



DR. AMBEDKAR AND ITS CONTRIBUTION AS SOCIAL REFORMER

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Abstract: The Father of the Constitution of India, DR Bhim Rao Ramji Ambedkar, popularly known as *Babasaheb*, was an educationist, jurist, social reformer, economist and one of the greatest political leaders of India who relentlessly struggled to reform the Indian social structure. He was a man with a vision who was ready to serve the nation from the core of his heart. Throughout his political career, he worked for the welfare of the society, especially for women and the downtrodden class. Actually Baba Saheb Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was a great human rights leader. who I believe must be considered the greatest Indian of the millennium, was a fighter for human rights not only for the most oppressed section of Dalit's but all the Indian caste opposed groups for workers and farmers and for women? Dr. Ambedkar is India's foremost human rights activist in the 20th century. He is an emancipator, scholar, extraordinary social reformer a true champion of human rights. Dr. Ambedkar provides equal rights for all citizen in Indian constitution. But the caste dissemination and untouchability somehow and others are still playing negative roles from different parts of the society. Untouchability is a crime against humanity, The constitution of India is designed in such a way that all citizens are equal before it. Our nation facing different sorts of socioeconomic, educational and political evils in the society and only the effective implementation of the constitution in its real spirit can overcome them. The Dalit's also will have to come forward and to labour hard in all social, economic, educational, political area to complete with the other members of the society.

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Introduction: This research paper focuses on the various stages through which Dalit consciousness and movement broadened from mid 19th century up to now and how various Dalit leaders, especially Jotiba Phule, the high-caste Hindu and Ambedkar, a Dalit fought for Dalit rights. As we know that the weaker section in general and the scheduled caste in particular have suffered from multiple deprivations and were the victims of cumulative domination since time immemorial. With the passage of time some Dalits mustered the courage to fight back the age long system of exploitation. The main objective of Dalit movements was to create a counter culture and a separate identity for the Dalits in the society. However, they were not against any individual caste or communal group, but against the establishment, the government but, the society as a whole. A favourable environment for the emergence of the protest movement of the Dalits was created by the collective efforts of Phule, Shivram Janba Kamble, Gopal Baba Walangkar, Kisan Fagoji Bansode and others minor leaders in Maharashtra. The Mahar revolution movements in Maharashtra, paved way to the attempts of the untouchable castes to organize for social and political purpose in various parts of India, including

the Dalits of Madras, the charmers of Chhattisgarh area, the depressed classes of the Punjab and the Namshudras of Bengal. All these Movements have not only provided the lower masses with the base for establishing self-determination, self-respect, and honour among them, but also a means for protesting against the domination of upper-caste and classes in the society. As a matter of fact, the quest of the Dalit activism is the levelling up of the status of Dalit masses and it is the real manifestation of a new consciousness among them.

Dr. Ambedkar put stock in serene techniques for social change. He was bolstered to sacred lines in the developmental procedure of social change. He thought the components like peace which are crucial for public activity. It additionally endeavors to support establishments that will improve "social order". He was inverse to the forceful strategy in mutual change for it hindrance the levelheadedness and make bedlam. He had no confidence in disorder strategies. A welfare condition of all can't be created on the grounds of fear, power and severe strategies. As per him vicious technique to a tranquil culture isn't just wrong yet too unreasonable and indecent. He was a genuine Renaissance man, an individual who

exceeded expectations in a wide range of regions of request. In spite of the fact that he was loathed by traditional Hindus and marked as a demolisher of Hinduism, students of history currently understand the vital job Dr. Ambedkar played in perceiving Hindu society. A long way from being a backstabber, he assumed a significant job in rejuvenating Hinduism, resuscitating it by testing everything that was unjustifiable and unreasonable inside it. Truth be told, he realized a renaissance of Hinduism by inciting the Hindus to reconsider a portion of the fundamental principles of their religion. Dr. Ambedkar had an extraordinary confidence in social reformers to make popular supposition for against of the gross disparities in the general public. He encouraged them to establish associations to manage critical instances of segregation.

