

Vol 2 Issue 1 July 2014

ISSN No: 2321-5488

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*International Multidisciplinary  
Research Journal*

# Research Directions

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**ISSN No.2321-5488**

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## DR. B. R. AMBEDKAR'S CONTRIBUTION IN FORMULATION OF WATER POLICY

G. S. Kamble

Associate Professor ,School of Social Science , Solapur University, Solapur.

### Abstract:

*Dr. Ambedkar was a great social reformer and an eminent Economist. He was a many sided genius : a distinguished economist, a learned professor, a brilliant lawyer, reputed author and a great political leader, but above all he left the mark as to how one could attain the heights of glory through self help respect. Acting on these principles, he rose to international eminence and exhorted untouchables to follow these principles as the only effective way of removing their disabilities.*

### KEY WORDS:

Parental Handling Style , Oppositional Behaviour , Family Environment , psychological.

### INTRODUCTION

His natural intelligence and acquired knowledge made him a great authority on current economic and political issues of India. It is to be noted that Dr. Ambedkar was essentially an economist by academic training and a recognized researcher in problems pertaining to public finance and political economy. He studied thoroughly the economic problems facing British-India and provided bold solutions to them, which are relevant even today.

### Dr. Ambedkar's Contribution in Formulation of Water Policy

The development of infrastructures such as electric power, irrigation, roads, communication and transport services and technical manpower were treated as prerequisites for agriculture and industrial development and therefore received top priority in the plan. It was believed that development of infrastructure would bring a relatively higher growth in industrial output and employment than the growth in rural labour force and help to absorb the surplus labour from agriculture. In a policy Committee on public work and electric power, Dr. Ambedkar emphasised that the country needed, "cheap and abundant electricity" without it, no effort for industrialisation could succeed. Development of irrigation and electric power were long-term projects involving large capital expenditure. The development of electric power (an transport, road and communication) was crucial for industrial and agricultural development. Improvement in irrigation facilities was expected to raise agricultural productivity. The main features of the new water policy, mentioned in an earlier section, constitute,

1. Adoption of a multipurpose approach for water resources development on the basis of river valley basin.
2. Introduction of the concept of river valley authority.
3. Creation of technical expert bodies at the Centre to undertake planned development of water and power resources.

On each of the above issue, Dr. Ambedkar had views of his own. In the period 1943-46, when the new policy was evolved, he actively participated in all discussions and expressed his views through presidential addresses and lectures. Between November 15, 1943 and November 8, 1945 Dr. Ambedkar

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addressed five conferences, of which two were on the Damodar Valley project, both held at Calcutta, one on Mahanadi Valley project and two on Electric power. Besides the records of the Labour Department, these five addresses contain his thinking on the issue of water resource development in the country. Dr. Ambedkar was a President of Policy Committee on Irrigation and Electric Power. He was also closely associated with "official Committee" in the Labour Department. The main task of the Committee was to formulate the water and power policy. Dr. Ambedkar had influenced the nature of water and power policy and strategy for their planned development.

In conference on the development on Orissa rivers, Dr. Ambedkar expressed his views about conservation and use of water resources. He referred to the recommendations made by the various committees, while pointing out the limitation of the remedies suggested by these committees, he observed; "with all respect to the members of these Committees, I am sorry to say that they did not bring the right approach to bear on the problem. They were influenced by the idea that water in excessive quantity was an evil, that when water comes in excessive quantity, what needs to be done is to let it run into the sea in an orderly flow. Both these views are now regarded as grave misconceptions, as positively dangerous from the point of view of the good of the people."

Man suffers more from lack of water than from excess of it, Dr. Ambedkar said, not only was nature niggardly in the amount of water it gave, it was also erratic in its distribution, altering between drought and storm. But this could not alter the fact that water was wealth. Water being the wealth of the people and its distribution being uncertain, the correct approach was not to complain against nature but to conserve water. Dr. Ambedkar thus looked at the problem of flood or excess of water in a different manner and focused more on the brighter and the positive aspects of the water problem.

#### EVOLUTION OF CENTRAL WATER COMMISSION

A major achievement of Dr. Ambedkar while he was the Labour Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council was the creation of two powerful technical organisations, namely the Central Waterways, Irrigation and Navigation Commission (CWINC), which were forerunners of the present day Central Water Commission and Central Electricity Authority. The efforts made by Dr. Ambedkar to have the concept accepted, the sense of urgency which he brought to the project and the promptness with which he accomplished the task within a very short period, have laid the foundation for the integrated approach for the development in the country.

