

UNTOUCHABLES LEADER OF DR. B.R. AMBEDKAR

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INTRODUCTION

Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar was the most prominent Indian untouchable leader of 20th century. He was born on April 14, 1891 Ratnagiri district in Maharashtra. He was the fourteenth child of parents who belonged to the very lowest stratum of Hindu society. He helped start a revival of Buddhism in India. The movement which is known as neo Buddhism.

He got education both in Marathi and English. Ambedkar passed matriculation examination from Mumbai University. Four years later, Ambedkar graduated with a degree in Politics and economics. Soon after wards he entered civil service in Baroda State.

The ruler of the state had forwarded him a scholarship. Ambedkar went in the western country. At the age of 32 years he finally returned to the country of his birth. It was one of the most highly qualified men in public life. During his three years of Columbia University he studied economics, sociology, history, philosophy, anthropology, and politics. He was awarded a Ph.D. for a thesis of the Evolution of provincial Finance in British India. His first published work, however, was a paper on castes in India. Their Mechanism, was Genesis and Development. After completing his studies in America, Ambedkar left New-York for London, where "he was admitted to the London school of Economics and political science and to Gray's Inn. A year later, his scholarship came to an end.

In 1920, having taught in a Bombay college and started a Marathi weekly called Mooknayak or Leader of the Dumb Ambedkar was able to return to London and resume his studies there. In the course of the next three years he completed a thesis on 'The problem of the Rupee', for which the university of London awarded him a D.Sc. At this time he was admitted to the bar. Before permanently ending his residence in England", Ambedkar spent three months in Germany, where he engaged in further studies in economics at the professional work.

The original source: Available reference book in this Article:

Back in India, Ambedkar established himself in Bombay and pursued an active career. He built up his legal practice, taught at a college, gave evidence before various official bodies, started a newspaper, and was nominated to the Bombay Legislative Council, in whose proceedings he at once took a leading part. He also-

attended the three Round Table Conferences that were held in London to enable representatives of the various Indian Communities and the three British Political parties to consider proposals for the future constitution of India.¹

Some people think that religion is not hold this view. I consider the foundations of religion to be essential to life and practices of society.²

In all the writings and speeches Ambedkar has maintained the necessity of religion According to him “religion is a part of one’s in heritage”, in a Depressed classes youth conference be observed.

"It pains me to see youth growing indifferent religion to religion is not an opinion as it is held by some. What good things I have been in me or whatever have been the benefits of my education to society“ . I shaw then to the religions feelings in me. I want religion but I do not want hypocrisy in the same of religion.³

He further added that material comfort was, by no means the solvent of all human ills Religion to him was the driving force for human activities. He remarked" - “man cannot live by bread alone. He has a mind which need’s food for thought.⁴

Between 1927 end 1932, Ambedkar led his followers in a series of nonviolent campaigns to assert the right of the untouchables to enter Hindu places of worship and to draw water from public tank and wells. Two of these campaigns were of special importance. The campaigns against the enclusion of untouchables from the Kalaram Temple in Nasik and other the Chowdar Tank in Mahad. Both of these involved tens thousands of untouchable, in Satyagrahi’s resisters. Higher caste Hindus responded violently.

The Chowdar Tank campaign, after years of litigation, ended in a iegal victory for the low caste activists. The chowdar tank campaign also saw the ceremonial burning of the Manu-Smriti (institutions of Manu) the ancient Hindu law book that Ambedkar believed bore much of the responsibility for the cruel treatment that the untouchables had, suffered. By thus desecrating the much reveved volume, Ambedkar’s followers intended to demonstrate that equality among castes was an issue, that could not be ignored.

