguarding their interest. As a national leader or states man he played a critical role in making a drafting of the constitution. And therefore, Ambedkar is also regarded as the modern one or the law giver of modern India.

So, he is also regarded in that role as a national a statesman or a national leader and not nearly as a caste leader or spokesperson of the untouchables. So, in playing all the three rules Ambedkar has also found himself not satisfied with the many developments that was taking place or unfolding in post independent India. And he was very unhappy with the Hindu religion or he therefore converted to Buddhism and for a very long time since 1930s as we have discussed. He distanced himself from gradually develop a sense of loss of all hope in the reforming or reformation of Hindu society. And, especially after the debacle of Hindu code bill he resigned from the law minister ship and also gradually turn to Buddhism or Buddha.

So, he was often bound by the circumstance limitations and this limited the realisation of many of his objectives such as Hindu code bill or creating a society or a culture which would be based on the principle of liberty, equality and fraternity. So, he experience and he was in many ways unsatisfied with the developments in the post dependent politics in India especially after the Hindu code bill controversy. So however, he played a very significant role in not just drafting the constitution, but also showing a way forward to construct the unified or common culture for future India.

So, to maintain such common or united India he wrote that, I do not want that our loyalty as Indians should be in the slightest way affected by any competitive loyalty whether that loyalty rises out of our religion, out of our culture, out of our language. I want all people to be Indians first Indian last and nothing else, but Indians. So, that is the emphasis or significance of fraternity in his political philosophy, where he want. So, in Indian identity or Indian moron self wood you may have come across that there is this kind of duality in terms of one being a Bengali then an Indian or a Bihari then an Indian or a Marathi then in Indian or similarly on the basis of language or religion or maybe the caste.

But, in Ambedkar conception of modern Indian one needs to consider oneself first and last as an Indian and there is no slightest duality in terms of loyalty towards India. So,

that kind of fellow feeling or creation of a society which treats everyone equally without any division of loyalty towards different cast culture language, and religion is something which Ambedkar believe will lead to a kind of ideal society or a ideal culture, where a democracy will penetrate or transform not just the political is fair. But also the social and economic is fair in the country and that will lead to the progress of the nation as well.

(Refer Slide Time: 60:18)

➤ In the words of Christophe Jaffrelot: *..certainly he obtained major concessions from the British by collaborating with them – including a new policy of positive discrimination in favour of the Untouchables and his politics made an impact during the constitutional debates when he gained more concessions for the Dalits and succeeded in marginalising some Gandhian propositions. But he did not get the separate electorate he wanted for the Scheduled Castes, he failed to have concrete social reforms adopted, such as the Hindu Code Bill, and he was not able to establish a party representing the interests of the Untouchables of India as a whole.*

➤ Despite certain limitations in fulfilling many of his ideals in practice, Ambedkar established a legacy of questioning the inequalities in society – those inequalities which were practiced for generations and yet never before so radically condemned. Criticizing these inequalities, he simultaneously presented an alternative vision of social organization which is democratic and based on the principles of equality, liberty and fraternity. This made Ambedkar one of the most inspiring and visionary thinkers of modern India.

In the words of one of the a political scientist Christophe Jaffrelot he writes what American that certainly he obtained major concessions from the British by collaborating with them including a new policy of positive discriminations in favour of the untouchables. And his politics made an impact during the constitutional debates when he gained more concessions for the Dalits and succeeded in marginalizing some Gandhian propositions. But he did not get the separate electorate he wanted for the scheduled caste he failed to have concrete social reforms adopted such as the Hindu code bill. And he was not able to establish a party representing the interest of untouchables of the untouchables of India as a whole.

So, there are many achievements in Ambedkar or through Ambedkar politics, but there are certain limitations also in his politics which we have discussed in our previous lecture as well. And so, this is a kind of comprehensive or kind of overall assessment of Ambedkar not just as I thinker, but also as a political activist and his achievements and limitations in Christophe Jaffrelot.

