



Review Paper

## Ambedkar's Philosophical Interventions: Humanistic Perspective

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Available online at: [www.isca.in](http://www.isca.in), [www.isca.me](http://www.isca.me)

Received 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2016, revised 29<sup>th</sup> July 2016, accepted 15<sup>th</sup> August 2016

### Abstract

*Ambedkar's philosophy has been a very influencing factor in emergence of modern India. Ambedkar had brought to the fore the denial, deprivation and subjugation of depressed classes and making them untouchables. Ambedkar believed in the concept that an ounce of practice is better than pound of theory. He believed in not mere philosophical expositions but translation of these into the practical social life with the aim of transformation of society. This presentation brings out how Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's philosophy is deeply embedded in and encompasses humanistic perspective.*

**Keywords:** Human Perspective, Ambedkar Philosophy, Human Development.

### Introduction

Philosophy is a systematic enquiry about the ultimate realities in the universe. The most important basis of understanding man is through philosophy which is mainly concerned with an enquiry into reality. According to Aldous Huxley, men live in accordance with their conception of the world. There is no aspect of human life and human activity which is divorced from philosophy. According to Radhakrishnan, "philosophy is a logical enquiry into the nature of reality<sup>1</sup>". It clearly shows that rational understanding of things of society such as what is reality? What is life for? And what is society? However, philosophy described as 'generalized thinking in relation to its place, function and value in experience'. Philosophy also means proper behaviour, the search for wisdom and involves rational investigation of questions about existence, knowledge and others. It also deals with personal belief and how one live and how to deal with others.

Philosophy of Ambedkar has been projected by the scholars as a complex in nature which was not the case. Scholars who engaged to explore Ambedkar in their own style. While doing so they have applied their own believes, customs, traditions and ideology. Bringing down to Ambedkar for a single perspective could not be possible because he was read through Buddhism, Pragmatism, Marxism and Deweyian approach.

Scholars like Pradeep Gokhale appropriated Ambedkar's political and philosophical dimensions with true sense of understanding. According to him Ambedkar ideas are pursued in different dimensions. His ideas are not limited to single perspective; it is always multi character in nature. Pradeep Gokhale takes out Ambedkar's understanding of religion can be an example for his rational and scientific understands. Ambedkar desired to the recall qualities of both, while

exceeding their limits. For the purpose of this, Ambedkar reformed Buddhism before he converted. He endorsed methodological anxiety – but sustained through universal standards. While doing so he could maintain statuesque as a rationalist – his apprehension for fundamental and universal principles. Although Ambedkar can be considered to have drawn inspiration aftermath of glorious revolutions, he was a firm believer in Democracy –which gives individual prominence and equal rights. In democracy equality is the ultimate goal and Ambedkar influenced constitution making, incorporation of fundamental rights, directive principles of state policy and reservations for SC/STs and such measures of equality and social justice in the constitution.

### Humanistic Perspective

The concept of humanistic perspective had its origin as a concept in 1960s. It is not that there was no such approach prior to 1960. The humanistic approach had its root from Socrates and Renaissance in the Europe. Revolutionary philosophers like M. N. Roy proposed it in the form of radical humanism. The contemporary approach had come into prominence since 1960s. It is applied in psychology, social theory, philosophy and politics. Humanistic perspective as approach in psychology emphasizes on human empathy, behavior of an individual. The humanistic approach can also called in other political and social theories equal.

The humanistic approach and philosophy can be associated closely. Carl Rogers's remarkable work in defining the self can be related to the concept of Edmund Husserl's phenomenology. Humanistic approach involves emphasizes on individual dignity, worth of human being, and their conscious capacity to develop competence and self-respect; personal worth of the individual and the continuity of human values.

It is stated in this connection that economic re-organization of the society would create a new world of freedom for which a new-fangled form of revolution is necessary. The true meaning of freedom could not only apprehension of political power for the oppressed and exploited classes and also elimination of private proprietorship as mentioned as means of production as envisaged in Marxian philosophy. In the minds of common people the involvement of philosophical revolution and radical adjustment brings out larger amount of change among large section of population. To secure free and happy individual moral life it necessary to learn the rational recognition of free ethical humanity. This kind of visualization needs humanist movement, which transforms the society beyond the social and philosophical standards, methods and morals. For the humanist movement it has got three important phases. In the initial stage is the formulation of methodical philosophy for the modern milieu. In the second stage essential change of minds and assertiveness among the large section of the people. In the final and crucial stage of philosophy is the change of social freedom manifestation in the form of institutions. At present these ideas are in exercise in the society. When it comes to the Philosophy of Ambedkar's embodies all three phases in connection to the depressed classes in India. Which is an essential philosophy of Ambedkar as a revolution in the lives of depressed classes. Ambedkar's philosophy is deeply embedded humanistic perspective. Marxism, Gandhism and other such thinking cannot be so considered.

