

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: His Philosophy and Approach

— Dr. P. R. Dubhashi

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was born in poor Mahar family with limited means in Konkan. His father was a Subedar in Indian Army and was a devoted Hindu who sang bhajans in the early morning hour. Bhimrao fondly called Bhira was a bright student and thanks to his teachers and financial assistance of Maharaja Gaikwad of Baroda he was able to acquire the high qualifications of Ph. D. and D. Sc. in Economics, Political Science and Law from the centres of higher learning in U. K., U. S. A. viz London University and Columbia University. On his return with high qualifications from abroad, he was unfortunately at the receiving end of all the humiliation which were inflicted traditionally by the Orthodox Hindu society on the untouchables. This hurt him deeply and influenced his outlook in future years. Dr. Ambedkar was determined to raise the lot of his people and liberate them from the social disabilities. He led the movement for drinking water from the common source of drinking water—namely the "Chardar Tale" of Mahad and for the entry by the Harijans into the Kalaram Temple at Nashik. In spite of this, there were no rapid changes in the religious orthodoxy and Dr. Ambedkar had to continue his life long struggle for the improvement of the lot of Harijans. Social equality, more than anything else, became, the objective of his struggle.

Dr. Ambedkar felt that education was one factor which could raise economic and social status of his people and spent many years of life for building up educational institutions.

On his appointment as a Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Constitution, set up by the Constituent Assembly which started its work soon after attainment of freedom, Dr. Ambedkar was able to introduce in the Constitution the liberal humanitarian principles which he thought should govern the society of free India. Accordingly he got these principles enshrined in the very preamble which provide keynote of the Constitution. These principles are liberty, equality, fraternity and social justice. Dr. Ambedkar in his speech on the floor of the continental assembly eloquently pointed out that all these principles were inter-connected. Thus liberty cannot exist without equality; since in conditions of extreme inequality there would be liberty only for those who had the wherewithals of living. There cannot be liberty of thought, expression, faith, belief or worship if there is no freedom from want and hunger. On the other hand, mere equality without liberty would deny the individual his fundamental rights and deprive equality of all its meaning. If liberty and equality exist there would

be fraternity but fraternity is much more than mere combination of liberty and equality. It implies a sense of fellow feelings among the people which Dr. Ambedkar considered very important. Social justice would be available to the people if they have blessings of liberty, equality and fraternity. In order to ensure that blessings of social justice would be available to the people, Dr. Ambedkar introduced the directive principles of the Constitution which stated that the means of production could be used for social good and that with this end in view, they should not be concentrated in few hands.

However, Dr. Ambedkar was deeply disappointed that despite the provisions in the Constitution, in practice large sections of people were denied the blessings of his philosophy. He was so embittered that at an emotional moment he talked of burning of the Constitution! However, Dr. Ambedkar was patriotic at heart and wanted India to remain together, strong and united. That is why he provided in Constitution a federal structure with a strong Centre. Dr. Ambedkar would have felt very distress at current instability at the Centre. He wanted a strong and stable Government at the Centre to hold the country together.

He provided for reservations to Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribes in service and also in the Parliament and Legislative Assembly but only for 15 years after the advent of the Constitution. He did not want reservations to continue indefinitely nor did he desire the scope of reservation to be extended to more and more sections of the society. He himself rose high on intellectual ladder and occupied eminent position in the society not on the basis of reservation but by dint of his own abilities and hard work. That is why he gave great importance to education.

With his family's background, Dr. Ambedkar like his father would have also liked to remain a devout Hindu but the social discrimination practiced in the Hindu society left him with no alternative but to go out of the fold of Hindu religion and take to Buddhism, a religion born in India and an offshoot of Hinduism itself but cleansed of social orthodoxy. However, Buddhist principles like compassion and non-violence are after all a part of Hindu heritage and principles of our civilisation handed down to us through centuries.

