

B. R. Ambedkar: The Father of Constitution & Social Equality

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Abstract

Some personalities in History have a life full of struggles and these struggles are generally for the betterment of the society. Baba Saheb Bhim Rao Ambedkar was also one of those famous personalities whose entire life was a history of crusade against the injustices prevalent in society. We all know that the constitution of India is the result of the efforts of Dr. Ambedkar to ensure a free and just society and the present paper discusses the contours of development centered around the struggles for the attainment of social equality.

Key Words

Constitution, Equality, Struggles,

Main Article

Amongst the numerous contributions to Indian Society, Ambedkar is the chief architect of the Indian Constitution. He knew the value of an equal society, because he himself had experienced the social injustices right since an early age.¹

Dr. Ambedkar brought the issue of untouchability prevalent in Indian society during the First Round Table Conference. The tradition or school of philosophy which he initiated has been a liberator of the millions. It does not only strive for liberty but also for a life of dignity for every individual. His philosophy aimed to provide equality, liberty and justice to all irrespective of caste, class, creed and gender. Dr. Ambedkar's marvelous personality can be understood from his famous statement: "we must shape our course ourselves and by ourselves".²

Dr. Ambedkar stood for all humans (not only the Dalits), and the consciousness of Humans. In fact, he was the one who gave a 'voice' to the depressed and downtrodden. The national movement since 1886 can generally be categorized into two categories: (i) 1886 to 1915 when there was no major recognition of the Dalits in contemporary Indian politics, and (ii) Post-1915 when with the efforts of many social reformers, the Dalits were not only recognized by the contemporary political parties but also efforts were undertaken by the government to uplift the marginalized.

¹P. L. Malhotra, *Foreward* in M.S. Sahare, *Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, His Life not Work*, published in February 1986 by NCERT.

²Babasaheb Ambedkar, Speech at the Depressed Classes Congress held at Nagpur on August 8, 1930; source National Archives, Delhi.

Ambedkar viewed national movement as an appropriate event to lay the struggle for social upliftment as well. His approach and viewpoint of nationalism is linked with the social and political liberation of the marginalized and downtrodden. Some scholars view his approach as representing an amalgamation of bi-fold perspective: connecting the marginalized to the mainstream of national movement and at the same time striving for the achievement for social equality for the marginalized.³ This can be viewed as both horizontal and vertical developments. There was a thrust on vertical mobility towards an equal society while at the same time the emphasis on political freedom for the larger society aimed to create horizontal developments.

A closer look at the times and efforts of Dr. Ambedkar would lead one to appreciate the far-sightedness of this great intellectual. He was not only at a higher level of intellectual caliber but was also a moral leader of the marginalized community. He was perhaps amongst those few intellectuals who could see the inter-relationship between social equality and political independence. His approach to the national movement was also quite refined and intellectually derived. He gave a clear message to the British colonial administrators that “the time when you were to make choice and India were to accept is gone never to return”.⁴ He was able to realize the significance of a constitutional framework which in the long run would lead to safeguarding the basic human rights of every individual. As far as his views on democratic systems are concerned, Dr. Ambedkar wanted to establish a democratic, socialist, rationalist, humanist, socio-political system in the country. His notion of democratic values permeated all layers and rungs of society and could be seen in all domains of life.

Even in the administrative manners Ambedkar wanted to have equal representation for the different sections of Indian society. An upholder of human dignity, he wanted a proper representation of the untouchables in the contemporary cabinets and offices. It can be said that Ambedkar empowered the Dalits to develop a sense of accommodation and cooperation with other communities.

Historically speaking, the evil practice of untouchability had been a reality of Indian society. Ambedkar not only brought out these inherent instances of marginalization but also strove to eradicate this evil. Now, here we need to focus upon the methods of Ambedkar. HE did not rely on mere petitions and writings. Making sincere efforts, he tried to put an end to the evil practice of untouchability through constitutional provisions.

Though one may analyze that constitutional provisions may not lead to the guarantee of the eradication of social evils, but it needs to be kept in mind that legislation and constitutional provisions play a very crucial role in safeguarding the interests of the marginalized and downtrodden. Babasaheb's contribution towards the eradication of social evils like untouchability through constitution needs to be seen as an effective means of ensuring an equal future for the coming generations. It would also lead to the promotion of the idea of social equality for all the sections of the society who would gradually learn to accommodate each other besides treating each other at par with the same set of rights. Such a development in Indian society went a long way in the creation of an equal and just society.

³Ramnarayan S. Rawat and K. Satyanarayana (eds.), *Dalit Studies*, 2016.

⁴Proceedings of the First Round Table Conference (RTC), dated 12-11-1930, pp. 123-29.

It is also a reality that despite legal and constitutional provisions, the number of offences and harassment towards the marginalized sections has not declined year after year, so it needs to be highlighted that along with legal provisions ample effort should also be made towards spreading awareness and sensitizing the society towards the conception of a just and equal society.

The works of Ambedkar also echo his concern and efforts towards the creation of an equal society. His 1936 undelivered speech Annihilation of Caste talks of the evil structure of caste system and its annihilation. He often talked of the need to take up the work of “annihilation of caste”. Ambedkar brought out the age-old evil practices through his numerous writings and speeches. He strongly believed that caste should be annihilated for all Indians. He himself writes that swaraj for him was not a limited thing. He says that he is not fighting against any foreign power but against the natives who themselves have perpetrated the many systems and structures of social inequalities.

Ambedkar believed that Indian society needs to eradicate the evils which had been there since ages, once there is a social equality there will be a better social configuration suitable for a diverse society like that of India. He knew that proper education would empower the people and then only the social evils can be contained. For him, religion had no meaning if it did not have a background firmly rooted in logic and reason. Religion’s real purpose, according to him was not to create social marginalization. Religion according to him should uphold liberty, equality and fraternity. Instead of any label for religion, Ambedkar strongly believed in the universal spiritual principles. These principles and ideas according to him were applicable and relevant for all societies and countries.

His another, path-breaking work *The Buddha and His Dhamma* presents a very organized and structured picture of his personal experiences and understandings. The idea of liberation enshrined in Buddhist philosophy had a great impact on him and he found himself closer to Buddhism than the other popular cultic-religious practices. And just like Buddha, chose to be the guide for the entire humanity.

His philosophical understandings can be gleaned from his work *Philosophy of Hinduism* where he highlights the role, purpose and significance of religion in a social context. Perhaps he had his own theory and concept of religion which is of fascination even today.

Conclusion

Thus, in above discussion we have tried to bring out the details of the Great personality of Babasaheb, the architect of Modern India and the Indian Constitution. In fact, Indian society would not have achieved the equality without our constitution.