

AN OVERVIEW OF DR. B. R. AMBEDKAR'S PERSPECTIVE ON RELIGION TO ACHIEVE FREEDOM AND HUMAN RIGHTS

N. BOBBY

Ph. D. Research Scholar, Department of Philosophy. Email: infobooby99@gmail.com

Dr. J. THIRUMAL

Associate Professor and Head of the Department of Philosophy, Annamalai University.
Email: drjt@rediffmail.com

Abstract

In addition to demonstrating his abilities as a renowned scholar, educator, legislator, administrator, leader, economist, and social reformer, Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (1891–1956) also excelled in his field of religion. B.R. Ambedkar and his insight and foresight have had a significant influence on social and political consciousness on India and all of humanity. In this Article the researcher has seen all the relevant ideas and studied and understood the ideology of Ambedkar's religion and his religious conversion into Buddhism to achieve freedom and Human Rights. The researcher re-analyzed the details of Ambedkar's perspective on religion. The purpose of this article gives a clear idea that, why Ambedkar choose to be a believer. What factors made Ambedkar to think to be a religious person to transform the country to enjoy all the equal rights. It also discusses the conditions that convinced he to convert from Hinduism to Buddhism, which he believed would give the untouchables a distinct identity. The endeavour was also given to highlight the relevance of Ambedkar at present day India. This study is library-oriented study mainly based on secondary sources like books, internet, journals etc,

Key Words: Ambedkar, Human Rights, Religion, Buddhism, Freedom of oppressed

INTRODUCTION

Dr. B.R Ambedkar is our one heritage to have in India. The country always feels proud. It is our privilege to our Indian country, person like Ambedkar will never be seen again in the coming generation. He stood as a revolutionary person. He is one of his smartest in his education, a well eminent scholar, the constitution is one of his best works for the country. He took great effort to abolish the untouchability. Must say that he is more like a practical man who does not believe things in a blind sense. To more to say he thought about religion as a unity making tool. He has become the religious leader for many. He thought religion also helps the society to become human. Whatever it takes to achieve the rights of the human and equality communities in India, he took that seriously as an effected person. He fought a fierce battle against Hindu religious prejudice towards the untouchables. He was born into the untouchable Mahar caste of Maharashtra, where no other untouchable caste person of his age could have imagined receiving the best and highest education possible.

Indian still do talk about Ambedkar and his ideologies to be set in the society. He was born along with the great Indian freedom fighters and among untouchables. Facing all sort of poverty and backwardness in the society he raised up. Mahars are uneducated and socially set back and not even given them any basic rights as a human. But, Ambedkar raised as a hero of the lower caste people and a great leader of the country. It is impossible for the person like Ambedkar to

bring such impact among people but he stood as a renounced scholar. His life teaches us a lesson.

He is an inspiration to millions of people. When the times many millions of people were blinded up with variety of beliefs, he changed the concept of belief. But Ambedkar never seemed to taking opportunity to be completely non-religious person. He does have such religious perspectives and made people understand why religion is important. There he comes to introduce Buddha as a spiritual teacher for the life path and rejected Hinduism and started following Buddhism. He publicly announced as Hinduism forces to follow varna system. Buddhism, he chooses to be the right path to the attainment of his aim in the recent times of his life. There are many influencers and motivators who supported him all through his life to achieve his aim and incompleteness in his life which he faced all through his life since childhood. Definitely can say it is bitter experiences to go through such inequalities and stand against for human rights. Especially Kabir had stood against caste system and religious differences in India. Ambedkar is one best approach towards religion and attain human rights.

Ambedkar and Religion

Ambedkar never left the heritage and values of India and he believed religion is part of his life. The religion had influenced his life very much. Speaking about religion he once said "what good things I have in me or whatever have been the benefit of my education to society, I owe them to the religious feelings in me. I want religion but I do not want hypocrisy in the name of religion."

