

ANNIHILATION OF CASTE IN DR. B. R. AMBEDKAR'S LIFE

Dr. A. R. Bharathi,

Asst. Prof of English

Adhiyaman Arts and Science College For Women,
Uthangarai

K. Logapriya

M. Phil Scholar

Adhiyaman Arts and Science College For Women
Uthangarai

Annihilation of Caste is a speech that Ambedkar writes for depressed low caste people. This annotated, critical study is an attempt to give his work the critical and scholarly attention it deserves. The term depressed classes, first used by missionaries in south India, is later adopted by the British government in its official records. Ambedkar finds the term degrading and contemptuous and suggest several alternatives for it, such as non-caste Hindus, protestant Hindus, non-conformist Hindus, excluded castes and exterior castes,. Nevertheless, in his own writing and speeches, he tries to highlight the plight of depressed classes and untouchables interchangeably.

Dr. Ambedkar, the revere leader of the Dalit's, declares that the main is the Hindu religion and its teachings, while historians of ancient India have speculated on the origins of untouchability in the course of their larger surveys and while modern day sociologists have studied caste as a social phenomenon. Mukherjee says that, small amount of hesitation and reluctance among ideologists and historians to study the past history of the untouchables. Mukherjee is the only scholar besides Ambedkar to have done a book is extremely illuminating Ambedkar's work, copious and eloquent, investigates the problem of untouchability from an insider's perspective and therefore for its combination of historical, sociological, political and experiential perspectives.

There is general consensus that the phenomena of caste and untouchability evolve over a period of time, as a result of conflicts over land, resources and cultural practices between a people who called themselves Aryans when they began arriving in India about the beginning of the second millennium B.C., and the various communities of indigenous people that ranged from citizens of highly developed city states to forest dwelling hunters and accumulators. Mukherjee suggests that the Aryans punished groups hostile to them by declaring them ritually impure and keeping them outside the villages and towns:

One touching chandala [untouchable] ...should bathe with one's clothes on. ...to touch, talk with or even to look at a chandala made one undergo penance For touching Aryan women a chandala was fined one hundred panas, and for adultery with her a shavapaca [untouchable] was sentenced to death. (41)

Ambedkar thinks that untouchability is born around A.D.400, it is born out of the struggle for supremacy between Buddhism and Brahmanism which has so completely moulded the history of India and the study of which is so, woefully neglected by students of Indian history. One may agree or disagree with Ambedkar's hypotheses regarding the origins of caste and untouchability, however the fact is that untouchables have long lived outside the village boundaries, subsisting on the flesh of dead draught animals that it is their duty to dispose unwanted things.

During the independence movement, many congress leaders give the consumption of carrion by untouchables as the reason why caste Hindus (as high caste Hindus are then called untouchables being called outcaste) practiced untouchability against them. While Ambedkar also advise his followers to give up eating carrion, he replies to the caste Hindus those untouchables has resorted to eating it only because they are too poor to get anything else and not because they love it. Whether the untouchables are Hindus or not become a highly sensitive issue during the early years of the twentieth century when the congress leaders demanding home rule from the British colonial government and matters of proportional representation for Hindus and Muslims came to the forefront. The Muslims leaders submits a petition to the British government claiming that untouchables, being outcastes, is a part of the Hindu population.

Ambedkar, along with other leaders of the untouchables, also demanded separate electorates for untouchables. He argues that untouchables are not Hindus since they are not included in the Chaturvarna system. For him Gandhi's claim that untouchables are an indivisible part of the Hindu fold is merely expedient. He sees it as a ploy to allow upper caste people to grab political power and continue to keep untouchables under their feet.

Dalit writers and leaders are influenced by Ambedkar's fight against untouchability. In his famous work, *Annihilation of Caste*, he proclaims, "You have got to apply the dynamite to the Vedas and the Shastras which deny any part to reason" (75). And on 25 December 1927, while leading the famous agitation to gain Dalit's the right to draw water from the Chavda Lake at Mahad, Maharashtra, Ambedkar has, in a powerfully symbolic act, burnt the Manusmriti in a bonfire. He chooses this text for burning because its author, Manu, is the ancient sage credited with codifying the Brahminic laws of untouchability and pollution.

The ideological difference between Dalit's and caste Hindus over the Vedas and other sacerdotal texts, Chaturvarna and the caste system cause a deep rift between the Dalit's and the congress leadership, which is dominated by high caste Hindus and ridiculed by Ambedkar as a bourgeois Brahmin organization. Gandhi, for, example believes that the caste system and untouchability are distortions that could be purged from Hinduism without discarding Chaturvarna, which he believed to be a unique gift of India to world civilization. He feels that untouchables must not stop performing their hereditary functions because that is what the Varna system enjoins upon every Hindu. Writing in Harijan on 6th March 1937, he says that, one born in a scavenger family, he must earn his livelihood by being a scavenger itself.

For centuries together, people belong to the lowest caste against the Hindus in India have continued to be uncared and unloved. These people are not only despised, ostracized and looks down upon but also humiliates by the caste Hindus, being treats by them as untouchables. The caste Hindus did not allow the untouchables to live amongst them or touch the water of their wells or village tanks. The untouchables are also forbidden to enter Hindu temples and are denied learning and education. Good jobs or business are not for them. They are only allows to

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sweep roads, make or repair shoes, weave baskets of cane or skin dead animals. A few only lucky ones will find employment as bonds labourers in the fields and homes of landlords or as servants in village offices. They are restricted on how they should dress and what they should eat and of what metals their vessels and ornaments should be made.

