



## DR. B. R. AMBEDKAR'S POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY AND ITS RELEVANCE TO THE MODERN INDIAN POLITICAL SYSTEM

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### ABSTRACT:

B. R. Ambedkar was great intellectual and social reformer. In his early stage of career, he realized the plight of untouchables. The political philosophy of Ambedkar assists in renegotiating the crisis of western political theory in particular and leading the fights of the people in general. Ambedkar has arisen as a major political philosopher with the rise of Dalit movement in contemporary times. He emerged on the Indian socio-political area in early 1920s and remained in the head of all social, economic, political and religious efforts for up liftment of the lowest layer of the Indian society called untouchables. Besides, he made an outstanding contribution as an economist, sociologist, legal illuminator, educationist, writer, parliamentarian, and advocate and human-right activist. He was an iconoclast and researcher, who effectively mobilized, energized, unified the untaught Indians against all social and political suppressions and oppressions. This study encapsulates the political philosophy and its relevance to the modern indian political system of Ambedkar.

### KEYWORDS:

DR. B. R. AMBEDKAR, POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY, RELEVANCE, INDIAN POLITICS.

### 1. INTRODUCTION:

“A great man is different from an eminent one in that he is ready to be the servant of the society.”– Dr Ambedkar.

The aim of human society must be to enable every person to lead a rich, all around life involving as much the cultivation of the mind as also the satisfaction of basic physical wants. It includes demolition of all social barriers between man and man. The worth and not birth is the measure of man and must promote equality between man and man. This is the way of life based on liberty, equality and fraternity.

Ambedkar featured as a significant political philosopher during a Dalit Movement. The philosophy of this versatile leader is always pursued in different norms and spheres. Due to diverse and inconsistent theoretical assessments of Ambedkar's philosophy, the academics and scholars are predominated by uncertainty and disputes. In the appraisal of thinkers, the social background of scholars and their subjective roles play a significant role, and more frequently, scholars' opinions elicit highly strong- and degrading reactions from Ambedkar. He had a considerable impact on Indian politics in the backdrop of the nationalist movement upto 1980's, yet no fruitful intellectual discussion had taken place on his efforts. All his endeavours and influences as a theorist and social scientist have been either overlooked or marginalised. In modern Indian philosophy and philosophical speeches, Ambedkar is not quoted anywhere. The implicit politics of the Indian philosophy authors must consider this exclusion of Ambedkar. Quite interestedly, he has been taken into the forefront by common masses of the deprived Indian community. It's not an exaggeration to claim that without an Ambedkar statue, there is no big

village in the world. He is India's most prominent icon in modern times. Because of the symbolic link between masses/Dalit and Ambedkar, the conservative and progressive political and academic parties have been compelled to investigate Ambedkar. The Ambedkar celebration upholds that the Indigenous Democratic State does not hit the bulk in this country and that the ignored groups are asserting themselves. In other terms, the theory of Ambedkar is a pursuit of the philosophies of Indian society's societal redevelopment.

Dr. Ambedkar's whole life is the continuous, unending and courageous struggle he had to make against social injustice, inhuman, unequal treatment. Dr. Ambedkar's was, par excellence, a spokesperson of the ignored community i.e. the workers, small peasants, landless labourers and women. So it is pertinent to raise some question to reflect on Dr. Ambedkar's legacy. Have his projects shaped out as he would have wished? Has India moved in the direction that he thought optimal? Have his inheritors embalmed his ideas in dogma or extended them while confronting new predicaments?

