



Ambedkarism and the Development of Political Consciousness among Dalit-Backward Castes

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of the present paper is to explore the relevance of Ambedkarism (thoughts of Ambedkar) and how it brings political consciousness among backward sections. B.R. Ambedkar advocates the path for emancipation through his personal experiences and he gave three mantras: 'educate', 'agitate' and 'organize'. The idea of 'education' would be main objective of this paper because education is one of the key mantras. Education makes a person to a complete human being. Therefore, Ambedkar express that the socio-political status of *shudra* (SC/ST/OBC) had been socially and economically backward only because there was a severe lack of education.

The present paper would explore the connection between political consciousness and Ambedkarism (thought of Ambedkar), because his thought does not accept any religious discrimination, apartheid, caste-discrimination, orthodoxy, superstition, ignorance, etc. in any form and this concept seeks the path of socio-economic and political upheaval through education.

Keywords: Ambedkar, Uttar Pradesh, Dalits, social justice, education.

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INTRODUCTION

A person can become a true Ambedkarite (rational follower) only if he has a worldview along with a recognition of right and wrong. These things are possible only when the person has taken proper education because education gives a path to rational and qualitative development. The Ambedkarite concept is the name of the social movements or efforts being made for the upliftment of human society based on logical and scientific facts. Babasaheb Ambedkar believed that there is 'graded inequality' in Indian society, which has been characterized through many myths in Hinduism. Similarly, the thought of Ambedkar is known as 'Ambedkarism'. It is the name of connecting humans with humans or making humans for humanity.

If we look-in the mirror of history, we find that the British-India regularized the caste system and planted the seed of intolerance among various communities. Politically so-called upper-castes like Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas (merchants) were being at the helm of power to maintain the traditional inhuman system (forced labour, usury, untouchability, etc.) and strengthen the caste system. Brahmins were a source of legitimacy and they got respected position in Indian society. Many Kshatriya castes received land grants (from Mughal kings, British officers, etc.) for their military service, and they became a zamindar and continued to exploit the raiyats or poor peasants financially [1]. As a result, such castes established their dominance in rural areas. The Vaishyas were involved in commercial activities and also gave loans to the illiterate poor and helpless Dalit-Bahujans (lower castes) at huge interest and continued to exploit the Dalit-Bahujans through usury. Therefore, Indian thinker Kanchallaiiah called this Vaishya community a 'social smuggler' and gave rise to a new discourse [2]. The feudal mindset people imposed several stringent rules on the Dalit-Bahujans and they made a joint effort to threaten the lower caste. Therefore, to make equal and egalitarian society, many resistance streams erupted on the surface of the society. Many famous faces like Kabir Das, Raidas, Phule, Ambedkar, Gandhi, Nehru, Kanshi Ram, Karpoori Thakur, Mayawati, Lalu, Mulayam etc. are the lively forms who have been giving direction to those streams from time to time.

In the early decades of the 19th century, Jyotirao Phule founded the 'Satya Shodhak Samaj' to get the Dalit-Bahujans out of 'mental slavery' and wrote a book with unfavorable currents like 'Ghulamgiri'. His wife Savitribai Phule took it a step further. She also opened a primary school for helpless women in collaboration with her husband Jyotirao Govindrao Phule. Jyotirao Phule believes that common people are mentally slaves and do not wish to be liberated due to lack of education. Phule writes that Das (Bahujan Samaj) himself were in favor of his master (Brahminism) and he also cites the exact example of Western countries to confirm his point. For example, in America, educated free whites were more

concerned about ending slavery than illiterate black slaves. In Indian context, he gives a suitable example and says that 'in the mountainous section of the west coast of India (Konkan), the British authorities established a system whereby local *raiyats* (tenant-farmers) could complain against landowners. The land-holders / land-owners sweated and enslaved their *raiyats* during the system of governance and in return provided only enough food for their family members to subsist. If the *raiyats* made a mistake, they were also beaten up. Despite this, uneducated *raiyats* supported their masters in court on this exploitation. Therefore, it was necessary to educate the Dalit-Bahujan to be free from superstitions and to resist.

