

DR. BHIMRAO AMBEDKAR'S UNFLINCHING HUMANISTIC CONVICTIONS

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ABSTRACT:

Though, a number of works have been done on Dr. B. R. Ambedkar in the form of biographies or his contribution to the dalit society but I did not find any specific work on his humanistic convictions. Finding this gap in the historical knowledge, I took the task of writing this paper to trace the origin and consolidations of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar unflinching humanistic convictions. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was indeed a man marking the beginning of an era. He was the embodiment of human intellect for creative endeavors which enriched human thought, knowledge and wealth thereby contributing to the human heritage for the posterity.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar fought for awakening India's millions of excluded and oppressed people for their rights. He experienced their sufferings and the cruelty shown to them. He overcame the obstacles to the stand on an equal footing with the greatest men of his time. He played a vital role in forming modern India through its constitution. His work and mission continue even today. We must not rest until we see a truly democratic India of equal citizens living in peace together.

Thus, this paper is a modest attempt to examine and analyze his humanistic approach through several instances in his life to justify the purpose of the study.

KEYWORDS:

Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar, Biographies, Humanistic Convictions.

INTRODUCTION

Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar also known as Babasaheb is widely recognized as an eminent jurist, a political leader, social activist, philosopher, thinker, anthropologist, historian, orator, prolific writer, economist, scholar, editor, revolutionary and a revivalist for Buddhism in India. He was also the chief architect of the Indian Constitution. He spent his whole life, fighting against social discrimination, the system of Chaturvarna- the categorization of Hindu society into four varnas and the Hindu caste system. He worked steadfastly for the upliftment of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other Backward Classes, amelioration and the achieving of their rightful place among caste Hindus. He encouraged inter-marriage and offered satyagraha for establishing their civic, social and religious rights.

DR. B.R. AMBEDKAR'S HUMANISTIC CONCERNS:

He entered national and political life in 1930 and desired that separate electorates be established for these groups but not hopeful of success that they would gain social and other types of equality with caste Hindus. Dr. Ambedkar in his young hood was being humiliated again and again by the upper caste. Why did the people ill-treat him in this way when he had not committed any sin? He was born in the Mahar caste and it was the belief of many Hindus that this caste is low and those born in this caste should not be touched by people of the other castes. Like the people of the Mahar caste, people of many other castes are called 'untouchables' and have suffered injustice for hundreds of years. Seeing all this, his mind became a volcano of bitter feelings and thus he thought to fight to protect the human values in the society.

Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar was truly a multi-faceted personality. A veritable emancipator of Dalits, a great national leader and patriot, a great author, a great educationist, a great political philosopher, a great religious guide and above all a great humanist without any parallel among his contemporaries. All these facets of Dr. Ambedkar's personality had strong humanistic underpinnings. He was an immortal personality in the human history that had raised his voice against slavery, apartheid, gender bias and caste system and thus, gave a relentless fight against the prevailing social order of his times in order to free the creative peoples from the shackles imposed on them. It is regrettable that the press in the past as well as the contemporary has projected him mainly as a great social rebel and a bitter critic of the Hindu religion. Critics of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar have ignored his basic humanistic instincts and strong humanitarian convictions behind his every act or speech throughout his life.

ORIGINS OF DR. B.R. AMBEDKAR'S HUMANISTIC CONVICTIONS:

His father, Subhedar Ramji was a known follower of the Kabeerpanth. Many of the Kabir's Dohas are the veritable gems of rationalism and the most daring expressions of the humanitarian beliefs. Dr. Ambedkar's mind was thus deeply imbued with Kabeer's philosophy in the childhood days. On passing his matriculation examination, he was felicitated by his teacher and was presented with a copy of a book on the life of Buddha. This gift had made a profound impact on the mind of young Ambedkar. He stayed in America, the land of liberty, for his higher studies. There he studied the western liberal thought and the humanitarian philosophy expounded by great thinkers such as Prof. John Dewey, who was also his teacher, John Stuart Mill, Edmund Burke, and Prof. Harold Laski. The impact of these thinkers on his mind is evident from his writings and speeches. The contrast between the social milieu which he lived in, and the liberal academic thought he studied could not have resulted in anything but making him an ardent humanist.

