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A study of Dalit consciousness of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar

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Abstract

The Dalits became conscious of the tyranny, caste discrimination, injustice, atrocities they were experiencing. Ambedkar's social reform movements carried a significant place for the betterment of Dalit community in general. Educational awareness was created for Dalits by the architect of the Indian constitution. Dalits became socially conscious about the circumstances and social problems of untouchability and caste discrimination meted out to them.

Keywords: Social evils, Dalit consciousness, dominant role

Introduction

One of the most dreaded social evils which exists in India is the caste system and its natural offshoot is a full community of people who have been labelled as "dalits". Gandhiji said that he did not want to be reborn but if born, he should be born an untouchable, a dalit so, that he might share sorrows and sufferings with them. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar belongs to the galaxy of eminent men who spent their whole life in the course of the upliftment of the lower castes. Besides being a harbinger of social resolution, Ambedkar was the architect of free India's constitution. Ambedkar is really considered to be one of the makers of modern India and a prophet of the future.

Dr. Ambedkar stood for the dalits and dalit consciousness in its all forms. The existence of Dalit consciousness can be traced to a period of 400 years. The dalit consciousness still occupies its full form. Dr. Ambedkar was of the view that the dalits would get rid of the shackles of degradedness only if the caste system is uprooted in every form lots of effort is required to help the dalits to get rid of their backwardness.

Indian politics can be clearly said to be a caste-ridden politics. In the past there existed no such department in India, where caste as a political, social economic, educational and cultural factor was not present. Even today caste continues to play a very dominant role in all aspects of an individual's life in our country.

Before the commencement of the Ambedkar era, there were the untouchables in India who due to the Hindu society had from time immemorial remained socially degraded, economically impoverished politically suppressed and excluded from educational and cultural opportunities. These people were deprived of all human rights. Though these degraded people suffered a lot, there were none to look after the political interests of the millions of untouchables. They were neglected not only by the British government but also by the emerging political forces upto the year 1915. The dalits had no place either in the political strategies of the congress. The growth of political awakening did not recognize the problem of social segregation of the untouchables. Borale PT segregation and Desegregation in India, Manaklala (Bombay) 1968^[1].

The dalits had no place in the political pictures and there was no change of bettering their condition. They were dragging on their miserable existence. It was Dr. Ambedkar who symbolised the dalits and their problem. He emerged from such downtrodden class to revolt against such ages old social order.

The national movement since 1886 from the point of political recognition of the untouchables falls under two categories

1. Span of 30 years 1886 to 1915 worked by non-recognition in Indian politics.
2. Second when they were not only recognised by political parties and government but also a lot of work was undertaken for their emancipation.

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Dr. Ambedkar took up the cause of the dalits wholeheartedly. He did so with a strong sense of duty and determination, unmindful of what one would think of him. He played a very significant role in the history of this country.

The Congress, the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha, linked their political aspirations with their culture and religion. Tilak wanted the various sections of the Hindus should unite themselves into a mighty "Hindu Nation". He declared that "Indian Nationalism could not be purely secular; it must be based on Hindu Orthodoxy". Aurobindo Ghosh went a step ahead and declared "Independence is the goal of life and Hinduism alone will fulfil this aspiration of ours". The emergence of communalism might be attributed to the role of Hindu revivalism based on Hindu ideology.

Ambedkar viewed the national movement in his own way. He saw it as a ray of hope for the political advancement and social freedom of their degraded people. He linked nationalism with social and political aspiration of the untouchables. Ambedkar's approach represented a dynamic fusion of two powerful trends, the revolt advocating the untouchable political claim and the efforts preserving the unity with the nation's mainstream during the freedom struggle.

Dr. Ambedkar was an intellectual and moral leader of the suppressed community as a whole. He advocated a correlation between social equality and political independence. Firstly, he was determined to elevate the 60 million untouchables from the state of slavery to manhood. Secondly, he resolved to build up a socio-political system in the country based on liberty, equality and fraternity. Ambedkar was the messiah of the suppressed humanity, the untouchables and a revolutionary for the conservative Hindu community and a dynamic in India. He loved India from the core of his heart and dedicated his life to secure political freedom from British domination. At the same time, he loved the most degraded people dearly and fought on their behalf at his fight for independence. He warned the Britishers on the soil of their own country that "the time when you were to choose and India were to accept is gone never to return". Thus, he was a true nationalist. Ambedkar had before him the aim of bringing political safeguards and human rights for the untouchables. Ambedkar came to the conclusion that constitutional safeguards were necessary to protect them from the oppression of the system and untouchability in the Indian society. He got the rights though not completely as he wished of scheduled caste embodied in the constitution of free India. Thus, his role was of a liberator and a savior of the depressed classes. He wanted to build up a democratic, socialist, secular, rationalist, humanist, sociopolitical system in the warty and fraternity. He wanted democracy to be present in all domains of life-political, social and economic.

Ambedkar's greatest achievement was fundamental rights, Directive Principles of state policy, reservation in the Lok Sabha and legislative assemblies as well as in services. The foundation of Ambedkar's movement was the removal of untouchability and all disabilities from which the deprived classes suffered. From 1919 onwards Ambedkar fought for a social change which meant for him a discernible, significant alteration in the structure and functioning of the Hindu social system. The political structure in India according to Ambedkar rested on a social structure which was the caste-system based on graded inequality. This was the outcome of

Hindu civilization and culture which had created such a society which had untouchables, unapproachables. This social system was defended in the name of religion. Ambedkar examined the nature of the Hindu social system and traced the origin of the caste shudras and untouchables (His work who were the shudras).

Therefore, Ambedkar's said "at the root of the Hindu Social System lies Dharma as prescribed in the Manusmriti. Such being the case I do not think it is possible to abolish inequality in the Hindu Society unless the existing foundation of the religion is removed and a better one laid in its place". According to him "Traditional Hindu book has a political tendency".

It was Ambedkar who in a systematic way questioned the authority of Hindu religious scriptures. He attacked the caste system, the varnasana Dharma which preaches hatred and contempt for groups of human beings. His struggle for human equality aroused bitter protest by the caste Hindu leaders. From the congenial platform Gandhi himself raised an alarm against untouchability.

According to Ambedkar what British imperialism was to India, Hindu imperialism was to the untouchables. He was against injustice and imperialism in any form and any part of human society.

In this case we also study the social networks. Human beings at all levels of development operate through networks in the everyday business of life. A network is a social field made up of relations between people. Thus, relations are defined by social, political and economic criteria underlying the field. The study seeks to discover networks active among the educated scheduled caste people and the influence it has on the community of depressed people.

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