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## DR. B.R. AMBEDKAR'S POLITICAL IDEAS

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### **Abstract:**

Dr. Ambedkar was one of the greatest jurists, lawyers and political leaders of modern India. At a time when Indians were awakening from their plight and struggle for freedom, the ripples of renaissance spirit touched the depressed – classes too. They found the instrument of reformation in Bhimrao. Responding to the call, he strode forward defiantly fighting for a better deal for the depressed classes, displaying rare crusading spirit, achieving in the process the right to be given a place among the builders of India.<sup>1</sup>

**Key words:** Political Ideas , plight and struggle , humiliation.

### **INTRODUCTION:**

Bhimrao was the youngest of fourteen children. His father Ramjee, retired as Subedar Major and settled in Ratngiri district. As a student, Ambedkar had experienced agony, anguish, frustration and humiliation because of being born in the Mahar (low) caste of Maharashtra. In school; for instance, he was forced to offer Persian instead of Sanskrit (supposedly a higher caste subject) as the second language.

Bhimrao was married to Rambai when he was only 14 and studying in the V standard. After her death he married a lady of the Sarasvat Brahmin caste.

While studying at Elphinston College he used to receive a monthly scholarship of Rupees twenty five from Maharaj Sayaji Rao Gaekwad of Baroda. As a student Bhimrao was average in his studies. But he was very respectful to his teacher and as a mark of regard and respect to his guru he began to call himself Ambedkar, the name of his teacher. He passed B.A. in 1913, and in the same year he joined Columbia University (New York), as a Gaekwad scholar. While in America Ambedkar attracted the attention of Lala Lajpat Rai, who was living there in exile at that time. Bhimrao obtained his M.A. degree for his thesis "Ancient Indian Commerce". He read a paper on 'The caste in India'. In this paper (published in 1917) he pointed out that endogamy is the essence of caste. "A caste is an enchained class and it existed even before Manu" Ambedkar maintained. In June 1916, he submitted his thesis for his Ph.D. entitled 'National Dividend for India' which was published in 1924 under the title 'The evolution of Provincial Finance. In British India; with introduction by prof. S.A. Seligman. In 1916, he joined the London School of Economics. In 1918, he published a brochure, 'Small Holding in India and Their Remedies'. On his return to India, he started a weekly, 'Mook Nayak; to champion the cause of the depressed, and a paper entitled 'Bahishkrit Bharat' to voice their grievances.

Apart from having an outstanding academic achievements to his credit, Ambedkar was a prolific writer. His writings include 'Who were the Sudra?' (1946) The untouchable castes in India' 'Thoughts on Linguistic States (1955), Riddle of Rama And Krishna' (proscribed), 'The Buddha and His Dhamma; Pakistanor the partition of India' (1940) etc.

In politics, Ambedkar was a ruthless critic of Gandhi and seldom agreed with the policy of the Congress led by him. As against the Congress stance, Ambedkar welcomed and cooperated with the Simon Commission (1928-29). His stand at the First Round Table Conference earned him the wrath of the Congressmen who upbraided him as a stooge of the British. At the Second Round Table Conference he not only challenged Gandhi's claim to be the leader of the untouchables but also demanded, to Gandhi's discomfiture, separate electorate for the scheduled castes,. His demand was, however, conceded by Ramsay Macdonald in his Communal Award (1932). But when Gandhi went on an indefinite fast on the declaration of the Communal Award, Ambedkar yielded to Malviyajis pressure and thereby saved Gandhi's life by singing the Poona Pact. But later on, Ambedkar described the Poona Pact as a "mean deal", and never forgave Gandhi for coercing him into singing the pact. Again, when the Second World War began he supported the war efforts as war Advisory Committee Member, and described the Quit India Movement (1942) as 'irresponsible and insane' for him, it an 'open rebellion'.

### **Ambedkar's Stand on the Partition of India.**

Ambedkar was as much interested in burying the Hindu Raj as Jinnah was in avoiding it. But he was in favor of forming a non- communal party (mixed party of Hindus and Muslims) to fight against the Hindu Raj. But later on, when he found that the Muslim were bent upon having Pakistan he began to support their demand. He felt that if their was no other alternative Pakistan had to be accepted. In his book "Pakistan or the partition of India' (1940) he wrote "once it becomes certain that Muslims want Pakistan there can be not doubt that the wise course would be to concede the principle of it." <sup>2</sup> He "realistically" pointed out that "Pakistan would liberate both the Hindus and Muslims from the fear of enslavement and encroachment. <sup>3</sup> while surveying the relations of the Hindu- Muslims relations down the ages, he found that in Islam there is no room for "territorial nationalism" At one time in his paper, 'Bahiskrit Bharat' he put forward the proposition that "Hindus and Muslims constituted two different nations."

