

**THE ETHICAL AND RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY OF  
DR. B.R. AMBEDKAR**

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**ABSTRACT**

The political philosophy of Ambedkar may help in renegotiating the catastrophe of western political theory in fastidious and principal the struggles of the masses in general. One can see Ambedkar's alliance with the grand political streams such as liberal, thorough or conventional through his writings. At the same time he differentiates himself with these three prevailing political traditions. Ambedkar's philosophy is basically ethical and religious. For him, the social precedes the political. Social morality is essential to his political philosophy. He is neither a stern eccentric nor a traditional communitarian. His conceptions of democracy internalises the principles of equality, liberty, and fraternity in their true spirit. Though there are many attempts but one may find complicatedness in locating him in prevailing political traditions. Often this may lead to misapprehension of the quintessence of Ambedkar. Ambedkar's political thought demands a new language to comprehend the involvedness of his thoughts.

**Key words:** catastrophe, communitarian, conventional, eccentric, fastidious, quintessence.

Ambedkar has emerged as a foremost political philosopher with the rise of the dalit movement in existing times. There are a number of attempts to comprehend Ambedkar and his philosophy. Perplexity prevails among scholars due to the subsistence of assorted, and sometimes, conflicting theoretical assessments of Ambedkar. The social context of the scholars and their prejudiced positions play a major role in the evaluation of the thinker and very often the opinions of scholars remind tremendous reactions which either make higher or humiliate Ambedkar. Though he had a great sway on Indian politics from the nationalist movement onwards, till the eighties, there has been not much intellectual dispute on Ambedkar. The communities of knowledge and centres of power either ignored or consciously marginalized him as a thinker and social scientist. Ambedkar is nowhere mentioned in the contemporary Indian

philosophy and the philosophical discourses. This segregation of Ambedkar has to be implicit with the inherent politics of the writers on Indian philosophy. Very entertainingly, the masses /communities of the disadvantaged of Indian society convey him into the front position. It is not an embellishment to say that there is no major village in the country without a statue of Ambedkar. He is the most celebrated representation of contemporary times in India. The celebration of Ambedkar has the flow of failure of the Indian democratic State to reach the majority of this nation, and the contention of these ignored communities. In other words, Ambedkar's philosophy is a look for towards the theories of social restoration of the Indian society.

Let us have a brief stare at the major philosophical traditions of politics before we continue into the political philosophy of Ambedkar. Political philosophers hunted to look at social phenomena and political behaviour, as well as to illuminate problematic concepts, estimate existing institutions, and disagree for social ideals. Political philosophy is concerning the decisive indication of politics and its practices. It is about the indulgent of the governing principles of a society in a much more critical fashion. It tries to philosophize the values, principles, practices and institutions, which administer the society. Philosophers gave diverse interpretations about the meaning of public life and leading principles of good society. Morality of the society and the ways of execution of institutions serve as a cause in deriving political theory. Socio-economic developments and the resulting conflicts in society afford conditions for the appearance of new social and political theories. Political thought seems to helix from the political practice of both the thinker and his society. Political theory is nothing but the systematization of moral and political judgments of our activities.

Historically, Greek thought followed the Christian natural law. In the West, Christian natural law was destabilized by the distinctiveness of the seventeenth century. Relationship between individual and god was replaced by the relationship between individual and individual as the foundation of social enquiry. This individualism becomes the vital trait of the ensuing liberal tradition. The idea of social proposal and social direct surrendered to the idea of individual initiative and individual control. In plain terms, new material conditions gave birth to new social relationships and new philosophy was evolved to give a rational reason for the new world which had come into being. This new philosophy became known as liberalism. Liberalism acquired different flavours in changed national cultures. The difficulties in liberal theory lie in its vital foundations of seventeenth century individualism and its worth of possessiveness. The domineering quality lays in the outset of the individual as in essence the proprietor of his own person or capacities unsettled nothing to society. The individual was seen neither as a moral whole, nor as a part of a larger social whole, but as a proprietor of himself. The basic postulation of possessive individualism –that man is free and human by asset of his sole proprietorship of his own person, and that human society is in essence a series of market relations, were intensely embedded in seventeenth century foundations. The contradiction lies intrinsically in the market society itself. Market society involuntarily brings the class differentiations.

The propertied class would like to seize power over the subsidiary classes. Men no longer saw themselves basically equal in a predictable inability to the purpose of market. Alternatives emerged for the market system. Expression of proletarian politics gave a grim blow to the liberal politics. There are overall altered assumptions about man and society. The community has replaced individual. Marxist theory aims at essential change in society and its human relations.

Human society as seen from the viewpoint of class considers human being as chiefly a producer. His relations are determined by his contribution in social production. Other than the Marxist notion there is a conformist political theory that would like to see society from the point of vision of community. Conservatism has veneration for tradition, religion and age old custom. Edmund Burke is one of the examples for traditional tradition. Burke, more than any theorist of the eighteenth century, approached the political tradition with wisdom of religious reverence. The conservative view of politics is known as politics of tradition. The state in meticulous and society in general must operate with admiration to traditions and customs. The rights of the groups are acknowledged in that particular society. Conservative perspective works within the limits of the given order tolerant forms of political action within the structural structure of existing institutions.

