

## DR. B. R. AMBEDKAR AND THE ANNIHILATION CASTE SYSTEM: A RESUME

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*Freedom of mind is the real freedom. A person, whose mind is not free though he may not be in chains, is a slave, not a free man. One, whose mind is not free, though he may not be in prison, is a prisoner and not a free man. One whose mind is not free though alive, is no better than dead. Freedom of mind is the proof of one's existence<sup>1</sup>.—B. R. Ambedkar*

### ABSTRACT:

*Dr. B.R. Ambedkar is known as an Ideal Figure of social reformer to eradicate the Indian caste system. But has his projects shaped out as he would have wished, has India moved in the direction that he thought optimal, has his inheritors embalmed his ideas in dogma or extended them creatively and imaginatively while confronting new predicaments, how cohesive we are as a society, why there is so much unrest in the society, what have been our basic ethos, philosophy or foundational values of our Constitution, how far we have adhered to them, many such questions may be the debating points which may come in this present age. That's why this paper is concerned with a resume of the works of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar which are correlated with the annihilation of caste.*

### INTRODUCTION

Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar who was born on April 14<sup>th</sup>, 1891 was not a leader of Indian national freedom movement like Mahatma Gandhi or Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose or Sardar Ballav Bhai Patel or Pandit Jaharlal Neheru or Masterda Surya Sen or other renowned freedom fighters. But he has become an Iconic Figure not only for India but also for whole world through his profound contribution on Indian trajectories of democratic justice

<sup>1</sup> [www.goodreads.com](http://www.goodreads.com)

based on the idea of liberty, equality and fraternity during pre and post Independence period. For this reason perhaps, US President Barack Obama, in his address to the Parliament of India, in 2010, remarked

We believe that no matter who you are or where you come from, every person can fulfill their God-given-potential. Just as a Dalit like Dr. Ambedkar could lift himself up and pen the words of the constitution that protect the right of all Indians. We believe that no matter where you live—whether a village of Punjab or the lanes of Chandni Chowk, an old section of Kolkata or a new high-rise in Bangalore—every person deserve the same chance to live in security and dignity, to get an education, to find work, and to give their children a better future.

The United Nations has also celebrated, in 2016, for the first time, 125th birth anniversary of Babasaheb Ambedkar, the architect of Indian Constitution, with a focus on combating inequalities to achieve Sustainable Development Goal.

Now the point is: what made Dr. Ambedkar as an Ideal Figure of social reformer to eradicate the Indian caste system? Have his projects shaped out as he would have wished, has India moved in the direction that he thought optimal, have his inheritors embalmed his ideas in dogma or extended them creatively and imaginatively while confronting new predicaments, how cohesive we are as a society, why there is so much unrest in the society, what have been our basic ethos, philosophy or foundational values of our Constitution, how far we have adhered to them, many such questions may be the debating points which may come in this present age.

For this reason, let us take a brief analysis on the established works—how to annihilate caste in India by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar in relation with the present situation of the India and the world, because the works of Dr. Ambedkar regarding how to lift the so called untouchable people have made him as a Role Model throughout the world, that's why his statute has been sculptured in Columbia University in his 125<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary.

## ANALYSIS –I

At the beginning it has been mentioned that Dr. Ambedkar was not a leader of national freedom fighting movement as like as the then leaders of National Congress. His determination was to abolish Indian caste system that's why his prime task was to fight against the inequality among Indians based the dogmas of caste which were

the real hindrances for the Indian people to be one and only one Indian nation. To him this task was so important<sup>2</sup> that he had made himself engage in a long debate with 'The Jat-Pat-Todak Mandal', an organization of Caste Hindu Social Reformers secretariat by Mr. Sant Ram on 1935 which had been mentioned in the prologue of his book 'The Annihilation of Caste' published on 1936.

The book 'The Annihilation of Caste' came in to existence as a result of undelivered presidential address<sup>3</sup> of Dr. Ambedkar for the Annual Conference of 'The Jat-Pat-Todak Mandal' which was scheduled to be held at Lahore, the headquarters of the Mandal, but was postponed.

In fact, Dr. Ambedkar wanted to uproot the Indian caste system in true sense. That's why his fighting against caste system was practically revolutionary. In 1936, Rabindranath Tagore wrote a novel named as 'Chaturanga' where Jagamohon and Harimohon were two brothers, among them the first was very much rational, but he was

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<sup>2</sup> This correspondence will disclose the reasons which have led to the cancellation by the Mandal of my appointment as President, and the reader will be in a position to lay the blame where it ought properly to belong. This is I believe the first time when the appointment of a President is cancelled by the Reception Committee because it does not approve of the views of the President. But whether that is so or not, this is certainly the first time in my life to have been invited to preside over a Conference of Caste Hindus. I am sorry that it has ended in a tragedy. But what can anyone expect from a relationship so tragic as the relationship between the reforming sect of Caste Hindus and the self-respecting sect of relationship so tragic as the relationship between the reforming sect of Caste Hindus and the self-respecting sect of Untouchables, where the former have no desire to alienate their orthodox fellows, and the latter have no alternative but to insist upon reform being carried out?