### **Ambedkar And Indian Democracy**

Ambedkar was a true and sincere democrat. For him, political democracy without social and economic democracy was a double deception. He warned that as long as there was inequality on the social and economic plane there can be no political democracy, except in name or form. Unlike most of the Indian leaders, he never indulged in unnecessary glorification of the Indian civilization. He frankly pointed out to the several weaknesses that the Indian society suffered from. He honestly contended that "democracy was a top dressing on the Indian soil which is essentially undemocratic ." He believed that constitutional morality is not a national sentiment and it has to be cultivated. He recommended three things to cultivate it: (1) Adherence to constitutional method ;(2) To make our political democracy a social democracy; and (3) Rejection of personality cult. For him hero- worship obtaining in India is a sure road to degeneration and to eventual dictatorship. Again according to him, the unit of the society is the individual, never the caste or the village. he never glorified the village organization of the past,

as Gandhi did. In his opinion “These village republics have been the ruination of India. What is the villager but a sink of localism, a den of ignorance, narrow mindedness and communalism.”

### **Ambedkar and Indian Constitution**

Ambedkar was one of the very few Indian statesmen in politics who actively participated in the discussion on constitutional matters from the Montford Reforms to the Cabinet Mission Proposals. It was in recognition of his expertise on constitutional matters that the Nehru government appointed him the Chairman of the Drafting Committee when the new constitution was to be framed. This Committee included legal luminaries like N. Gopaldaswamy Iyenger, Alladi Krishnaswamy Iyyer, K. M. Munshi, Sayied Mohdf. Sadulla, N. Mathavi Rau, D.P. Kaithan. In the Making of the new constitution of India. Dr. Ambedkar Played the role of the “Indian Jefferson”. He brought to bear upon his task a vast array of qualities – erudition, scholarship, imagination, logic, eloquence and experience. According to M.V. Pylee, “Ambedkar espoused the cause of strong union with autonomous states”.<sup>4</sup> Apart from being the chief architect of the constitution of free India, he was the last word on its interpretation.

### **Ambedkars views On Religion**

For a long time, Ambedkar was a follower of Kabir, as Kabir was against the caste system, but ultimately he found solace in the teachings of Buddha, another great crusader against the caste system. He regarded Buddhism as a moral and tolerant alternative to Marxism. His followers took pride in glorying him as a Bodhisattva. However, Ambedkar reinterpreted Buddhism. His ‘The Buddha and His Dharma’ is virtually his new Testament of Buddhism. For him, Buddhism was the most rational religion of all, integrating a materialistic view of life with a religious morality compatible with modern era, and would eventually be embraced by the whole world.

### **Ambedkar’s views on the Indian Caste System**

As a sociological historian, he did not accept the hypothesis of an Aryan invasion of India. He forcefully put forward the view that the Sudras were not dark –skinned aboriginals enslaved by the Aryan invaders, but they were also Aryans who belonged to the Kshatriya solar dynasty. The subordinate status of the Sudras was brought about by a violent battle between the Sudras, the Sudra King and Vashishta. Due to social vicissitudes and changes of fortune, they became degraded from their Kashtriya status. In his opinion, the Brahmins were responsible for the degradation of the Sudras.<sup>5</sup>

According to Dr. Ambedkar, Chaturvana has been the parent of the caste system as well as untouchability. He believed that the problem of the untouchables could not be solved by mere tinkering and palliatives he said: “White- washing does not save a dilapidated house; you must pull it down and build anew.” He demanded a radical social revolution. He was not satisfied with the constitutional provisions for them in the constitution. He demanded that there should be more members of the untouchable community in the higher bureaucracy.

### **The curse Of Untouchability – Ambedkar & Gandhi**

Both Ambedkar and Gandhi were heroic and the very embodiment and symbols of revolt against the unjust social order obtaining in India. Both were great champions of the underdog, great emancipation and humanist. But while Gandhi was a reformer, Ambedkar was a social revolutionary and an iconoclast. In the opinion of Prof. Bpin Chandra, “Both share in common total opposition to caste oppression and caste discrimination and commitment to transform the social, economic and cultural conditions of Harijans.”<sup>6</sup> Untouchability, Gandhi said, “poisons Hinduism as a drop of arsenic poisons milk.” The vital interests of the untouchables he would not sell even for the sake of winning freedom of India. As a matter of fact; Gandhi was the greater and more total revolutionary in this respect, fo he worked for the ending of the caste system itself which was responsible for socio-economic disabilities of the untouchables. It is worth mentioning here that in the beginning Gandhi believed that untouchability was an excrescence, a pathological growth that had nothing to do with the essential nature of the caste system which was a frame work for the division of labour, and as such he simply advocated a purified varnashrama dharma. But in 1935, Gandhi declared that caste system had to go and admitted that Varna Vyawastha that he idealized earlier was today non-existent in practice. Hinduism, he asserted, had to become casteless if it was to survive, and he looked for the most effective, quickest and most unobtrusive way to destroy caste system.