Conservative theory of politics is recognized as politics of blemish. It finds limitations with human beings and believes that human beings will be incapable to form a social order through their own impulsive efforts. People are innately voracious and egotistic. To hold back them there is a want for a state. The power is state. State plays a central role in conservative thought. It is the backbone of social order and authority, the sponsor of social hierarchy. As per the unadventurous views, the intrinsic imperfections of human nature make a burly state essential. It is needed to organize the anti-social impulses of the individual. As per the fixed conservative viewpoint, social order is not and can never be achieved impulsively by the free play of individual activities as claimed by liberals and anarchists. Social order has to be maintained through the sturdy leadership of those who hold positions of political liability. It does not mean that state is the only agency which maintains social order. Conservatives stress the magnitude of tradition, custom and of network of longstanding groups and associations, all pre-requisites of social order.

Society is made of collectives who engender political community. Far from involving only the facet of inter-subjective or inter-individual contracts, a review or alteration of individualism in the light of common bonds necessitates a broad alteration of man's relation to the world and nature - a reconsideration that inexorably conjures up the hazard of objectivism and naturalism. Contemporary political theory appears hazardously lodged at the crossroads of liberal individualism and post-individualist communalism.

Ambedkar's thought, as reflected in his writings and speeches, has immense importance in tracing the history and growth of social thought in India. It is necessary to comprehend the philosophy of Ambedkar which is the notional foundation for the Dalit movement. The core of political view of Ambedkar is contained in two of his statements- *the rights are protected not by law but by social and moral conscience of society, and a democratic form of government presupposes a democratic form of society*. He considers democracy basically as a form of society, or a mode of associated living, and a social conscience is the only safeguard of all rights. The roots of democracy are to be searched in social relationships, in terms of associated life amongst the people who form a society. For him, social relationships are the key to democracy. Ambedkar is a social democrat in spirit and practice. His unusual giving to political thought lies in his linking up liberty, equality and fraternity to the notion of social democracy, which in turn, he relates to democracy as a form of government. He further reminds us of the limitations of social democracy in everyday working. In this sagacity he defined democracy as a form and

process of government whereby radical changes in the economic and social life of people are brought about without bloodshed.

In most of the speeches and writings of Ambedkar, the vital theme is social reformism. He often debated and confronted the issue of preference of social over political issues. Politics have to be essentially connected to social issues. The very foundations of democracy lie in associated living in society. On the issue of giving primacy to social over political, he differs with the Congress and the socialists. This is well reflected in all his writings in wide-ranging, and Annihilation of caste and 'What Congress and Gandhi have done to Untouchables' in finicky.

In contemporary times, once 'caste' got tentatively recognized and established as the Indian social reality, the established political and social theories got innovative meanings. Ambedkar as a thinker got distinction because of his erudite conceptualization of the institution of caste and its performance in Indian society. He interpreted the Indian social world in command to alter the lives of the Dalit masses who are the victims of caste system. The condition demands suitable appraisal of Ambedkar's political philosophy in relation to other famous political streams of the time. Ambedkar is a real philosopher in the Marxian sense. He has interpreted the Indian social reality in order to vary it.

Ambedkar is influenced by all the major political traditions of his times. His political contemplation has emerged from the three grand traditions of political reflection, i.e. liberal, traditionalist and radical. The exclusive feature about him is that he has transcended all these traditions. He was influenced by the ideas of John Dewey, the realistic American and his teacher. The Fabian Edwin R. A. Seligman had significant collision on his thought. He frequently quoted Edmund Burke, the conservative intellectual of British, though we can't brand Ambedkar as a conservative. Ambedkar's notion of liberty comes close to T.H. Green.

Ambedkar's philosophy is mainly *ethical and religious*. He systematically explored the Indian traditions and its philosophical systems in an inimitable way. He developed political concepts like democracy, justice, state and rights from his accepting of Indian society and the performance of its institutions on the moral grounds. He is very decisive of the institution of caste, which influences all the spheres of individual's life and the Indian society as a whole. He further discusses how the individual is related to the society and how the individual's freedom is partial by other social forces. He is significant of authoritarian Hindu social order and argued in favour of a democratic society. He probed into the moral and social foundations of India and gave new connotation to the lives of disadvantaged people. His was a motivation approach. Reason plays a role in his writings and speeches. The attitude he used is very scientific rather than speculative. He was influenced by the assumptions of modernity. He is well informed in many areas of Indian history, polity, culture, anthropology and philosophy. He quotes many thinkers in his writings, those who have influenced him.

The notion of community is central to his thinking. To say that individuals make up society is trivial; society is always composed of classes. It may be an exaggeration to assert the theory of class conflict, but the existence of definite classes in society is a fact [...] an individual in a society is always a member of a class. A caste is an enclosed class. Brahmins created caste and it is extended to other servile classes. Caste is an endogamous unit and also a communal unit. His political theory was premised on a moral community. It was as an ideal to be realised. He was very much critical about the Hindu social order. He argues that Hinduism is not qualified to be a community. Buddhism was projected as the ideal having the value of community

grounding on morality. He considers that Buddhism attempted to found society on the basis of 'reason' and 'morality'.