### Ambedkar's Philosophy

Ambedkar may not be considered as an experienced philosopher when it compared to his professor John Dewey. The theories proposed by Ambedkar are more useful to the day to day life than hypothetical and intangible. While demonstrating these philosophical issues for the novel cause of liberating Depressed Classes towards more democratically ordered Indian society.

Ambedkar had firsthand experience of caste discrimination in the caste ridden Hindu society. Thus the human perspective in his philosophy can be considered as auto ethano-centric. Through Ambedkar's abundant speeches and writings explained the problem of caste system for solving this, came out with perfect logic of scientific accuracy. He spent quite some time for the reformation of caste Hindu Society for vanishing caste based practices within Hinduism. He could not find any historical change of response from the practice of caste system among the caste Hindus, therefore, he has transformed himself towards Buddhism.

Ambedkar defended himself for his choice of Buddhism by logical explanation of his choice in his social philosophy, gives brief description of Liberty, equality and fraternity. The highness in Ambedkar's ethical and moral philosophy brings extraordinary change in the minds of custom centric thinking of Indian society towards modernization and democratization of equality and human rights among the philosophers.

In Ambedkar's view the society and man are measured as essential aspects which have to go together. In the modern philosophy three important questions need to be answered. Firstly, societal goal is to accomplish human happiness. Secondly, societies need to work towards the development of man and his inherent self-development. Finally, ultimate aim is to create an idle society. In the modern philosophical view point has been highlighted these three elements between the man and society, Ambedkar founds that these three elements are not found in Hindu religion. In Hindu religion individual human rights development could not found. Ambedkar conveyed fourth these three modern ideas for the greater good of man and society. According to Ambedkar, a religion needs to highlight individual self-development, welfare and progress rather than religious development. He further said that the man is born for his own individual development but not for the development of the society. Hinduism has been developed caste based society which has graded inequalities among the caste groups in which the depressed classes neglected for educational, trade and commerce, self-protection. The cruel thing is that they were denied to access basic needs such as water, and kept them under continues psychological slavery.

In Ambedkar's own perception the proposed three factors are necessary for the enrichment of individual self- they are empathy, liberty and equality. In Hinduism these things are intentionally kept away for depressed classes to have not access basic human rights. It is here Ambedkar proposed few things for the individual development i. Individual consciousness and awareness comprehended personal duties and responsibilities ii. Individual slavery develops according to his own conditions and situations which have to overcome through individual self-control iii. Ancestral customs and traditions make the individual to follow blindly in the name of religion and make the humanity as slaves iv. There won't be any chance of reasoning for the self-development v. All of them are bound to follow this vi. Those who do not believe religion except scientific examination of facts vii. It is the burden of individual who challenges the individual self-respect in a gentle public reproach viii. Those who think independently with intelligence will not become instrument in others act xi. Those who willing to accept the change through his own choice of acts. Therefore, Ambedkar deliberates that the individual is the master for his own destiny towards his own choice in life. When it comes to Hindu religion there is no space for individual integrity, rationality and thinking. Further it promotes individual to follow Vedas or Smritis without any rational thinking, one has to admit to imitate great man and was not to practice his rational thinking. Thus, in Hindu religion depressed classes' individual were part of the religion to become a continuous slave without any individual autonomy.

Ambedkar was stanch admires of democracy. According to him democracy allows individual to overcome their situations and conditions to act up on individual development. Furthermore, he believed that the democracy is not suitable to Indian state of

affairs in time immemorial even if democracy exists in India, the capacity of democracy limited to one particular group to act accordingly. Therefore, Ambedkar believed that the Indian traditional men are blindly confined to traditional wit than democracy. "Democracy must learn that its safety lies in having more than one opinion regarding the solution of any particular problem and in order that people may be ready to advice with their opinions, democracy must learn to give a respectful hearing to all those who are worth listening to"<sup>2</sup>.

For regaining human nature of depressed classes, Ambedkar took up the historical struggle with fully consciousness to fight with the cause. He wanted for the depressed classes an assurance of strength, unity and determination to stand for their rights, fight for their rights and never to relent until they win their rights. He believed that justice was on their side and therefore they should not lose their battle. He furthermore said that the battle between caste Hindus and depressed classes are fully spiritual and joy fulfilled. There is nothing material in it. For ours is a battle, not for wealth or power, it is a battle for freedom. It is a battle for the reclamation of human personality which has been suppressed and mutilated by Hindu social system and will continue to be suppressed and mutilated, if in the political struggle the Hindus win and we will lose. My final word of advice to you is to educate, agitate and organize, have faith in yourselves and not lose hope"<sup>3</sup>.