In a speech on June 14, 1947 he reaffirmed that distinction between asavarna and savarna must go. He believed that mere political upliftment would not eradicate the caste system. In his later years he attacked one of its major pillars, that it endogamy, and advocated intercaste marriages. But at the same time Gandhi was vehemently opposed to separate electorate for the scheduled castes, as demanded by Dr. Ambedkar, for he felt it will ensure their bandage in perpetuity.

Ambedkar too was an enemy of the caste system, particularly of Brahmanism which buttressed it, and he too stood for its total liquidation. He believed that caste system would have to go if untouchability was to be done away with. Nothing could emancipate the outcaste except the destruction of caste.

Although the goals that both pursued were almost the same, their strategies differed. While Ambedkar worked for self-regeneration and struggle on their own way by the scheduled castes, Gandhi never emphasized the autonomous activity of the untouchables as crucial to their emancipation. He, on the other hand, felt that their emancipation would come about unobtrusively through cooperation with higher castes. In fact, Gandhi wanted to absorb the Harijans into the Hindu fold by fusing their identity with Hinduism. Therefore, he advocated cooperation in place of confrontation. But Ambedkar found in Gandhi’s approach a sort of paternalism which he was not willing to accept. What is more, while forcefully rejecting it, Ambedkar repudiated Hinduism altogether. Thus while Gandhi tried to resurrect Hinduism, Ambedkar revolted against the Hindu community as such. Thus, “Ambedkar’s Project rested on undermining the traditional social order, while Gandhi’s interest was to preserve the traditional social equilibrium.”<sup>7</sup>

However, Gandhi’s approach appears to be most sound and realistic. His approach was based on four pillars: First, there was the primacy of the ongoing struggle against imperialism which called for class and caste cooperation. But for Ambedkar, on the contrary, the British presence was a check on the caste Hindu oppression; Second, Gandhi thought that the people subjected to suppression for centuries could seldom be mobilised for a militant struggle.

Moreover, he was convinced that a violent approach without preparing the masses would inevitably plunge the society in turmoil. In this respect Gandhi was right as history would bear him out. It is a fact that Ambedkar did fail to mobilise the Harijans except among the Mahars – his own subcaste; Third, since caste Hindus constituted the overwhelming majority, no social change could occur by confronting the majority; Lastly, Gandhi believed that the upliftment and welfare of Harijans were linked to the overall development of the Indian society as a whole. Dr. Ambedkar too accepted these arguments at significant moments. Did he not marry a Brahmin lady though he was opposed to Brahmanism ? Again, his joining the Nehru Cabinet of Independent India and performance of heroic labour in the making of the Indian constitution was based on his belief that the Harijans would develop and promote their interests only in cooperation with caste Hindus.

Thus we see that despite differences in their approach to the problem of untouchability Gandhi and Ambedkar both began to admire each other at the fag end of their life. To substantiate, it was at Gandhi's instance that the Nehru government appointed Dr. Ambedkar as Chairman of the Drafting Committee which was set up for drafting the Indian Constitution, although Nehru's own preference was either for Ivor Jennings or Granville Austin. Though belatedly, Ambedkar duly recognized Gandhi's contribution and acknowledged that the Dalits had been "nearest and dearest" to Ambedkar was the most renowned and the most militant champion of the untouchables. Through his scholarly writings, speeches, leadership and constructive work, he made significant awareness of the political, economic and social problems of the untouchable community. Though provoking and provocative, his life is highly instructive to every who yearns for human dignity and equality in social relations. More than any other Indian it is he who fought for the cause of social revolution in Indian society. He stood for the social liberation, economic emancipation and political advancement of the downtrodden.

Ambedkar's other major contribution to Indian progress was his faith in constitutional order. Though he believed in change, but stood for change through constitutional methods only. The civil-disobedience methodology could be a dominance of anarchy, he thought. His contribution as a parliamentarian, scholar, statesman and a reformer was outstanding. He also drafted and introduced the Hindu Code Bill to end complexities of the marriage system in India.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

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