Irrigation planning had a chequered history in India. During the British rule, the first major initiative as regards water resources management was taken by the Military Board, which was also in charge of irrigation. In 1810, the Board surveyed the status of old canals constructed on both sides of the river Yamuna. When the Military Board was recognised in December 1830, a Canal and Embankment Department was created, and the Military Board was abolished in 1855, a new Department of Public Works came into existence, and the irrigation works were transferred to the Public Works Department.

The early twentieth century brought about two major developments in respect of water resource management. These were the setting up of the Central Water and Power Research Station in (CWPRS) at Pune in 1916 and the introduction of the Government of India Act, 1919, which placed irrigation under the purview of the provinces of British India.

However, not much work was done to promote the water resource management till Dr. Ambedkar assumed the charge as Member, Labour Irrigation and Power in the Executive Council of Viceroy in 1942. When he took over charge of the Labour, Irrigation and Power portfolios, three main administrative units existed at the Centre to look after the development of irrigation and hydro power of the provinces. These were the Central Board of Irrigation, the Irrigation Advisor and the Electrical Commissioner. It was felt that the structure of these establishments was very inadequate to meet the growing demands for accelerated irrigation and power development of the country. In order to overcome these inadequacies, it was proposed to create the Central Waterways, Irrigation and Navigation Commission and also the Central Technical Power Board, which would provide the Centre a more positive and active role in irrigation and electric power development in the provinces and states. It goes to the credit of Dr. Ambedkar, who recognised the need for technical organisation both for Irrigation and Power development. The roots of this initiative, however, were to be found in the new water policy under the post war plan.

Dr. Ambedkar approved the draft on the proposed Central Waterways, Irrigation and Navigation Commission and the letters to the provinces on December 7, 1944. In the letter, the Labour Department explained that post war development was a vital matter before the Government's of the country. The broadening of the electrical industry and the development of hydro electric power were inextricably connected with development of industries and food production. Expansion of irrigation, conservation of soil, and control of floods had a direct bearing on food supply and people's general content and prosperity.

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Navigation would also play an important part in alleviating transport difficulties. The response from the provinces was overwhelming. The result was that a resolution to set up the CWINC was approved by Dr. Ambedkar in March 1944 and the draft of CWINC was adopted on December 7, 1944.

While addressing the first conference on the Damodar Valley Scheme (Calcutta, January 3, 1945), Dr. Ambedkar had observed :

"The objects which have led to the setting up of two organisations – viz. Central Technical Power Board and Central Waterways Irrigation and Navigation Commission ..... are to advise on how the water resources can be best utilised and how a project can be made to serve purposes other than irrigation..... I hope we shall be guided by the right spirit, leaving aside all sectional points of view, and proceed to open a way to the inauguration of a new policy in regard to our waterways and lay the foundation for a regime of prosperity of the poverty stricken millions of this country."

In May 1945, when Dr. Ambedkar argued for a suitable size for the CWINC, Dr. Ambedkar had said prophetically :

"I visualise that the growth of this body in course of time, into a very big organisation with its activities spread over the entire length and breadth of India, and its assistance and advice eagerly sought by all provinces and states, to the end that the natural resources of any region may be exploited for maximum benefit and unified development."

At about the same time, the Central Technical Power Board (CTPB) was set up. There was certain amount of overlapping in work. Functions of CWINC, CTPB, Electrical Commissioner and that of Consulting Engineer for Waterways and Irrigation were reviewed and Central Electricity Commission (CEC) and Central Water, Power, Irrigation and Navigation Commission were created in 1948. In the year 1951, all were merged as Central Water and Power Commission (CWPC). During October 1974, the Ministry of Irrigation and Power was bifurcated resulting in creation of Ministry of Agriculture & Irrigation and Ministry of Power. The CWPC was accordingly bifurcated, one unit has assumed the name of Central Water Commission, and the other is called as Central Electricity Authority.

