



## B.R. AMBEDKAR AND THE IDEA OF SOCIOLOGICAL NATIONALISM IN INDIA

V. BALA MURALI KRISHNA,

Research Scholar

(Roll No. 100311074014)

Osmania University, Hyderabad-500 007

(TEL) INDIA

### ABSTRACT

*Dr. Babasahab Ambedkar is the name that shines and shines almost as a state in the annals of both social and political history of India. Having occupied a prominent place in the political affairs of India before and after independence, he had earned a preeminent place for himself, besides earning a great name for the people of his caste and class. It was Dr. Ambedkar who had said that we have been sterling as a nation, not just for the transfer of power and the political independence of the nation but for the abound development of India. The strife that they had undergone to scale higher altitudes of life of earning a Doctorate from such a famous university like that of the Columbian University in the United states and even being the chairman of the Drafting committee in the country that has despised and discriminated against him on the basis of his caste, mahas in his native state, Maharashtra and across the country. Maharashtras is a veritable nest of the people who strove for a common cause which is the common people's cause Dr. Ambedkar single minded attention and focused concentration was only on the uplift of the people of his caste and class.*

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter tries to elucidate an understanding of Ambedkar's idea of nationalism through a study of Annihilation of caste, A speech undelivered, "What the Buddha Taught", "Ambedkar and Buddhism", what Gandhi and the Congress, have done to the untouchables" and Speeches and Writings through which some of the important elements of his thoughts on nationalism have been drawn. He, in his works, envisages a nationalism that promotes and even fosters a caste free societal set-up. The Caste and class Consideration for the distribution of social wealth and the wealth that is produced by the community that comprises the down-trodden to a larger extent should be the things of the past. Caste should no longer be the deciding factor, a vital role player in the distribution of benefits of the state owned property. It was Rd. Ambedkar who had always emphasised on the sociological dimension of



nationalism, when a few people of the upper state of the society enjoy themselves a larger share of the production, it is awful for those people who were deprived and denied of these benefits to bear with it. The gruesome reality is that the societal set up of India does not allow the “Panchama Varna” to get fit into it even after seventy long year of her independence. The Country that has offered them space at the end of the towns and allies, labelling them to be uncivilised primitive, has turned a deaf ear to the woeful ballads and the elegies sung by the people of the untouchable castes, to commemorate the death of their brothers. The sort of nationalism should make their lives liveable, if not loveable.

When the whole country from Kashmir to Kanayakumari was fighting against the British and trying to drive the whites from our country at was Dr. Ambedkar who showed the struggle for freedom a different way and he had also been successful in setting the nation on the path of working for social emancipation and social empowerment which is also his single agenda for his life long struggle. He had, in fact heralded a new epoch and an era in trying to educate the masses and making them emerge as the powerful section of the people of this country to fight for their rightful place in the country and her progress and has development. He, like the other leaders of Maharashtra like Mahathma Jyothirao Phule, Savithri Bai Phule and even Avatar Mahar Baba who said that real happiness was in making others happy. Ambedkar’s question was how a people could be happy and feel safe and secured when their very instance was a perial and even doubt. The rising star could blaze in anger and anguish.

Scholarship, leadership and statesmanship are the three major questions, found in Dr. Ambedkar which made him create new horizons of leadership, after competing and even challenging the ideas of the leaders of the time such as Gandhi, Nehru and Patel. All that Dr. Ambedkar wanted was nothing short of the socio economic, political and cultural development of the backward classes of our country. The Hindu case system had in reserve a severe punishment for Dr. Ambedkar and his community for nothing but thirsting for education and knowledge and freedom from the sectarian ideology which is narrow which has placed the people of his community at the lowest level of being the ati shudras, the fifth caste while the other four upper castes were Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vyahyas and shudras. The inferiority and superiority were based and decided on the birth of the people, which has nothing to do with their holding a membership in the society. It was the social structure of the four fold caste system in the Hindu religion that made the division of people go down deeper into the soul of this country. When at was felt that these castes were decided based on the occupations, Dr. Ambedkar had furiously said that at was not the division of labour but the one of labourers.

