



MULTIFACETED PERSONALITY OF DR.B R. AMBEDKAR

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INTRODUCTION

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was a social revolutionary, a constitutional expert, and a charismatic political leader of the downtrodden masses. He was deeply committed to the socio-economic uplift of vast millions of Indians. In a public life spread over many decades, Ambedkar, with his insight into the problems of the Indian society, put forth his views in a frank and fearless manner. Ambedkar with his vast erudition and analytical brilliance had capability to look at issues and problems from different perspectives, but yet in a creation fashion. Ambedkar was an eminent economist in his own right, though this aspect of his personality is rather less known. He wrote intensively and extensively on economic issues, combining a through grasp of theoretical and concrete economic problems. Most of his economic writings relate to the pre-independence period, yet they are of a contemporaneous nature in their freshness lucidity and depth of understanding. Therefore, in this section an attempt has been made to understand the multifaceted facility of Dr.B.R.Ambedkar briefly.

A. AMBEDKAR'S BROAD PRINCIPLES OF LIFE:

Ambedkar was consciously in search of a philosophy of life right through the period of his adolescence. The core of his philosophy of life was the basic tenets of liberty, equality and fraternity. His dedication to the world of ideas was lifelong. He immersed himself in the world of ideas and came up with his own perspective in an attempt to find answers to the problems posed by his life experience.

Ambedkar's principle was not to fight against the particular persons who created a frustrating situation for him and his fellow sufferers, because the cause of the situation was not these persons but the social philosophy which supported a social system of inequalities. His long range response was a direct attach against the root

cause. Ambedkar was a strong believer in religion, but he was firmly against hypocrisy in the name of religion. For him, religion is for man and not man for religion. Likewise, patriotism was a firm principle of Ambedkar's life. He confessed he had many quarrels with the caste Hindus over some points, but he took a vow he would lay down his life in defense of our land.

B. AMBEDKAR AS A HUMAN RIGHTS CRUSADER:

It is intense humanism that actuates one to take to human rights movement. Ambedkar had observed, experienced and studied the utter privations, despair and fear skillfully injected into millions of his countrymen. He boiled at their sub-human condition and regarded the woes and miseries of these people as a personal humiliation, and, therefore, he had taken a vow to lead them in their battles for their human rights. "Tell the slave he is a slave and he will revolt" was the slogan raised by Ambedkar.¹¹

He was preaching them the grand universal law that liberty is never received as a gift, it has to be fought for. That is the justification for Ambedkar's primary role as the crusade for human rights of the underdogs in the country. His early life experience and his studies of the socio-economic history of this country convinced him of the primacy of emancipation of the depressed classed through social reform movement over bare political action. Ambedkar had been striving to secure human rights for his people without meaning or doing any harm to the country.

C. AMBEDKAR AS A PARLIAMENTARIAN:

The magnificent way in which Ambedkar piloted the Constitution Bill in the Constitution Assembly of India revealed the depth of his knowledge of the constitutions of the various countries and his firm grasp of the political and constitutional principles. The talent and ability, which Ambedkar showed as one of the chief architects of our Constitution, crowned his work as a constitutional authority of world fame. He emerged as a great constitution maker of our times in the constituent assembly of India from December 1946, to January 1950. His speeches there show his profound knowledge, scholarship, and wide range of studies, remarkable power of persuasive eloquence, and admirable capacity for lucid exposition, penetrating intellect and his great and courageous statesmanship. As Chairman of the Drafting Committee and the Law Minister he strove his utmost to incorporate into our constitution such provisions as would help establish a new social order. But he was placed under severe handicaps and limitations in this task, and he was not really satisfied. For example, he was unhappy with the inclusion of the property clause, as fundamental right in the Constitution. To quote his own words, he bleated a good deal, but to no effect. While replying to the debate on the third reading of the Constitution on November 25, 1949, Ambedkar expressed great anxiety about the future of the country, with some prophetic warnings. His later

observation that “Constitutional morality is far more important than the Constitution” shows the honesty of his purpose and dedication. His work of constitution-making alone would have assured him a top place in Indian history.