However, despite its limitation in fulfilling many of his ideals in practice, Ambedkar established a legacy and that legacy is more important than what he has achieved and certainly in the revival of contemporary interest in Ambedkar and his thought signifies such legacy of Ambedkar. Never before the equalities was that was practiced for generation it was never before so radically condemned or criticized. He in fact made untouchability or caste exploitation a national priority and it has global repercussions also. So, he used different platforms or organisations or mechanism to make this issue of untouchability or the caste exploitation in national priority a major political issue in the political development in India.

So, in criticizing these inequalities he simultaneously presented an alternative vision of social organisation which is democratic and based on the principle of liberty equality and fraternity. This made Ambedkar one of the most inspiring and visionary thinkers of modern India and that is perhaps is greatest contribution. So, Ambedkar in his lifetime was critical of not just congress and the Gandhian politics, but he was equally critical of socialist and the communist modes of politics. He was also critical of the right wing Hindutva politics certainly as Hindu Mahasabha or their conception of Hindu Rashtra he was very critical of such revivalist politics.

But nonetheless his foresightedness or his vision was so relevant that when he is attacking many of the evil practices or the inequalities and that is remarkable. So, prior to that as I was saying that there is many reforms movement social reforms movement in modern India, and also in pre modern India such as Buddhism or during the Bhakti and Sufi movement. But, for them the struggle or fight was for religious equality or treating everyone equally in the eyes of god or fighting for the religious equality.

But, for the first time Ambedkar was inspiring for fighting for equality in the social economic and the political is were also. And there he had alternative vision for egalitarian society or a culture which would be more democratic or founded on the constitutional principle of liberty equality and fraternity and not divided on the basis of caste or any kind of descriptive identity. And therefore, in modern times you find the critique of Ambedkar's and to whom Ambedkar's criticize very strongly or competing with each other to adopt delegacy and thought of Ambedkar in today.

And, in many ways the millions of the let us who considered him as an icon or as a liberated is also helpful in restablishing Ambedkar as one of the most a influential thinker of modern a India in contemporary politics perhaps Ambedkar and his ideas or relevent more than he was during his time or after few decades a few decades after the independence. So, there is a kind of gradual emergence of Ambedkar as an all India thinker and not merely as a caste leader or as a spokesperson of untouchables and that is something which we need to engage more and more with Ambedkar and his thought.

(Refer Slide Time: 65:55)

**Resources**

1. *Sources of Indian Traditions*, Vol.2, edited by Rachel Fell McDermott, Leonard A. Gordon, Ainslie T. Embree, Frances W. Pritchett and Dennis Dalton, Columbia University Press, 1988
2. "Dr. Ambedkar and the Future of Indian Democracy" by Jean Dreze in *Indian Journal of Human Rights*, January-December 2005
3. *Political Thought in Modern India* by Thomas Pantham and K. L. Deutsch.
4. *Makers of Modern India* by Ramchandra Guha.
5. "Political philosophy of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar" by A. M. Rajasekhariah and Hemalata Jayaraj in *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 52, No. 3 (July - Sept., 1991), pp. 357-375
6. "What is Constitutional Morality?" by Pratap Bhanu Mehta,

So, on this lecture you can refer to some of the texts like 'Sources of Indian Traditions' and 'Ambedkar and the Future of Indian Democracy' by Jean Dreze, and also 'Political Thought in Modern India' by Pantham and Deutsch, Ramchandra Guha also some exerts from Ambedkar and his speech will be very helpful to understand his vision of democracy and also constitutional morality which you should and must refer to. So, Political Philosophy of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar by A. M. Rajasekhariah and Hemalatha Jayaraj is also something you can look at. And certainly this text by Pratap Bhanu Mehta will help you to understand his conception or also Ambedkar's conception of constitutional morality and also the concept of constitutional morality in general.

So, these books you can refer to his views or to understand his views on democracy and constitutional morality. So thanks, I hope you enjoyed the lecture.

Thanks for your patience.