The associations should bargain the incredible segment of society to allow to the persecuted and discouraged classes to work in various parts. The Hindu society should give a space to discouraged areas by utilizing them in their different divisions fit to the limits of candidates. As indicated by him, social change and social equity are in fact basic to the libertarianism that any vote based system must try it. As a social democrat Dr. Ambedkar stressed on an a lot more extensive perspective on unfaltering revamping of nation with complete development and social mix in the Nation without rank separation. As the significant draftsman of the Indian constitution, Dr. Ambedkar developed the shields for building up an increasingly impartial society to a huge number of mistreated and discouraged classes. He was firmly accepted that political establishments were liable for transforming the current social organizations by utilizing authoritative power to yield the outcomes. Political establishments will endure just when they effectively work for social transformation.

The Contribution of Ambedkar The contribution of Ambedkar towards the upliftment and dignity of the Dalit community is remarkable and phenomenal. The amount of injustice, cruelty, oppression and suppression had given to the Dalits, is simply unbelievable and unforgivable. No one try to wipe out this sheer injustice? Ambedkar was a God gift to the Dalit community. He was the only person, who not only tried to wipe out this caste system, but also did his level best to eliminate the hierarchy based caste system. Ideas of high and low had crept into the Hindu society; Ambedkar suffered because of this; he also fought hard against such differences; later he became the first Law Minister in free India. The credit for making a Law and creating the necessary atmosphere to wipe out 'Untouchability' goes to Ambedkar. The 'Untouchables' are Hindus. Therefore, the doors of temples should open to them.

If the Hindus can touch the Christians and the Muslims, why should they not touch the people who are themselves Hindus and who worship the Hindu Gods? This was Ambedkar's argument. He gave a call that people who practice and support 'Untouchability' should be punished. Some people argue that the 'Untouchables' were not yet fit for equality. The Hindus say that they want independence and democracy. How can a people who have temple upon all the liberties of a backward group aspire to democracy? Ambedkar argue like this and thundered that these people had no right to speak of justice and democracy.

In 1927 there was a big conference. It resolved that there should be no caste differences in the Hindu Dharma and that people of all castes should be allowed to work as priests in temples. The Chowdar Tank dispute went to the court. The court decided that tanks are public property. The 'Untouchables' who have been subjected to humiliation for hundreds of years should find justice. For this purpose Ambedkar indicated a few clear steps. No section of the Hindus should be kept out of temples. There should be more representatives of the 'Untouchables' in the legislatures. The government should not nominate these representatives. The people should elect them. The government should employ the 'Untouchables' in larger numbers in the army and the police department. Those who suffer in the Hindu society should get justice. This was Ambedkar's rocklike decision. He was prepared to oppose anybody to reach his goal. The British Government invited several Indian leaders to discuss the problems of India. The conferences were held in London; they were called the "Round Table Conference". Gandhiji also took part in them. At the Round Table Conference, Ambedkar spoke angrily against the government. He said that the backward sections did not enjoy equality with other sections, even under the British Government; the British had just followed the ways of the other Hindus. That was a time when Gandhiji was very popular in India. Millions of people followed his footsteps with devotion. Ambedkar openly opposed Gandhiji's views on how justice should be secured for the 'Untouchables'. He supported the views which seemed right to him. Ambedkar secured for the Harijans (the Untouchables) 'separate electorates' at the Second Round Table Conference in 1931. As a result, the Harijans could elect their representatives separately. But Gandhiji could not agree with Ambedkar.

Montagu Chelmsford Reforms

Caught in the turmoil of World War I, Britain focused its attention on Europe, not on India.