D. AMBEDKAR AS A WOMEN’S LIBERATION ADVOCATE:

Ambedkar was also a great advocate of the liberation of women in India. While addressing a large meeting of women of the depressed classes at Mahad in 1927, he gave a clarion call for the liberation of women. He exhorted them to “attend more to the cultivation of the mind and the spirit of self-help”. He said, “Education is as necessary for females as it is for males. If you know how to read, write there would be much progress. As you are so, your children will be”. When a Bill proposing maternity benefits for women laborers was introduced in the Bombay Legislative Council in 1928, Ambedkar vigorously supported it. He said “it is in the interest of the nation that mother ought to be get a certain amount of rest during the pre-natal period and also subsequently”. That Ambedkar was a strong believer in women’s organization was confirmed in his address to a Conference of the Depressed Classes Women at Nagapur in 1942. According to him, the progress of a community is measured by the degree of progress which women have achieved. He advised women “Do not be in hurry to marry. Marriage is a liability. You should not impose it upon your children unless they are financially able to meet the liabilities arising from marriage. Those who will marry will have to keep in mind that to have too many children is a crime.....above all, let every girl who marries stand by her husband, claim to be her husband’s friend and equal, and refuse to be his slave”.⁸

As stated earlier, Ambedkar made an all out effort to get his Hindu Code Bill passed in parliament, but it failed. Even the marriage and divorce part of the Bill was let down. About this time, Ambedkar wrote a masterly article “The Rise and Fall of the Hindu Women” for a Calcutta journal “The Maha Buddhi”. In it he has shown how before the advent of the Buddha woman was denied the right to acquire knowledge and also the right to realize her spiritual potentiality. By admitting woman to the life of parivrajaka (an ascetic), the Buddha by one stroke, removed both these wrongs. It was both revolution and liberation of women in India which allowed them liberty and dignity. Manu, the greatest opponent of Buddhism, put women under restraint and heaped many inequalities on them. Thus, it was Manu, and not the Buddha, who was responsible for the decline and fall of women in India, Ambedkar concluded.

Ambedkar had been so much concerned about the lot of the downtrodden that he founded an independent Labour Party as early as August, 1936, with a comprehensive programme to meet the needs and

grievances of the landless, poor tenants, agriculturists and workers. Very few people are now aware that Ambedkar was a great advocate of agrarian reforms. He led a peasants march to the Council Hall in Bombay as early as 1938, and was developing into a great leader of the peasants, workers and the landless. He was the first legislator in India to introduce a Bill for the abolition of the serfdom of agricultural tenants. His profound knowledge of labour matters was universally acknowledged and actually demonstrated during his terms as Labour Member of the Viceroy's executive council from 1942 to 1946.

CONCLUSION

Dr. Ambedkar was not a purely speculative and idealistic political philosopher, in the conventional sense, like Plato and Aristotle. Nevertheless, he developed his own social and political ideals, which were deeply rooted in real human problems and issues, and vital human affairs. His political philosophy attempted to bridge the gulf between theory and practice, materialism and spiritualism. Out of his sense of dejection with the inhuman treatment meted out to his community by the caste Hindus, his mission for the total emancipation of the servile classes from the clutches of the privileged caste Hindus, his total engagement with the predicament of Indian society, evolved Ambedkar's political ideology ¹¹.

Every great person has a vision that impels all her/his works. Its discernibility may vary from case to case, generally being the function of the degree of turbulence around her/him, her/his relative position within the power structure in the given environment, her/his own equipment and conception of self-role. Marx, for instance, offers an articulate vision in clearest terms as he assumed the primary role of a philosopher to bring about revolutionary change, whereas Ambedkar had donned the mantle of mass-leadership in his primary role to spearhead the change; the degree of turbulence in the work domain of Marx had been minimal as he basically struggled in the realm of thought spanning complete human history whereas Ambedkar situated himself in the political turbulence that obtained in India as his strategy; Ambedkar's position in the power structure that bounded his work domain was certainly weak relative to Marx's. This is neither to undermine the role of Marx as the activist constantly trying out his philosophy in the realm of practice nor to belittle the problems he suffered in life. With regard to personal equipment, both Ambedkar as well as Marx could be taken to be equally equipped to undertake their respective tasks that they had undertaken. Marx had started off with philosophy and adopted the class-consciousness of the proletariat quite unlike Ambedkar, in whose case it was his own consciousness- the consciousness of an untouchable built up through concrete experience that had propelled his philosophical search.

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