

**AMBEDKAR'S IDEOLOGY INVOKING DALIT
CONSCIOUSNESS IN CONTEMPORARY INDIA: A SUBALTERN
LITERARY PERSPECTIVE**

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Abstract

*The paper discuss about the democratic and socialist ideology embarked by Dr. Ambedkar with regard to the awakening of **Dalit consciousness** in Contemporary India. It can, at times, refer to the notion of political awareness, in the sense of consciousness-raising among certain sections of the Dalit population, and at other times refer to a collective notion of identity among diverse Dalit communities. According to him, any community before it can progress must first develop a 'consciousness'. The real obstacle in the path is their inertia and indifference. To overcome this, it is necessary they should become charged with resentment of the injustice of their own condition. The paper also highlights the tenacity of 'subaltern literature' and its proponents who marked a great impact in awaking and liberating the dalit masses. Subaltern literature is regarded as a literary form of social protest and depicting historical setting in alleviating the element of dalit consciousness.*

Keywords: Dalits, Dalit consciousness (chetna), Subaltern literature, Ambedkar's ideology, Ambedkarism theory

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INTRODUCTION

Ambedkar proposed an alternative socio-economic and political framework, wherein the pragmatic and the visionary aspects of his thoughts meet on even grounds. His main objective was to establish the separate identity of the untouchables in Indian society. Ambedkar recognized the limitations of law and held that laws could not protect citizen's right. He remarked- 'Rights are protected not by law but by the social & moral conscience of society'. Dr. Ambedkar's social and political thoughts or writings contributed to the resurgence of the untouchable community (Dalits); even in the contemporary times. In order to create a spirit of self-consciousness among the dalits, they had to reckon their self-identity. This task of their mental liberation was fulfilled by Ambedkar's criticism of Hinduism. Ambedkarism notion of "ideal society" is based on liberty, equality and fraternity. The paper entails the detailed description of Dalit chetna in the Ambedkarite ideology of emancipation; its contemporary state & direction too. It tends to integrate the untouchables into Indian society in modern and not traditional ways. He sought to bring the untouchable from a state of 'dehumanization' and 'slavery' into one of equality through the use of modern methods based on education and the exercise of legal and political rights. He entails to awaken an awareness of their debased condition and common interests in the untouchables that would promote the unity needed for the development of effective organizations and mass action.

❖ SOCIO-POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF AMBEDKAR

Ambedkar's legacy as a socio-political reformer had a deep effect on modern India. "The entire philosophical, ethical and religious reflections of Dr. Ambedkar are grounded in humanism, because the proper object of his study is man, the empirical man, who lives and behaves in society. The inherent idea of his thought is that man is the measure of all things, i.e. the true measure of man is worth, not birth."

Ambedkar had a unique vision of India, having people a sense of liberty and equality. He wanted India to be free not only from external rule, but also her people, especially the depressed classes, to be free from internal thralldom. For this purpose, Ambedkar wanted the dormant forces of the depressed classes to be organized and self-aware; then only they could become free in the right spirit, and could assess things by their own standard of values, and make use of it by their own creative urges, because they had their own potentialities and powers.

Ambedkar stressed on the enormous need of educating the depressed classes in right earnest, and thus Education was one of the major planks in his philosophy of humanism. From the socio-political perspective, Ambedkar's idea of democracy is largely influenced by humanism. His conception of human law covers the whole moral life of the individual and society. It is implied by him that law should be enforced not only by punishment but also by education. Law is not always a force compelling the individual to discharge his duties but a spirit impelling him to act. Thus, in Ambedkar's view impulsion is more important than compulsion.

❖ Emergence of Dalit Consciousness -:

"Dalit chetna" is a fundamental component of an emerging theory of Dalit aesthetics. Dalit consciousness defines the sense of awareness and self-identity among the depressed classes for the emancipation of exploitation and sufferings of their life. Eleanor Zelliot wrote an essay entitled '*The Roots of Dalit Consciousness*' (1998), was describing those elements in Dalit collective culture

'which allow pride, self-respect and a vision of the future' (p. 28). Ambedkar persists as the primary symbol and inspiration of struggle and freedom in Dalit political, social and economic spheres. 'Dalit chetna obtains its primary energy from Dr. Ambedkar's life and vision. (*'Dalit Chetna in Dalit Literary Criticism'* By Laura R. Brueck)

The major points of Dalit chetna are:

- Welcoming the vision of Dr. Ambedkar on questions of freedom and independence;
- Being for Buddha's rational, intellectual perspective and concepts of no-god and no-soul, and being against the hypocrisy of Hindu law and custom;
- Being against the caste system, casteism and communalism;
- Being against social divisions, and in support of brotherliness
- Taking the side of independence and social justice;
- Being against capitalism in the financial sector;
- Being against feudalism and Brahmanism
- Being against traditional aesthetics; Supporting social change
- Taking the side of a caste-less, class-less society; and
- Being against hierarchies of language and privilege' (P.31)

❖ **AMBEDKAR'S IDEOLOGY OR AMBEDKARISM THEORY-:**

Dr. Ambedkar's ideology centralizes the notion of consciousness in the oppressed dalits in the society. Ambedkar calls for a separate electorate for the dalits; which in turn was the formation of a separate/distinct identity. The basis of separate identity for a group depends upon the objective circumstances as well as the subjective consciousness of deprivation and the identification of another 'group' and circumstances as the source of that deprivation.