#### Dr. Ambedkar's views on Damodar Valley Project

The water resource policy evolved under Dr. Ambedkar's direction was a far-reaching framework and a multi dimensional achievement. It led to the creation of two premier technical organisations at the Centre, namely the Central Waterways, Irrigation and Navigation Commission and the Central Technical Power Board. It was accepted by all concerned that the best way of developing inter-state rivers was by adopting the concepts of comprehensive planning with multipurpose projects through a multi disciplinary River Valley Development Authority. It was the beginning of an important present day river valley project in the country, namely the Damodar Valley Project. The river valley projects which were under the active consideration of the Labour Department during 1944-46 were Damodar River Valley Projects, the Sone River Valley Projects, the Mahanadi and the Kosi and others on river Chambal and rivers of the Deccan. These projects were conceived essentially for multipurpose development with flood control, irrigation, navigation, domestic water supply, hydropower and other purposes.

The multipurpose projects which were initiated during 1943-46 were the Damodar, the Mahanadi, the Sone and Kosi while substantial work relating to the Damodar Valley Projects was completed during 1943-47, a beginning was made with others and progress in various magnitudes achieved.

Dr. Ambedkar was instrumental in ushering in the coordinated development of the Damodar basin by the Central Government. As a member in the pre-independence Cabinet, he pursued vigorously the development proposal for Damodar Valley. With this kind of groundwork, the Damodar Valley Scheme became the first river valley development scheme in post-independence India, with the Damodar Valley Corporation getting established by an Act of Parliament, in July 1948.

Damodar Valley Corporation (DVC) was established in July 1948 with the primary objectives of flood control, irrigation and water supply, and electricity generation, transmission & distribution.

Damodar Valley Corporation's (DVC's) command area extends over 24235 sq. kms. spread across Bihar and West Bengal.

The Damodar river rises in West Bihar and after travelling for about 540 km. in Bihar and 250 km. in West Bengal joins the river Hooghly about 50 km. below Calcutta. Its destructive characteristics have earned the Damodar river the notorious name of 'the river of sorrows.' It erodes soils in Bihar and floods Bengal and causes much distress and loss in both Bihar and West Bengal. Floods have been occurring at regular frequency causing untold misery and damage and adhoc measures were being taken to repair the damage and relieve the distress. A devastating flood in 1943 totally disrupted the rail and road communication and Calcutta was totally cut off, disrupting the movement of troops, which made the Government to realise the importance of controlling the floods on Damodar River. The Government of

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Bengal appointed a Committee, the Damodar Flood Enquiry Committee in 1944 to suggest permanent measures to control floods in the Damodar Valley.

The Committee, inter alia, recommended after detailed surveys, construction of storage dams on Damodar River and its tributaries. It also felt, measures should be taken not only for controlling floods, but also for irrigation and electricity generation. In one of its recommendations, the Damodar Flood Enquiry Committee had stated that it would be an advantage in the solution of flood control and soil conservation problems if forests and rivers of India were made the concern of the Central Government. Dr. Ambedkar approved this approach on September 18, 1944. This would also enable the Central Government to fund the project to some extent. The Central Government, under the leadership of Dr. Ambedkar suggested the involvement of Bihar Government and also preparation of comprehensive schemes by a committee of experts involving the Central Technical Power Board and Central Waterways of Irrigation Board, covering not only flood control but also hydroelectric and thermal power from the coal fields, irrigation and development of agriculture, navigation and development of port, afforestation etc.

Dr. Ambedkar convened the meeting with the representatives of Bengal, Bihar and the Central Provinces as participants on January 3, 1945 to pursue the matter further and to debate about (i) the possibility of exploiting Damodar river for multipurpose use, and (ii) to collect necessary data for analysis.

Dr. Ambedkar wanted to evolve a policy which would utilise the water resources of the country to the best advantage of everybody and the Tennessee Valley Scheme of USA would be an ideal model to emulate. Dr. Ambedkar clearly emphasised that this would be possible only if the provinces offered their fullest co-operation and agreed to override the provincial barriers which had held up their progress and prosperity for so long. The Damodar river would be the first along this line.

Dr. Ambedkar argued that the constitutional problem could be overcome by establishing a cooperative undertaking in which the Centre and the Provinces of Bihar and Bengal would be partners. Both the Governments after detailed deliberation agreed to have a coordinated scheme for the multipurpose development of the project with flood control as a priority and to also undertake detailed surveys for establishing a multipurpose project.

