

AMBEDKAR'S VIEWS ON RELIGION: A PHILOSOPHICAL STUDY

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Abstract: One of the most eminent people of India, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar is not only a leader, popular scholar, administrator, parliamentarian, social reformer, and economist but also a great religious expert. He described his religious explanation of the Dalit viewpoint where social equality is spoiled by religion. This paper focuses on Ambedkar's views on religion and critique of Hinduism and also Buddhist conversion. For Ambedkar, religion is not a spiritual way, but a social doctrine to establish equality between man and man. He considered morality as the way to bind together between society and human beings. His religious intention does not express theology, but rather practical and social. Ambedkar was also a religious person by heart but the caste discrimination system of Hinduism makes him a strong critic against Hinduism as well as other religions. This inequality in society made him leave Hinduism and later initiate Buddhism as a new form, i.e. Neo-Buddhism. For him, Buddhism is a scientific religion, morality, and Indian religion also. In his book '*The Buddha and His Dhamma*' there he mentioned various superstitions and barriers in Hindu religion. For Him, those are man-made, especially elite classes. Later his religious movement provide a separate identity to Dalits and tries to establish equality in society.

Keywords: Ambedkar, Religion, Neo-Buddhism, Dalit, Hinduism

Introduction:

Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (1891-1956) was a unique person of modern India regarding social, political, economic and so on. Ambedkar did lots of important works in his life, among them most important the author of the Indian constitution and he raised his voice for those who belonged to backward classes who are known as untouchable. As a Hindu, he also fought against Hindu religious discrimination, against those are affected by untouchables. As a Mahar, He faced many problems during his student life and working life also, but he got the highest education among their cast. By birth as a Mahar i.e. untouchable, a black part of the Hindu caste system gave birth to anger towards Ambedkar and gradually He decided to leave Hinduism. He was deeply influenced by Buddha and Kabir also. The bad effects of Hindu religion make Ambedkar more crucial against Hindu monks and agenda and He does not hesitate to criticised Hindu religion. For him, Hinduism and Brahminical tradition which is the primary cause of social conflict and injustice in India.

Ambedkar's thinking on religion was more complicated and multifaceted. Particularly caste system and the Hindu religion were the main targets of Ambedkar. This paper will discuss, the process of Ambedkar towards all human beings especially Mahar, and how to achieve equality or gain power religiously or politically apart from Hinduism. Ambedkar's religious beliefs and practices are especially attached to Buddhism.

Philosophy of Religion:

Philosophy of religion is neither a religion nor a discussion about theology nor philosophy. Philosophy of Religion is something apart from those discussions. It covers the language that is related to religious thinking, and religious experience and may also be anti-religion. The Philosophy of religion is not connected with any rituals or any worship, nor the religious experience. It is also not a stream of any religion. The Philosophy of religion stands for the belief of the existence of God, life beyond the empirical word and immortality of soul and transmigration, and also attached to social development. The Philosophy of religion is

a process to develop the religious life of a particular community, which is also mentioned as a healthy relation of man and society. The main focus of the Philosophy of religion is on a particular religion and its social and moral values and to save mankind from harmful practices. And trying to wellbeing for society.

Ambedkar's views about the Philosophy of religion:

The Philosophy of religion is not attached to religious beliefs, divine power worship, or any other rituals. According to Ambedkar, religion is necessary to all and it will be treated as equal to all. For Ambedkar, religion is directly connected with society. He believed that, a good religion makes a healthy society that also promotes justice and equality, and any kind of inequality can be rejected by this, because religion must be morality-based. For him, true religion is social, moral and rational and stands for public demand. For him, analysis and evaluation must be compulsory in religion, because any religion or its group or institution has some beneficial aspects or harmful for individuals, groups or society.

Ambedkar attached with Indian and Western religious scholars for the reconstruction of society. In general, there were many thinkers and different views, but Ambedkar criticized them and agreed with them, that religion should focus on human social relations.

Ambedkar's view on Hindu philosophy of religion:

For Ambedkar, religion is a necessary part of human life, for this reason, he did not agree with Karl Marx and other Marxist thinkers. For him, humans cannot live for bread only, human needs food for thought. Religion gives hope for life. Religion has a role of human beings, however, Ambedkar criticized and rejected Hinduism as a religion. We all know that, as a Hindu he did not get any advantage from society, because belongs to Mahar. Law of Manu, Manusmriti which Ambedkar regards as Brahmanical legal text, later, Ambedkar showed from Manusmriti, the casteism and inequality are deeply connected with Hinduism. For him, this social structure was composed by Brahman for himself and held the highest position in society. Human beings believe that, this discrimination is controlled by divine power. They also accept that, social discrimination is due to the action of previous birth. Ambedkar believes that, cast is the heart of Hinduism, for him, Hinduism cannot be reformed, but can be rejected. It's a misinterpretation by Brahmanic society. To distraction and anger about the Hindu caste system, in 1927 he burned a copy of the Law of Manu. For Ambedkar, freedom is necessary not just free from British rule, but it is required to be free from Hindu religion, a religion where human beings are against each other and have space for morality.

Conversion to Buddhism:

The rigidity of casteism and its bad effect on Hinduism made Ambedkar leave Hinduism and later initiate Buddhism. For him, Buddhism is a scientific religion and he also found the religious moral character in Buddhism, i.e. liberty, equality and fraternity. In Buddhism there is no space for any caste discrimination as well as any superstition and no ups and downs, even everyone can take advantage of Buddhism. Ambedkar's main target was to get a separate identity for Dalits, and his movement known as Neo-Buddhism, is open to all. It is also clear that, all members of Neo-Buddhist came from deprived classes. *The Buddha and His Dhamma* is a most important book about Neo-Buddhism, where He discussed criticism of Hinduism and advantages of Buddhism as well as Neo-Buddhism.

Conclusion:

In modern India Ambedkar's thoughts about religious, political and social uphold a new way for society. Ambedkar's religion was moral and political. Ambedkar's conversion to Buddhism was not only a personal interest, but a powerful decision against social discrimination. Ambedkar's view about religion is to critique Hinduism and caste system. Besides this to established a new way with equality and morality.

From this discussion, it is important to note that, we need to change our mentality and attitude towards people of another caste, or other religions, and also respect them. We must follow that, we all are related to each other, and no one is separate from this society. This will be a tribute to Bharat Ratna Ambedkar.

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