

# An Evaluative Study of Political Thinking of B.R.Ambedkar: A Critical Underpinning

Dr. Ishita Aditya

Associate Professor, Bejoy Narayan Mahavidyalaya, Under University of Burdwan, West Bengal, India

## Abstract

This article, besides reflecting the theoretical issues that are implicated in the writings of Ambedkar, attempts to capture the position of Ambedkar on issues whose relevance is actually felt even in the present day. The complex issues which Ambedkar explained and defended, although not always to the satisfaction of many and sometimes not as rigorously as required, have continued to claim intellectual and political attention to this day in many societies and especially in India. Therefore, the present study is an attempt to make a comprehensive and objective analysis of the various strands of the political ideas of Ambedkar while keeping in minds the gaps and lapses in the existing literature on Ambedkar.

DOI: 10.7176/HRL/48-01

## Introduction

Born in a socially backward caste, educated along the lines of the western system, rational in outlook and somewhat rebellious in mentality and temperament, Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (1891-1956), 'a symbol of revolt' (as called by Jawaharlal Nehru) came at the appropriate moment to assume the natural leadership of his kinsmen and participated in social movement and got involved in founding the constitutional edifice of the country. He was one of the front-ranking nation-builders of modern India. He is popularly considered as the 'pioneer' who initiated the 'liberation movement' of roughly sixty-five million untouchables of India of his time. For, Ambedkar, notwithstanding his birth in a lower caste, the *Mahar* community of Maharashtra, has made an indelible imprint on the body politic of the country. As regards the emancipation of the backward classes, first he criticized the caste *Hindus* for their social apathy towards the depressed classes, blamed the British for their political and economic backwardness and stood as the unrivalled champion of the depressed classes, and dedicated his life to the cause of their amelioration. As a brilliant scholar on Indian Society and intellectual well-versed with writings of great scholars in east and west, Ambedkar all through his life reflected the problem of untouchables. A glance at his profuse writings would evidently show that despite his preoccupations with the problems of the *dalits*, Ambedkar had, in his own way, made significant contribution to the contemporary political ideas.

The present study is an attempt to make a brief objective analysis of the various strands of the political ideas of Ambedkar while keeping in minds the gaps and lapses in the existing literature on Ambedkar.

## Analysis of Various strands of Political thought of B.R.Ambedkar:

### I

Several factors that Ambedkar encountered with, contributed to the formation of his political ideas. In fact, the experiences he gathered during his life at different levels-personal, intellectual as well as socio-political -exerted deep influence on the formulation of his ideas. Encounter with English education in India and abroad helped Ambedkar to come into contact with several contemporary thinkers intellectuals. However, in some cases, the contact was not personal, but through their ideas, those thinkers had attracted Ambedkar intellectually. Ambedkar was greatly inspired by the ideas of Indian social reformers. He was greatly influenced by the philosophical ideas of Lord Buddha, Mahatma Jotiba Phule, Kabir and *Dalit* saints like Nandnar, Ravidas and Chokhamela. He dedicated his book, "*The untouchables who were they and why they become untouchable?*" to the memory of Nandanar, Ravidas and Chokhamela. The three renowned saints were born among the untouchables and by their piety and virtue won the esteem of all. Ambedkar admired those saints for their challenge to the orthodox Hindus and religious guidelines to the downtrodden.<sup>1</sup> Ambedkar was a different reader and had been very good in Sanskrit, Persian, Marathi, Hindi and English. Through the books he read, he drew lot of inspiration. These books had great impact on Ambedkar's struggle for social justice.

Ambedkar's proficiency in Sanskrit made him to have wide knowledge about Hinduism. Ambedkar would recite *Mahabharata*, *Ramayana*, *Upanishads*, *Manusmriti*, and other religious texts. Due to his vast reading, he could assess the drawbacks of these texts and could build his own theories. His books on "*Caste in India*", "*Annihilation of caste*", "*Philosophy of Hinduism*", "*Revolution and counter Revolution in Ancient India*", "*Who were the Shudra*" and "*Riddles in Hinduism*"<sup>2</sup> which Ambedkar had derived from the original Hindu religious texts. Ambedkar had studied great deal of literature on religious, social, political and economic life of India. Hopkins's "*The Great Epic of India*", C. V. Vaidya's "*The Riddle of the Ramayana*" and "*History, Manners and Customs*" and Prof. D. S. Trivedi's "*The original home of the Aryans*" were some of great books which