**“We are Indians firstly and lastly” is yet to be realized.**

#### 1.1 BIRTH AND EDUCATION:

Bhim Rao was born on 14 April 1891 in an untouchable 'Mahar' family at Mhow, near Indore in the present Madhya Pradesh. He was the fourteenth child of Ramji Sakpal and Bhimbai. Ramji Sakpal (1848-1913) was a head master in the Military School in the rank of subedar- major. Bhimbai (1854- 96) belonged to a well to do family of Murbadkars who were also employed in the British army. Bhimrao's family hailed originally from the Ambavade

village located in the Ratnagiri District of the present Maharashtra. His official name in the school register was Bhima Rao Ambavadekar. There was a Brahmin teacher in his school with the surname Ambedkar, who somehow had a soft corner for the boy. It was the kindness of this teacher which made him ultimately adopt Ambedkar as his surname. Ambedkar got married to Ramabai, a nine years old girl, at the age of fourteen. He passed matriculation in 1907. With the help of a scholarship offered by Maharaja Syajirao Gaekwad of Baroda, he completed the B.A. degree in 1912. His higher education was in the West. There also his studies were financed by the Maharaja, on an agreement to serve in the Baroda state after completing the studies. He took his MA degree in 1915 and Ph.D. degree in 1916 from the renowned Columbia University, New York. After successful completion of his studies at the Columbia University he left New York for London and entered the Gray's Inn for doing Bar-at-Law and simultaneously enrolled himself in the London School of Economic and Political Science. But, when he was half the way through his studies the Maharaja of Baroda called him back, as the period of scholarship granted to him was over. Back in India he assumed the office of the Military Secretary to the Maharaja. But due to the unbearable humiliation he had to suffer at the hands of caste-Hindus he left Baroda state. For a shortwhile he worked as a professor of political economy at the Sydenham College, Bombay. He resigned from this post to resume his economic and legal studies in London. This time the Maharaja of Kohlapur rendered him financial assistance. Before leaving for London he had given evidence before the South borough Commission on franchise; and had advocated separate electorate for the untouchables. In 1921 he got his M.Sc. for his thesis "Provincial Decentralization of Imperial Finance in British India" He obtained the D.S.C. (Econ) degree in 1922 from the London University for the thesis. "The Problem of the Rupee: It's Origin and its Solution". Taking his Bar-at-Law degree from the Gray's Inn he went to Germany and joined the famous University of Bonn for a higher course of studies in economics. But he could not complete his studies due to shortage of funds.

## 2. OBJECTIVES:

1. To know the revolutionary work of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar as the social reformer of modern India.
2. To highlight his role against casteism and for human dignity in India.
3. To assess his Contribution and Relevance to the Modern Indian Political System.

## 3. METHODOLOGY:

Methodology The present study on „A study of the contribution of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar in Modern India“ is based on historical method. This research is based on a primary and secondary sources data that are available. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's publications, What Congress and Gandhi have done to untouchables (1945), Federation versus Freedom (1939), The problem of Rupee: Its origin and its

solution (1925), Annihilation of Caste (1936), Castes in India: Their Genesis, Mechanism and Development (1918), Who were the Shudras (1946), The Untouchables: Who were they and why they became Untouchables (1948) and varied collection of secondary sources for the study were also consulted.

## 4. DISCUSSION:

### PERTAINING TO OBJECTIVE 1

#### **01. To know the revolutionary work of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar as the social reformer of modern India:**

Ambedkar's thought, as reproduced in his writings and speeches, has great prominence in drawing the history and growth of social thought in India. It is essential to understand the philosophy of Ambedkar which is the theoretical foundation for the Dalit movement. The central of political thinking of Ambedkar is enclosed in two of his statements, the rights are protected not by law but by social and moral conscience of society, and a democratic form of government presumes a democratic form of society. He deliberates democracy as a form of society, or a mode of associated living, and a social conscience is the only protection of all rights. The origins of democracy are to be examined in social relationships, in terms of associated life among the people who form a society. According to him, social relationships are main factors to democracy. Ambedkar is a social democrat in spirit and practice. His special contribution to political thought lies in his connecting liberty, equality and fraternity to the concept of social democracy, which in line, he relates to democracy as a form of government. He further explained the limitations of social democracy in everyday functioning. He categorically stated while addressing the constituent assembly (November 25, 1949), "Political democracy cannot last unless there lies at the base of it social democracy' which means, a way of life which recognizes liberty, equality and fraternity as the principles of life." This statement indicates that he defined democracy as a form and method of government whereby radical changes in the economic and social life of people are brought about without killing." Majority of speeches and writings of Ambedkar are about social reformism. He often discussed and challenged the issue of superiority of social over political issues. Politics have to be essentially connected to social issues. The foundations of democracy lie in associated living in society. On the issue of giving primacy to social over political, he diverges with the Congress and the socialists. This is well reproduced in all his writings in general, and 'Annihilation of caste' and 'What Congress and Gandhi have done to Untouchables' in particular. It is well assessed that Ambedkar is greatly impacted by all the major political traditions of his times. His political thought has emerged from the three striking traditions of political thought, i.e. liberal, conservative and radical. The sole feature about him is that he has surpassed all these traditions. He was influenced by the thoughts of John Dewey, the practical American and his teacher. The Fabian Edwin R. A. Seligman had considerable impact on his philosophy. He often quoted Edmund Burke, the

