



Dr. B.R. Ambedkar As a Human Rights Defender

Dr Sudeep Kumar Assistant Professor (Political Science)

D A.V. College, Pehowa (Kurukshetra) Mail I'd. gahlawat.sudeep8@gmail.com

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was ratified on December 10th, 1948, by all countries in the globe, including the so-called imperial powers and newly independent states, adopting the fundamental tenets of human life that would serve as the century's guiding principles. If it were claimed that the historical battle for social reform and human rights began with the ratification of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the claim that it dates back to Buddha, Thomas Paine, Jyoti Ba Phule, and Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar would be denied. Human exploitation, sometimes known as taking advantage of the "less fortunate," is a practise that has existed for as long as there have been struggles for human rights and dignity.

Ambedkar was not simply the offspring of the oppressed, but also a product of globalisation and modernity. He may have agreed to the same "term" of being "less fortunate" or "unfortunate" had he not completed his education at Columbia and the London School of Economics. However, he was able to interact with children of various races and ethnicities while attending school in England and the United States, which taught him what true freedom meant. Only after his time in Europe and America did he begin to feel human again after the excruciating days of humiliation he endured in India. He expanded his thoughts and ideas rather than keeping them limited to the Indian social system. Ambedkar is a product of internationalism, where academic achievement is valued and recognised. While I don't need to get into Ambedkar's perspective on international law and human rights.

Ambedkar made it obvious that in order for Hindu society to grow, it must be based on the values of equality, fraternity, and liberty after suffering birth discrimination and knowing that the varna system of caste goes well beyond the issue of untouchability.

Ambedkar's grandeur and distinctly humanist outlook led him to not only question the Vedas and other sacred books, but also modify them to reflect modernity. He was utterly repulsed by Gandhi at this point for saying that Shastras cannot be modified and that anyone who rejects them cannot call themselves a Hindu. Ambedkar valued human dignity and humanity more than any particular religion.

"We value human dignity more than Hinduism," [Gore 1993: 97] declared. In our society, we fight for equality of rights. As much as we can while still sticking to Hinduism, or if necessary, by renouncing this pointless Hindu identity, we will achieve them. (From Debrahmanizing History, page 357)

Ambedkar criticised Gandhi for asking the Scavenger group to carry on with their activity because it was caste-based, and they would carry it out in accordance with custom. Ambedkar, in contrast to Gandhi, was a sensible individual who refrained from adhering to a tradition that was insulting to human dignity and self-respect.

If Gandhism promoted poverty for all people, not just Shudra, the worst thing that could be said about it is that it was a bad idea. But why promote it as advantageous to only one class? Why force someone to voluntarily accept what they would rationally see to be harsh discrimination against them by appealing to the worst human vices of pride and vanity. What purpose does it serve to inform the scavenger that even a Brahmin is willing to perform the scavenging when it is clear that a Brahmin would never be required to deal with the restrictions associated with becoming a scavenger voluntarily in accordance with Hinduism and the Hindu Shastras?

One could comprehend profession if its goal was to persuade people who resisted engaging in it. But why utilise his ego and vanity to make scavenging appear like a noble job for which he should not feel guilty, in order to persuade him—and him alone—to continue doing it. It is outrageous and a cruel joke perpetrated on the vulnerable classes to preach that scavenging is good for the untouchables and terrible for everyone else, as well as that poverty is good for Shudra and bad for everyone else. These oppressive demands are made in an effort to persuade the helpless classes to accept them as voluntary choices in life. Only Mr. Gandhi can do this with composure and impunity.

Then came the momentous occasion when Ambedkar and Gandhi engaged in a discussion about caste and Varna in relation to his works in "Harijan." As usual, Gandhi believed himself to be an authority on everything, including religion and spirituality. Unfortunately, his absurd religious beliefs—that a person cannot be a true Hindu if they do not believe in caste or Varna—were powerful enough to force Ambedkar to consider other religions outside Hinduism. None of the Gandhians challenged his fantastical theories. In actuality, some of them later criticised and supported Gandhi. There are many such twits in Indian media who have nothing to do with Gandhi but are nevertheless willing to take advantage of him and his ideal of an upper caste Indian society.

If Varna is a fundamental component of the shastras that characterise Hinduism and if caste and Varna are concepts that can be interchanged. I don't understand how someone can identify as a Hindu if they reject caste, or Varna. (Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's eradication of caste) Such traditional viewpoints from a leader who regarded Ambedkar as not just awakening India's political populace but also its soul shocked him. Following this, he made the well-known proclamation, "I will not die a Hindu, even though I was born one." Ambedkar believed that the liberation of Dalits was

more crucial for the freedom of India because he believed that granting power to the Hindu upper castes would be damaging to the interests of Dalits in India.

Women's Rights

Ambedkar was a staunch supporter of the liberation of women. He thought that women had also been oppressed by the Varna system in addition to Untouchables.

