

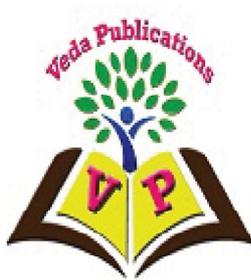


## IMPACT OF AMBEDKARISH : DALIT EMANCIPATION THROUGH SOCIAL JUSTICE

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"I refuse to join with them in performing the miracle- I will not say trick-of liberating the oppressed with the gold of the tyrant and raising the poor with the cash of the rich."

(B.R. Ambedkar, *Annihilation of Caste*)

### INTRODUCTION

Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (14 April, 1891- 6 December, 1956), popularly known as Babasaheb, was an Indian jurist, politician, philosopher, anthropologist, historian and economist. A revivalist for Buddhism in India, he inspired the modernist Buddhist movement in India which is also called Dalit Buddhist movement. As independent India's first law minister, he was the principal architect of constitution of India. Overcoming numerous social and financial obstacles, Ambedkar became one of the first Dalits to obtain a college education in India. While practising law in the Bombay High Court, he tried to uplift the untouchables in order to educate them. His first organized attempt to achieve this was the Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha, which was intended to promote education and socio-economic empowerment, as well as the welfare of outcastes.

## WHAT IS AMBEDKARISM

Ambedkarism is an organized struggle for justice against all the odds and social discriminations that are being faced by historically excluded communities. This revolution comes from the fire that emanates from the burnt huts of all those suppressed people who are being subject to the physical, social and psychological attacks. This revolution arises from the injustice that is being done in courts. That revolution upsurges from the right to live with self – respect, dignity and honor. This revolution comes from all those institutional murders that are being done in premier educational centers. As Hinduism spreads across the world so is the caste. These castiest Indians feel proud in establishing caste associations in foreign countries. Caste is the fundamental rule and foundation of Hinduism. The focal point of Ambedkarism aims at giving life to those who are disowned, elevating those who are suppressed and enabling those who are downtrodden, and granting liberty, equality and justice to all irrespective of their caste.

## AMBEDKAR THOUGHT AND DALIT EMANCIPATION

Ambedkar wanted social and political equality for the untouchables. He insisted that they must be secured before the Britishers departed from India. He urged that the country must be placed above community. He issued a call to the Scheduled Castes, telling them that it was the duty of the Scheduled Castes to defend India's hard-won freedom and to avoid our independence being put into Jeopardy for a second time and probably be lost forever. It is indeed a tribute to his sagacity, wisdom and legal acumen that the basic philosophy and ideals enshrined in the constitution of India have withstood the test of time and helped in preserving the unity, integrity and democratic fabric of the country. Therefore, he has been aptly described as the Modern Menu.

## SOCIAL JUSTICE

"The outcaste is a byproduct of the caste system. There will be outcastes as long as there are castes. Nothing can emancipate the outcaste except the Destruction of the caste system." (B.R. Ambedkar, *Annihilation of Caste*)

Babasaheb Dr. Bheemrao Ambedkar inherited a society based on the graded inequality and injustice resulting in the deprivation of human rights of millions of his countrymen. He felt the need for reforming and restructuring the Hindu society based on equality, liberty and justice and, above all, social justice for all. Centuries old customs, traditions and beliefs cannot be thrown away overnight. To mould the Indian society which comprises several religions, faiths, linguistics, ethnic groups and sub cultures, in to one compact unit was by any standard a herculean task. The sufferings, exploitation and oppression of the scheduled castes will not end unless the caste system is destroyed. It is high time that the caste system which accentuates and heightens social tension, was abolished and a casteless society based on justice, equality and fraternity established. B.R Ambedkar is one of the major spokesmen of the depressed classes in India. It is a fact that Babasaheb Ambedkar did not discover a profound, specific definition or theory of "social justice."

## CASTE NATURE AND IMPACT ON INDIAN SOCIETY

"I measure the progress of a community by the degree of progress which women have achieved."  
Dr B.R. Ambedkar.

In Ambedkar's perspective, the formation of castes was due to the closed door policy adopted by the priestly caste, Brahmin in the beginning. This was also one of the parameters of formation of castes in India. Later on, the principle of purity was followed by other divisions of the society. To quote Ambedkar,

"At the outset that the Hindu society, in common with other societies, was composed of classes and the earliest known are the

- \*Brahmins, or the priestly class,
- \*The Kshatriya, or the military class,
- \*The Vaishya, or the merchant class and
- \*The Shudra, or the artisan and menial class."