The people of the so called untouchable communities were in a way totally robbed off within the framework of the Hindu caste system that has made itself suitable and sustained mechanism of exploitation, making their lose their human identity. Dr. Ambedkar’s strove and struggled very hard to study the point of origin of the evil of caste system in Hindu, to



combat against the same and finally redum the human dignity of the people of his community that has been lost by them for ages. He has made the community ready to face the onslaughts and transformed them into a vibrant army of the solders, fighting against the monostorous caste system which had by them been at least two thousand years old.

Despite his great contributions like drafting the consolidation of independent India, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was despised and looked down upon. But one thing is certainly true that he was given a place alongside with the Buddha after Dr. Ambedkar had extracted the biggest conversion in the sociological history of India with his western attire with a perfect understanding and a first hand awareness of the Indians set up. Dr. Ambedkar had been neglected by the main stream leadership till the emerging imperatives of the electoral politics needed him. Taking advantage of Dr. Ambedkar's stand against the caste inequalities, the main stream leaders took the advantage of vote bank politics. Dr. Ambedkar had not even been considered as the leader of the untouchable as a whole but was treated to be the leader of his own community. This has made Ambedkar get confined to the little margins of the books of history, not being given a place of pride as the major force of energy and a fountain of strength and a mountain of support to the hitherto neglected masses.

It is the intellectual work of Dr. Ambedkar which had been ignored by the top leadership, unlike the books of Gandhi and Nehru which enjoy a long shelf life. The absence of an easy access of to Dr. Ambedkar original writing, he had been away from the understanding of the common people, besides the well real intellectual group beyond certain heresies and amendotes. It is only the consistent and constant struggles of the people of his community that made him wage a fierce battle against the same. It also earned them a little importance in the contemporary politics, which are also the part of the woeful song sung by the masses. The problems of the Dalits are far from being resolved. Inspite of coming to know that the constitution of India provides them with certain privileges, they could not rise their voice against the discrimination that they are put to day in and day out.

Many challenges confronted him, especially the ones that were based on his caste, which was considered to be an untouchable caste, while all the other leaders of the national struggle for freedom were striving to make India free from the sharkles of the British, Dr. Ambedkar was completely focusing on the social transformation of India which was the need of the hour them. It was this contribution of Dr. Ambedkar's that made the Government of India abolish untouchability in the year 1955.

The discrimination was not similar across the country. It different from person to person and even from one place to the other or ranges from the stable provider exercised by the people of the upper castes against the untouchables in the urban areas and the strike practice of untouchability in the rural areas. The policy of reservation in politics, education and services brought out to bring a marked changed in the lives of the masses in another significant



constitutions influence on the Dalits which the policy of reservation was implemented sincerely in the political area, because it fundamentally serves the interest of the establishments, providing the system with sigtimaly, its implementation in the other wo arised like education and employment has been utterly provide. The consistent demand of their dues to the untouchables by the executive as well as the ordinary has forced the frangs of the state. Even after the decades of the implementation of the policy of reservation its implementation is utterly damaging, destroying and disgusting.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru said at independence that the service to India meant the service to the millions who suffer. Swami Vivekananda speaking about the heart rending situation of the poor here, said, "Religion is not for empty bellies and it sis better to put a few slices of bread in their empty bellies. The first cabinet of the union Government, instead of trying to address, the challenges facing the country, Nehru went on, in a way, boasting the contribution of the congress and himself in making the dreams of the pre independence days completely into leaders. Instead of leading the masses from one god to another, as a part of the focused march of India.

It was Ambedkar who wrote that it is the governing class that always rises the cry of nationalism to divert the attention of the people from exactly what they need. The some thing had happened even in the year 1997, during the Golden Jubilee celebrations of India's Independence when the nation was passing through a tough time with a severe leadership crises, Mr. HD Dewa Gowda, being the prime minister India, being unable to deliver his speech / address on the Independence Day from the ramparts of the Red fort in Hindi the National Language of the country. At a critical juncture of her political history at which India needed a leader with such a capability of Dr. Ambedkars to show it a new dimension of equality among all the castes. The political system of our country them was charged with great instability.