Nevertheless, the British passed important legislation during this turbulent period that would have a significant impact on the development of Indian governmental institutions: The Government of India Act of 1919. The Act had its immediate origins on August 20, 1917. With Britain in a war for survival in Europe, in need of continued support from India and the Empire, and desiring to avoid confrontation with the Indian independence movement, Secretary of State for India Edwin Montagu, in an announcement in Parliament, defined Britain's India policy as: "increasing [the] association of Indians in every branch of the administration and the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realization of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire. Montagu and Lord Chelmsford, then Viceroy, embarked on an analysis of the Indian situation, eventually laying out proposals forming the basis for the 1919 Government of India Act. Despite mention of greater Indian participation in politics, the 1919 Act still contained provisions guaranteeing a continued active British presence and dominance: While we do everything that we can to encourage Indians to settle their own problems for themselves we must retain power to restrain them from seeking to do so in a way that threatens the stability of the country. The reforms included devolution of more authority to provincial governments and diarchy, a system in which elected Indian ministers, responsible to the legislatures, were to share power with appointed British Governors and Ministers. The Act also addressed minority safeguards, including the particularly vexing issue of communal electorates. Montagu and Chelmsford firmly rejected communal electorates, characterizing the system as a "perpetual [or] of class division" and a "very serious hindrance to the development of the self-governing principle." The authors also pointed out another related problem that: A minority which is given special representation owing to its weak and backward state, is positively encouraged to settle down into a feeling of satisfied security; it is under no inducement to educate and qualify itself to make good the ground it has lost compared with the stronger majority. On the other hand, the latter will be tempted to feel that they have done all they need do for their weaker fellow countrymen and that they are free to use their power for their own purposes. The give-and-take which is the essence of political life is lacking. There is no inducement to the one side to forbear, or to the other to exert itself. The communal system stereotypes existing relations.

Dr. Ambedkar struggle for Dalit's Rights

Dr. Ambedkar adopted various means to protect and safeguard to Dalit Human rights in India. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar starts the movement against Dalit

discrimination by creating public opinion through his writings in several periodicals such as Mook Nayak, Bahishkrit Bharat, Equality for peoples, which he started for the protection of Dalit rights. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar organized the Dalit rally to assert their legal rights to take water from the chowder tank. The chowder tank of Mahad was made a public tank in 1869. In 1923 the Bombay legislative council passed a resolution to the effect that the Dalit's be allowed to use all public watering places. The Mahad municipality passed a resolution on 5 January 1927 to the effect that the municipality had no objection to allowing the Dalit's to use the tank. Baba sahib Bhim Rao Ambedkar fought for the right of workers and peasants. In the late 1920 and especially in the 1930s, when he had formed his independent labour party, he took up the cause of tenants (from both the Dalit Mahars and the caste Hindu Kunbis) in the Konkan region of Maharashtra. With the supports of radicals then in the Congress Socialist Party, the Independent labour party organised a huge march of 20,000 peasants in Mumbai in 1938, the largest pre independence peasant mobilization in the region. In the same year, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar joined with the communists to organise a strike Mumbai textile worker in protest against a bill about to be introduced by the British government to curb labor strikes. Dr. Ambedkar took the lead in condemning the bill in the assembly and argued that the right to strike was simply another name for the right to freedom of assembly.

NARRATIVE VIOLENCE AMONG ANTI-CASTE ACTIVISTS

Ambedkarite activists often tell hagiographic stories about of their patriarch, Dr B.R. Ambedkar. In my experience of meeting and talking with Dalit anti-caste activists there is an unquestioned reverence and respect for the life and work of Dr Ambedkar that can only be compared with a demi-god or modern pop-icon. This reverence is expressed through the telling of stories about Babasaheb's life and work. Like most interactions with Ambedkarites, my own experiences interacting with Dalit diaspora Ambedkarites on the occasion of 125th birth anniversary was no exception to my previous experiences of this phenomenon of hagiographic storytelling. On this jubilant occasion, I spoke to an audience of Ambedkarites at Michigan State University and asked them to fully consider their own agency as speaking social agents. In being invited to give a lecture to Ambedkarite anti-caste activists there is always a balance between gently suggesting pragmatic action and providing critical analysis of the ongoing anti-caste movement. As should be evident by now, I do not think narrative is an inanimate and agentless fact of social interaction. Nor do I think that stories, or narratives, are just subjective expression of

personal truths devoid of any social and political relevance for social change. Therefore, my focus in such “lecture” situations is often to draw attention to the stories that I hear activists themselves voice. As a social constructionist, I believe firmly in the power of stories to influence social and structural change and I am intentional about placing the agency for change among the people who have experienced, and in turn, tell (and retell) such stories. I have written elsewhere about the elliptical character of these stories and their ability to mobilize activism. But, beyond movement mobilization what do stories do? How do they work to strengthen identity boundaries and build awareness of unmet rights and self-worth?

