

DR B. R. AMBEDKAR AND HIS SOCIO-POLITICAL CONTRIBUTION

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Abstract

History produces few people who leave such an indelible mark on the society that their life comes to be seen as a metaphor for liberty, as an icon for progress and change. In this line, comes Dr. B. R. Ambedkar (1891-1956) who was a rare combination of immense knowledge, exceptional political prowess, and an unwavering commitment to socio-political changes in modern India. He contributed to the development of the Indian society and political values. As India not only suffered from the colonialism of Britishers but it was also internally affected by the various social evils such as caste disparities, untouchability, inequalities, etc. due to barbaric Hinduism. Ambedkar himself was also affected by caste disparities and exclusion theory of Hinduism. The purpose of the present paper is to examine the socio-political contribution of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar for the downtrodden communities on par with others in the Indian societal structure.

Keywords: *society, liberty, change, caste disparities, untouchability, hinduism.*

Introduction

“Life should be great rather than long.”

–Dr B.R.Ambedkar

Every human being learns to live from his surroundings. The environs are the basic toll of education to every human being. The fortunate has better environs, the unfortunate faces many challenges and many succumb up to the challenges. A few become bold and fruitful against it and achieve a name in history. In the post modernism when identity becomes important and brings the marginalised to the centre stage of discussion in historical writings, one has to assess the work of Ambedkar in this background, since he was

mainly responsible for bringing the marginalised to the centre stage for the purpose of equality (Mohan, 2006).

Ambedkar's entire life was devoted to the socio-economic development of India. In the early 1920s, he became a prominent leader in the socio-political scenario of the nation. He played a pivotal role in the upliftment of the lowest level of the so-called untouchable Indian society in respect to social, economic, political and religious perspectives. Besides, he made an outstanding contribution as an economist, sociologist, legal illuminator, educationist, writer, parliamentarian, advocate and human-right activist. He was an iconoclast and a researcher who

effectively mobilized, emergized, unified the untaught Indians against all the social and political suppressions and oppressions (Kishore, 2001).

Ambedkar was influenced by the writings of the world's great Master Lord Buddha. He was also influenced by John Dewey, Carlyl, Karl Marx, Kabir, Mahatma Phule and other rationalists. He was a rationalist to the core and did not believe in anything that appeared to him devoid of reason and morality. He accepted "Lord Buddha's theory of the indomitable faith in the capacity of man to shape his own shape, his own destiny and this theory and experience was decisive factor which exercised a lasting influence on him". He was a leader more misunderstood than understood by all during his life time. This study encapsulates socio-political contribution of Ambedkar (Heggade, 1992).

Dr Ambedkar's views on Indian Society and Culture

The ideology of Ambedkar is principally theological and ethical. He researched Indian beliefs and metaphysical structures closely in an unmatched manner. Centred on his interpretation of Indian culture and its institutions' action for moral purposes, he introduced political ideas including freedom, fairness, state and privileges. He is critical of the caste institution, which affects all aspects of the existence of the individual and the Indian society as a whole. It explains more

how the person is associated with the community and how other social powers restrict the independence of the citizen (Mathew, Thomas, 1991).

He criticises the Hindu authoritarian social order and supports a democratic culture. He questioned India's spiritual and social pillars and brought life to the poor citizens with a newer sense. His approach was logical. In his writings and speeches, reason plays a part. The method he used is not only speculative but also very scientific. The assumptions of modernity affected him. In several fields of Indian heritage, governance, community, anthropology and philosophy, he is well educated. In his essays, he mentions several philosophers who inspired him (Lokhande, 1982).

Ambedkar's theory focuses on the notion of culture. It is trivial to claim that citizens constitute culture; society often consists of groups. To affirm the principle of conflict between classes may be an exaggeration, but it is a reality that such courses of community exist. An individual still belongs to a study in society. An enclosed class is on caste. Caste is developed by the Brahmins and spread to other servile groups. Caste is an endogamous and a municipal unit as well. He advocated for a religious culture that focused on his philosophical philosophy. It was ideal to accomplish. He hated the Hindu social system so strongly. He insists that Hinduism is not a community. Buddhism has been projected as the ideal that is founded

on morals. He claims that Buddhism has sought, on "reason" and "morality," to found civilisation (Jatava, 1965).

Ambedkar's Contribution to Social Equality

Ambedkar fought the battles for equality on all fronts. His vision and mission to establish the egalitarian society was on the basis of the teachings of Lord Buddha. He started some journals like Mook Nayak, Janata, Bahishkrit Bharat as the mouthpiece of his views and aims. In the first issue of Mook Nayak, on January 31, 1920, when he had just entered the public sphere, he advocated the need for a forum 'to deliberate on the injustices let loose or likely to be imposed on us and other depressed people and to think of their future development and appropriate strategies towards it critically (Jaferlot, Chirostopher, 2004).