When there were crises on all fronts, at was all neglected by the them Government to celebrates the golden jubilee celebrations of India Independence with a great pople and variety. The term nationalism for Dr. Ambedkar was compassimate and emancipatory. The 125<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was an apt occasion to assess and reasons has contribution to understand the conditions of the country during his time and the way be struggled to change them, both as a fighting soldier and a reactionary. The reactionary tendencies of Dr. Ambedkar's filled the hearts of the people, envious of his frame as a leader of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with fear. Dr. Ambedkar shaped and stirred the struggled for secular polity, socialistic patrism of society and social justice with a universl vision. Decreasing the that the Bourg olive and Brahminism are the twin enemer of the world. Dr. Ambedkar said that the annihilation of caste and the negation of capitatism are the impetrations for change that would take India and the world feredal.



The India commercial community thoughts and even sought to replace the Europeans in the field of trade and commerce, the context in which Dr. Ambedkar thought to analyse nationalism. The idea of nationalism was also useful to the commercial community in their trials to replace the Europeans by themselves. The commercial group of India also wanted to lower the exchange rates and higher the profits taking the advantage of the idea of nationalism. It was the very same class that compromised with the British Raj and served its interests. It is extremely critical to recall the analysis of Ambedkar's, in the right of the sole profit making prevents of the companies (corporate) at the cost of the people's interests. Where had the sense of nationalism of the Bharatiya Janata Party that had formed the government with a single handed majority after the 2014 elections, had permitted the foreign companies to establish their firms in India under the programme of "Make in India" and Digital India" which are also the programmes which grab away the opportunities of employment of the Dalits.

The eradication of caste system in India has to be done with an iron will and it will not be possible through the avoiding of surnames as was the idea of the former speaker of the Loksabha, Meera Kumari and the Nobel Laureate, Kailash Satyarthi. The dropping of the surnames was a measure which even the commission for the scheduled castes also enunciated earlier. But instead of undicing caste system, the dropage of surnames will results in the other complications and the problems faced by the bodies like the Election commission will get multideal by similar name which number to several thousands in India. Caste exist in the Indian mind. It exists well beyond just the nomenclature. It is deeply embedded in the Indian projects as Ambedkar's annihilation of caste "states", Caste is not a physical object like a wall of bricks or a lime of barbed wire which prevents the Hindus from commingling and which has therefore to be pulled down. Caste is a nation. It is a state of mind. The destruction of caste therefore does not mean the destruction of a barrier". Apart from the use of surnames, there are still several ways of the identification of caste.

Even after almost seventy long years of India's independence, in rural areas various castes live in their non designated localities and are identified by the names of their castes it is a fact that our educational institutions still require us to stat our caste, particularly at the time of admission. The specific mention of the caste that they belong to made by the children is somethings that injects more sense of caste into the childrens mind. By abolishing the surnames we would be demonstrating and deleilaminsing the Dalit identities and background as well. Instead of weakening casteism through all this, we strengthen further. A deeper and greater reflections have been given by Dr. Ambedkar, the principal architect of our constitution on several occasions at different places. Dr. Ambedkar strongly condemned nationalism, saying the nationalism was used as a cover to put our demands like that of the adequate representation of the untouchable castes in the Executive Judicrary and legislature areas. Though there a few examples like that of Dr. K.R. Narayanan, a Dalit becoming the president of India, in the golden jubilee year of her formation, kum. Mayavati becoming the



chief minister of the largest state of India but it is very shameful to hear such derogatory comments that were made on her recently Damodaram Sanjeevayya of the erstwhile Andhra Pradesh, coming from a schedule caste could become the chief minister of the state. But everyone accepts the point when it is said that development and growth are not one and the same. It is not about the growth of the number of people from the scheduled castes occupying the higher positions is which is very important. But there should be a similar development in all the fields. Dr. Ambedkar also puts one point straight across saying that it is not the allocation of a considerable number of seats in the highest places of learning is which is important but it is very vital on the part of the government to provide people with a sense of social security as social development is as important as the political and economic development are. If we are today hearing the demands of the Dalits to provide them with reservations even in the private sector, the reason go far beyond our imagination taking the ground of the opportunities of higher education. Because they do not have the economic resources enough to go to metropolitan city where there are simple chances to grow educationally. They are still backward a those people with a good background are able to make the best to use of all the opportunities, they find on their way.