conservative thinker of British, though we can't brand Ambedkar as a conservative. Ambedkar's notion of liberty comes close to T.H. Green. 4 Ambedkar's main focus was on the notion of community. According to him, society is always composed of classes. It may be an overstatement to proclaim the theory of class conflict, but the existence of definite classes in society is a fact. An individual in a society is always a member of a class. A caste is an enclosed class. Brahmins created caste and it is extended to other servile classes. Caste is an endogamous unit and also a communal unit. His political theory was based on a moral community. It was as a model to be realised. He was highly critical about the Hindu social order. He debates that Hinduism is not capable to be a community. Buddhism was projected as the ideal having the value of community grounding on morality. He considers that Buddhism tried to found society on the basis of 'reason' and goodness. His idea of community is very original. He does not approve to either Hindu ideal community or Marxist conception of community based on participation in production process. His notion of community is moral and ethical. It is not automatically available for participation in common affairs. His idea of community has to be created through hard and torturous process of moral revolution.

#### **PERTAINING TO OBJECTIVE 2**

#### **02. To highlight his role against casteism and for human dignity in India:**

Ambedkar's 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 casteism 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. Ambedkar's ideological conflict with the Hindu social order and casteism developed into direct action in March 1924 when a meeting of the untouchables was convened at the Damodar Hall, Bombay. The foundation of "Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha" set a concrete platform to represent the grievances of the depressed classes. 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. He felt that it was his duty to promote their interests by demanding separate electorates. On this matter he had to confront with Gandhiji in the Second Round Table Conference. Ambedkar formed the Independent Labour Party (ILP) to promote the cause of the depressed classes. When, under the Government of India Act 1935, election to the provincial legislatures was declared, his party

contested the election in seventeen seats in the Bombay Presidency and won fifteen. However, congress formed the government and Ambedkar joined the opposition. A notable achievement of his party in the legislature was the introduction of the bill for abolition of Mahar Watan and Khoti. The bill was aimed at liquidating the feudal land tenure system that prevailed in the Konkan region. As a member of the constituent assembly and as chairman of the Draft Committee of Indian Constitution, Ambedkar did his best to safeguard the interests of the depressed classes. The constitution established a uniform or single system of citizenship law for the country. 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.

#### **PERTAINING TO OBJECTIVE 3**

#### **03. To assess his Contribution and Relevance to the Modern Indian Political System:**

**The political philosophy of Ambedkar:** The political philosophy of Ambedkar may aid in renegotiating the predicament of western political theory in particular and leading the fights of the masses in general. People can observe Ambedkar's association with the grand political streams such as liberal, radical or conservative through his writings. At the same time, he distinguishes himself with these three dominant political traditions. Ambedkar's philosophy is fundamentally ethical and religious. According to him, the social precedes the political. Social morality is main focus to his political philosophy. He is neither a violent individualist nor a traditional communitarian. His ideas of democracy internalises the principles of equality, liberty, and fraternity in their true spirit. Though there are many attempts but one may find difficulty in locating him in dominant political traditions. Often this may lead to misinterpretation of the essence of Ambedkar. Ambedkar's political thought stresses a new language to understand the intricacy of his opinions.

