

# Ambedkar's View's on Re-Interpretation of caste Untouchability in India

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## Abstract

This paper is to examine the efforts of Ambedkar to social against the violence of caste untouchability and religion in India during the colonial and immediate post-colonial period. Born into an untouchable family in western Ambedkar was soon confronted by the discrimination his maligned community experienced at the hands of the higher castes. In response, he formulated a theory which surmised that the system of caste, religion and untouchability in particular, rested upon a naturalisation of inherent violence. In order to overcome this, Ambedkar re-interpreted untouchability into identifiable, material and mountable disadvantages that allowed him to use his position as Law Minister within the post-colonial government to legislate against it. While his efforts have had variable success in rural India, their enduring impact has been the nationalisation of the caste question and official recognition of the violence of religion, caste and untouchability.

**Key Words:** *Re-Interpretation, Untouchability, Caste, Religion, Caste-Violence Social Reformer, Depressed Justices.*

## Introduction

Ambedkar was a Great Nationalist, Social Thinker, Political Reformer, and Philosophical Writer with Progressive ideas. Ambedkar was born in 14<sup>th</sup> April 1891 into an untouchable Mahar caste and family in India Ambedkar was soon confronted by the widespread community impediments that were humanity and often violently forced onto his community. Consequently, he dedicated his life to fighting caste, religion and untouchability and its inherent violence. He stood for all political, social and cultural actions which increased the reason of human development and happiness. He was the soul for the constitution of India. He caused for the betterment of the exploited and depressed classes. He stood rare crusading spirit, carving out in this procedure plays important role for himself between the leading architects of modern India.

However, fight all chances he attained higher education thus he became the first ever untouchable, caste and religion to attain the same. No sooner after completing his higher studies, he launched himself politically fight for the rights of the depressed class and inequality practiced in the society. He was an

advocator of social equality and justice. Academically trained as a jurist, he went on to become the first Law Minister of Independent India and the framer or chief architect of the Constitution of India. He laid special emphasis on dignity, unity, freedom, and rights for all citizens as enshrined in the constitution. Ambedkar advocated democracy in every field Social, Economic and Political.

According to Ambedkar is generally recognized as the leader and Social Reform, Drafter, Writer, Emancipator of the Caste and Religion untouchables in India. Untouchables occupy the lowest position in the social system of caste in South Asia that stratifies often endogamous communities into occupationally-defined which are then grouped into the more rigid hierarchical (Varna) castes based on ritual purity. While caste is traditionally identified with religion (Hinduism) it is replicated across religions and cultures in much of the Indian subcontinent. Untouchables, while encompassing many hundreds of castes, are excluded from the Varna system and as such are lower caste by the higher castes and forced to perform menial labour and tasks considered unclean.

#### **Assumption of Caste Violence in Ambedkar**

The two principles that formed the cornerstone of Ambedkar assumption of caste violence were grade inequality and naturalisation of the caste system. In 1916, Ambedkar claimed during his seminal lecture on caste that, "There is no such thing as caste". The hierarchical structure of caste was based upon exclusion and inequality which could not function without multiple castes that could be defined against each other in terms of ritual purity.

From this perspective, the untouchable became the key player of the entire caste system as it was their manifest impurity against which other castes were defined and ranked. In this way Ambedkar presupposed the Demotion analysis of caste in which the untouchables were kept in a permanently unclean state, thereby allowing higher castes to maintain their purity the term Ambedkar employed to theorise this pluralistic and hierarchical system was graded inequality.

Ambedkar's theory on caste allowed him to specify the mechanisms that resulted in the violence of untouchability these however were self perpetuating. In response to this limitation, he redefined untouchability in terms of its specific material disadvantages. Ambedkar re-interpreted untouchability as acts of violence, therefore rejecting the notion that untouchability was fixed. In 1933, Ambedkar argued that

through political action, through appropriate law you can make government provide for you what you are now denied food, clothing, protection, education.

Here he attempted to secularise the violence of untouchability into material forms of discrimination that could unlike religious notions be solved. This reflected his legal training and pragmatism preferring to attack untouchability from a material basis as opposed to a religious one. During the late colonial period and particularly during the framing of the legal and constitutional framework of the post-colonial state Ambedkar worked to alleviate the specific afflictions that defined untouchability.

### **Ambedkar on Experience Untouchability**

Social distinguishes humans from animals are the ability to experience the hurt caused by degradation. Humiliation is a normal risk in social interaction. In the Indian context it is the notion of untouchability that form and content of humiliation. The social practices and hierarchies order of the Indian society itself produces the site for humiliation in modern India.

The Indian tradition through colonial rule in different parts of the world had subjected local people to both crude and subtle forms of humiliation. India's nationalists ignored the internal forms of humiliation that emanate from the social practices based on caste, untouchability and gender discrimination. However they were over sensitive to racial humiliation this looks internally conservative and externally radical. Feeling of humiliation and shame is a powerful and omnipresent emotion in social life and humiliation is the active public face of indignity it is the hostile infliction of indignity on others in the Indian context untouchability was both a condition of existence as well as a violent expression of power.

In August 1917, when the British colonial government in anticipation of the Government of India Act, announced that it intended to set up self- government bodies it provided an immediate opportunity to the untouchables who constituted about one-seventh of the population to claim representation as an important political group. They demanded representation proportionate to their numerical strength in the promised self government bodies Untouchability as a unique form of inequality is not prevalent anywhere else except in Hindu India.