#### **Dr. Ambedkar stated that;**

"The project (harnessing the waters of the Damodar River) is a welcome one to the Government of India. It very clearly shows a fine prospect of the control of the river, a prospect of controlling floods, of securing a fine area for perennial irrigation with resultant insurance against famine and a much needed supply of power. I am sure it will be more than welcome to the Governments of Bengal and Bihar if they realise what the project will mean to them and their people."

In the first conference on Damodar Valley Project (Calcutta, January 3, 1944), Dr. Ambedkar asserted;

"The Damodar project must be multipurpose project.....it should not only deal with problem caused by floods, it should also provide for irrigation, electricity and navigation. There has not been enough realisation that our policy for water resources development must be multipurpose policy so as to include all possible uses of water."

The consensus of opinion at that conference was that we should go in for the latter. Accordingly, the conference decided to take the next step, namely to create machinery for collecting the necessary data to draw up a multipurpose scheme. On the part of Government of India, Dr. Ambedkar offered the fullest assistance of technical experts in carrying out preliminary work.

#### **In the second conference held on 23rd August 1945, Dr. Ambedkar stated that :**

"Flood control is a matter of policy and there can hardly be any other opinion, as the flood protection will ensure full safety to the vulnerable area of the Damodar basin against even the most adverse combination of foreseeable natural circumstances and scheme drawn up in the preliminary Memorandum does provide for that full measure of safety."

"Another matter of policy is the collective responsibility of the three Governments assembled here to put their shoulders to the task. The three Governments are proceeding energetically with the development of the Damodar River Valley and the project is fully endorsed by the Government of India, and would undoubtedly be welcomed by the Governments of Bengal and Bihar."

Dr. Ambedkar also stressed about the need to take decisions on priority about the selection of dam sites, agency to carryout preliminary investigations; the agency for designing and construction of dams; the creation of administrative machinery; and surveys to the best utilisation of water and power.

Dr. Ambedkar also emphasised that in addition to being a multipurpose project, the project was a

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post war employment project, with the sudden reduction of war employment and expenditure. Dr. Ambedkar exhorted the participants and sought their co-operation to take decisions on these issues during the conference itself. While both Bengal and Bihar had agreed to have this project as a multipurpose project, there was serious difference of opinions regarding the location of dams. Dr. Ambedkar persuaded both the Governments to accept the recommendations of the Experts Committee on the basis of economic benefits of the region, after taking into consideration the mutual interest of both Bihar and Bengal.

Dr. Ambedkar, while reiterating the commitment of the Central Government, promised to assume the direct responsibility for securing the staff and organisation necessary to carry out all further preliminary investigations to expedite construction. He also assured for mobilisation of necessary engineering manpower including from Army, in view of shortage of staff in Bengal to expedite implementation of the project.

The conference decided to proceed rapidly with further investigation and progress in regard to the Unified and multipurpose Damodar Valley Development Project. It was decided that the Central Government would try to secure staff, at the earliest possible opportunity, for the further detailed investigations required for such project reports. Meanwhile, however, investigations should be carried on by such staff as was immediately available.

The conference agreed that the entire staff engaged on further investigation of dam sites should work under the technical direction of the Central Technical Power Board so that unified control of the preliminary operations could be ensured. It was further decided to invite four engineers from the USA to advise on the design and construction of the first two dams to be built under the proposed unified scheme. The engineers would constitute a Technical Mission and should arrive, if possible, in India early next year. It was hoped that by that time the required data would be collected and available.

While the ultimate intention was to constitute a Damodar Valley Authority for the administration and carrying out of the scheme, the conference decided that, as an interim measure, the Central Government should appoint a high ranking Administrative Officer to coordinate all preliminary action and rapidly to push through investigations connected with the proposed project.

Dr. Ambedkar went to the extent of providing initial funds, to be charged to the project, if it materialised or shared equally between the Centre and the Province if it did not materialise, Dr. Ambedkar, however, expected the states to ensure that the benefits of the project should go ultimately right down to the grass roots, i. e. everyone living in the valley and some of those in the vicinity and all had their share in the prosperity which the project should bring.

Multipurpose use of water resources for the regional development of the entire river valley basin was the key element of the new water policy. The adoption of the concept of River Valley Authority and the creation of two technical expert bodies, at the Centre were means to achieve this objective. Dr. Ambedkar also emphasised a need for proper rehabilitation and resettlement plan for the project affected regions. While summing up these points, Dr. Ambedkar reminded the provinces of their collective responsibility and need to put their shoulders together to the task and urged upon them.