In the state of Maharashtra at Mahad in the year of 1927 march 20th, he started the struggle for the liberation of untouchables and for freedom of lower caste people. He took the painful journey to constitute equality in India. Ambedkar is also a common human being with ultimate values and who thought of the nation more than a soldier, there is no wonder to think alike that he practices religion as part of his life. Religion is one of the sources which everyone follows. Religion teaches moral and ethical values to an individual. Ambedkar wanted to show his life as an example to his followers. He set himself as an example those who are taking Hindu religion and its beliefs. There is wide connection because he converted into Buddhism. Religion changes the lifestyle and ethics of human to be humanistic. He showed his passion for nation all of his entire life. He expressed the problem of caste in many of his writings. He wanted to see India as a democratic independent life. In the form of nation building to develop the social equality and integrity which is slated for many years by the varna ideology.

Human Rights and Untouchables

In the occasion of a public meeting held in Damodar Thakersey Hall on February 26th with the gathering around 500 people, Ambedkar was called as a prime speaker. After the Sub-Judge of Mahad lifted the restraining order, he had issued against Dr. Ambedkar and other participants of the Depressed Classes, it is believed that the final propose to exercise their civic duty to obtain water from the Mahad public tank. When members of the Depressed Classes tried to reach the tank by Marching for one last time after having previously gathered there for a meeting, they were manhandled by the Hindus of the "upper" Caste, resulting in some members

suffering from serious injuries. When the "Untouchables" attempted to collect water from the tank, the leaders of these "upper" Caste Hindus complained to the District Collector under the section 144 that this was against the prevailing customary ban on taking water from tanks. They didn't stop there and proceeded to sub-judge about this issue which was against the rights of these untouchables. "Any interference with the exercise of such right would be wholly illegal."

Ambedkar decided to tackle the Chavdar water tank problem in Mahad, a tiny town in the current Raigad district of Maharashtra, in 1927. He supported the untouchables to gain fundamental rights to use water tanks. After that incident He publicly burned the reviled Manu Smriti, the cornerstone of Hindu orthodoxy, in order to subvert Hindu tradition. A very daring act was the burning of the Manu-Smriti. It was an assault on the Hindu religion itself. Manu, the creator of the Hindu social structure, established the Varna System, a class system based on the division of labor.

However, Ambedkar denounces Manu as a ruthless ruler who perpetuated the caste system and states "I am certain that my power is weak. to extinguish his ghost. He appeals to people, lives like a ghost without a body, and I fear he will live a long time." After this incident Ambedkar has taken a very daring steps in multiple places such as, Ambedkar protested the rigid Brahmin priesthood in the Guruvayur temple in Kerala in 1931, the Kalaram temple in Nasik in 1930, and the Parvati temple in Pune in 1929. Ambedkar presented his well-known speech on Mukte Kon Pathe? (Which path to emancipation?) in May 1931. The speech's subject was "Change your religion." Religion is one utmost evil which he found to be avoided and Ambedkar analyzed deeply and its roots of the systems and declared why it is necessary to be come out of it.

Despite having made such a clear statement in May 1929 in Jalgaon, he made a positive announcement at the assembly of the Depressed Classes on that day by expressing the historic proclamation that he would not die as a Hindu despite belonging to the untouchable community due to events beyond his control. This statement shows how much Ambedkar wants to come out of his born religion because he finds that is main reason for people to violate the rights and show domination upon lower castes. Religion has multiple teachings which shows that level of inequality and he just avoids just because attitude of the people. "I'm leaving Hinduism because of the inequality in it," he explained. The fact that I was born with a reputation for being untouchable is not my fault. I have some power over this, and I'm going to use it. When Ambedkar famously said, "I will not die a Hindu," in 1936, he said: It is important to consider what conversion's effects will be on the nation as a whole.

