

THE POLITICAL THINKING OF B.R. AMBEDKAR: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY

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Synopsis

Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (1891-1956), ‘a symbol of revolt’ (as called by Jawaharlal Nehru), was one of the front-ranking nation-builders of modern India. He is popularly considered as the ‘pioneer’ who initiated the ‘liberation movement’ of roughly sixty-five million untouchables of India of his time. For, Ambedkar, notwithstanding his birth in a lower caste, the *Mahar* community of Maharashtra, has made an indelible imprint on the body politic of the country. A glance at his profuse writings would evidently show that despite his preoccupations with the problems of the *dalits*, Ambedkar had, in his own way, made significant contribution to the contemporary political ideas.

The existing literature on Ambedkar is vast and swelling. Quite a large number of works are there which have dealt with the different aspects of Ambedkar’s socio-political views. A few of them are worth mentioning. Dhananjay Keer’s *Dr. Ambedkar: Life and Mission (1971)*, though mainly a running commentary on Ambedkar’s personal and political life, deals *passim* with his social and political ideas. In his *Dr. Ambedkar: A Critical Study (1975)*, W.N.Kuber covers a wide spectrum of Ambedkar’s opinion on different social and political questions examined from Marxian standpoint. G.S. Lokhande’s book *Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar: A study on Social Democracy (1982)* discusses Ambedkar’s visions of an integrated society, his views on democracy, socialism and variety of other subjects, and analyses them critically.

After the birth centenary of Ambedkar (1991), a few major books have been published. *The Social Context of an Ideology: Ambedkar’s Political and Social Thought (1993)* By M.S Gore, attempts to study the ideology that Ambedkar enunciated to register his protest against the inequalities of Hinduism and to promote the liberation of the untouchables of

India. While analyzing what he calls the ‘Ambedkar’s Ideology’, the author then dwells on some key political issues of contemporary India (Section II). Gail Omvart in her *Dalits and the Democratic Revolution : Dr. Ambedkar and the Dalit Movement in Colonial India(1994)* examines Ambedkar’s role in the Dalit movement of India during the colonial period. Incidentally she devotes a chapter to assess the ideology of Ambedkar. On the other hand, Section II of *From Untouchables to Dalit: Essays on the Ambedkar Movement (2001: 3rd edition)* by Eleanor Zelliot, deals with the various aspects of the politics of Ambedkarism.

Nevertheless, a detailed and systematic analysis of the main strands of Ambedkar’s political thinking is conspicuously absent in all these works. Moreover, the scholars who have worked on different aspect of Ambedkar’s ideas fail to give due importance to his political thinking. In spite of valuable contribution supported by the analysis of eminent scholars on this issue, the above mentioned pertinent research gaps on Ambedkar’s political thinking after a thorough and careful review of literature, have led me to undertake this study.

The present study is an attempt to make a comprehensive and objective analysis of the various strands of the political ideas of Ambedkar while keeping in minds the gaps and lapses in the existing literature on Ambedkar. For the purpose, the whole study has been divided into five chapters, including ‘Introduction’.

After introducing my research study, its objectives, review of literature, the second chapter seeks to examine the influences of various thinkers and social reformers, as well as the philosophical ideas of Buddha, Kabir, Phule, Tukaram, Burke, Seligman, Dewey, Russell etc. on Ambedkar which might have led him towards making a critical analysis of the concrete problems facing humanity.

In third chapter, an attempt has been made to examine the social aspects of Ambedkar’s political ideas- his views on issues of caste and caste system, politics of untouchability highlighting Gandhi and Ambedkar debate, his views on social justice.

The fourth chapter attempts to evaluate Ambedkar’s self generated vision on nationalism with reference to the current debates relating to his role in freedom struggle,

his idea of democracy, equality and freedom, political resistance and also his idea of socialism.

The fifth and concluding chapter is devoted to making an evaluation of Ambedkar's political ideas pointing out their relevance to contemporary India.

Whatever he achieved, that would have been possible for his strength of character which manifested his individual charisma. As a statesman, scholar, crusader of downtrodden and above all, a spiritual guide, Ambedkar has left an indelible impression on the Indian History. His contribution to uplift the downtrodden made him a cult figure among the depressed classes. The roots of his philosophy were not in politics but in religion. Ambedkar was one of the pioneers of social justice in India. As Ambedkar worked outside the mainstream of Congress politics and also criticized the Congress, he was suspected by many to be a separatist and pro-British. But all along, he remained a patriot. Thus, *Ambedkarism* is of great relevance to Indian society even today in achieving social justice, removal of untouchability, in establishing equality and freedom and true democracy. Democratic socialism is the key note of his political thought and constitutionalism is the only way to achieve it.

This research gives closer and analytical insight into the political thoughts of Ambedkar and provides an answer to the question of whether we achieve religious tolerance, human equality and freedom, true democracy in the society, justice and peace in the light of political philosophy of Ambedkar whose memory will ever guide the nation on the path of justice, liberty and equality. This dissertation, therefore, besides reflecting the theoretical issues that are implicated in the writings of Ambedkar, also attempts to capture the position of Ambedkar on issues whose relevance is actually felt even in the present day. The complex issues which Ambedkar explained and defended, although not always to the satisfaction of many and sometimes not as rigorously as required, have continued to claim intellectual and political attention to this day in many societies and especially in India.