"The Damodar Valley Project is a matter of grave urgency, and it would be criminal folly not to come to any decision, without which it is not possible for us to proceed further in the matter. I, therefore, hope and trust that with your cooperation, we should be able today to return with our decisions fully and firmly made."

Dr. Ambedkar pointed out that all multipurpose projects, great and small, had to clear a lot of hurdles before they materialised. The Bhakra Nangal Project, before it was given a working shape, was on the anvil for forty years. Work on the Krishnarajasagar dam was suspended for ten years after part construction. Dr. Ambedkar emphasised that Damodar Valley Project would be the first in a series of multi reservoir and multipurpose projects in the country.

The country thanks to the concentrated efforts made by Dr. Ambedkar, to implement the project speedily by the middle of August 1947 all conflicts of interests were sorted out, financial commitments were settled and the constitution of an autonomous Corporation agreed upon. The Damodar Valley Corporation Bill was presented to the Constituent Assembly in December 1947 and was passed on February 1948 and with a nucleus of energetic and enthusiastic engineers, the gigantic adventure had made its beginning. It becomes difficult to believe that the entire complicated process was accomplished in less than four years under the able leadership of Dr. Ambedkar.

#### Dr. Ambedkar's Views on Hirakud and Sone River Projects

Mahanadi is the biggest river in Orissa. The flood and destruction of July-August 1943 were the worst ever. Many temporary expedients had been tried in earlier decades to tame the fury of the river, without much success. In 1858, Sir Arthur Cotton visited the Orissa Province with the specific object of

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giving advice on controlling the flood water of Mahanadi. He recommended the construction of a complete system of irrigation and navigation canals, on lines of the schemes for the Godavari and Krishna River. From 1928 down to 1945, a series of Committee studied the problem. The Orissa Flood Enquiry Committee (1928) was the first of these. In 1937, the enquiry was entrusted to M. Visveswarayya, the renowned engineer, who submitted two reports. Then followed the Orissa Flood Advisory Committee, which submitted a preliminary report in 1938, three interim reports, and the last report in March 1945.

At this time, the Government of Orissa approached Dr. Ambedkar to consider the taming of the Mahanadi on lines of the Damodar Valley project. H. K. Mahtab, a nationalist leader from Orissa, also suggested him to pay special attention to the problem.

#### Conference on Hirakud Project

In response to Orissa's request, the Labour Department arranged a conference on November 8, 1945 between representatives of the Government of India and the Governments of Orissa, the Central Provinces and Eastern States to discuss the possibilities of developing Orissa rivers. Referring first to the economic problems of Orissa. Dr. Ambedkar, who chaired the session, he observed that, water problem of Orissa was of flood is both over simplification and understatement of the problem. People in Orissa are faced to many afflictions such as flood, draught and famine. Deterioration in health and of internal communication and problem of under development and high poverty. Much effort had undoubtedly been spent in inquiring into the question of flood by several committees, Dr. Ambedkar observed, with all respect to the members of these committees, I am sorry to say they did not bring the right approach to bear on the problem. If water resources were to be conserved, embankments were a wrong solution. Orissa delta was not the only area with abundant water. The Missouri, Miami and Tennessee rivers posed the same problem in the USA, which had evolved the solution of damming the rivers at various points to conserve water permanently in reservoirs and put it to multipurpose. Orissa needed to follow that method.

Dr. Ambedkar stated; the agenda for the meeting was to consider the desirability of :

- 1.Undertaking, forthwith, surveys and investigation of Orissa rivers with a view to preparing schemes of unified and multipurpose development comprising flood control, navigation, irrigation and drainage, soil conservation and power development.
- 2.Concentrating, first, on surveys and investigation on the Mahanadi river towards its control and development.
- 3.Carrying out surveys and investigations by the provincial Governments in conjunction with, and under the general direction of, the Central Waterways, Irrigation and Navigation Commission. A thorough survey and investigation of the natural resources and physical feature of the region was necessary, Dr. Ambedkar said to prepare a comprehensive scheme for its development. 23

The conference agreed that, first; the possibilities of controlling and developing the Mahanadi river were to be surveyed. The surveying would be done by the Provincial Governments in conjunctions with and under the general direction and supervision of the CWINC. The Commission would commence with a preliminary reconnaissance over the entire length of the Mahanadi with the help of the Orissa River Division of the Provincial Government and full cooperation of the Central Provinces Government and the Eastern States. Only at this stage would the parties concerned need to participate fully both administratively and financially.