Ambedkar and Buddhism

The downtrodden classes will become denationalised if they convert to Islam or Christianity. The number of Muslims will triple if they convert, and the threat of Muslim dominance also shows up. If they convert to Christianity, it will increase Britain's influence over the nation. Ambedkar given an essay on "The Buddha and The Future of His Religion" to the Maha Bodhi of Calcutta in 1950. Ambedkar highlighted morality in the piece. He claims that "morality is the religion of the Buddha." He claims that morality is the foundation of Buddhism. Second,

he asserted that reason and experience were the foundation of Buddhism. He teaches to his disciples that they should not take his teaching just because he teaching but, should follow based reason and experiences. If Buddhism is not helping, they can leave the Buddhism any time they want. They don't need cling on to the Buddhism. If someone is maintaining that religion "must be in accord with science. Religion is bounced to lose respect. if it is not in accord with science". And he said that the religion such elements like social morality, should identify the elements of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. At some point of time Ambedkar tried to convert into Sikhism but, verifying various things about that religion he draws back because he might get caught up as second-rate Sikh status.

Ambedkar is very much careful in choosing the religion because it should not get away with any of the rights given to the human. Religion should not decide what he is eligible for. Religion should develop the humanity and equality. Otherwise, it is of no use. Ambedkar had gone through such bitter experiences as he was born Hindu religion. Some communities of the Hindu religion have taken religion as their strength to dominate or suppress lower caste people. More over Hindu religion itself shows that various differences among people. Ambedkar was in every situation defending and achieving rights for people.

According to Ambedkar, religion ought to grant an individual a unique identity and equality. Religion should always uphold the ideas of treating others with respect and upholding human rights. Religion aids in moulding a person's life's character and behaviours in the proper direction. Religion tells him how to adopt his lifestyle and provides direction. The practise of religion is important in every system. Humanity should learn to live in a society where everyone respects one another. Religion ought to bind a person to certain oppressions. Slavery and religion cannot co-exist. Man is made for religion, not the other way around. Ambedkar was the public figure who generated the most controversy life of India. He himself said in the "Annihilation of Castes," They (Hindus) hate me. To them I am a snake in their garden."

Ambedkar and Ideology

Ambedkar has played key note in molding Indian constitution but it does not really help people to receive human rights. The Constitution was merely a piece of paper with idealistic concepts that had no connection to reality. He believed that his only option was to engage in radical socio-religious protest. Ambedkar's writings demonstrate that he personally experienced injustice and discrimination due to his caste throughout his professional and political life. Additionally, he witnessed the daily pain that his caste society endured. In order to advance the social liberation of groups that had been oppressed by caste-based violence, which was permitted by the Hindu religious ethos and doctrines, he converted to Hinduism.

In other words what Ambedkar tried to understand about the religion and his ideologies which influenced people to convert into Buddhism? It was a protest on a personal and social level against the Hindu faith, which condones social injustice and inequality in the religious name. Ambedkar strongly believed that Buddhism will defiantly offers him the ideal solution to his pursuit of real social equality, egalitarianism, and freedom from all forms of prejudice. It was a hidden appeal for modernization and transformation for the Hindu religion.

Moreover, Ambedkar's major objective was not to criticize the Brahmanical system in order to change it by emphasizing the universal Indian morality. Instead, he established an alternative to the Brahmanical social structure centered on India. Critical criticism of the social and theological domination of the Brahmins. This option is significant because it is supposed to co-exist with Brahmanical Hinduism rather than to displace it. Ambedkar's historical perspective on Brahmanical-Buddhist ties and his discussions of morality, nationalism, religion, and social welfare highlight how different this approach was to bringing the untouchables together. Understanding Buddhism and its function in establishing a moral social order reveals that Ambedkar's decision to convert to Buddhism was made in order to produce a community of virtuous neo-Buddhists who could coexist with other religious groups in India when it attained independence.

Why Conversion?

The reasons why he converted to Buddhism require some additional clarification. In order to prevent them from reverting to the Hindu caste system and being forced to carry its baggage, Ambedkar wants the lowest classes in modern India to acquire their own identities. Their social and economic advancement would be undone, and they would be returned to the previous social structure. Ambedkar's true motivation for the modification was to officially recognize the untouchables as a distinct identity. He added that the purpose of the transition was to attain spiritual and religious fulfilment rather than more money. This looks to be largely accurate. When he converted to Buddhism in 1956, therefore he decided to take the chance. He assured his followers that they could put their faith in him because he would soon restore the rights and privileges that the depressed people had lost when they converted to Buddhism. According to further research, Ambedkar chose Buddhism over Christianity in large part because it is an Indian religion. It should go without saying that for them to experience the psychological rebirth that Buddhism promised, being able to blend in with the Indian culture surrounding them was crucial. Additionally, the untouchables sought equal rights from two sources: Western democracy and Indian spiritual idealism. The similar point is obtained by Owen Lynch: Buddhism originated in India, but it also suited the untouchables' need to travel and their acceptance of new ideas.