However, it would be incorrect to assume that his religion simply encompasses the wrongs committed by other people. Because the Brahmin has supported the worst injustices that women have ever experienced everywhere in the globe. Widows were suttees, burned alive. Remarrying was never permitted for widows. In comparison to the intellectual elite in other areas of the world, Brahmins have a far darker history of enforcing laws against Shudras, Untouchables, and women.

Because, unlike the Brahmins in India, no intellectual class has ever prostituted its intellect to create an ideology that would keep his illiterate masses perpetually ignorant and impoverished.

There is no denying that the status of women in India now is significantly worse than it was in the past. Regarding their role in the statecraft during ancient times, little can be said. However, there is no doubting that they played a vital role in the social and intellectual life of the country.

He questioned Manu and Manu Smriti, thinking they were solely to blame for the degradation and collapse of Hindu women.

In our world, it is in women's instinct to seduce men. Because of this, sensible people are always on their alert when around women.

After the Hindu Code Bill failed to pass as expected, Ambedkar actually quit Nehru's cabinet. Shyama Prasad Mukharje, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, K. D. Malviya, and other right-wing Hindus fiercely opposed his campaign in the Parliament for women's rights to divorce. The failure of Nehru to pass the bill left him feeling utterly disappointed.

For Civil Rights' Sake

Ambedkar sent a letter dated November 1932 to A.V.Thakkar, also known as Thakkar Bappa, the general secretary of the League against Untouchability. Thakkar Bapa and Ambedkar did not get along. Even though Thakkar Bapa sought Dr. Ambedkar's advice on a number of issues, the following piece of advice was never even recognised. I'm going to use this crucial letter between Ambedkar and Thakkar Bapa to illustrate how he was a real supporter of human rights and his understanding of the untouchability and Dalit issues from a human rights perspective.

I believe the league should launch a nationwide campaign to ensure that the depressed classes can exercise their civic rights, such as access to village wells for drinking water, enrollment in village schools, entrance to village chawdis, and use of public transportation. If these plans are

implemented in the rural, Hindu society will undergo the required social revolution, without which it will be impossible for the oppressed classes to achieve social equality.

Only when caste Hindus are made to realise and feel that they must change their ways will the downtrodden classes find relief. To do this, you must take direct action against his established moral code in order to spark a crisis. He will ponder as a result of the crisis, and when he does, he will be more ready to make changes than he would otherwise be. Because they do not lead to crises, the least resistance strategy and the covert infiltration of logical concepts lack the ability to force reflection.

Millions of teaching days were spared as a result of reformers' quick action in defending the Chawdar Tank in Mahad, the Kalaram temple in Nasik, and the Gurwayur temple in Malawar.

The Equalisation of Chances

The depressed classes' suffering and poverty are largely brought on by the lack of opportunity equality, which is brought on by untouchability.

Private businesses and businesses run by Hindus can do a lot by giving the underprivileged their support and by hiring them in their offices in a variety of grades and jobs that suit their qualifications.

Social Communication

The greatest approach to do that is to increase communication between the two. People can only overcome the weird feelings they have when they are in contact with one another through a shared cycle of engagement. Nothing, in my opinion, can accomplish this more successfully than inviting members of the lower classes to stay at or serve in the homes of Hindus from the caste system. The thusly established live interaction will familiarise both parties with a shared and related existence and open the door for the unification that we are all seeking.

It is not enough to abolish untouchability; you also need to eradicate Chaturvarna if you want untouchables to be an integral part of Hindu society.

On February 8, 1948, following Gandhi's passing, Laxmi Kabir wrote to her.

Great people can occasionally do great things for their country, but they can also do significant harm to its development.

Invisible Political, Economic, and Social Rights

Mr. Gandhi had developed into a real threat to our nation. He had stifled every original ideas. He was preserving the unity of the congress, which was composed of all the selfish and wicked elements of society who agreed on nothing other than adoring and praising Mr. Gandhi. He claimed that Gandhi's passing would free people from being held captive by a superhuman, encourage independent thought, and force for them to be able to stand on their own.

According to the idea of graded inequality, which states that some people are elevated while others are demoted, India's social structure is founded. On the economic level, our society is divided into those who are extremely wealthy and others who are living in squalor. We will begin living a contradictory existence on January 26th, 1950. One man, one vote, one value will ensure political equality, but social and economic life will remain unequal. Those who are harmed by inequality will overthrow the democratic democracy that this assembly has fought so hard to construct if we don't resolve these problems as quickly as feasible.

The cause of the untouchables is that for which freedom is currently being fought in India. Freedom does not stem from the causes of Muslims or Hindus. Their conflict is one of power rather than one of freedom. Therefore, it has always surprised me that no party or movement committed to freedom has shown interest in the untouchables up to this point.