Ambedkar believed that the Buddhists are revolutionaries and Brahmins became counter revolutionaries. The battle between them are for autonomy. According to Ambedkar Buddha was the first person who proclaimed and talks of liberty, equality and fraternity in the history of the world. They had been lost because the revolution was so overwhelmed by the counter revolution. The rational thinking of Hinduism lost its importance in the society and started practicing grossest superstition, idoltry and all sorts of evil practices, was wide spread in the name of religion. "Buddha's rationalistic approach to truth has been lost. The tragedy of today is that the non rationalistic ideology has entered even politics"<sup>4</sup>.

Ambedkar believed that the education only can bring freedom, justice, equality, awareness, truth for fearlessness. Besides, character is important for him. "I am a man of character"<sup>5</sup> he wrote. In this regards he continued that educated man without character and humility is more dangerous than beast. If his education was detrimental to the welfare of the poor, he remarked, the educated man was a curse for society. Ambedkar emphasized that "character is more important than education". In the words of Ambedkar, "the rule in life, they should keep in mind, was that they must cherish a noble ideal. Whatever might be one's ideal either of national progress or self-development, one should patiently exert oneself to reach it. He further said that one should concentrate one's mind and might on one's goal. Man must eat to live and should live and work for the well-being of society"<sup>6</sup>. It clearly says that man should develop in the state. This is what our constitution precisely mentions. In our

constitution we have declared that liberty, equality and justice as fundamental rights to provide all citizens of India through democratic political system. Later in 1976 through 42<sup>nd</sup> amendment of Indian constitution we also added words Socialism and Secularism and we have declared that Indian state as Welfare State. This is the core philosophy of Ambedkar which is reflected in Indian constitution.

Ambedkar believed that the individual character and self-respect are the greatest virtues which can be acquired through education. That is the reason Ambedkar worked for his life time for the advancement of education to the depressed classes with the philosophy of universal human value. That value can be counted as universal philosophy of equality, brotherhood and unity. According to pragmatists education is the process of social progress, in the sense that education includes the individuals, the society, the environment, the social fabric and the prevailing traditions. Pragmatic education aims at instilling democratic values and ideas in the individual.

## Human Development

Human development has been defined as enlarging people's choices in a way which enables them to lead longer, healthier and fuller lives<sup>7</sup>. The definition of Human Development as "enlarging people's choices" is very broad. It clearly says that individual has to have freedom to choose any profession according to his or her choice. Here choice means individual's interest and whatever work he does he will have a satisfaction of what he has performed. Here I also look into another aspect that today's educational system is tri-polar which includes teacher, child and society. That means not only develops child's innate qualities (inborn) but also there are many areas which would develop through education. Once education became a part of society, the child should understand society and whatever the issues (problems) existed in that child has to take responsibility to overcome those problems with rationality. Ambedkar laid emphasis on the progress of society through education, which should provide a rational understanding of problems. Therefore, he advocated that "students should study the Indian problems in all the aspects, but cautioned that politics was not the be-all and end-all of nation's life. He exhorted students to diligently study India's problems in all aspects, politics, social, religious and economic and then fight on own accord for the salvation of the downtrodden"<sup>8</sup>. We need to understand this very broadly that of Ambedkar's philosophy the downtrodden is particular and larger society in general.

Kant was greatly influenced by the individualistic concept of education and defined education as the process by which man through his voluntary efforts. Now it is clearly understood that human being is the central to the state and development of state. Ambedkar's philosophy deals with individual development or advancement with full potential of individual with wider opportunities in the state. That means state has to provide opportunities to an individual and with these opportunities

individual should realize his potentials through education. Here individual's development is a part of society. Thus, education has been regarded in the constitution of India as the fundamental right of each and every citizen.

Ambedkar has gone on record that the enchantment of his personality by Buddha and Christ. He was in favour of a religion, because of religion people may learn the behavior towards the other fellow being and laid down the duties of humans towards others and their relation with God in the light of "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity"<sup>9</sup>.

Ambedkar stated in January 1939 that "This voluntary corpse was born in the struggle started for the assertion of human rights by the Depressed Classes which culminated in the Mahad Satyagraha. For proper discharge of the duty, you have to be men of sterling character whom the rest of society will look to as models of humanity"<sup>10</sup>.

## Conclusion

From the foregoing, it is established that Dr. B. R. Ambedkar had envisaged and advocated human perspective much before it to be recognized in psychology in 1960s. Ambedkar's philosophy which involves denouncement of graded inequality in Hinduism, fight for equal human rights for depressed classes and social action to achieve these ends involve a strong humanistic perspective.

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