The engineers who earn lakhs of rupees working for the multinational companies are all Brahmins and the people of the other well to do castes by and large. The Harijans, as Gandhi called them, in a way not to invite hostility of their Leaders of a very strong opposition like Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, though he had done nothing for their welfare, were and are still at the lowest ring of the economic ladder. No steps were initiated by Gandhi to Address the issue of caste during India's struggle for freedom, to quote a notable example Gandhi's neither resisted nor fasted during the temple entry movement in 1920s when the non-cooperation movement has at its height.

Indeed, all the Ambedkar wrote before independence is a grain reality today, being more relevant than ever that arouses a true sense of nationalistic fervor and a great nationalistic sentiment in not just abusing the British rule under those grip the country had to suffer for about two centuries but thinking in plain terms what the nation actually needs today. What exactly the word 'nationalism' connotations and what it means in plain terms to an average Indian, who waits for arms for two square meals a day. It is true that the only department that employs more number of Dalits is the Indian Railways in the arena of manual scavenging, though the very activity has been totally banned by the government some time age. It is the plight of these Dalits to carry and clean the tracks full of human shit every day. Except this area, nowhere a Dalit can be seen in a government department being employed in a higher position. Every day here or these somewhere or the other there is an uproar against the idea of reservations. It is a true that the reservations have been introduced by the Government of India during the formative years of Indian nationhood for a span of ten years but year after year it is the vote bank politics that has been extending the period, as it was the case with English's being the associate official language for all these years, from 1967.



But it has to be looked at from the perspective of development. Recently, there has been a big discussion in the Jawaharlal Nehru University, where Humanities and Arts are taught and learnt at a great scale. The teachers there have answered the court saying that following the rule of reservation in rater losing their reputation what is it that they wish to do with that reputation which is gained through mortgaging the interest of the people who have always hitherto been outside the ambit of learning. As Dr. Sarvepalli Radha Krishnan has pointed out our universities have an immense role to play and be instrumental in providing the country with men of a great knowledge, wisdom and character, as the potential stone houses of knowledge and wisdom. Is that big pool of knowledge meant only for a few people of the elite communities.

It is widely believed across the world that Ambedkar's political thought is more or less the blue print of the constitution of our country. Surveying the entire spectrum of Ambedkar's social and political thought places one on a plane of confusion whether Dr. Ambedkar is primarily a theorist of the Hindu social structure with an emphasis on the hardships facing the untouchable castes and the difficulties involved in their emancipation or a comparative theorist of the constitutional Government. Dr. Ambedkar's focus encompassed not only the internal structure of India's parliamentary democracy but also the ills and evils of the civil society and the strengths and weaknesses of the economy. Dr. Ambedkar's proposal of the recruitment of the temple priests across the caste divisions. The memorandum submitted by Dr. Ambedkar to the constituent Assembly speaks not only about the special privileges to the people of the scheduled castes and reibes but also about collective farming and the state ownership of agriculture and the socialism of the station the field of Industries, a kind of socialism was envisaged by him be done away with by the legislative or the executive action.

Ambedkar said the political liberty should lead to economic and social liberty which would make the farmer more meaningful. Here while analyzing the difference between the western countries and India, Ambedkar tells us that the interference of the state in securing the rights of the individual is minimal, unlike the Indian system in which the state plays a vital role in ensuring that the individuals are free to make the best use of their social and economic rights contribution to the thought of Indian liberalism.

“The role played by Ambedkar has left its imprint on the social tapestry of the country after independence and shaped the political and care continuous of India today. It would have been a different India without him and in all probability, a much more inequitable and unjust one. He attempted to forge India's moral and social foundations and strove for a political order of constitutional democracy that is sensitive to the disadvantaged. Inherited from the past or engendered by prevailing social relations” (Valerian Redrigues, The essential writings of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar (New Delhi Oxford University Press, 2002 pp.1) .