Ambedkar analysed the nature of the caste system and tried to find out how it differed from other kinds of inequality, and was sustained for centuries. In Ambedkar view the practice of untouchability was a

necessary product of the caste system explained that there were three factors responsible for continuation of untouchability they are ideological economic and political.

### **Explore Human Dignity Religion Critical Evaluation**

Different from Ambedkar believed that the historical Hinduism of his time had a capacity to be reformed and to eliminate untouchability and he was instrumental in setting up the All-India Anti Untouchability confederation as an integral part of his campaign. Ambedkar, one of the members wanted it to launch a nationwide civil rights movement. He demanded that the confederation should attack not just untouchability but the caste system itself and strongly campaigned against the taboos on inter-caste dining and marriage. When his proposals were turned down he resigned. In Ambedkar self-respect emerges from an affirmative link between the moral quality of labour and the claim that can be made over the distribution of the fruits of that labour.

It was Ambedkar who took battle against untouchability in post independent India when the Constituent Assembly passed eleventh article declaring untouchability a cognisable offence. However till the end of their life, they differed on the grounds of emancipation in terms of both causality and instrumentality to affirm the dignity of individuals particularly of untouchables Ambedkar draw an important distinction between independence of the country and independence of its people.

It was fundamentally an economic and political problem requiring a radical restructuring of not just the Hindu society but the Indian society as a whole and without this radical restructuring it is difficult to ensure dignity of every individual. For Ambedkar individual dignity was very important for liberation therefore he reinterpreted the Buddhist foundations in a new way that can deal with equity and human dignity. However there were too many limitations in the understanding of both as far as untouchability and its elimination were concerned. They had differences over the organising and correcting principles of society to assure human dignity.

Ambedkar relied much on institutional mechanisms to protect and promote the interests of the untouchables and did not fully appreciate the importance of changing the moral culture of the wider society. A profound cultural and moral change was needed in Hindu society in order to deal with the humiliation and privations of the untouchables.

## **Ambedkar against Caste and Untouchable**

Ambedkar birth in an 'untouchable' community made him undergo humiliating experiences. In those days untouchability was deeply entrenched in the minds of the caste Hindus. Ambedkar fought the caste-ridden unjust society on all fronts social, religious, political and economic. His encounter with castes and untouchability opened a new course in the social reform movement in India. Unlike the earlier reformers who limited the cause of social progress and welfare within a general frame of reference, Ambedkar concentrated his power and resources on the cause of liberation of a particular section, the Dalits.

During the early phase of his movement Ambedkar demanded equal rights particularly social and religious for the Dalits. But later the association set importance extra on the political rights of the depressed classes. Ambedkar no more fought within the fabric of Hinduism. While the congress boycotted the Simon Commission he did not hesitate to tender evidence before it on behalf of the Dalits. It outlawed the stigma of untouchability and prohibited discrimination on the ground of religion, caste, race and sex. There are provisions in the Constitution for protecting the political rights of the depressed sections of the society.

### **Maker of Indian Constitution**

Ambedkar drafting of the Indian Constitution has facilitated the abolition of untouchability and the prohibition of all forms of discriminations based on Sex, Religion and Caste etc. unsettled to the entire exceptional offerings Ambedkar can be truly entitled as the Principal architect of the Indian Constitution. However it is an undeniable truth that Ambedkar vision of the construction of a democratic social arrangement still remains unfulfilled. Various countries all over the world have followed the Indian Constitution. Ambedkar had imprinted his mark of endowment and vision in drafting Indian Constitution. His statesman qualities can easily visible each and every article of Indian Constitution.

Ambedkar preferred the parliamentary system in England than the Presidential System in America. Dr. Ambedkar described the role of President as He is the head of the state but not the executive. He represents to nation but does not rule the nation. He is the symbol of the nation. His place in the administration is that of a ceremonial device on a seal by which the nation's decisions are made known. The president of the Indian union will be generally bound by the advice of the Ministers. He can do nothing contrary to their advice nor can he do anything without their advice He strongly supported for federal system.

He said The Draft constitution is Federal Constitution is a much as it establishes what may be called Dual polity. This Dual polity under the proposed constitution will consist of the union at the centre and the states at the periphery each endowed with Sovereign powers to be exercised in the field assigned to them respectively by the constitution. Ambedkar said about independent Election Commission that the greatest safeguard for purity of elections for fairness in elections, was to take away the matter from the hands of the executive authority and to hand it over to some independent authority.

## Conclusion

Ambedkar was a multifaceted personality his public service started during the second decade of twentieth century he belonged to the category of politician putting their service to humanity before themselves. Ambedkar was a short life and yet a most extra ordinary one. He rose up from dust from being treated worse than an animal to becoming the father of the Indian Constitution. Ambedkar of King Maker Emancipator of Dalits a great Inter-National leader, patriot, a great author, a great educationalist, a great political philosopher, a great religious guide and above all a great humanist without any parallel among his contemporary. All these facets of Ambedkar personality had strong humanist underpinnings. Ambedkar was in fact a designer of a nation and a universal leader instead of just a Dalits leader or leader of the backward classes. It is just because efforts of Ambedkar we are pleased with the principles of social justice is the individual who with his efforts had build India in her early years. They fought for the independence of India and then strived to build India of their dreams.

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