#### Foundation of Hirakud Project

In line with the decisions of the Cuttack conference, A. N. Khosla, Chairman of CWINC made a preliminary survey of the Mahanadi river to identify the site for the dam. The preliminary survey would be completed by February 1946, he said, and construction of the first dam commenced by October, 1946. A tentative scheme worked out by the CWINC after the survey with the help of the Government of Orissa and the state comprised.

- 1.The construction of three dams across the mainstream of the Mahanadi to store the surplus monsoon supplies with a view to flood control and their release during the dry weather for purpose of irrigation, navigation and power generation.
- 2.The construction of navigation locks at these dams and possibly at intermediate sites for making the Mahanadi navigable for a distance of over 500 km. from its mouth at the seam.

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3. A system of canals for perennial irrigation.
4. Power plants at the three dams to provide cheap power for use in agriculture, industry and in exploiting the large mineral wealth of the area.
5. Drainage and anti-malaria works.
6. The provision of facilities for fish culture and recreation. The three dams identified were Hirakud 15 km. above Sambalpur, Tikarapara some 210 km. downstream and Naraj near Cuttack. 24

The Hirakud dam was a comparatively straight forward, as the dam site and submerged area were entirely in Orissa. The dam could provide irrigation to, 3,24,000 ha. and could generate about 50 MW of energy and the dam was financially viable. The project was given further impetus due to the interest shown by the Viceroy Wavell, who felt that Orissa was a very poor and backward province and if it was technically sound to construct the dam at Hirakud. We should go ahead with the project immediately. Dr. Ambedkar immediately responded that the project was technically feasible and assured all support to the Orissa Government from the Central Government in speedy implementation of the project.

Hirakud Dam is the longest dam of the world, which drains an area of 1,33,090 sq. km. more than twice the area of Ceylon. As the largest multipurpose river valley project of the world, it is a real gift to the nation "all for happiness and prosperity."

The upshot of Viceroy Wavell's efforts was that the foundation stone for the Hirakud dam was laid by the Governor on March 15, 1946, before the Governor retired a fortnight later. By coincidence or by design, the foundation, work on Hirakud was also completed before Dr. Ambedkar laid down office in the Central Cabinet three months later. The initiative taken by Dr. Ambedkar was thus given a definite shape in the shortest possible time of six months to Hirakud project. The Government of Orissa, immediately after independence on 28th August, 1947 resolved to implement the project for economic and industrial prosperity of Orissa. The Hirakud dam was finally completed in 1957 by ushering a new era of development for Orissa. The timely action taken by Dr. Ambedkar substantially contributed for the development of the State of Orissa.

#### Views on Sone River Project

The Sone River Valley Project was another multipurpose scheme, which the Labour Department initiated during 1944-45. River Sone rises in Madhya Pradesh and flows onward to Uttar Pradesh before merging with the Ganga. On November, 1944 the Government of the United Provinces drew the attention of the Labour Department to the potentialities of development of Sone river. The Department responded favourably. In its letter dated December 8, 1944, it observed that the potentialities for multipurpose development and management scheme on the river Sone were immense. These included possibilities relating to increase supplies of water for irrigation, perennial hydel-power plant, provision of hydel power for pumping from tubewell or from rivers and for industrial development, supplies of water for navigation on the Ganga and improved flood control. And direct benefit from this project would accrue not only to the United Provinces and Bihar but also to the Central Provinces and Chandbhakar, Korla, Sarguja, Jeshpur and Mahir States. The Central Government was willing to consider participating in the project, but subject to the provision that all the details about the financial and technical prospect of the scheme were worked out by an expert body.

#### Conference on the Sone River Project

Dr. Ambedkar emphasised in the conference on River Sone that if Sone river's possibilities were to be fully exploited, it was necessary to make a regional rather than a local approach to the problem. He urged all parties to realise that ultimately there must be an agreement to set up an appropriate organisation to which they would give certain powers relating to the subjects which would be handled by this organisation, the principle of which would be to supply the bulk of electricity and water for irrigation and navigation.

It was during the time of Dr. Ambedkar, the Sone Valley Project was treated as a multipurpose river management scheme covering not only the potentialities for irrigation by canals and perennial hydel power for the area but also for increased utilisation of such power for agricultural development such as for pumping from the tube wells and increased fertility by dewatering in water logged area, provision of cheap power for industrial development, improved supply of water for irrigation on the Ganga and improved flood control.