Thus, for hundreds of years the untouchables lives a life of poverty, illiteracy, backbreaking hardships and untold sufferings. Into one such untouchable Marathi speaking, Mahar family is born Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar on whom India in 1990, proudly and gratefully conferred its highest title of Bharat Ratna, the jewel of India. Dr. B.R Ambedkar is discriminated because of his low community. He faces a lot of problems, while practicing law and he has to encounter many hurdles. Facing them bravely, he takes up the work of eradicating untouchability in right earnest. This purpose, he set up the BahishkrutHitakariniSadha, in July 1924. This organization aim is uplifting the people of the lower classes and making them socially and politically equal to other high classes in the Indian society. There are already a few other institutions and organizations working for the welfare of low class people. Their work is uplifting but whereas Dr. Ambedkar's BahishkrutHitakariniSadha wants to entire caste system to be scrapped from the Hindu religion. To strike at a system in existence for over two thousand years is an uphill task indeed.

Ambedkar is an Indian leader, influential during the colonial era and post-independence period of India. He belongs to a Dalit community, traditionally the most oppressed and marginalized group in Indian society. He is the fourteenth child in an impoverished Maharashtra Dalit family, who studied abroad, returned to India in the 1920s and joined the political movement. His focus is to fight for social and political rights of the Dalits. He fights for a broader liberation from exploitation and oppression. Dr. Ambedkar, the revered leader of the dalits declares that the main cause which is responsible for the fate of the untouchables is the Hindu religion and its teaching. While historians of ancient India has speculated on the origins of untouchability in the course of their larger surveys and while modern day sociologists has studied caste as a social phenomenon.

The adaptation of lower classes in literature is not a new trend. The representation of marginalize people in Indian. Writing in English is started by Mulk Raj Anand in his book *Untouchable*. Afterwards this kind of Dalit theme in literature in sketched by Arundhati Roy and in the contemporary postmodern period Arvind Adiga, Rohinton Mistry and translated literature Mahasweta Devi. Dalit is a Sanskrit word which means to split, crack or open. Untouchables, depressed, underprivileged, downtrodden, underdogs and Harijan (God's people) is called Dalits. Dr. Ambedkar in Indian constitution gives special provision for those depressed classes entitle as Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe. The theme of exploitation, injustice inhumanity, hatred etc. the typical features of Dalit texts. And the heroes and heroines of the texts cannot openly react against these so calls long lasted socio-economical drawbacks. The positivity or the helplessness condition of fate is the inevitable phenomenon of dalit hero and heroin's ultimate destiny. The condition of these people is similar to that of the condition of African black people, apartheid or the Australian's aborigines or Canada's first nations. In India, Dalit is concerned with the Schedule Caste or Schedule Tribes who is somehow or the other way exploited in respect of race, caste, class or gender. The racial discrimination cages them in the zoo of casteism after the sixty years of India's independence.

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Ambedkar has declared in a mammoth meeting in 1935, that although he was born a Hindu, he is not going to die as one. True to his word, he embraced Buddhism on 14 October 1956, along with millions of his followers just three months before his death. Since then, there have been many mass dalit conversations. High caste Hindu forces have tried to prevent these through various means. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar calls dalit's as broken people and Mahatma Gandhi give them a new name Harijans the man of god and made so many efforts for upheaval of the dalits.

The freedom, got on 15th August 1947 is meaningless for them until the attainment of the social as well as financial freedom of dalits. Now the dalits literature has taken the shape of agitates on injustice and exposes the evil and hypocrisy of the upper caste. Literature is always plays an important role in the revolution and dalits literature is revolution against the social unjust. Dalit literature reveals untouchables quest for identity, dignity and the recognition of their human worth rather than to points those unnoticed shades of a social problem which generally escape the eyes of the social scientist.

Ambedkar's idealism is different from Gandhi's idealism on reforming Hinduism. Whereas Gandhi believes in the removal of untouchability through penance and acts of social service by caste Hindus, as opposed to mandated changes in the law, Ambedkar used the language of rights and legislate remedies. Similarly, while Gandhi and the other congress leaders thought in terms of temple entry and inter-dining, Ambedkar likes untouchables, constantly reiterating how they are denied access to education, ownership of land and jobs above the level of scavenging, sanitary and other menial occupations and are also forced to provide their wages. In the words of Gail Omvedt, "the point is that Gandhi, who feared a' political division...in the villages ignored the division that already existed; in his warning against the spread of violence, he ignored the violence already existing in the lives of the Dalit's" (172).

As Dalit's battles for equality and dignity, the names they have given by their oppressors became a major issue. So stigmatized are untouchables caste names that they desired to discard them. The new names asserted their claims that they are outside the chaturvarna and are, indeed, the aboriginal people in India. They adapt names like Adi-Dravida, Adi-Andhra, Adi-Hindu, Adi-Karnataka to lay claim to an aboriginal identity, the word Adi means from the beginning. This claiming of aboriginal status and a non-Aryan identity flies in the face of the Hindu ideologues who see the Vedas, the texts of the Aryans, as the source of India's civilization, and claim that the Aryans does not come western from central Asia but are indigenous to India.

On Ambedkar's birthday The BahujanSamaj Party (BSP) is launched on 14th April 1984. The party has been able to dislodge the supremacy of Brahmins and Kshatriyas in Uttar Pradesh, the most populous province in India, where it is back in power for fourth time. It is a measure of the complexity and oddity of identity politics in India today that the party, which has to make opportunistic alliance with the Bharatia Janata party in the last elections, begged an absolute majority in the 2007 elections with the support of the Brahmins.

Dalit's are thus a major force in India today, playing a decisive role in shaping the future, spread over the entire country, speaking many languages and belonging to many religions, they are certainly not a homogeneous community. However, they continue to face certain problems, which emanate from their status as untouchables.



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