Dalit communities in independent India

Ambedkar says that Dalit is a community which has suffered the most from 'Brahminism' and is not even considered 'human'. Due to his shadow, the person of feudalistic mindset kept considering himself as 'impure' and systematically closed all the doors of development of the Dalit community [3]. After independence, socio-political change among Dalits began with the efforts of leaders like Gandhi, Nehru, Ambedkar, Kanshi Ram, Lohia, Jayaprakash Narayan, Mayawati, Lalu and Mulayam. Even today, it is difficult for people with feudal mindset to see the change. So, such people have also been trying to impose cowardly behavior and traditional thinking on Dalit-Bahujans. If Dalits refuse to follow such undemocratic rules (forced labor, slaughter, plow, etc.) and social exploitation, then they face atrocities. Una, Virudhunagar, Begumpura, Lakshmanpur Bathe, Parali (Perambalur), Dharmapuri, and Villupuram, etc., which have occurred in the last two decades, are direct examples of social caste atrocities on Dalit community. Then the question arises whether the Dalit community will be able to forgive this Brahminical system so easily [4,5]. Social thinkers, Guru and Sarukkai [6] write that the self-experiences of Dalit communities are the only valid and authentic experiences ... Only Dalits can understand this experience. Gandhi's humanistic philosophy, the teachings of Kabir Das, Ravidas, Phule, Ambedkar and Kanshi Ram continue to encourage this Dalit-Bahujan community to move forward. Following the ideals of Periyar, Phule, Sri Narayana Guru, etc., education was made a means of empowerment and development in the states of South India - Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana etc. and many government facilities were provided to the Dalit-Bahujan students. At the same time, the Chief Minister of Punjab state of North India made arrangements for free education for women. Similarly, the Delhi government of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal also prepared the roadmap for Adarsh Vidyalaya and also arranged for coaching for Dalit-Bahujan and poor students. At the same time, Yogi's government in Uttar Pradesh proved to be a failure in the field of education. Uttar Pradesh was already backward in the field of education and required some corrective policies. But the current government of Uttar Pradesh seems to be doing the opposite. On one side, 'Shiksha Mitras' of Uttar Pradesh have to get on the road today, on the other hand, recently, the Uttar Pradesh government has stopped the scholarship for the backward classes which have been getting for years and also the scholarship for the Dalit students. Now, the scholarship and other educational benefits will be available only when they achieve more than sixty percent mark. Such provision was not in the previous governments. Not only this, Chief Minister Yogi has also stopped the policy of Dalit student's 'admission on zero fees'. Now the students of Dalit-backward communities first deposit the entire money and later the government will send money to their account if they score first class. As a result, in the coming times, both these decisions will reduce the entry of poor students from such marginal castes into higher education. Especially in professional subjects, the entry of students coming from this community will be stopped at all, because most of the students of this class live below the poverty line. This seems to be a very conspiratorial decision of the present Uttar Pradesh government. Such decisions of the government are going to hurt the perception of social justice very much and will also help in transforming education as a privilege for those who buy it with money. The parties of the self-proclaimed backward and Dalit sections, like the Samajwadi Party, Apna Dal, Bahujan Samaj Party, etc., are keeping silence on this burning issue. In such a situation, the question arises that whether the Dalit-Bahujan society of Uttar Pradesh still looking for its hero or the ideology of the honorable Kanshi Ram, Lohia and the teachings of Ambedkar become blurred in them? Is the Bahujan class afraid of being crushed one by one? In this context, an eminent thinker Ratan Lal writes in a positive tone that the public outrage over Rohit Vemulacase of Hyderabad or atrocity against Dalit in Una and the India bandh (closed) on April 2, 2018 on SC-ST Act or on March 5, 2019 is a testimony to this fact. That the public does not always wait even for five years. Lohia used to say, "If the roads become deserted, the Parliament will stray!" Now, neither the roads will be deserted nor the Parliament tramp [7]!" If we peep into the mirror of history, we know that it is the same Nagaur district of Rajasthan where on the occasion of Gandhi Jayanti (in 1959) India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru laid the foundation of Panchayati Raj for empowerment of farmers and backward classes. However, today the same Nagaur district is again in the news headlines. Chandra Bhushan Singh Yadav, a well-known writer in this context, says that in Panchori area of Nagaur district of Rajasthan, two (Dalit) cousins were not only beaten up and beaten up with accusations of theft but also put petrol on their bodies and put screwdrivers in their private parts.

Such inhuman activity is not only shameful but extremely considerable in this twenty-first century. After this incident in Rajasthan, the question arises that if both those youth, who have been accused of stealing, would not belong to Dalit, would they still face such heinous crimes? These incidents show that how intolerant and animalistic people too exist. Currently, there are IPC / CRPC law and also SC / ST Act, yet how feudalistic or Manuwadi people still indulge in such undemocratic act. The aristocracy, even the exploited section of the society which burns itself in the furnace of

Manuwad, does not miss out on inhuman treatment of the Dalit community as soon as the opportunity arises because the Brahminical system has taught the Dalits not to be human for generations. Highlighting the anomalies of the Brahminical system, the critic Harinarayan Thakur [8] writes that it is a great surprise and anomaly is that by giving food to the crow, how one's ancestors' hunger disappears. If such socio-cultural practices are not discussed rationally, the generations to come will also get entangled in the spider web of Brahminism, and our society will deviate from the mainstream of development.