Opening the inter-provisional conference on Sone River Valley in March, 1945. Dr. Ambedkar highlighted the importance of the scheme to the economic development of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and some of the Central Provinces and States. He emphasised that if the possibilities of the scheme were to be fully

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exploited it was necessary to make a regional rather than local approach to the problem. It was indeed during this conference that Dr. Ambedkar laid considering stress on the concepts of regional multipurpose development of river valley for the management of inter-state rivers.

The Memorandum prepared for the meeting explained the essential features of the Authority.

1. Such Authority must be given by Provinces and States full authority over the waters of the Sone and its tributaries.
2. Provinces and States must agree that such Authority should have the sole right to generate electricity in the area covered by the Authority.
3. Provinces and States must agree not to abstract water without the approval of the Authority.
4. Those Provinces and States in which dam sites are situated must agree to the submergence of lands on which terms as may be arranged.

The Memorandum also explained the essential elements of the concept of regional and multipurpose development of river valley. The water reservoirs of the rivers were to be used for multipurpose use including irrigation, hydro electric power, navigation, water for domestic, industrial and urban use, and power for pump irrigation and industrial use. The concept of multipurpose use was to be linked with the regional development of the entire valley basin and called for regional planning of the basin as a whole.

Such matters as plans for industrialisation, social well being, reforestation, relocation of population, roads and schools, provision of extra irrigation whether gravity or by pumping, co-operative development, fertilizer and farm demonstration programme, and the setting up of provincial and municipal planning boards was to be necessarily the responsibility of the provinces and state concerned, but the Authority was to have a clear interest in such development and might be allowed to assist with its advice the co-ordination and development of plans. There had to be the fullest co-operation between the Authority and the provinces, states, local bodies and with the people in the areas to be developed if the Authority was to be able to achieve the maximum good of which it was capable.

Thus, the Labour Department not only recommended multipurpose development of water resources but also wanted its planned development and utilisation for the regional and overall socio-economic development of the entire river basin to be carried out in close coordination with the Provincial Governments and local bodies. All the participating provinces of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Central Provinces and the States of Rewa approved the proposal for regional development of Sone basin, the establishment of a regional authority and to take steps for preliminary investigation and survey. However, development of Sone basin took a different course after Dr. Ambedkar laid down his office.

Sone canal system is one of the oldest canal system in the country. It is in operation since 1874. Catchment area of Sone river at the Barrage 69,000 sq. km. water conductor system (a) power channel – 580 M, (b) Tailrace channel – 160 M. etc.

#### Water and Indian Constitution

The question of provincial jurisdiction had become a major obstacle in promoting multipurpose projects on inter-state river, which needed to be overcome. While the Labour Department in the Central Government had an all-India outlook both as regards the costs and benefits of the inter-state river project, the Provincial and State Governments needed much convincing to have similar outlook. Compromises had to be made and delays were inevitable. It was fortunate that Dr. Ambedkar expert on constitutional matters, which knowledge helped the Labour Department to evolve alternative ways within the framework of the provisions of the 1935 Act when he was made the chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Indian Constitution, the country had the benefit of his knowledge and experience. This was especially useful in making provisions about water resources in the Indian Constitution. In this content we examine the role played by Dr. Ambedkar in the light of his experience in evolving solutions agreeable to all concerned in the case of multipurpose projects.

In 1919, the first comprehensive constitutional reform was introduced as a part of "The Montague-Chelmsford Reform Act." Under it, "irrigation, canal, drainage, embankment and water storage including famine relief and agriculture and forest" became a provincial but reserve subject. Upto to March 1937, the Government of India and the Secretary of State in London exercised powers of Superintendence, direction and control on all large-scale consumptive use of water by the provinces of British India from the rivers in the country. Under the 1935 Act, which introduced another set of constitutional reforms, provincial autonomy was enhanced and the provincial Governments got exclusive powers over "water, that is to say,

#### DR. B. R. AMBEDKAR'S CONTRIBUTION IN FORMULATION OF WATER POLICY

water supplies, irrigation and canals, drainage and embankments, water storage and water power." The only items reserved for the central list were "shipping and navigation on tidal waters", and for the concurrent Legislative List, "shipping and navigation on inland waterways as regards mechanically propelled vessels, and the rule of the road on such waterways, carriage of passengers and goods on inland waterways.

