

DR. B. R. AMBEDKAR AS A HUMANIST

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Abstract :

Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, is known worldwide as a revolutionary, an Indian jurist, economist, politician and social reformer. While he gained reputation as a great scholar for his research in law, economics and political science at both Columbia University and the London School of Economics in the first part of his life, his later life was marked by his political activities, his involvement in campaigning and negotiations for India's independence, publishing journals, advocating political rights and social freedom for Dalits, and contributing significantly to the establishment of the state of India. Though highly educated he met secondary treatment by the upper castes at every stage of his life. To end the humiliations on the ground of lower caste and to ensure the life of dignity to all, despite social background, he inspired the Dalit Buddhist movement and campaigned against social discrimination towards the untouchables. Every move of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, his thoughts, expressed through his speeches and published in his books, his views on socio-political-economic issues in India prove that he was a great humanist.

Keywords – Humanist, social discrimination, untouchables, constitution.

This paper is an attempt to present Dr. B. R. Ambedkar as a rationalist-humanist, human rights intellectual – activist and a man who looked ahead of his time. A humanist is a person who has a strong interest in or concern for human welfare, values, and dignity. He / she works selflessly, involves his / her potentials to create awareness among the people, particularly those who are ignorant about their rights, and treated inhumanly by the so-called upper castes. His / her principle of life is to live as a human being and to treat others as humans, despite any concern to birth, caste or class. His / her only goal of life is to ensure justice to all and avail opportunities for socio-economic development.

It was not only during his early stage that Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar met humiliations and was forced to live life worst than beasts, as a boy from lower caste. But even after he was highly educated, having the recognition as a great scholar for his research in law, economics and political science at both Columbia University and the London School of Economics, he met the same treatment. He went through such experience first at Baroda where he went to work as a probationer in the Accountant General's Office. He experienced that the deep divides existed in Baroda during that time, not just between castes, but also between religions. Upon arriving in Baroda, he realized that none of the Hindu hotels would allow him stay due to his lower caste. He found a Parsi inn, but even here, non-Parsis were not allowed to stay. It was only after Ambedkar gave his name as a Parsi, he was allowed to stay. However, when his original caste was exposed, a group of angry Parsi men, armed with sticks, arrived and removed him from the inn that very day. Not having a place to stay, he was forced to leave Baroda. He met the same experience at Bombay where he returned to find work to make a living for his growing family. In Bombay he worked as a private tutor, as an accountant, and established an investment consulting business. However, he failed in this attempt, too, when his clients learned that he was an untouchable. He met the third same experience even after becoming Professor in the Sydenham College of Commerce and Economics in Bombay. He



was successful with the students, but other professors objected to his sharing a drinking-water jug with them.

As such Dr. B. R. Ambedkar had firsthand experience of the life of injustice, sufferings and humiliations, even to the highly educated like him, to a large section of Indian populace on the ground of class, caste and religion. He had also studied India, not as outsider but as insider, and exposed that study in his scholarly papers, dissertations and thesis. He felt it necessary that systematic and long-term revolutionary moves, with massive public support are necessary to ensure life of justice and dignity to a large populace in India that was deprived of all rights. However, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar never wanted to do all that as revenge against any caste, class or religion. He was a rational, intellectual, humanist who lived before the time. He planned and executed his moves to ensure two-fold objectives, first to ensure the life of dignity to all, particularly to the lower caste people, second to ensure idealistic changes in Indian socio-economic-political scenario. His decisions and launching of active public movements and marches to open up public drinking water resources, a struggle for the right to enter Hindu temples, public criticism of the classic Hindu text, the *Manusmriti* and later burning the copies of the 'same text were against untouchability. In the absence of any other constitutional provisions there was no other alternative available with Dr. B. R. Ambedkar than such revolutionary movements. His teaching of the principle of 'to get educated, to get united and to struggle' should be seen impartially as important one for all the countries and for all times. Being a person living before the time he knew the importance of education to remove ignorance, to ensure economic stability and social dignity. Hence he tried to promote education to untouchables and uplift them while practising law in the Bombay High Court. To promote education and socio-economic improvement, as well as the welfare of outcastes he established the central institution Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha. His another move of starting many periodicals like *Mook Nayak*, *Bahishkrit Bharat*, and *Equality Janta*, for the defense of the rights of untouchables should be seen as rational, intellectual and humanistic approach on his part.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's another rational, intellectual and humanistic move can be stressed in his insistence for creating separate electorates and reservations for untouchables and other religious communities. It was again a humanist in Dr. B. R. Ambedkar that saved the life of M. K. Gandhi at Poona Pact. He showed deep interest in the wellbeing of children and women in all the classes, castes and religions. Though he justified the Partition of India, he criticized Islamic practice in South Asia. He condemned the practice of child marriage. He also condemned the mistreatment of women and the practices like polygamy and concubinage in Muslim society which resulted into the misery to Muslim women.