**Ambedkar's Concept on democracy:** Ambedkar had a long conversation on democratic form of government in his literatures. His conception of democracy is different from the parliamentary democracy of Western Europe. Democracy came with the principles of liberalism. Parliamentary democracy has all the marks of a popular government, a government of the people, by the people and for the people. Ambedkar considered the problems and articulated displeasure against the parliamentary democracy in nations like Italy, Germany, Russia, Spain and some other European nations in proposing the parliamentary democracy in India. Caste-based inequality in India still persists. While Dalits have acquired a political identity through reservation and forming their own political parties, they lack behind in social dimensions (health and education) and economic dimension.

There has been a rise of communal polarization and communalization of politics. It is necessary that Ambedkar's vision of constitutional morality must

supersede religious morality to avoid permanent damage to the Indian Constitution.

**Ambedkar as an eminent economist:** Dr. Ambedkar work in economics is noteworthy. His views deals with public finance and agriculture are landmark in the economics. Prof. A. K. Sen has also said, "Ambedkar is my Father in Economics. He is factual celebrated champion of the disadvantaged. He deserve additional than what he has achieve today. His contribution in the field of economics is splendid and will be remembered forever..!" Ambedkar said, „Economy" in public expenditure does not simply mean a low level of public spending, but it is the clever use of finances so that every paisa fetches the most benefit. Those in charge of public funds must strive to evaluate alternative methods of achieving the objectives and see to it that leakages do not occur. Ambedkar"s commitment was internal stability and he was convinced that only an automatic system based on gold standard with gold currency could achieve this desirable end. He was of view that governments should spend the resources garnered from the public not only as per rules, laws and regulations, but also to see that "faithfulness, wisdom and economy".

**Dr. Ambedkar as a Nation builder:** He was out spoken about his ideas of nation building. He possessed great foresight and his warnings about the future of India ring so true today. In a speech before the constituent assembly he cautioned his fellow legislators against the use of non-constitutional methods of protest, such as civil disobedience and Satyagraha, because they were essentially an anarchic in nature. He rallied against the Indian tendency to engage in hero worship. He was afraid that the people of India would lay their liberation at the feet of someone they worshipped or entrust them with extraordinary limitless powers. He also underlined the importance of creating not just a political democracy, but also a social and economic one. His PhD thesis was inspired to set up for the Finance Commission of India and his works helped a lot in framing guidelines for the RBI Act 1934. He was one of the founders of Employment Exchanges in our country. He played a vital role in establishment of the National Power Grid System, Central Water Irrigation, Navigation Commission, Damodar valley project, Hirakud project and Sone river project.

**Dr. Ambedkar as an architect to Indian constitution:** Dr. Ambedkar"s drafting of the Indian Constitution has facilitated the abolition of untouchability and the prohibition of all forms of discriminations based on sex, religion, caste etc. Owing to the entire exceptional offerings, Dr B.R. Ambedkar can be truly entitled as the Principal architect of the Indian Constitution. However, it is an undeniable truth that Dr Ambedkar"s vision of the construction of a democratic social arrangement still remains unfulfilled. Various countries all over the world have followed the Indian Constitution.

## 5. CONCLUSION:

According to historian R.C Guha, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar is a unique example of success even in most adverse situations.

Today India is facing many socio-economic challenges such as casteism, communalism, separatism, gender inequality, etc. We need to find the Ambedkar's spirit within us, so that we can pull ourselves from these challenges. Dr B.R. Ambedkar was in fact a designer of a nation and a universal leader instead of just a Dalit leader or leader of the backward classes. It"s just because efforts of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar we are pleased with the principles of social justice. Babasaheb 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. It is only regrettable that the press in the past as well as the contemporary has projected Ambedkar mainly as a great social rebel and a bitter critic of the Hindu religion. Critics of Dr. Ambedkar have ignored his basic humanistic instincts and strong humanitarian convictions behind his every act or speech throughout his life. Thus we conclude Dr. Ambedkar was one of the foremost makers of Modern India.

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