STORIES IN AMBEDKARITE ANTI-CASTE CIRCLES

One of many hagiographic stories of Ambedkar’s life involves his 1934 trip to Daulatabad Fort in Maharashtra. Travelling with a group of about 30 “untouchable” friends and arriving late and tired to these historical ruins, the party stopped to wash and refresh by a small tank of water that was near the entrance to the fort. Feeling newly refreshed as they entered the front gate of the fort, an old Muslim man came running to the entrance yelling “The Dheds [meaning ‘untouchables’] have polluted the tank!” After some tense debate with the local authorities, the party was eventually allowed to see the ruins of the fort, but not without an armed guard to ensure that they did not “touch water anywhere in the fort”. Dr Ambedkar’s own autobiographical sketch of this episode ends with the evaluative statement: “This will show that a person who is an untouchable to a Hindu is also an untouchable to a Mohammedan.” Such a story is retold with disbelief and frustration by Dalit activists and recreated as street plays in many low-caste communities. But to what actual effect?

While Dr Ambedkar clearly told this story towards the goal of illustrating an evaluative judgment about the dehumanizing demerits of the caste system even outside of the Hindu fold, he also, in telling such a story, must have soon realized how little control he would have over this narrative going forward. Again in the words of Cobb “narrative authorship is partial and dependent” and, therefore, we often “arrive at narratives that we did not make.” While such a narrative helps to build a collective identity as marginalized, it also paradoxically positions Dalits in identities that they have little control over. How followers and detractors use this story to make their own evaluative judgments and build support for their own identity concerns represents a crucial question for anti-caste activists pushing for social change. While this story clearly communicates the injustice and inhumanity of the situation Dalits consistently face, it

also constructs their identity as distinct from, and possibly in opposition to, Muslims. Such a story, therefore, creates a paradox for Dalit activists. It creates an identity of “other” that supports and reinforces an identity and experience of self as “othered”. While it underscores the inhumane and unjust realities of life as a Dalit or Scheduled Caste (SC), it also closes off dialogue with others (in this case Muslims and possibly other “downtrodden” and economically depressed potential allies) by strengthening in-group identity, as well as, portraying Dalits as either victims or a distinct and cohesive community as apart from various “others” in society. Either of these social positions leaves something to be desired for Dalit activists working for social transformation, and, therefore, the retelling of such a story acts to close off the narrative space to dialogue with others.

This is not to suggest that Dalits not tell this story, but rather that it is the type of story that should be deployed selectively and strategically in tandem with positive identity and awareness education. Though not a strong example of Cobb’s sense of “narrative violence”, this narrative does little to challenge the perpetual narrative violence that Dalits face in the public sphere. It does little to “thicken” the narrative life of Dalits. In fact, due to the ambiguity involved in Dalit listeners hearing such a story coming from Dr Ambedkar’s *own* experience, listeners get caught up in what Francesca Polletta calls “narrative ellipsis” – a process in which the stories activists tell compel other activists to retell the story to better understand the ambiguous meaning of the events described. The story itself has a life. Failure to engage the story as a constantly changing system leaves activists unable to strategically use the story to its full potentials.

By reproducing the inexplicable inhumanity in such a story, the activist unwittingly reifies the community’s own sense of separated identity and victimization, and does little to open the opportunity for dialogue and narrative shift among others in the wider public sphere. In addition, high-caste detractors can, and do, use such a narrative to convince low-castes to stay within the Hindu fold reasoning that caste is not just a Hindu problem (which is indeed counter to Ambedkar’s own analysis of the caste system). In short, the narrative space this story opens, as it is currently deployed by Dalits, does little to create social agency and/or even the social justice equation for Dalits or low-caste communities. So how do anti-caste activists fashion stories that will better open the space for thick narrative that engenders authentic dialogue with others? This has been the perennial challenge for modern anti-caste activists. Failure to strategically develop and systematically

deploy stories of oppression that devalue separateness of identity and simultaneously value liberty, fraternity, and collective awareness of injustice, has fractured and splintered the anti-caste movement. Such fracturing among anti-caste activists has left them unable to influence the hearts and minds of higher caste Indians.

