DALIT LIFE AND TECHNOLOGY

Prof. Dr. Lella Karunyakara
Dean, School of Culture, Director, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, Sidho-Kano Murmu Centre for Dalit and Tribal Studies, Mahatma Gandhi Antarrashtriya Hindi Vishwavidyalaya, Wardha, Maharashtra.

Abstract
The biggest asset of humans is having instinct for curiosity. The fundamental difference between human and other beings is humans have ability to think whereas other beings don't have such ability. Creativity is human's natural asset. The instinct of curiosity created humans to think differently and innovate in any field. Thus the technological revolution has become human's prerogative. Today humans rule over all species because of their ability to create and innovate technology. Does it mean the fruits of technological revolution percolated down to all sections of human society? The answer is a big 'No'. There are humans who don't find dignified place in public space created by technological advancements. Lack of empathy in human society though not because of technological changes but certainly because of the rulers of technology. It is beyond the scope of this paper to analyse critically impact of technological changes on human societies across the globe, it tries to study technological impact on Indian society with reference to life of Dalit race/ community.

Key words: Dalit life, Dalit history, Dalit Identity, Technology, Ambedkar, Ethics.

Introduction
It is a natural instinct of humans to find opportunities for dominating not only natural world and also social world. They try to dominate animals and to own natural resources under the ground, on the ground, seas and sky, what not everything. In social world, humans try to dominate fellow humans in every sphere of life. Cultural hegemony through technology is the means of such domination which could be a universal phenomenon throughout the world history in all human societies. In India, Dalit life is a classic example of socially excluded and psychologically crippled through cultural machinery by the dominant governing class. However, whenever Dalit life exposed to the new technological changes, it experienced social liberation. Technology indeed liberated Dalit life. The biggest issue as far as Dalit life is concerned is not the question of whether technology required or not for humans but the question of how to distribute technological benefits to Dalits. Technological driven life style has always been worked as an agency for Dalit empowerment. The objective of the paper is to find answers to following questions - how technology could help Dalit life for liberating itself from the age old traditional occupations which made them below-humans. How technology could enable Dalit social freedom? How Dalit thinkers viewed technological modernity?

Dalit Identity and Technology
Dalit is a historical race. It is not a caste identity. It is a racial identity. It is a product of race. History is nothing but celebration of identities, if not clash of identities. Without identity there is no civilization. Dalit history is about celebration of Dalit identity. When there are identities, there are certainly ideologies. Identity survives by ideology. Conflicting ideologies make identities to conflict with each other. Therefore, history is both celebrations of identities as well as clash of identities. Conflicting identities compete with each other for space in the history. Technology contributes the empowerment of identity. Social groups use existing technological to find dignified space in history that causes clash of identities. Celebration of Dalit identity by using modern technology empowers Dalit identity. By empowering Dalit identity through technology, Dalit race empowers itself. By celebrating Dalit identity

through technology, Dalit race celebrates itself. In the era of social media, Dalit race is in advantage position to find dignified space in making the history. Therefore, it could be said that 'age of social media is the age of Dalit media'. Engaging with emerging software technology, Dalit race is reinventing pride in the Dalit identity by re-writing Dalit history from Dalit perspective. If a Dalit doesn't know who he is, others define him. Majority Dalits don't define who they are. That is the reason others define them as low born or untouchable. Dalits must know who they are by defining their history and identity. Using technology is necessary in the age of communication revolution to define Dalit identity. By defining Dalit identity positively, Dalit race can reclaim the dignity and self-respect at least in their eyes.

Dalit life in technologically driven world
In the age of information revolution, fiber technology driven by Artificial Intelligence already has brought unimaginable changes in human society. Just twenty years back very few Indians have communication equipment like television and telephone. In a short span of time the world including India is witnessing rapid changes in mass communication technology. Smart phone in the hand of almost every Dalit Indian, whose parents never experienced landline telephone in their early lives, brought the global culture into their personal lives. Their dream of becoming cultural global citizen is coming true through easily available mass communication technology like Face Book, WhatsApp, Twitter, google, recently launched Chat GPT etc. Dalit opinion is becoming visible on Twitter and Face Book. Dalit presence is felt on the World Wide Web. Dalit business and Dalit art have got international visibility. With arrival of robotics and Artificial Intelligence, forced labour occupations like manual scavenging will be no more handled by humans but by machines. Dalits will be leaving traditionally imposed occupations with the help of AI machines.

The sates like Andhra Pradesh in south India introduced English medium and subjects like computers, robotics, Coding, Machine Learning, Artificial Intelligence etc., in government schools and colleges. Majority Dalit children study in government schools. In other words, Dalit children would get exposure to global knowledge system through English medium and computer education that enable them to equip themselves with skills required for the technologically changed world. Today job market is not restricted to government offices. The most important impact of fiber technological revolution on Dalit life is transformation of Dalit from passive player into active and strong player in the global job market. Government fellowship schemes for overseas education making Dalits to aspire for studying in foreign countries and to become part of global work force in the technological market. Global companies like Google, CISCO etc., providing space for Dalit work force in USA. By doing jobs in global companies Dalits in fact experiencing newly found social freedom and regained lost social dignity which were deprived in traditionally imposed occupations.