B. R. AMBEDKAR

Rajgriha, Dadar, Bombay 14

15th May 1936

<sup>3</sup> The Reception Committee of the Mandal has now cancelled the Conference. The notice of cancellation came long after my Presidential address had been printed. The copies of this address are now lying with me. As I did not get an opportunity to deliver the address from the presidential chair, the public has not had an opportunity to know my views on the problems created by the Caste System. To let the public know them, and also to dispose of the printed copies which are lying on my hand, I have decided to put the printed copies of the address in the market. The accompanying pages contain the text of that address.

defeated in the court and lost his landed property for giving shelter to his poor muslim raiyats. His straight forward arguments towards the judge were that he did not believe any caste discrimination between men and he did not know about the part of Brahma from where the muslims were born. On that very year, Dr. Ambedkar presented a paper named 'Caste in India: Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development' at a seminar in Colombia University, organized by the department of Anthropology. This paper was published in The Indian Antiquary on 1917. In this paper Dr. Ambedkar showed his equal feeling to the inferior caste, instead of showing mere sympathy to them.

In 'Castes in India,' Dr. Ambedkar wrote that the root of the Indian caste system was based on the *barna byabastha* or class division—Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Sudra. Dr. Ambedkar proved by the help of the *shastra* or scripture that these four *barna* or class was based on the prudence of individual person, not on the birth of individual person.

The important latter works of Babasaheb were: Who were the Shudras? (1946), 'Untouchables: Who Were They and Why They Became Untouchable' (1948), and Riddles in Hinduism (Written in 1955, Published on 1987) where he tried to prove that so called Brahmanism had no strong scripture basis. The bases of Brahmanism were the dogmas.

## ANALYSIS –II

Now let us peep into few arguments which were put forwarded by Dr. Ambedkar following 'The Annihilation of Caste' with reference to present situation.

**Argument–I:** *Social reform is a necessary condition for political reform*

Dr. Ambedkar's consideration regarding political reform was unique. It was unique in the sense that he said that no political reform could ever be possible unless the social reform had taken place.

All we know that India is a country of multiculturalism and the wheel in our National flag is the symbol of this multiculturalism, accordingly to Pandit Jaharlal Neheru and Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan's version. In reality it is observed that multiculturalism has become the battlefield for multi-existence, although 70<sup>th</sup> Independence Day Celebration is over.

**Argument–II:** *Social reform is a necessary condition for economic reform*

He has also mentioned that social reform is a necessary condition for economic reform. In this age of Globalization and Neo-liberalism it is believed by the economists that a country can be measured by the sole criterion of its G.D.P. But this is not happening in the actual sense. The capitalists' economy makes the poor people poorer and the rich people richer. The difference between poor and rich people is so high that Pope Francis has also been failed to shut his mouth up. The following parts of his remarks in the second World Meeting of the Popular Movements at the Expo Feria Exhibition Centre in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia on July 9, 2015 are relevant here.

Do we realize that something is wrong in a world where there are so many farm workers without land, so many families without a home, so many laborers without rights, so many persons whose dignity is not respected?

The first task is to put the economy at the service of peoples. Human beings and nature must not be at the service of money. Let us say no to an economy of exclusion and inequality, where money rules, rather than service. That economy kills. That economy excludes. That economy destroys mother earth. The economy should not be a mechanism for accumulating goods, but rather the proper administration of our common home.<sup>4</sup>

Dr. Ambedkar saw this future in his mental frame work at that time. That's why he kept the provisions for food, dress and shelter of the poor people in Indian Constitution. Money based present society acts as an obstacle to give the real value of our constitution also. Questions are raised against the election based democratic system as the opinions of depressed classes are suppressed. We are failed to give the real value to our constitution which have already been given by the architects of our constitution. Dr. Ambedkar was so serious about the constitution the following remark made by him is relevant.

If I find the constitution being misused, I shall be the first to burn it<sup>5</sup>.

**Argument–III:** *Caste is not just a division of labour; it is a division of laborers*

It is believed that the division of caste is essential because the division of labour is prior to the division of caste. But Dr. Ambedkar said that the division of labour creates the division between the laborers. Creating division between laborers entails the division between men which is not fair at all. Labour is a perishable commodity, it

<sup>4</sup> www.time.com

<sup>5</sup> www.goodreads.com

depends on the natural trends of human beings. The natural trends of human beings cannot be categorized artificially. So, the root of the caste system is not firm.

**Argument–IV:** *Caste prevents Indians from forming a real society or nation*

Dr. Ambedkar thought that the division of caste had been acting as the barrier of Indians to be a real society or nation. The following quotation may be helpful to understand Dr. Ambedkar’s notion of real society.

Men constitute a society because they have things which they possess in common. To have similar things is totally different from possessing things in common. And the only way by which men can come to possess things in common with one another is by being in communication with one another. This is merely another way of saying that Society continues to exist by communication—indeed, in communication. To make it concrete, it is not enough if men act in a way which agrees with the acts of others. Parallel activity, even if similar, is not sufficient to bind men into a society<sup>6</sup>.

Unlike a drop of water which loses its identity when it joins the ocean, man does not lose his being in the society in which he lives. Man’s life is independent. He is born not for the development of the society alone, but for the development of his self too.—[B.R. Ambedkar](#)

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<sup>6</sup> Ambedkar, B.R.: “The Annihilation of Caste”(1936)