Unpopular as Ambedkar’s activities had already made him in orthodox Hindu opinion, during 1931 and 1932 he became more unpopular still. In his own words, he became the most hated man in India. The cause of the trouble was Ambedkar’s continued insistence an the necessity of separate electrorates for the depressed classes. Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress party were opposed to separate electorates for the depressed classes. Ambedkar and Gandhi had clashed on the subject at the Second Round Table Conference. Although Gandhi was one of the earliest champions of the cause of untouchables and wanted to rise Hindu Society of all castism and discrimination. He was not prepared to allow the British to politically divide Hindus based on Caste. When the British made their communal Award in 1934. They granted separate electorates for untouchables. Gandhi went on a fast unto death. Ambedkar met with Hindu orthodox readers and leaders of the Indian National Congress and agreed to give up the Separate electrorates and quotas. In return, the congress party agreed to increase its representation of untouchables. Hindu religions leaders became aggressive in their attack upon caste discrimination and untouchability as a whole.

Ambedkar was not satisfied by what he left were inevitably hollow promises given the reluctance of orthodox Hindus to re-visit caste doctrines, and his conceding to Gandhi over key political issues. At this point, partly as a result of the opposition he had encountered over the gestion of separate electrorates and party because of the continued exclusion of untouchables from Hindu temples. Ambedkar made a tactical shift, in his standard of living and gaining political power. He also began to think, there was no future for the untouchables within Hinduism and that they should change their religion. In the same year Ambedkar was appointed principal of the Government Law College, Bombay, built a house for himself and his books and be lost his wife Ramabai. He had been married -in 1908 when he was sixteen and his wife was nine years. She had born her five children, of whom only one survived.

* **Acceptance of the Buddhist way of Life:**

Dr. Ambedkar derives his views on Buddhism from a profound study of the original and primary sources. But his conception of Buddhism is definitely marked by his own individual outlook on life and his social economic and political ideas and ideas. Here we give his views on the Buddhist way of life.⁵

* **ON GOOD, EVIL AND SIN**

Dr. Ambedkar holds that a good deed is that which brings one no regrets the fruit there of is received with delight and satisfaction. While on evil deed brings regrets. The fruit there of is received with “fear” and lamentation. Evil thoughts and deeds are always harmful, while good thoughts and deeds are always constructive, both for the individual and the society. So he emphasizes the need of following the law of virtue for the virtuous rests in bliss in this world, to him‘, there is neither sorrow no fear“, while ‘sin’ contradicts this the accumulation of ‘sin’ is ‘painful’, it brings an individual both ‘sorrow’ and ‘fear’. Thus according to Dr. Ambedkar the Buddhist way of life may be summarized in the formula. “Do Good”, “Be no party to evil”, and “Commit no sin .

* **On Hurt and ill – will:**

Dr. Ambedkar insists upon the practice restraint in conformity with the descripline. The person, who inflects ‘pain’ on innocent and harmless’ individuals is unjust and will come soon to ‘grief’. It a man offends a harmless and evil falls back upon that food like light dues thrown up against the wind. Hurt and ill-will are very harmful to social solidarity. So according to Ambedkar, the Buddhist way of life is summed up in the manims, “cause no hurt”, cherish no ill will.

* **ON SELF AND SELF – CONQUEST:**

Everyone has his own personality » an aggregate of material and mental substances, the whole of which is often, called the ‘Self’. Dr. Ambedkar thinks “If one has seft let him practice self conquest”. Self central is the first essential condition for spiritual discipline. For he who loves looking for, pleasures only his ‘senses’ ‘uncontrolled’ and is immoderate in his food ‘idle’ and weak will certainly be overthrown by his own over—daing, as the wind throws a weak free. - while he who lives without looking for ‘pleasures’ his ‘senses’ “ ‘will controlled’ moderate‘ in his food, ‘faithful’ and ‘strong’ will not be overthrown any more than the wind throws down a rocky mountain.

From this view - point, Dr. Ambedkar says if a man lives himself and is dear to himself, he has to keep a man loves him self and is dear to himself, he has to keep a close watch upon himself in order to mould first, himself in the right way, only, in that case he may be bale to counsel others. In fact if one shopes one self. Just as one counsels others. One will har 'control' over others. One self is the" guardian" of oneself, guarded by oneself one gets a 'guardian', the like of which is not likely to be gotten.

