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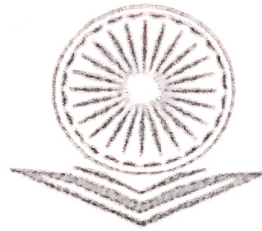
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2. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar - The Great Visionary Social Thinker

Anil Kosamkar

Associate Professor, Dept. of Sociology, Dr. L. D. Balkhande Arts and Commerce College Pawani.

Introduction

The revolutionary, who fought against the untouchability practiced in India, is popularly known as the Chief Architect of the Constitution of India and masiha for the Dalit in India. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was influenced by Liberalism, believed in Parliamentary Democracy, worked for upliftment of women. He joined interim Govt. was the First Law Minister who brought revolutionary Hindu Code Bill with aim of uplifting status of Women.

Biography

Childhood and Early Life

- Belonging to Mahar caste, who were considered untouchables, his family suffered from socio-economic discrimination. However, due to special privileges rendered to army children, he secured good education.
- In 1897, he along with his family moved to Bombay where he enrolled at the Elphinstone High School, thus becoming the first ever untouchable to attain higher education.
- Completing his matriculation degree in 1907, he admitted himself to Elphinstone College in 1908, again creating history by becoming the first untouchable to enter university. He graduated from the same in 1912 with a degree in economics and political science.
- He secured a job at the Baroda state government but did not continue the same for long as he was awarded a Baroda State Scholarship, which provided him the opportunity to gain postgraduate education at Columbia University in New York City. To pursue the same, he moved to America in 1913.

- He completed his MA in June 1915, majoring in Economics, with Sociology, History, Philosophy and Anthropology as other subjects of study. Two years henceforth, he gained a PhD in Economics.
- Meanwhile, in 1916, he enrolled for a bar course at Gray's Inn. However, due to the termination of the scholarship, he had to return to India.

Career

- Upon returning to India, he worked as the Defence Secretary for the Princely State of Baroda. However, the work was not easy for him as he was often ridiculed and castigated for being an untouchable.
- Quitting the profile of military minister, he took up jobs as a private tutor and accountant. He even established a consultancy business which doomed due to his social status. He finally found himself a teaching position at the Sydenham College of Commerce and Economic in Mumbai
- Being a victim of caste discrimination inspired him to uplift the pitiable state of the untouchables in the society. Thus, with the help of the Maharaja of Kolhapur, he founded a weekly journal, 'Mooknayak', which criticized the orthodox beliefs of Hindus and the reluctance of politicians to fight against the discrimination
- Accumulating enough wealth, he moved to London to complete his education. In 1921, he attained his Master's degree from the London School of Economics. Two years later, he acquired his D.Sc. in Economics. Completing his law studies, he was admitted to the British bar as a barrister.
- Returning to India, he started working as a legal professional in the country. His passion for eradicating the practice of caste discrimination led him to found the 'Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha'. The main aim of the organization was to provide education and socio-economic improvement to the backward class.

Political Life

- In 1925, he was appointed to Bombay Presidency Committee to work under the All-European Simon Commission. The commission reports were thrashed by the Congress who set up its own version of the Constitution of free India.
- In 1927, he actively worked against untouchability. Instead of taking the route of violence, he walked on the footsteps of Gandhi and led a satyagraha movement.

fighting for the rights of untouchables to access the main water source and enter the temples.

- In 1932, due to his rising popularity as a crusader of the rights of the depressed class he received an invitation to attend the Second Round Table Conference in London. However, at the conference, he opposed Gandhi who voiced against a separate electorate that he demanded. Finally, he reached an understanding with Gandhi which was called the Poona Pact according to which instead of a special electorate; a reservation was granted to the depressed class in the regional legislative assemblies and Central Council of States.
- In 1935, he was appointed as the Principal of the Government Law College, a position he retained for two years. Following year, he founded the Independent Labour Party, which went on to secure 14 seats in the 1937 Bombay elections
- Same year, i.e. in 1937, he published his book, 'The Annihilation of Caste' in which he strongly ridiculed the Hindu orthodox leaders and condemned the caste system practiced in the country. Next he came up with his work, 'Who Were the Shudras?' in which he explained the formation of Untouchables.
- As soon as India gained independence, he administered the transformation of his political party into the All India Scheduled Castes Federation. However, the party did not perform well at the 1946 elections held for the Constituent Assembly of India.
- He served as the minister for labour of the Viceroy's Executive Council and on the board of the Defence Advisory Committee. It was his dedication that led him to earn the chair of Free India's first law Minister and as the chairman of the drafting committee of the Constitution of India.
- The constitution drafted by him aimed to bring about a social revolution in the country freeing it from any sort of discrimination. It provided the citizens with freedom of religion, abolished untouchability, advocated rights for women and bridged the gap amongst the classes of the society. It even provided reservations of jobs and education for members of the backward class.