Ambedkar prepared himself in March 1924 to launch his social movement for the uplift of the Dalit. He founded on July 20, 1924 an institution called Bahishkrit Hitakar Sabha (Majunder, and Bhanwar Singh, (Ed.), 1997). The aims and objects of the sabha were:

To promote the spread of education among the depressed classes by opening hostels or by employing such other means as may seem necessary or desirable.

To promote the spread of culture among the depressed classes by opening libraries, social centres, and classes or study classes.

To advance and improve the economic condition of the depressed classes by starting Industrial and Agricultural schools.

To represent the grievances of the depressed classes.

This organisation devoted itself to annihilating untouchability and caste system. It was also committed to securing a status of socio, economic and political equality to Dalit and ameliorating their problems of development.

Ambedkar led the Mahad Satyagraha for asserting the right of the Dalit to draw water from public tank in 1927. Here he declared, "We aim at a Social Equality" and further said, "The uplift the Untouchables was the uplift of the Nation", on 25th December 1927 in the Mahad conference held under the banner of equality and for the civil rights to all. Justifying the launching of the agitation against to inequality and untouchability. He wrote in the editorial of his Marathi fortnightly Bahishkrit Bharat the following words, "If Tilak had been born amongst the Untouchables he would not have raised the slogan 'Swaraj is my birth right', he would have raised the slogan "Annihilation of inequality is my birth right" (Shyam Lal, and Saxena, (Ed.), 1998).

Ambedkar's Contribution to Political Equality

Dalit has a long history dating to Montague-Chelmsford Reform of 1919 during the

British Raj period. Ambedkar had been closely involved in the struggle to give Scheduled Caste people solid statutory safeguard. The year 1927 was a turning point in Ambedkar's life. At the beginning of this year he paid homage to the brave soldiers of Mahar, who beat the dust of Peshwa's army, at the Bhima-Koregaon War Memorial Initiated in 1927. The Mahat Satyagraha was initiated in 1927. On 27 December of the same year he burned the Manusmriti. In the same year, he was subsequently appointed to the Bombay Legislative Council (Vasant Moon, (Ed.), 1987). It was this year in which he began a decisive fight against inequality, race, ethnicity, religion and democracy. This caused him a series of fierce assaults. Journals and magazines owned by Dwijis shot a volley of false claims at him. He felt he was able to dismiss the arguments of his critics in a journal of proof and logic.

The core of Ambedkar's political thinking is contained in two of his statements.

- i. Rights are protected not by law but the social and moral conscience of society.
- ii. A democratic form of government presupposes a democratic form of society.

Social conscience is the only safeguard of all rights, fundamental or non-fundamental. Ambedkar was a delegate at the Round Table Conference in London during 1930-32, where he asked for separate electorate for

the Dalits (Jatava, 1965). His participation and speeches at the Round Table Conference clearly demonstrated his great political acumen and sagacity.

He declared that the untouchable in India were also for replacing the existing British government by a government of the people, for the peoples and by the people. Even the hostile Indian Press acknowledged that Ambedkar was a true patriot of the country. He loved the downtrodden and the poor people more than his life, Ambedkar was so much involved in the destiny of the peoples that he had lost his personal identity and independence. It is not a surprise that subsequently Ambedkar saw to it that the welfare of the Scheduled Caste people was guaranteed in the 1949 Constitution of India in the form of reservation in legislative, employment and educational fields (Trilok Nath, 1987).

While speaking in the Constituent Assembly on 25th November, 1949, after the Constitution was framed, Dr. Ambedkar categorically stated: "Political democracy cannot last unless there lies at the base of it social democracy" which means a way of life which recognises "liberty, equality and fraternity as the principle of life" forming a "a union of trinity" (Gore, 1993). Dr B.R.Ambedkar was a great champion of the Dalit cause because he succeeded in turning the depressed class movement into a revolutionary movement throughout India.

Conclusion

Dr Ambedkar was one of the finest flowers of the twentieth century renaissance, a valiant fighter for human freedom and dignity. Ambedkar's life and works shall remain a source of inspiration to men and women all over the world for a long time to come. The Indian social activists and political leaders have gained inspiration

from the noble contribution of Ambedkar in all spheres, especially social and political equality in the line of human values. Today India has witnessed the oppressed classes walking on the streets of cities and villages with confidence and poise, of course many despicable acts of discrimination and violence against the Dalit still occur. Yet the juggernaut of equality is rolling on remorselessly and forcefully.

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