His outset of community is very novel. He does not substantiate to either Hindu ideal community or Marxist origin of community based on partaking in production process. His conception of community is moral and ethical. It is not repeatedly available for contribution in common affairs. His idea of community has to be created through hard and torturous procedure of moral transformation. Ambedkar had a long argument on democratic form of government in his writings. His conception of democracy is unlike from the parliamentary democracy of Western Europe. Democracy came with the principles of liberalism. His conception of democracy is different from parliamentary forms in a momentous system. Parliamentary democracy has all the marks of a popular government, a government of the people, by the people and for the people.

Ambedkar considered the problems and expressed displeasure adjacent to the parliamentary democracy in nations like Italy, Germany, Russia, Spain and some other European nations in proposing the parliamentary democracy in India. Ambedkar finds reasons for the failure of parliamentary democracy that 'parliamentary democracy gives no free hand to dictatorship and that is why it became a discredited institution in the countries like Italy, Spain and Germany which readily welcomed dictatorships'.<sup>1</sup> The nations that are contrasting dictatorship and pledged to democracy to find their disgruntlement with democracy. First, parliamentary democracy began with equality of political rights in the form of equal suffrage. There are very few countries having parliamentary democracy that have not adopted adult suffrage.

It has progressed by escalating the notion of equality of political rights to equality of social and economic prospect. It has recognized that corporations, which are anti-social in purpose, cannot hold the state at bay. With all this, 'the reason for discontent is due to the realization that it has failed to assure to the masses the right to liberty, property or the pursuit of happiness. The causes for this failure may be found either in wrong ideology or wrong organization or in both'.<sup>2</sup> He elaborated this point by pointing out the blunder with both wrong ideologies and bad association in carrying the ideals of democracy. The idea of freedom of contract is one of the answerable factors for parliamentary democracy in terms of ideology. Parliamentary democracy took no observe of economic inequalities and didn't care to scrutinize the outcome of freedom of indenture on the parties to the contract, in spite of the fact that they were unequal in bargaining power. It didn't mind if the freedom of pact gave the strong the opportunity to deceive the weak.

The effect is that parliamentary democracy in position out as a protagonist of liberty has incessantly added to economic wrongs towards the poor, downtrodden and disinherited class.<sup>3</sup> The second wrong thought which has vitiated parliamentary democracy is the failure to appreciate that political democracy cannot achieve something where there is no social and economic democracy'. He illustrated this summit by comparing the crumple of parliamentary democracy in the countries of Italy, Germany and Russia with England and USA. He felt that there was a superior level of economic and social democracy in the latter countries than existed in the former. 'Social and economic democracy are the tissues and fiber of a political democracy. The tougher the tissue and the fiber, the greater the strength of the body'.<sup>4</sup> Democracy is an additional name for equality. Parliamentary democracy developed fervour for liberty. It never

made even nodding social contact with equality. It failed to realize the significance of equality and didn't even smack a equilibrium between liberty and equality, with the consequence liberty swallowed equality and has made democracy a name and a charade.

More than awful ideology, bad organization is in charge for malfunction of democracy. All political societies get divided into two classes- the rulers and the ruled. This is approximately stratified that rulers are always drawn from the ruling class and the class that is ruled never become the ruling class. This happens because commonly people do not see that they administer themselves. They are comfortable to create a government and leave it to administer them. This explains why parliamentary democracy has never been a government of the people or by the people and why it has been in authenticity a government of the hereditary subject class by a transmissible ruling class. It is this, a vicious organization of political life which had made parliamentary democracy such a dismal failure.<sup>5</sup> it is wrong to deem that democracy and self government repeatedly became realities of life. In fact, the active governing class is inconsistent with democracy and self-government and made all its efforts to preserve its power to govern. Ambedkar felt that self-government and democracy become real not when the constitution based on adult suffrage comes into survival but when the governing class loses its power to detain the power to rule. In some countries the servile classes may succeed in ousting the governing class from the seat of power with just by adult suffrage. In some other countries the prevailing class may be so intensely ingrained that the servile classes will need other safeguards besides adult suffrage to achieve the same end.

Ambedkar accused the western writers that they were exterior and have not provided the pragmatic view of democracy. They ostensibly touched the constitutional morality, adult suffrage and recurrent elections as the be-all and end-all of democracy. Ambedkar proposed a written constitution for a successful democracy. The habits of constitutional morality may be indispensable for the continuance of a constitutional form of government and he puts more accents on the moral society and its customs than the written legal law in prevailing its people. He heavily invested on social morality for valuable working of the democratic form of government. He reminds us very often, in devising the constitution one has to keep in mind that the principle mean of the constitution must be to extricate the governing class from its situation and to avoid it from enduring as a governing class forever.

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