Ambedkar and Technology
Ambedkar found technological modernity as a source of cultural modernity. He always believed in modern technology and industrialization. He viewed village as a hell on earth because village is center for caste system. He gave a call for Dalits to leave villages and to migrate to cities. Leave village and settle in city is his clarion call for all Dalits. Dalit migration to cities is not only for job opportunities but an ideologically driven phenomenon. At time of Ambedkar, it was industrialization that attracted Dalits to settle in cities. Heavy industries assured some extent social comfort which was not there in agricultural based occupations in feudal village setting.

Industrialization has provided opportunities to Dalits to leave traditional jobs in the villages. They migrated to cities worked in factories. Political independence based on Ambedkar's written Constitution

of India has given Dalits the right to vote and the right to live with dignity. They left village based occupations like agricultural labour and became factory labour. Thus at least some sections of Dalit society have become middle class with government jobs and factory jobs. Privatisation of government owned institutions and companies has recently has become cause of concern for Dalit society. Privatisation of government jobs in different sectors has almost made job reservation a redundant policy. Hence Dalit society is looking at technological skills as remedy to find place in the newly emerging global job market. Ambedkar's call for Dalits to embrace modernity culturally driving them to adopt new occupations that make them global citizens.

As Ambedkar rightly said, "An ideal society be mobile, should be full of channels for conveying a change taking place in one part to other parts. In an ideal society there should be many interests consciously communicated and shared. There should be varied and free points of contact with other modes of association."[1] In caste based feudal social set up, there is no channel of communication between different layers of society. Indian society since ancient period remained socially static as far as social communication is concerned. With communication in the palm of almost every Dalit in the form of AI enabled smart phone, Dalit life is experiencing mobility in the channels of social communication. Modern technology is making Indian society mobile with full of channels for communications for building social bonds between the groups of people. WhatsApp, Face Book, Twitter etc., proving to be social assets for Dalit society which is hitherto deprived of freedom to interact and communicate with others. Communication revolution has brought age of information through fiber technology. Artificial Intelligence enabled machines creating a new communication channels which provide opportunities for Dalits to make social mobility as their way of life. Communication technology is making society socially more mobile and vibrant by providing space for socially excluded communities like Dalits. Ambedkar's vision of empowering Dalits through technology has become some extent reality in today's software technological world.

Ethics and Technology
Technology can be used as a tool or weapon. Tool symbolizes with social utility whereas weapon symbolizes war. Technologically advanced tools make society progress materialistically and provide economic stability. A high-tech weapon creates social instability and fear of life. Earlier the war was only for ownership of land. Kings and monarchs fought war for land. The age that witnessed wars for land is called feudal age. Invention of heavy machines created age of industrialization. Wars occurred for cheap labour and raw material for making products through industries. Industrial needs produced European colonial powers in Asia and Africa. British rule for Dalits became blessing in disguise as it brought labour oriented new industries and opening education to all sections. Macaulay's minutes gave the right to education for Dalits and his Indian Peanal Code made all Indians equal before law. Though economically British rule made India a colony and a place for exploitation of cheap labour and Indian resources, but socially it opened new gates for Dalit liberation from age old social slavery. Age of industrialization is an age of labour intensive job market. Though India is not industrialized unlike Europe, after independence, Dalits nearby metro cities like Mumbai and Chennai benefitted from whatever opportunities made available to them by industrialization. Today, wars can happen neither for land nor for raw material but for data ownership. In the age of information, owning people's mind has become demand. Personal data of people has become market material. It means whatever the shape of technology- heavy or soft, human nature doesn't change. An owner of technology tries to dominant the workers of technology. Technological ownership decides the social and economic nature of human society. Dalits here also beneficiaries as there are nothing for them to lose except their data like others. But the moot question is ethical society.

Ethics is the only cultural solution that can harmonise human mind to balance between war and peace and defense and offence. Dominance is a natural instinct. Civil society by definition is to keep under control the dominance of one person or a group over others. By framing rules in other words constitution civil society functions for protection of the rights of powerless sections of the society. Constitutional morality is the core ethical value of civilized society. Use of technology without morality creates social anarchy and takes back society to feudal and dark days. To imbibe ethical values in the social culture of Indian society, Ambedkar, the architect of Indian constitution argued for giving primacy of constitutional morality over material culture.

Conclusion

History has witnessed material advancements through technological innovations. Technology determined material modernity of a society. However, lack of morality in the cultural values made under privileged sections of the society away from the fruits of technological innovations. Therefore, Ambedkar privileged constitutional morality in the social system to empower Dalit life through technology. He favoured use of modern technology to uplift the living standards of socially excluded and economically deprived people. Automation might make life easier but it doesn't ensure the leisure to all. It is social ethics that could ensure social inclusion in the technological world. The object of technology is material reconstruction of society. Without social reconstruction of society, material reconstruction makes society a dangerous place to live because it defines the relation of individual to society on the basis of ownership of technology and not on the basis of human values – liberty, equality and fraternity. Constitutional morality makes social reconstruction to define the relationship of individual on the basis of human values. Ambedkar visualized Dalit empowerment through constitutional morality.

References

1. Ambedkar, B.R., Annihilation of Caste, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches, Vol. 1, New Delhi, Re-printed by Dr. Ambedkar Foundation, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India, 2014, p.57.
2. Ambedkar, B.R., Mr. Russell and the Reconstruction of Society, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches, Vol. 1, New Delhi, Re-printed by Dr. Ambedkar Foundation, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India, 2014, pp. 483-492.
3. Rodrigues, Valerian, The Essential Writings of B.R. Ambedkar, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2022.