For the training of one's own mind means to understand the nature of other individuals, that can help to make a common approach towards men and things, only a 'self - guided' and self guarded, individual can have "confidence strength and sufficiency in himself and in others to change "evil deeds' into good deeds. This can lead an individual from his egocentricity to socialiaty.⁶

* **Conversion to Buddhism**

While Ambedkar continued to participate in the proceedings of the Rajya Sabha and was to do so until the proceedings of the Rajya Sabha. He was to do so until the end of his life, from 1952 onwards Ambedkar's energies were increasingly devoted to other concerns. Ever since the 1935 Depressed classes conference, when he had shocked Hindu India with the declaration that though he had been born a Hindu he did not intend to due one, Ambedkar had been giving earnest consideration to the question of conversion. Further consideration made him increasingly convinced that there was no future for the untouchables within Hinduism, that they would have to adopt another religion, and that the best religion for them to adopt was Buddhism.

In 1950 he visited Sri Lanka at the invitation of the Young Men's Buddhist Association, Colombo, where he addressed a meeting of the world Fellowship of Buddhists in kandy and appealed to the untouchables of Sri Lanka to embrace Buddhism. In 1951, he wrote an article defending the Budhha against the change that he had been responsible for the decrease in women's status in ancient India. The same year, he compiled the Bauddha Upasana Patha, a small collection of Buddhist devotional texts.

In 1954, Ambedkar twice visited Burma the second time in order to attend the third conterence of the world Fellowship of Buddhists in Rangoon. Tn 1955, he founded the Bharatiya Bauddha Mahasabha or Buddhist Society of India and installed an image of the Budda in a temple that had been built at Dehu Road near Pune on 25th December 1954. Addressing the thousands of untouchables who had assembled for the occasion, he declared that henceforth he would devote himself to the propagation of Buddhism in India.

He also announced that he was writing a book explaining the tenete of Buddhism in simple language for the benefit of the common man. The work in question was 'The Buddha and this Dhamma', on which he had been working since November 1951 and which he completed in February, 1956. Not long afterwards, Ambedkar announced that he would be formally converting in October of that year. Arrangements were accordingly made for the ceremony to be held in Nagpur.

On 14 October 1956 Ambedkar took the three Retuges and five precepts from a Buddhist monk in the traditional manner and then, in turn, administered them to the 380.000 men. Women and children who had come to Nagpur in response to his call. After further conversion covermonies in Nagpur and Chanda,

Ambedkar returned to Delhi. A few weeks later he travelled to Kathmandu in Nepal for the fourth conference of the world Fellowship of Buddhists, where he addressed the delegates on “The Buddha and Karl Marx”. On his way back to Delhi he made two speeches in Banaras and visited Kusinara, where the Buddha had died. In Delhi he took part in various Buddhist functions, attended the Rajya Sabha, and completed the last chapter of his book the Buddha and Karl Marx.

Ambedkar died on 6 December 1956. Although Ambedkar had been a Buddhist for only seven weeks, during that period he probably did more for the promotion of Buddhism than any other Indian since Ashoka. At the time of his death three quarters of a million untouchables had become Buddhists, and in the months that followed hundreds of thousands more took the same step despite the uncertainty and confusion that had been created by the sudden loss of their leader.

The concept of Anityawad in Buddhism essentially belongs to dialectics that has made Buddha an early dialectician philosopher. He is a not familiar but he alone could be the beacon of the dalit movement. The will of the collective is supposed to be embodied in the state by the constitution. It is therefore that Ambedkar has reservation in agreeing with Marx that ‘religion was the opium of masses’ or the ‘state’ shall eventually wither away“ which the social systems certainly are, do have the inherent capability.⁷

*** BUDDHISM AND COMMUNISM PRESIDENT, YOUR REVERENCES AND GENTLEMEN:**

I am sorry that having come to Nepal to attend the conference. I have not been able to participate in its proceedings in the way in which a delegate ought to participate. But I am sure, most of the delegates are aware that although I am here I am physically a very ill man and I am quite unable to hear the trest and strain of the conference proceedings. It is, therefore, not out of any disrespect for the conference that I have been usually absent, it is because of my personal condition that I could not do justice to the Task of the conference.