According to Ambedkar and his movement, his choice to convert to Buddhism was an effort to give his followers a different and egalitarian identity in opposition to the Hindu social and political hierarchy. Ambedkar developed a paradigm for a moral community that was compatible with Brahmanical Hinduism and Indian nationalism but not submissive to them by drawing on Indian cultural resources and eastern interpretations of Buddhism. Notably, his decision to convert to Buddhism spurred a revival of interest in Buddhist thought both in India and elsewhere.

CONCLUSIONS

Ambedkar ultimately decided to embrace Buddhism in order to advance human rights. There were two reasons why this decision was made. First of all, Buddhism first emerged in India. Second, Buddhism is a religion founded on equality, ethics, morals and learning; it has no room

for the caste system, rituals, superstition, or the belief in a supernatural being. Buddhism is the only religion in the world that can coexist with science and a scientific outlook. Buddhism may be the only religion that scientific method acknowledges as offering solutions to a lot of current problems. The Ambedkar-initiated drive to improve the so-called downtrodden community in our country in the guise of religion shouldn't be stopped; instead, the younger generation should participate actively in the Human Rights movement. Sometimes the little things we do to our fellow friends will improve our communities can have a significant impact. We must alter our behaviour and mindset towards people of other caste, creed, section, religion etc. We must respect and be tolerant towards the people of other caste, creed, religion, habits etc. The idea that India is our motherland and its people are our brothers and sisters must become ingrained in our minds. This is the best tribute to our very own Baba Saheb.

Bibliography

1. Ambedkar, B.R. , Baba Saheb. Castes in India: Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development. Bombay: Govt of Maharashtra, n.d.
2. Bharill, Chandra. Social and Political Ideas of B.R. Ambedkar. Jaipur: Aalekh Publications, 1977.
3. Bhat. R. M. Ghandian Phase: Mahila-Samitis and the Role of Women in the Indian National Movement . 2022.
4. Blackburn, Anne M. Religion, Kinship and Buddhism: Ambedkar's vision of a Moral Community, Northfield. U.S.A: The Journey of the International Association of Buddhist Studies, 1993.
5. Chandrakanthan, A.J.V. Conversion to Buddhism as a Form of Socio-Political Protest. 2013.
6. Cohen, Stephen P. The Untouchable Soldier: Caste, Politics and the Indian Army, . The Journey of Asian Studies, 1969.
7. DC, Ahir. Buddhism and Ambedkar. Delhi: B.R. Publishing Corporation, 1990.
8. DR. B. R. Ambedkar and his egalitarian revolution part one struggle for human rights. n.d.
9. Guru, Gopal. Dalits: Reflections on the search for inclusion. New Delhi : Sage Publications, 2000.
10. Keer. Dr. Ambedkar: Life and Mission. Bombay: Dhananjay , 1954.
11. Khare, R.S. The Untouchable as Himself: Ideology, Identity, and Pragmatism among the Lucknow Chamars. Cambridge University press, 1984.
12. Lynch, Owen M. The Politics of Untouchability: Social Mobility and Social Change in a City of India. New York: Columbia University Press, 1969.
13. Meshram, Siddharth G. 'The philosophy of great conversion to Buddhism. Eastern Book Linkers , 1990 .
14. Omvedt, Gail. Ambedkar Towards on Enlightened India. New Delhi: Published in Viking by Penguin Books India (P.) Ltd, 2004.
15. Ramteke, D.L. Revival of Buddhism in Modern India. New Delhi: Deep and Deep, 1983.