- Other than his role as the framer of the Constitution, he helped establish the Finance Commission of India. It was through his policies that the nation progressed both economically and socially. He emphasised on free economy with stable rupee.
- In 1951, following the indefinite stalling of the Hindu Code Bill proposed by him, he resigned from the Cabinet. He contested for a seat at the Lok Sabha but was defeated. He was later appointed to the Rajya Sabha of which he was a member until his death

Personal Life and Legacy

- He converted himself to Buddhism after attending a convention in Sri Lanka of Buddhist scholars. Inspired by their preaching, he penned a book on Buddhism. No sooner he converted to the religion. He founded the Bharatiya Bauddha Mahasabha (Buddhist Society of India) in 1955 and completed his final work 'The Buddha and His Dhamma' in 1956. The book was however published posthumously
- His deteriorating health condition further worsened as he suffered from diabetes and weak eyesight. He breathed his last at his home on December 6, 1956.
- Since he had converted himself to a Buddhist, a Buddhist-style cremation was organized for him. The ceremony was attended by hundreds of thousands of supporters, activists and admirers.
- To commemorate his contribution to the society, a memorial was constructed and established.
- His birthday is celebrated as a public holiday, known as Ambedkar Jayanti or Bhim Jayanti.
- In 1990, he was posthumously awarded Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian honour.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar As A Political Thinker

- The political philosophy of Ambedkar assist in renegotiating the crisis of western political theory in particular and leading the fights of the people in general. Ambedkar has arisen as a major political philosopher with the rise of dalit movement in contemporary times.

- He emerged on the Indian socio-political area in early 1920s and remained in the head of all social, economic, political and religious efforts for upliftment of the lowest layer of the Indian society called untouchables.
- Dr. Ambedkar's attack on the caste system was not just aimed at challenging the hegemony of the upper castes but had broader connotation of economic growth and development that the caste system had reduced the mobility of labour and capital which in turn, obstructed economic growth and development in India.
- He strongly suggested democracy as the 'governing principle of human relationship' but stressed that principles of equality, liberty and fraternity which are the foundations of democracy.
- According to him, the social precedes the political. Social morality is main focus to his political philosophy.
- He is neither a violent individualist nor a traditional communitarian. His ideas of democracy internalizes the principles of equality, liberty, and fraternity in their true spirit.
- According to him, social relationships are main factors to democracy. His special contribution to political thought lies in his connecting liberty, equality and fraternity to the concept of social democracy, which in line, he relates to democracy as a form of government.
- His political thought has emerged from the three striking traditions of political thought, i.e. liberal, conservative and radical.
- Ambedkar's main focus was on the notion of community. According to him, society is always composed of classes. It may be an overstatement to proclaim the theory of class conflict, but the existence of definite classes in society is a fact. An individual in a society is always a member of a class. A caste is an enclosed class. His political theory was based on a moral community.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar and Democracy

- Ambedkar had a long conversation on democratic form of government in his literatures. His conception of democracy is different from the parliamentary democracy of Western Europe. Democracy came with the principles of liberalism.

- It is fundamental changes in the Social & Economic life of the people & the acceptance of those changes by the people without resorting to disputes & bloodshed.
- He wanted Political Democracy to be accompanied by Social Democracy also wanted to establish the principle of One Man, One Vote & One Value not only in the political life but in Social & Economic Life also.
- He gives Importance to Social Democracy Over Political Democracy, paid greater attention to social linkages among people than separation of power & constitutional safeguards for Democracy.
- According to him democracy means no slavery, no caste, no coercion. He wants free thoughts that choice & capacity to live & let live.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar and Social Justice and Equality

- The primary aim of well ordered society is to establish and maintain justice within its borders.
- Dr. Ambedkar concept of social Justice stands for liberty, equality and social justice of all human beings. He stood for social system which based on right relations between man & man in all spheres.
- For Ambedkar Justice is simply another name for liberty, equality and fraternity. As the chief architect of Indian constitution, he got it shaped clearly on the values of justice, liberty, equality, fraternity & dignity of man. They form the unity of trinity in the sense that to divorce one from the other is to defeat the very purpose of democracy.
- In the Constitution of free India all the Indian Citizens have been guaranteed political and social equalities
- Name of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar has written in golden letters in the history of India as a creator

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar and Women Empowerment

- Dr. Ambedkar the great fighter and deep thinker have made significant efforts on the path of liberty.
- Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's approach to women's right is exclusively different from other social reformers. His goal was to make just society, to secure this goal, Ambedkar

has given equal status to women on par with men by providing many provisions in the Indian constitution.

- Dr. Ambedkar not only ascertain constitutional guarantees to women but also introduced & got passed four acts which strengthened the position of women in the society.
- These were incorporated in the Hindu Code Bill. These are:
 - i. The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955
 - ii. The Hindu Succession Act, 1956
 - iii. The Hindu Minority & Guardianship Act, 1956
 - iv. The Adoption & Maintenance Act, 1956

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Labours Laws

- Dr. B. R Ambedkar called as a Saviour of Labour Rights In India.
- He was the labour member of the Viceroy's Executive Council between 1942 and 1946. He was the First Labour Minister of Independent India. On August 7 1942 he called Tripartite Labour Conference in New Delhi.
- He is the man behind reducing factory working hours (8 hrs duty).
- He also framed many laws for women labours also paid equal pay for equal work irrespective of the sex.
- He also made compulsory recognition of trade unions.
- He also developed insurance for employees.

Important Works of Dr.B. R. Ambedkar

The Education Department, Government Of Maharashtra (Mumbai) published the collection of Ambedkar's writings and speeches in different volumes

- *Castes in India: Their Mechanism, Genesis & Development and 11 Other Essays*
- *Ambedkar in the Bombay Legislature, with the Simon Commission and at the Round Table Conferences, 1927-1939*
- *Philosophy of Hinduism; India and the Pre-requisites of Communism; Revolution and Counter-revolution; Buddha or Karl Marx*
- *Essays on Untouchables and Untouchability*
- *The Annihilation Of Caste (1936)*