It is perhaps because of my absence from the conference that I was asked by way of compensation to address you this afternoon. I conswnted to do that, but» even here there have been surprise flung on me I had not enough notice that I was to speak here. And when I was asked what subject I would speak on, I mentioned the subject of Ahimsa in Buddhism. But I find that a large majority of the people attending this conference are desirous that I should speak on Buddhism and communism a subject to which I in a very passing sentence referred at the first general meeting.

I am quite prepared to agree to the suggestion of the change of subject although I must say that I am not quite, on the spur of the moment prepared to deal with such a large enormous, and if I may say so a very massive subject. It is a subject which has had half the world in grips, and I find that it has held also in its grip a large number of the student population, even of the Buddhist countries.

I look upon the later aspect of the matter with grave concern. if the younger generation of the Buddhist countries are not able to appreciate that Buddhism supplies a way of life which is better than want is supplied by the communist way of life, Buddhism is doomed.

It cannot last beyond a generation or two. it is therefore, quite necessary for those who believe in Buddhism to tackle the younger generation, and to tell them whether Buddhism can be a substitute for

communism. It is only then that Buddhism can hope to survive we must all remember that today a large majority of the people in Europe and a large majority of the youngsters in Asia look upon Karl Marx as the only prophet who could be worshipped. And they regard, the largest part of the Buddhist Sangha as nothing but the yellow peril. That is an indication which the Bhikkhus must take up, must understand to reform themselves in order that they could be compared with Kari Marx. And Buddhism could complete with it.⁸

Origin of Communal Award and Poona pact

Poona Pact, (Sept. 24, 1932), agreement between Hindu leaders in India granting new rights to untouchables (low-caste Hindu groups). The pact, signed at Poona (now Pune, Maharashtra), resulted from the communal award of Aug. 4, 1932, made by the British government on the failure of the India parties to agree, which allotted seats in the various legislatures of India to the different communities. Mahatma Gandhi objected to the provision of separate electorates for the Scheduled (formerly “untouchable”) Castes, which in his view separated them from the whole Hindu community. Though in prison, Gandhi announced a fast unto death, which he began on September 18.

Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, the untouchable leader, who felt that his group’s special interests might be advanced by the government’s system, resisted concessions until Gandhi was near death. He and the Hindu leaders then agreed to the pact, which withdrew separate electorates but gave increased representation to the Scheduled Castes for a 10-year period. Ambedkar complained of blackmail, but the pact marked the start of movement against untouchability within the Indian nationalist movement.⁹

It is known history that Dr. B.R. Ambedkar’s intense struggle against the British rulers and the Indian society and its leaders resulted in recognizing for the first time the political rights of dalits in the Communal Award of 1932 given by PM Ramsay MacDonald after the debates and decisions of the Round Table Conferences. Like other communities, dalits were also given separate electorates to send their representatives to the central and provincial assemblies. With this the political and social identity of the dalits got established. The Hindu society and its leaders led by Mahatma Gandhi were dead against this happening. The manuwadi mindset was at work. They were not interested in the empowerment of the dalits but wanted to keep the dalit community in their fold to serve them as dictated in the scriptures. The ‘oligarchy of the high castes’, as somebody has said, was the riding consideration of the society rather than addressing the problems of caste and untouchability. Mahatma Gandhi termed the Communal Award Of Ramsay MacDonald as “injection of a poison is calculated to destroy Hinduism and do no good whatever”.¹⁰ Gandhi strongly opposed the communal award on the grounds that it would disintegrate Hindu society. He began an indefinite hunger strike from September 20, 1932 to protest this award. In view of the mass upsurge generated in the country to save the life of Gandhi, and appeals of orthodox Hindu leaders, Congress politicians and activist, fearing a communal reprisal and genocide of untouchables, Dr. Ambedkar was compelled to soften his stand. He agreed to joint electorates under massive coercion from the supporters of Mahatma Gandhi. As a result of the agreement, A compromise between the leaders of caste Hindu and the depressed classes was