#### Constitutional Issues and Inter-State Rivers

The 1935 Act gave exclusive power to the provinces to control the water of all rivers and the Central Government was not concerned with the development of irrigation, there was no office at the Centre to look after the development of electricity in India and there was hardly any data on the production, distribution and administration of irrigation and electricity in India. This was the state of affairs when Dr. Ambedkar took charge of the Irrigation and Electric Power Department in July 1942. Under the existing arrangement, under which the Central Government had no say in the matter of India's water policy and referring to the Act of 1935, he observed that,

"we have not taken sufficient account of the fact that there is no difference between railways and waterways, at any rate those that flow from province to province. On the contrary we have allowed our constitution to make a distinction between railway and waterways. With the result that railways are treated as Central, but waterways are treated as Provincial."

Dr. Ambedkar argued, therefore needed the reversion of the Constitution, treating waterways on the same footing as the railways. Till such time, he suggested as an alternative, an independent Authority giving the Central Government a leading role and participation for development of water resources on inter-state rivers. A similar alternative was also recommended for the development of electric power on inter-state rivers for integrated and regional development of the entire river basin.

For Electricity as for waterways, he said, suitable schemes could be limited by provincial boundaries and though clearly there had to be the closest co-operation and coordination between the Centre and the Provinces, it did seem advisable that the Centre should be able to step in where Central control was found necessary for regional development and where a province did not itself wish to bring an undertaking under state control.

#### Indian Constitution, Inter-State Rivers and Dr. Ambedkar's Role

Dr. Ambedkar's this line of thinking, which led to the creation of river valley Authority, was also reflected in the framing of the new constitution for implement India. When the draft constitution was submitted on February 21, 1948, it was obvious that it had benefited from the influence of Dr. Ambedkar, who was chairman of its Drafting Committee, especially as regards independent India's water policy. The Draft Constitution included Articles 239-242 corresponding closely to Sections 130-134 of the Government of India Act, 1935, as adapted in 1947. These articles used the earlier phrase "water from any natural source of supply." List I of the Seventh Schedule (viz. Union List) to the Draft Constitution, however, made a major departure from the 1935 Act and placed the development of "inter-state waterways" under the Union List, the relevant item being : "74. The development of inter-state waterways for purposes of flood control, irrigation, navigation and hydroelectric power."

On September 1, 1949, Dr. Ambedkar moved an amendment to entry 74 in the Constituent Assembly as follows –

74. The regulation and development of inter-state rivers and river valleys to the extent to which such regulation or development under the control of the Union is declared by Parliament by law to be expedient in the public interest. On September 9, 1949, Dr. Ambedkar another amendment to insert article 242A as follows, in place of draft Articles 239-242 :

"Adjudication of disputes relating to waters of inter-state rivers or river valleys." In proposing this amendment, Dr. Ambedkar referred to various corporations being created (like the Damodar Valley Corporation set by Act No. XIV of 1948) and the need, therefore, of a body to deal with such disputes as might arise from the activities of such corporations. He said that, "the original draft or proposal was too hide-bound or too stereotyped to allow any elastic action that may be necessary.... Consequently I am now proposing this new article which leaves it to Parliament to make laws for the settlement of these disputes."

This draft article came to be adopted as Article 262. In accordance with this provision, Parliament enacted the Inter-State Water Disputes Act, 1956 and the River Boards Act, 1956. The former provides, in the words of its preamble, "for the adjudication of disputes relating to the waters of inter-state rivers and river valley." The River Boards for the regulation and development of Inter-State rivers and river valleys, in terms of entry 56.

### CONCLUSION

Dr. Ambedkar with his political status, immense concerns and high Scholarship was successful in persuading the provinces to have an all India policy, to develop the instrument of River Valley Authority to manage the project on inter-state rivers for multipurpose development and with active participation of the Central Government. In the establishment of the Central Waterways, Irrigation and Navigation Commission (CWINC) on April, 1945 Dr. Ambedkar and his Department laid down the foundation for a new water policy on the eve of independence preparing the ground for the prosperity of the emerged nation.

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Address for Correspondence

56, 'PARASHURAM' Ayodhya Nagari, Near Reliance Office,  
Hydrabad Road, Dahitane,

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