Another more mainstream and consistent narrative that one hears when studying Ambedkarite communities worldwide is the nationalist story of Dr Ambedkar as the source/father of the Indian Constitution. Yet, such a dominant narrative has divergent meanings in different social communities and contexts. For Dalit communities, the faith in the rule of law is strong and India's 1949 Constitution is a source of pride as the penultimate legal resource to ensure rights for the marginalized. This is why Ambedkar memorial statues throughout India show the Indian Constitution tucked under his left arm as a steadfast Dr Ambedkar points toward a desired egalitarian future. As the head of the drafting commission for the Constitution, Dr Ambedkar is seen by Dalits as *the* author of this important document, despite the more complex negotiated realities of his co-authorship. Even the more complicated and revolutionary aspects of Dr Ambedkar's long career outside of government seem to be sidelined in nationalist narratives about him. Dalit friends have told me that it is the Constitution more than any other document that Ambedkar authored, including the revered *Annihilation of Caste*, which cements his anti-caste legacy. The narrative of Ambedkar as first law minister and nationalist hero trumps more complicated historical readings of him both within and outside Dalit communities. Indeed, it is within anti-caste activist circles, that an acritical reverence for Dr Ambedkar as a father of the nation, as well as the progenitor of a mass move to Buddhism, conspires to narrow the narrative impact of Ambedkar outside of Dalit communities. Still, in all strata of Indian society, a shallow collective understanding of Dr Ambedkar's legacy and impacts exists. In heeding Cobb's call for attention to narrative patterns we must analyze not simply prevailing low-caste narratives of Dr Ambedkar and his followers, but also the narratives of high castes, if we hope to transform future-going narrative violence.

As an important father of the nation, Dr Ambedkar is remembered and memorialized by members of the privileged castes in an even more one-dimensional nationalist way than among Dalit communities. For the privileged castes, rather than the father of a democratic rule of law, or a social reformer, Ambedkar is one father (among many) of an India that is independent from outside rule. In the same league with Gandhi, Nehru, Patel, and other nationalist

forefathers of the nation, in this perspective, Dr Ambedkar is a symbol of national unity and has little to do with caste oppression or social reform. Here, Ambedkar is a symbol of freedom and independence, but this freedom is nationalistic and amorphous – not tied to any one community, but to India as a unified and predominantly Hindu independent nation. In turn, Dalit reverence of Dr Ambedkar as an archetype for the rule of law is understood by privileged castes as simply supporting the nationalist narrative and in no way challenging Hindu privilege. In a sense then, as a source or a father of the Indian nation, Ambedkar legacy is mollified by both Dalits' and privileged castes' nationalistic narrative expressions about him. The reverence for Ambedkar is not lost, but rather transfigured into a call for national unity, as opposed to a critique of power. The dominant one-dimensional view of Ambedkar as nationalist father and author of the Constitution meld together in ways that work to mask more complicated and revolutionary narratives about him and forestall any constructive dialogue and/or criticism about his revolutionary ideas for social change.

The Babasaheb of most Dalits' imagination, a Dr Ambedkar as a revolutionary-change-agent and public intellect, are secondary narratives for the majority of caste Hindus. The nationalist narrative of Ambedkar as an important father of the independent nation has relegated the intellectual and social revolution he spurred to the domain of divided and contested histories. Such divided histories go unnoticed by the dominant castes and the more radical statements of Ambedkar have become sanitized in the public sphere. Dalits' view of B.R. Ambedkar as revolutionary activist is largely invisible to many privileged higher castes. The fact is that the Dalit conception of Babasaheb, as a change agent and radical, is not a conception most high-caste Hindus ever encounter.

Dr. BR Ambedkar's Satyagraha at Mahad

A young legislator of the Bombay assembly led about 4,000 Dalits to assert the right of social outcasts to water in public places 89 years ago. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar's march to Chavadar water tank in the municipality of Mahad in Maharashtra's Raigad district has since been talked about only in limited circles in the country. Never in terms of a major civil rights movement. "The Mahad Satyagraha (non-violent movement) is comparable to Mahatma Gandhi's Dandi march and Martin Luther King's Selma march," said Anna Bhau, a Dalit campaigner. "It represents the collective articulation of our rights and our decision to assert them ... But in India, the word satyagraha means Gandhi." But every Dalit in Mahad remembers Ambedkar's contribution and his memory stays in images, books, flags, banners,