It was again as a great scholar, doubtlessly, he was appointed Chairman of the Constitution Drafting Committee, and was appointed by the Assembly to write India's new Constitution. He accepted that task for the sake of nation and prepared an ideal constitution for the Independent India, keeping in mind her secular status. *The text prepared by Ambedkar provided constitutional guarantees and protections for a wide range of civil liberties for individual citizens, including freedom of religion, the abolition of untouchability, and the outlawing of all forms of discrimination. Ambedkar argued for extensive economic and social rights for women, and won the Assembly's support for introducing a system of reservations of jobs in the civil services, schools and colleges for members of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and Other Backward Class, a system akin to affirmative action. India's lawmakers hoped to eradicate the socio-economic inequalities and lack of opportunities for India's depressed classes through these measures.*^[1]

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's rational, intelligent and humanistic approach can be seen again in his resignation from the cabinet in 1951. *During the debates in the Constituent Assembly, Ambedkar demonstrated his will to reform Indian society by recommending the adoption of a Uniform Civil*



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Code. Ambedkar resigned from the cabinet in 1951, when parliament stalled his draft of the Hindu Code Bill, which sought to enshrine gender equality in the laws of inheritance and marriage. .^[2]

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar looked ahead of his time. His views on several issues have universal relevance. He knew well that agriculture was not only the living source of majority of the populace but also the base of Indian economy. He also knew that there is a need of industrialization. However, he never advocated industrialization for the sake of industrialization but to boost up agriculture and generate employment. *He argued that industrialization and agricultural growth could enhance the Indian economy.*^[3]


Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's advocacy of national economic, and social development, education, public hygiene, community health, residential facilities as the basic amenities, birth control for the development of the Indian economy, equal rights for women for economic development are suffice to prove him as a true humanist. He found the existing education policy faulty being divorced from the real social content and social goals. He dreamt that every educational institute from secondary school to University College should be developed to become an agency of change. Above all, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar wanted all the citizens of the republic to be constitutionally committed to democracy, social justice, equality of opportunity, secularism and above all to a welfare state.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's acceptance of Buddhism is another remarkable example of humanism. He accepted Buddhism for no other reason than its humanism, its scientific reasoning, that seeks to achieve human freedom, equality, liberty and fraternity. *Dr. B. R. Ambedkar belongs to a category of creative humans who use their intellect for creative endeavors which enriches human thought; knowledge and wealth thereby contribute to the development of human heritage for the posterity. Possessive people, on the other hand do not believe in the use of human intellect for creative purpose. Gautam Buddha, Jesus Christ, Guru Nanak, Kabeer, Ravidas, Tukarama, Krantiba Jotirao Phoolay, Periyar and Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar. They all belong to the great class of Creative humans called as Humanists in Indian context.*^[4] As such Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's every move and march, his thoughts, expressed through his speeches and published in his writings, his deep concern for idealistic changes in socio-political-economic scenario in India and his ideals reflected in the Indian constitution prove that he was a great rationalist-humanist.

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