



DR. B.R. AMBEDKAR: HIS TIRADE AGAINST SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND CRUSADE FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION



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ABSTRACT

The nineteenth century India witnessed a number of upheavals which led to socio-religious regeneration. When there was a transformation from the medieval time to the modern age, the whole gamut of socio-economic and political scene underwent a change. The multi cultural society of India faces challenges from within and without and in the wake of modernization new thoughts and ideas found new ground for germination which succoured the ushering of an age of ratiocination. The age old socio-religious customs and traditions which were always been a deciding factor in giving direction to the way of life of the people in this country, were viewed through the prism of modernity by numerous stalwarts and illustrious sons of India to herald a new and reformed social order, warding off and eradicating all the ingredients of medievalism from the atmosphere of emerging India. One of such magnanimous personalities of modern India who tried to revolutionise the malignant social system by engineering various socio-political means, was Dr Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (14.04.1891-06.12.1956).

KEYWORDS: Religious Regeneration, Socio-Religious Customs, Civic Amenities, Economic Organization

INTRODUCTION

The nineteenth century India witnessed a number of upheavals which led to socio-religious regeneration. When there was a transformation from the medieval time to the modern age, the whole gamut of socio-economic and political scene underwent a change. The multi cultural society of India faces challenges from within and without and in the wake of modernization new thoughts and ideas found new ground for germination which succoured the ushering of an age of ratiocination. The age old socio-religious customs and traditions which were always been a deciding factor in giving direction to the way of life of the people in this country, were viewed through the prism of modernity by numerous stalwarts and illustrious sons of India to herald a new and reformed social order, warding off and eradicating all the

ingredients of medievalism from the atmosphere of emerging India. One of such magnanimous personalities of modern India who tried to revolutionise the malignant social system by engineering various socio-political means, was Dr Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (14.04.1891-06.12.1956).

The Indian social system which since ancient times was based on the theory of *Chaturvarnas*, became more complex with centuries together of evolutions and revolutions. This *varna* system gradually transformed in to a hydra headed caste system which continued to deface the Indian society down the centuries. These complexities of the caste system which grappled the society during the nineteenth century agitated the mind of thoughtful personalities who vis-à-vis great odds and oddities took the responsibility of social change into their own hands.



DISCUSSION

The period to which Ambedkar belonged was marked by infestation of absurd practices like untouchability. Mechanisms were evolved to discriminate some sections of people on the basis of identity which consequently leads to their exploitation and oppression. Inequality was the very basis of the caste system.

Dr. Ambedkar born and brought up in a period where caste based distinctions was galore and it was the most challenging tensions that exist in modern India. Besides, the four main castes a number of sub-castes were added from time to time in the social structure. Among them were the untouchables which formed the lowest stratum of the Hindu society. They were denied entry into temples, public services and civic amenities. This acrimonious casteism was opposed tooth and nail by socio-religious reformers and organizations in the nook and corners of India.

Dr. Ambedkar because of his birth in a lower caste family suffered humiliations and discrimination at the hands of the prejudiced society which later strengthened his resolutions to fight the evil systems of the society. He created a niche for him through indefatigable efforts in the society from where his voice of resistance, reform and change could be heard.

He criticised the caste system by saying "Hindu society gives more importance to the division of people and not the work". He craved for social justice throughout his life and utilized every opportunity that comes in his way to assert it out rightly. The greatest opportunity he got which he utilized the utmost, was when he became the Chairman of the Constitution Drafting Committee. He worked hard to enshrine in it the fruits of democracy i.e. liberty, equality, Justice and fraternity.