and even brochures of life insurance policies that carry a small picture of the marginalised people's icon who wrote the Constitution. Every year on March 19 and 20, Dalits from across Maharashtra make a beeline for this dusty town and congregate at Chavadar tank. Ambedkar converted to Buddhism on the Deekshabhoomi in Nagpur on October 14, 1956. So Buddhist monks lead the prayers; Samata Sainik Dal members, in blue caps and cream trousers, parade around town; cultural activists alternate between speeches and singing songs in praise of Ambedkar, popularly known as Babasaheb. Seminar halls ring with rousing speeches on Dalit empowerment. But the epicenter of the movement cries for attention. Chavadar is so dirty and polluted that Ambedkar disciples like Veena cannot "drink its hazardous water, but we do dip our feet". Dalits, called untouchables, were banned from using water bodies and roads used by upper-caste Hindus. Ambedkar's Mahad Satyagraha was a fight against this age-old, discriminatory custom.

Social Reform Works

1. Struggle to achieve Dalit Rights: Dr Ambedkar was the leader of the Mahad Satyagraha movement. This movement was a struggle to secure basic human rights for the Dalit community. Through the Mahd movement, Ambedkar wanted to end social discrimination against Dalits. The movement started with the Dalits not being allowed to use water from the chowder tank in a place called Mahd. However, Ambedkar's relentless struggle made the Mahad Municipality pass a resolution in 1927 allowing all people, irrespective of their social caste, to use the water of the tank. He published five weekly papers Mook Nayak, Bahishkrit Bharat, Bahishkrit Bharat and Samta Janata to fight untouchability. In July 1924, Ambedkar founded the Bahishkrit Hitkarini Sabha to fight the evils of untouchability. The Sabha started a free school for the young and the old and ran reading rooms and libraries.

2. Society based on Equality: He vehemently fought with the aim of reconstructing the society by uprooting the social evils of feudal inequality and caste system. He wanted a reformed society based on the ideals of the French Revolution – liberty, equality and fraternity. He also wanted to free Indian society from the evils of caste system.

3. Spreading Education: Ambedkar's educational goals were integrated with his social objectives. He realized that social emancipation could only be possible with education of the masses. The slogan 'Educate, Agitate, Organize' embodied the ideological basis of Ambedkar's movement for social reforms.

Under the support of the People's Education Society established in 1945, many schools, colleges, hostels and other educational institutions were established to uplift the underprivileged.

4. Political Upliftment of the Underprivileged: Ambedkar succeeded in transforming a class movement into a revolutionary movement throughout India. During the British rule, he was one of the delegates at the Roundtable conference in London, where he demanded a separate electorate for the Dalit people. When the new constitution was framed in independent India, Ambedkar ensured as the chairman of the drafting committee that the welfare and development of the backward community in India were guaranteed. This introduced reservations for backward communities in various fields such as employment, education etc.

5. Land Reforms and Economic Reforms: Dr Ambedkar stressed the need for extensive land reforms. His philosophy of life centred around giving justice to the underprivileged, lifting the downtrodden, and providing a just society for all. He believed that an unequal agricultural system was a hindrance to the development of society. He supported land reforms so that the agricultural system is equitable for all, particularly the landless.

He believed that the state has a very important role to play for the economic transformation of the state. As such he advocated in favour of nationalization of land and the leasing out of land to small groups of cultivators. These groups have to be encouraged to form cooperatives to promote agricultural activities. Agricultural development has to be accompanied by large capital investments to raise productivity.

He also realized the necessity of industrialization so that the surplus labour from agriculture could be moved to other productive livelihoods.

Conclusion

Dr Ambedkar championed as a fighter for human rights not only for the Dalits but also for the unequal social system and oppressed class, which included workers, farmers and women. Ambedkar was an extraordinary social reformer, emancipator of the oppressed classes, scholar and educationist, and a true champion of human rights. Dr. Ambedkar advocated equal rights for all Indian citizens in the constitution. As the chairman of the drafting committee, he designed the constitution in such a way that all citizens are equal before the law. His ideology for the entire

nation was: *Be Educated, Be Organized and Be Agitated.*

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