Social discrimination is a universal phenomenon which is reflected in various forms among different people across regions. Hindu society has historically been marked by a rigid form of social stratification based on the varna-jati model of social organization in which the Brahminical religious

principle, namely purity and pollution, played a central role in defining social hierarchy and separation. Caste, however, is a unique determinant of social discrimination in the Indian sub-continent (Acharya, 2010). M.A. Sherring referred to the caste system as “the most baneful, hard-hearted and cruel social system that could possibly be invented for damning the human race.” (Sherring, 1974). This led to a variety of social inequalities characterized by social oppression and economic exploitation (Selvam 2007). The kind of inequality inherent in the caste system is called “graded inequality” (Jaffrelot 2009) furthermore to preserve patriarchal system and complete subjugation and suppression of women.

### **AMBEDKAR'S TRINITY : LIBERTY, EQUALITY & FRATERNITY**

Ambedkar's ideological framework remains far from completion unless his socio-political trinity – liberty, equality and fraternity – is taken into account. This seemingly political trinity could easily be mistaken to have been borrowed superficially from the French revolution. But in spite of all the inspirations which Ambedkar drew from the French revolution and more precisely from the sacrifice which the privileged ruling class of 18<sup>th</sup> century France had the courage to make, it cannot be plainly said that this political phrase was out and out a European import. While different moral and religious pursuits might be reasonable, the premises of liberty and equality suggest that they are unavoidable. Once social agents are conceived of as free and equal, a plurality of moral and religious pursuits and identities inevitably beget themselves. (Valerian Rodrigues, *The Essential writings of B.R Ambedkar*, 2002)

#### **LIBERTY**

The problem of liberty involves the adjustment of claims between individual and society. The state comes into the picture because it is the instrument or agency for regulating their relations. If the claim of individual is stretched to an extreme in utter disregard of the interest of the society, liberty would be reduced to 'license'. It is therefore essential

to draw equilibrium between liberty and license on the one hand and liberty and authority on the other. Liberty, therefore, has been one of the most debated terms ever since the arrival of the modernity in Western Europe. Ambedkar recognized the importance of the fundamental rights of an individual whom, as we have seen above, he considered an end in himself. But he went a step further. “The fear of the starvation, the fear of losing a house, the fear of losing savings if any, the fear of having to be a burden on public charity, are factors too strong to permit a man to stand out for his fundamental rights. The unemployed are thus compelled to relinquish their fundamental rights for the sake of securing the privilege to work and to subsist.”

#### **EQUALITY**

Ambedkar was at pains to notice the grave existing contradiction between the political system known as parliament democracy and capitalist form of industrial organization. According to him, economic inequalities are inherent in the capitalist economy, which make political equality assured by democracy worthless. This lands us in the unavoidable situation of equality in politics and inequality in economics. Thus, according to Ambedkar, the failure to recognize that political democracy cannot succeed where there is no social and economic democracy has vitiated parliamentary democracy. Ambedkar maintained therefore that though “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 endeavor to strike a balance between liberty and equality, with the result that liberty swallowed equality and left a progeny of inequalities”. Thus we can draw from this the essence of what the learned doctor implies by equality and further that it grows incompatible with the capitalist society.

#### **FRATERNITY**

Liberty and equality are the central emphasis of a democratic society, and yet they are by themselves inadequate. According to Ambedkar, a genuine democratic society necessitates the fulfillment of the third fundamental fraternity. Ambedkar discovered

that no nationalism could be complete unless the spirit of fraternity is imbibed by the concerned society. In Indian society, caste system has killed this civic spirit and thus obstructed the making of nation out of multiple nationalities in India. Thus he invokes the indispensable element of fraternity to carve out a nation. Besides Ambedkar's notion of fraternity' also reflects his nationalist spirit in the sense that he does not interpret it. Simply with the implications French revolution provided but goes beyond to trace it into Indian anthropology and particularly into Buddhist literature.

#### **TRIBUTE TO DR. AMBEDKAR:**

It made a feature film on Ambedkar and published 144 volumes of his speeches and writings so far in various languages. Dr.Ambedkar Chairs have been set up in nine universities\ institutions. Baba Amte was given Dr. Ambedkar International Award for Social Change in 1999 and Remy Fernand Clude Satorre Bonhomme of Spain has been selected for the year 2000 as Lord Casey said "Ambedkar stands as the fountain head of wisdom and knowledge" in modern India also.

#### **CONCLUSION**

For Ambedkar, the vision of emancipating untouchables was clearly anchored in the principles of justice, equality, liberty and fraternity. For the oppressed of India even decades after his vision was spelt out it embodies the emancipating potential that no other ideology could offer them.

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