It was the young Ambedkar who underwent a tremendous pressure when he realized that a large section of his countrymen were denied and deprived of their rightful place on the planet earth. He portrayed and depicted Manu, the ancient Hindu law gives as the founder of Slavery.

It is to be accepted without a shadow of doubt that a lot has been done to the people of the scheduled castes and tribes. The names first being founded in the Government of India Act 1935. They have grown up from their utter backwardness to a considerable extent. If not to the zenith of dictating the policies of public welfare in India. Mahatma Gandhi, many a time, said, "Given a chance, I would select a Bhangi girl to be the president of India. The people hailing from such castes have been given the positions. The president K. R. Narayanan, the eleventh president of India was a Dalit who occupied the highest position for the first time in the history of India, more over when India was running ahead to celebrate her Golden Jubilee year of her formation. It certainly is true that the Depressed classes are not leading that tough a life as it was the case with their lives in the formative years of India independence. But still there is a lot that has to be done and which can be done to amend their standards of living and make them lead radiant lives of thunderous happiness. But why couldn't India march ahead in the aspect of passing the Bill, avoiding the activities such as manual scavenging, carrying human shit with people's hands even without gloves on the railway tracks. It is this job of cleaning the railway tracks and roads in which Dalits are appointed in their fullest measure.

The word untouchable was used by Dr. Ambedkar, finding no other word to show their suffering and bring out the ways in which those untouchables were restricted from growing personally and socially. The curse of untouchability came in the way of the material growth of the untouchables. Depriving the untouchables from certain civil rights was the order of the day. Prohibiting the untouchables from using the public road is an example for the way in which they were discriminated against. If an untouchable happens to find a high caste man on the way, he had to stand out of his way such that the shadow of the untouchable does not fall on the high caste man. The slogan of Ambedkar that made the untouchables realize their actual position and conceive a vision of coming on to the equal plain was that, "Tell the slave that he is a slave and he will revolt against his slavery". The slogan also generated a sort of consciousness among the people of the untouchable castes as is the case with electricity of a high voltage passing through a wire.

A Satyagraha was launched on the 9<sup>th</sup> of March, 1924 at Damodar Hall, Bombay by Dr. Ambedkar, besides launching the satyagraha, he started several journals, social and educational institutions for the upliftment of the downtrodden. The establishment of the Bhaisheri Hitakarini Sabha by Dr. Ambedkar was the result of his efforts to draw the attention of both the untouchables and the people from the other communities to explain their condition and the tough time, they were passing through. Dr. Ambedkar said, "my heart



breaks to see the pitiable sight of your faces and to hear your sad voices. You have been grooming from the time immemorial and yet, you are not ashamed to hug your help nesses as inevitability. Why did you not perish in the prenatal stage instead ?why do you worsen and sudden the picture of the sorrows, poverty slavery and burdens of the world with your deplorable, despicable delistable and miserable life ? you had better died and relieved this world if you could not rise to a new life an if you could not remunerate yourself. As a matter of fact, it is your birth right to get food, shelter and clothing to if equal proportion with every individual high or low. If you believe in living a respectable life your should believe in self help which is the best help”. (Dhananjay keer : Dr. Dr. R. Ambedkar : Life and Mission Bombay, popular prakashan 1950, pp. 60-61. It can be said that Dr. B.R, Ambedkar was trying to trumpet the ill and evils of the caste system that the untouchables were bearing with a great difficulty.

The aim of the satyagraha that was launched by Dr. Ambedkar was awakening the self-respect among the untouchables. It was the Satyagraha that was launched by Dr. Ambedkar at Mahal was so historical that it was intended for the welfare of the untouchables. It also kept on fighting rights of the downtrodden, more especially the right to click hearted support from the people of the district of kolabs in which the municipality of Mahal was situated. In the face of the stiff opposition from the orthodor section of the Hindu community. The movement could attain its objective. The chandas tank was, when it was taken to the civil judge, with the institution of Dr. Ambedkar, the caste Hindus were asked to like recourse to law and he also passed an order of refusal in prohibiting the untouchable from drawing water from the chowdas track, Taking all these things into a serious consideration, the rises within the Hindu community, Dr. Ambedkar expressed, his decision to country into some other religion that accepted the intouchables within their religion.