reached on September 24, 1932, popularly known as the Poona Pact signed in the Yerwada Jail where Mahatma Gandhi was on hunger strike. The resolution announced in a public meeting on September 25 in Bombay confirmed -" henceforth, amongst Hindus no one shall be regarded as an untouchable by reason of his birth and they will have the same rights in all the social institutions as the other Hindus have". This landmark resolution in the history of the Dalit movement in India subsequently formed the basis for giving due share to Dalits in the political empowerment of Indian people in a democratic Indian polity.¹¹

But it was not to be. Ambedkar and his followers were soon disillusioned. The provisions of separate electorate as envisaged by the communal award were enough to establish political and social identity of the dalits. The opportunity was cleverly denied by the Poona Pact. Ambedkar was disappointed and he made his disenchantment known to Mahatma Gandhi in his letter dated February 11, 1933 bluntly refusing to give a message for the inaugural issue of the Harijan“. . . I feel I cannot give a message. For I believe it will be a most unwarranted presumption on my part to suppose that I have sufficient worth in the eyes of the Hindus which would make them treat any message from me with respect . . . I am therefore sending you the accompanying statement for publication in your Harijan.”¹²

“The Out-caste is a bye-product of the Caste system. There will be outcastes As long as there are castes. Nothing can emancipate the Out-castes except the destruction of the Caste system. Nothing can help save Hindus and ensure their survival in the coming struggle except the purging of the Hindu faith of this odious and vicious dogma.”¹³

Dalits continue to suffer from this disability of having an identity till today. Babu Manguram Mugowalia and his associates tried their best through the Ad-Dharam Movement to establish dalit identity by stating and pleading that dalits were neither Sikhs nor Hindus. Subsequently Babu Kanshi Ram also rose and disapproved the Poona Pact. He wrote in Preface of his book the Chamcha Age that Chamcha age started from the Poona Pact giving joint electorates instead of separate electorates. The purpose of book was to make Dalit Soshit Samaj of the existence of Chamchas or stooges, and to awaken masses how to differentiate between genuine and counterfeit leadership. The reservation issue is still alive as the dalits could not be empowered as desired. Moreover, the thinking of Mahtma Gandhi in saving the Hinduism has fallen flat otherwise also. Sikhs have asserted their separate identity independent of Hinduism. The Poona Pact it seems was an act of treachery and fraud on the dalits. The point is not to blame Dr. Ambedkar as he had no other option as he was a nationalist to the core. He did not want to create friction with the majority Hindus on one hand and stand against the national movement of independence against the British on the other.¹⁴

CONCLUSION:

Dr. Ambedkar was a man of letter and great freedom fighter oi India. He was a key of scheduled caste and scheduled tribe of India. He belonged to scheduled caste category by caste Dom. He was a constitutional

head in making constitution of India and also a Law Minister of free India. He always fought with Hindu community for the right of scheduled caste and scheduled tribe. He removed untouchability for some extent.

He fought with Gandhiji for the welfare of S.C. & S.T. At last he accepted the religion of Buddhism with one lac Mohar to come in Gaya. On the whole he was a great man of India. We never forget him, because he has done better work for India and specially for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe. He died on 6 December 1956.

I am hardly respected my constitution man. I accept my Indian culture. But not accepted untouchable system in my country. This system is very neighbouring. Man and man are equal but he is a systematic rule. So Baba Saheb Bhim Raw Ambedkar are great philosopher in my country. He was a great personality in my country in this time.

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