Ambedkar discussed the right to self determination in terms of a separate electorate. Gandhi fought vehemently against Ambedkar's desire for a distinct Dalit electorate when he pushed for it. The Gandhi who had nothing against Muslims wanting their own electorate was the same Gandhi. After the Poona Pact was ratified in 1932, Gandhi was reluctant to concede defeat to a cunning Dalit leader. Gandhi decided to fast till he passed away after his return to India in opposition to a prize that would have greatly raised the standard of Dalit leadership in that nation. Because Dalits could have won elections without the assistance of Hindus from higher castes. Ambedkar is said to have been used as a pawn by Gandhi in a negotiation to persuade him to concede: "**Mahatmas have come, Mahatmas have gone, but the lot of Dalits remain the same.**" Ambedkar was concerned that, in rural areas where upper caste control still prevailed, Dalit violence may rise as a result of Gandhi's passing. In order to offer Dalits seats in state and federal legislatures, he made a compromise with Gandhi and signed the Poona Pact. Gandhi defended the interests of his upper caste and mandated that Dalit leadership need the support of the higher castes. Ambedkar himself suffered as a result of this and was unable to defeat the higher castes in Maharashtra to win the Lok Sabha election.

Right to choose your path

Ambedkar rewrote the course of history and connected the Dalits to Buddha. After failing in his attempts to reform the Varna faith, he decided to follow the logical road of Buddhism. He even stated emphatically, "Unfortunately, I was born a Hindu. I sincerely promise you that I would not pass away a Hindu, but I was powerless to stop it from happening.

In order to support his stance on conversion, Dr. Ambedkar stated that there are both material and spiritual dimensions to it in addition to religious ones. It is important to comprehend the origins, the nature, and the application of untouchability, regardless of the viewpoint or aspect. You won't be able to appreciate the true significance of my conversion proclamation without this understanding. I strongly advise you to think back on the accounts of the horrors committed against you in order to comprehend untouchability and its practises in real life. Few of you, though, might have realised why this happened. Their dictatorship has this as its foundation. I believe it is crucial that we comprehend it. This isn't a conflict between two antagonistic men. Untouchability is a problem that arises from class conflict. Hindus of the caste system and untouchables are at odds.

It is not a matter of treating one man unfairly. This is a case of one class being treated unfairly by another. This conflict begins as soon as you demand that everyone be treated equally...

According to Dr. Ambedkar, the so-called Hindu dharma has no room for individual identity because it does not respect or uphold my morals. I'll be absolutely clear: males should practise religion, not the other way around. Convert to human treatment to receive it. Convert for organisation. Convert to gain strength. Convert in order to ensure equality. Convert to gain freedom. Convert to ensure happiness in your home life.

According to what he had learned from his experiences, three things are necessary for a person's uplift. Compassion, equality, and freedom are them. Have you had any personal experience with any of these elements?

Conclusion :

Ambedkar promoted the rights of the oppressed. However, it would be extremely unfair to him to limit his role to that of a Dalit leader. Among his contemporaries, he was the most accomplished political figure and philosopher. When he drafted the Hindu Code Bill, he was obviously decades ahead of his time. A privilege that Indian women had never before imagined being accorded to them was made available by this measure. In contrast to other political individuals, such as certain Dalits, who were unable to question religion and religious texts, Ambedkar held that human dignity was superior to all religions and all religious writings. It is unnecessary to mention the well-known Satyagraha in Mahad for the dalits' access to water. Without a thorough assessment of Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar's substantial contributions, no discussion on human rights in India could be deemed to be conclusive.

References :

1. Bhatia, Sunil, and Anjali Ram. "Outsider at home: Reading Babasaheb Ambedkar as a radical, decolonial psychologist." *Journal of Personality* 91.1 (2023): 14-29.
2. Sithardhanan, K., and J. Thirumal. "Ambedkar Views On Unflinching Defender Of Human Rights."
3. Debnath, Debashis. "Dr. BR AMBEDKAR'S THOUGHTS AND PHILOSOPHIES ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND EMANCIPATION THROUGH EQUITABLE EDUCATION." *Dr. BR Ambedkar: Education, Equality and Empowerment*: 11.
4. Kumar, Kamlesh. "Defending the defenders: An analysis of violence against human rights defenders in India." *International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology* 3.12 (2011): 460-468.
5. Bob, Clifford. "'Dalit rights are human rights': Caste discrimination, international activism, and the construction of a new human rights issue." *Hum. Rts. Q.* 29 (2007): 167.
6. Queen, Christopher S. "Dr. Ambedkar and the Hermeneutics." *Engaged Buddhism*:

- Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia* (1996): 45.
7. Puradkar, Rina Avinash Pitale. "Concept of Social Justice through the Lenses of Dr. BR Ambedkar: An Appraisal." *Future Human Image* 17 (2022): 6-13.
 8. Cabrera, Luis. "'Gandhiji, I Have no Homeland': Cosmopolitan Insights from BR Ambedkar, India's Anti-Caste Campaigner and Constitutional Architect." *Political Studies* 65.3 (2017): 576-593.
 9. Rajshekar, V. T. *CASTE A NATION WITHIN THE NATION*. GYAN PUBLISHING HOUSE, 2015.
 10. Bob, Clifford, ed. *The international struggle for new human rights*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011.