It was this caste system that characterized a vast majority of the people as untouchable whose shadow was enough to pollute the touchables. A long list of rules was codified by Manu to the untouchables which when transgressed invited a severe punishment. This was what made Dr. Ambedkar react in fury against the existing social conditions. The edifice that was sanctified by religion made the people at the bottom virtual slaves (9)(Ganni Raju, The Life of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar (Hyderabad Babasahab Dr. Ambedkar Memorial Society, 1971). P. 253. Dr. Ambedkar looked at the issue of caste with a great perseverance. The shudras were prohibited from pursuing knowledge, engaging in economic enterprises, and bearing arms according to the chaturvarna. The people of his country which being treated on an equal footage with the people of the other upper classes and strongly believed that the essence of human freedom would come true only when these lower sections of the society are granted freedom. (G.S. Lokhande, Bhim Rao Ramji Ambedkar – A study in social Democracy, New Delhi, Intellectual publishing House, 1982, p. 156.). Any revolt against the caste was virtually prevented by the chaturvarma. Every Hindu village had a ghetto. The Hindus lived



in the village and the untouchables in the ghetto (11) (Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, The untouchables, New Delhi Amrit Book Co., 1984. p. 22)<sup>28</sup>.

It was Dr. Ambedkar's conclusion that nowhere in the world except in India, there existed permanent separate camps and also that there had never been a precedent of people treating a section of their own people as slaves. The practice of untouchability was a vice that is unknown to humanity except in Hinduism. The expression was proved by Dr. Ambedkar by citing an example of the condition of the people during the rule of the peshwas. (C.B. Gupta, The Harijans in Rebellion, case for Removal of untouchability), New Delhi Sterling publishing ltd., 1964, p. 11-12.

It was believed by Dr. Ambedkar that the untouchables were treated to be slaves in India because they were allowed to complain against their condition by forcing the other castes to treat them on equal footing with that of the so called upper castes. Being treated with the same respect as the other classes and castes was a distant mirage to the people of the untouchable castes. The state of slavery of the untouchables and the denial of the basic human rights to them was placed before the reforms committee (Franchise) and south borough committee on 27<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1919.

The support that the united states of America rendered to terrorism and militancy proved that their romantic idealism such as that of Nehru's had been of no use in this country even during his life time. Nehru's option for the non-alignment policy was also a plan, devised to please both the super powers and be neutral in the aspects of strategic management. It was also, on several occasions, proved that the rich countries such as America, Russia and china went full straight and the smaller and developing countries which made lofty promises of maintaining equality were almost crushed in their doing so. The help and the service, we, as developing countries or the emerging economies, received from the rich countries was only the one that was done by them with some long. Run ideas of the selfish, self centred and self-seeking nature.

According to Nehru, "We have sought to avoid foreign entanglements by not joining one power block or the other. The natural result has been neither the American nor the Russians look on us with favour. Nevertheless we intend cooperating with the united states of America and cooperating, fully with the social union". The use of the phrase, "co-operating fully with the soviet union" created several doubts in the minds of the people. Nehru's socialist attitude made him and even tempted him to tend towards the soviet union, besides his aversion to colonialism. The country that became independent two years after India moved headlong and become almost self sufficient, despite its population being more than that of India's, keeping in mind Mao's words, "power flowed from the barrel of the gun not from empty words. It is often said that Nehru's one sided opinion of meager allocations being sufficient to Defence and agriculture else, as was believed by Jawaharlal Nehru resulted in

the debacle of the Chinese aggression in the year 1962 to everybody's shock and surprise made him realize and report that 'Defence' was equally important India's panchasheel Agreement with china was broken with by china itself.

The present article, being published as an annexure with the dissertation on the topic of Nationalism in Indian Pose : a study of selected works of Rabindranath Tagore, B.R. Ambedkar and Shashi Tharoor focusses on the very idea of Nationalism and changing facets if the same which is now more relevant than ever before under literature, as one of the most important discourses to say that Nationalism is not just an idea of or an emotional feeling but a way of life like any other Indian religion which should certainly take into consideration the fundamental societal setup and its impacts on the sociological side of the National life.

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