

## Conceptualizing the Ambedkarian Ethic of Care: Pandemic, Prejudice and Otherness

*Mukesh Kumar Bairva*

### Abstract

The eruption of the current pandemic (Covid-19) has propelled us to reflect on our socio-cultural and economic values and structures. This critical phase has not just debunked the myth of development; it has also tested our civilizational ethos. History bears testimony to the fact that such crises have often befallen us. Human societies responded to these crises according to their cultures of care. The global pandemic has exposed the deeply entrenched hierarchies, prejudice and precarity in the Indian society. Globally, it has been noticed that the marginal subject has been labelled as the 'abominable Other'. In the Indian context, the Bahujan intellectuals reflected on the care of self and produced a new ethic of care. By deriving cues from the Foucauldian, Heideggerian and Levinasian ethic and care of self, the paper proposes to explore and theorize the Ambedkarian ethic of care.

**Keywords:** pandemic, ethic, care, abominable other, Ambedkarian, crisis

The Ambedkarian discourse shows deep scepticism towards terms like social distancing, self-quarantine and hygiene. After the outbreak of the contagion (Covid-19), the ruling classes tried to legitimize the inhuman practice of untouchability by invoking scientificity behind social distancing. The word 'social distancing' may be unwittingly used to justify the tradition-based discriminatory practices. As a matter of fact, in a civilization marked by the history of prejudice against caste subalterns, social discrimination can camouflage itself as social distancing. To perpetually keep a distance from the Dalits (ex-untouchables), the Brahmanical discourse interpellated the untouchable as the abominable