He tried to build a new social order based on the most egalitarian and humanitarian principles and he was of the opinion that caste had not only disorganized but also demoralized the contemporary society. To him "as an economic organization caste was harmful institution. It involved the subordination of man's natural powers and inclinations to the exigencies of social rules."¹

He was against the stigma of untouchability and the social distinctions prevalent in India. He wrote, "The system of untouchability was a gold mine for the Hindus. The untouchables were forced to be bonded labourers, scavengers and sweepers; they were denied education and also prohibited to possess land. Untouchability, as an economic system, permitted uncontrassable economic exploitation without obligation."²

To him slavery is better than untouchability as there is scope for education, virtue, happiness, culture and wealth and there is none in untouchability. He blamed for this discrimination to the Hindu social system as the latter fear that the untouchables may rise above and become a menace to the Hindu social order if parity would be allowed in the system.³

He was a champion of a new social order where social status, function or profession of the individual must not be determined in accordance with birth. It should automatically appear according to quality, activity or performances of individual.⁴

He was of the opinion that exploitation of man and woman in the name of religion is unjustifiable. He wanted a society sans God, exploitation and discriminations and therefore, emphasized on the Buddhist principles of *prajna* (understanding as against superstition and supernaturalism), *karuna* (love) and *samata* (equality) as he believed that neither God nor soul could save society.⁵

He advocated a democracy where change and reform should percolate almost all segments of the society. To him democracy is not merely a form of government rather it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience. It is essentially an attitude of respect and reverence towards fellowmen.⁶

He laid stress on life of culture which should be assured to all individual and to him economic betterment cannot provide a better life without cultural progress. Therefore, the slogan of a democratic society must be machinery, and more machinery and civilization and culture is the product of leisure and leisure would be made available when machine takes the place of man.⁷

He championed the theory of "State Socialism" to achieve the goal of classless society. And this could be possible through parliamentary democracy. By this method the triple objective of establishing socialism, retaining parliamentary democracy and avoiding dictatorship can be materialized.⁸

To him "Democracy is incomplete and inconsistent with isolation and exclusiveness, resulting in distinction between the privileged and unprivileged-privileges for a few and disabilities for the vast majority."⁹

"Ambedkar's personality, erudition and capacity to lead and organize would have by themselves marked him out as an outstanding asset to our nation. But in addition to that the inestimable services he gas rendered to our Motherland in trying to stamp out untouchability and the results he has achieved in instilling a manly spirit of self confidence in millions of the Depressed Classes

constitute an abiding patriotic as well as humanitarian achievement. The very fact of the birth of such towering personality among the so called untouchable castes could not but liberate their souls from self-depression and animate them to challenge the supererogatory claim of the so-called touchables.”¹⁰

Almost all his works, deeds and speeches were directed towards social justice. Social justice to him would mean giving every man his due. The fundamental aim of social justice to him is to remove the imbalances in the socio-political and economic life of the people to create a just society. In India social justice has a deeper and wider meaning of dispensation of justice to those who were denied this for a long time due to an established social structure.

Dr Ambedkar's theory of social justice can be surmised as-

- ◆ Establishment of a democratic society based on liberty, equality and fraternity.
- ◆ Establishment of a democratic society based on social, economic and political equality.
- ◆ Establishment of a democratic society based on a well defined Constitution.
- ◆ Establishment of a democratic society based on principle to provide dignity to each and every individual.

These ideas of Dr. Ambedkar are so fundamental to a healthy society which is germane even today's globalised world. Thus, in this world of universalisation in face of innumerable challenges like, corruptions, malpractices, human rights violations, untouchability, displacements so on and so forth, Dr. Ambedkar has become a global icon. His political activism, egalitarianism, empirical political thought provides immense scope to delve in and for all practical purposes requires a lot of discussion and deliberation again and again.

India still baffles with some intricate question like-

Why caste based, gender based, religion based social exclusion still exist?

Why there is a large Dalit Diaspora languishing in poverty? – the answers to which lies in the thought of Dr. Ambedkar which the country needs to materialize.

CONCLUSION

Ambedkar is one of the makers of modern India who throughout his life fought for the upliftment of the depressed class of the society. His thought, philosophy, ideas, egalitarianism were found relevance even today. He was of the opinion that India cannot be a welfare state unless and until the age old caste system would not be abolished. To him the caste distinctions, supra-racial contradictions were the main hindrance to the development of India. So, in such a situation, Dr. Ambedkar's ideas on social justice, democratic society, liberty, equality and fraternity may help to establish a welfare state on true sense of the term.

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