PROOF OF DR. B.R. AMBEDKAR'S UNFLINCHING HUMANISTIC CONVICTIONS:

The following events in the life of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar bear testimony to his humanitarian concerns and convictions.

MAHAD TANK SATYAGRAHA: Untouchables were barred, however; the animals were allowed to use the water of the Chawdar tank in the Mahad town of Maharashtra. This glaring manifestation of inhuman attitude of the society was challenged by Dr. Ambedkar to usher a new era of social revolution. On 20th March 1927, 10,000 satyagrahis assembled at Mahad under the leadership of Dr. Ambedkar and marched to the Chawdar tank to assert their human right to drink the water from the public place. The procession was attacked by Hindu castes and many satyagrahis were injured by them. There were many ex-military persons among the satyagrahis who had shown their bravery during the World War-I. They could have retaliated in a befitting manner. However, Dr. Ambedkar appealed to his comrades not to indulge in violence. Only a person who is the humanist to his innermost core can show such steadfast faith in the non-violence in such situation.

The name of Mahad town is also permanently linked with human rights because of one more reason. Dr. Ambedkar organized a conference of satyagrahis on 25th December, 1927 in which the Manusmriti was burned. Burning of the Manusmriti was a revolutionary step which sought to denounce the inhuman laws of scriptures and proclamation of right to equality and justice.

KALARAM MANDIR SATYAGRAH: In the instance, on 2nd March, 1930 in the Kalaram Mandir Satyagrah, many satyagrahis were stoned heavily and grievously injured by the castes Hindu. The satyagrahis wanted to retaliate. But Babasaheb always displayed the wisdom of a statesman; qualities of a leader, the courage of a hero and endurance of a martyr. He advised them to remain peaceful and not to retaliate aggressively.

POONA PACT: In the field of politics also, Dr. Ambedkar remain firm with his convictions. Signing the Poona Pact is perhaps the ultimate testimony of Dr. Ambedkar's humanitarian credentials. He was fully aware of the reason for Gandhi's fast and also the consequences of signing the pact, yet only on the humanitarian ground to save the life of Gandhi he did it. The essence of his political philosophy, the trilogy of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity was borrowed from Buddha's philosophy. His political aims and objectives as expressed in the manifesto of the independent labour party founded by him. Many of the current provisions for the welfare and protection of labour have their origin in the manifesto of the independent labour party.

Fundamental rights assured to all citizens of our country is a great leap towards establishing the basic human values in the society that was based on graded inequality. As the Chairperson of the Constitution Drafting Committee, Dr. Ambedkar was instrumental in the incorporation of the principle of fundamental rights in the constitution.

Dr. Ambedkar was a firm believer in the parliamentary democracy. That is why, when the fear of fascism represented by Hitler was looming large over the world, he decided to cooperate with the British government in its fight against the fascism. Only as a humanist, he could foresee the dangerous consequences of the victory of the fascism. Today some myopic people criticize Dr. Ambedkar for this. However, by criticizing Dr. Ambedkar on this score, they inadvertently expose their fascist leanings.

A few months before his Mahaparinirvana, he embraced Buddhism. It was a great tribute of a great humanist to the greatest humanistic philosophy of Buddha. By initiating millions of his follower in to the Buddhist fold, he asserted his faith in the humanistic values preached by Buddha in alleviating the sufferings of his lot. He thus reached the pinnacle of the humanism by becoming a Bodhisattva.

Now while concluding this study, it should be admitted that Dr. Ambedkar was a great world class Humanists. He immersed himself in the world of ideas and came up with his own perspectives in an attempt to find answers to the problems posed by his life experience. Although he spoke of strong resistance and virility he never attempted to disturb the peace and order. His dedication to the world of ideas was life-long.

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