Ambedkarism is highlighted as the '*Theory of Dalit Liberation*' expressing the ideology of the dalit movement. Its main significance is the urge to abolish the social and economic exploitation involved in caste and capitalism

prevailing in the society.

His thoughts are summarized as:

An uncompromising dedication to the needs of his people, the Dalits which required the total annihilation of the caste system and the Brahmanic superiority it embodied.

A strong dedication to the reality of India whose historical-cultural interpretation he sought to wrest from the imposition of a 'Hindu' identity to understand it in its massive- "A conviction that the eradication of caste required a repudiation of 'Hinduism' as a religion, and adoption of an alternative religion' which he found in Buddhism, a choice which he saw necessary for Dalit masses who followed him, but for the masses in India generally".

A broad economic radicalism interpreted as 'socialism' mixed with growing out of his democratic liberalism and liberation dedication to individual rights.

A fierce rationalism which burned through his attacks on Hindu superstitions to interpret even the Buddhism he came to in rationalistic, 'liberation theology' forms.

And finally, a political orientation which linked a firmly autonomous Dalit movement with a constantly attempted alliance of the socially & economically exploited (Dalits and shudras) projected as an alternative political front to the Congress party he saw as the unique platform of 'Brahmanism' and 'Capitalism'.

Ambedkar proposed the framework that causal importance of socio-religious-political asserts the 'superstructure' from the Marxist point of view. If caste oppression/exploitation was central then only socio-religious factors, factors of consciousness were important and primary. He insisted on change of thought as a necessary ingredient to change social behavior patterns.

Ambedkar, Savarkar and Jinnah defined Indian society on the basis of caste and community divisions, caste and community consciousness and the issue of Indian Independence was defined in terms of caste and community rights, interests and demands. The Gandhi-Nehru platform on the other hand was built on the basis of a secular, multi-lingual, multi-cultural, multi-religious, multi-national India. The moral of this ideology is that political mobilization is linked with the levels of consciousness. Caste mobilization has always led to the growth of caste consciousness and religiously defined communities always develop a specific religious-consciousness in the process of politics of mobilization.

❖ ROLE OF SUBALTERN LITERATURE IN PROMOTING DALIT CONSCIOUSNESS

Dalit consciousness is a vital seed for subaltern literature. It is demarcated as unique because of this consciousness. Limbale remarks: Dalit consciousness is an indispensable attribute of Dalit literary aesthetic. Dr. B.R Ambedkar persists as the primary symbol and inspiration of struggle and freedom in Dalit political, social and literary imaginations. The subaltern approach understands the marginalized group of people that have been long relegated to the corners and ill-fittingly described. More often, Dalit literature is being overlooked one-dimensionally, rather negatively, conforming to revolt. But in reality, this alleged 'negativity' is actually a form of bold, genuine and strongly positive assertion. Repressed and ruined human beings break the status of animal servility to which they were proposed. The literature seeks as a weapon and a strong urge to raise one's voice, to speak up and denounce loudly breaking an ever silence hitherto enforced for centuries. This embarks a new beginning. (Zene, Cosimo 2011)

❖ NEED FOR UPRISING DALIT CONSCIOUSNESS AS A WAY OF LIBERATION IN CONTEMPORARY ERA

India's new proletariat, Dalits, have unlimited revolutionary potential, much more than the industrial proletariat of any other country. Ambedkar quoted

that the untouchables have the maximum potential because the caste society refuses to upgrade them. It is the eternal proletariat, who have nothing to lose: economically, socially and culturally. What is required in the present Indian situation is a reconciliatory approach. Today there is a need of forging Marxist revolutionary programme with Ambedkar's insight into the Indian social structure. The sense of democracy was to begin at the level of consciousness, the mind, where a sub-human status is merely accepted as a 'divine' order of things. In order to bring about the uplift of outcastes it is first necessary to awaken them. Any community before it can progress must first develop a consciousness. Ambedkar regarded rights as "natural" and "inherent" in the individual, and held that 'the individual has certain inalienable rights'. He built the theory of social & political organization around his central concept of the individual and his rights. Ambedkar recognized the limitations of law and held that laws could not protect citizen's right. He remarked that- Rights are not protected by law but by the social and moral conscience of society.

❖ CONCLUSION

The foundation of Dalit-Bahujan nationalism framework developed by Ambedkar aimed at restructuring the Indian society into a casteless and classless and egalitarian Sangha (Ilaiah 2001: 109). Annihilation of caste was its central theme. Caste for Ambedkar was nothing but Brahmanism incarnate. "Brahmanism is the poison which has spoiled Hinduism" (Ambedkar 1995: 92). Ambedkar realised that any form of nationalism whose roots were steeped into Hinduism could not be a solution to the problem of dalits. Any discourse of nationalism bereft of annihilation of caste was just not acceptable to him. The agenda of annihilation of caste was so important to him that it became a central point of his struggle against colonial rule. Ambedkar has become an inspiring symbol of hopes & aspirations for the Indian Dalits, the oppressed, deprived and dispossessed. He epitomized the relentless struggles of the dalit masses for human rights, dignity and freedom. To conclude, Ambedkar's social and political ideas, as evolved out of social realism and the vast experiences of his practical as well as deep reflective life, are as meaningful today as they were in the past of this land. In this restructuring of society from the naïve perspective

of Dalit consciousness, subaltern literature played a dominant role and affirmative action.

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