Dalit-Bahujan is entrenched in the clutches of Brahminism. The notion of ritualism prevalent in Hinduism can be traced back to the early decades of Indian independence (1947). To such cultural process, M.N. Srinivas (sociologist) attempted to explain in his study with the help of a concept 'Sanskritization' [9]. Nowadays, the people are taking about Hindutva and Ram Rajya. It is not Hindutva and Ram Rajya that took the neck of Dalit Shambuk? Not only Rajasthan, every corner of the country is currently on the rise of the fanatical Hindutva as well as they are eager to give effect to such Manuwadi thinking. To avoid such incident, the Dalit-Bahujan intellectuals and educated members will have to come forward. There is strong need to show the significance of Ambedkarism. You will have to spread it to every person. Today, the Dalit-Bahujan has to make education a weapon to avoid the atrocities and social discrimination.

CONCLUSION

The social stratification in India is characterised by a rigid caste-based hierarchy. In Hindu society, the Scheduled Castes were remained as *achhot* (untouchables) for long time. For centuries, the *shudra* (SCs, STs and OBCs) were remained socially backward, economically impoverished, politically marginalised. They were also excluded from educational and cultural opportunities and deprived of political and human rights. To realize their accelerated socio-economic development, Ambedkar fought for social justice, essentially with two objectives: dignity and emancipation of the *shudra*. Due to his efforts, the Indian Constitution also prescribes protection and safeguards for the Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and other weaker sections to promote their political, educational, and economic interests and remove social disabilities. Even now, they need a few more special and targeted interventions to safeguard their socio-political interests.

Ambedkar gave the mantra of educating and organizing the common deprived masses, as well as taking the initiative to fight for the present social challenges. As a result, many socio-political changes also took place across the country. Meanwhile, the Dalit-Bahujan community is feeling cheated due to some discriminatory policies of the present central government. At the same time, the weakening of non-political roots or movements in Uttar Pradesh and other states at a slow pace indicates a terrible situation. Honorable Kanshi Ram, who raised Baba Saheb's caravan, used to say that the situation of Dalit-Bahujan is like those hens in the court, who are in captivity of butchers but they have nothing to do with the pain of each other. Only the hen who comes to be bitten, the same rooster shouts, 'Save-Save' and the other remaining hens are silently engaged in pimple-picking (with selfishness). They do not know that their number is going to come soon.

The emergence of Kanshi Ram and his success in politically empowering Dalits in Uttar Pradesh - is undoubtedly the second biggest event in the history of the Dalit movement after Ambedkar. The Dalit movement in Uttar Pradesh was inspired by the thoughts of Ambedkar and was born from the womb of Ambedkarism and its pioneer soldier was Manyavar Kanshi Ram. Dushyant Kumar [10] writes that during his political and social struggle, following the Ambedkarite ideology, Kanshi Ram vehemently opposed everything influenced or associated with Brahmanism, whether it was political parties, media or '*chamcha*' (pseudo Dalit leaders). According to Manyavar Kanshiram, instead of supporting the Dalit organizations in the 'social struggle', they (Chamcha) seek opportunities in big political parties. Today, that example of selfish chickens given by Kanshi Ram is being applied to the Dalit-Bahujans. Today, it is necessary to reduce the trust on such fake Ambedkarite masks and raise the edge of social movements for the all-round development of the Dalit-Bahujan community. Ambedkar's original mantra 'be organized' should be adopted again. Otherwise, we will have to face discrimination and atrocities in daily life like the incidents of Jhansi-Encounter caste, institutional killing of Rohith Vemula at Hyderabad University, disappearance of Najeed Ahmed from JNU. The words encounter, mob-lynching, atrocity, social boycott, institutional killing, kidnapping, etc. will become synonymous with the destruction of Dalit-Bahujan and India will never be able to boast of being an egalitarian society in future. Today, we need to fulfill that dream of Babasaheb's 'egalitarian society' by taking inspiration from the thought of Ambedkar and taking a pledge to fulfill the unfulfilled dream of Manyavar Kanshi Ram and strengthening DS4 and BAMCEF as well. Despite the many obstacles, the thought and learning of Mahatma Phule, Ambedkar and Kanshiram were intensifying the 'Bahujan movement'.

The spread of education should increase among marginal sections. Today, the conscious and educated class will have to take the responsibility of bringing power to the doorstep of the Dalit-Bahujan, otherwise the uneducated Dalit-Bahujan can deviate from the path shown by Babasaheb Ambedkar. Today, Babasaheb's '*prabuddhabharta*' (enlightened India) and Manyavar Kanshi Ram's unfinished dream of 'Bahujan Samaj' are not seen to be fulfilled. To fulfill that dream of

Ambedkar, the first-generation learners will have to come forward and cooperate in advancing the edge of social movements.

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