



**DR. B. R. AMBEDKAR: A PROBE INTO INDIA'S DESTINATION FROM  
ILLUSION TO RATIONALITY**

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**Abstract**

*The colonial modernity of alien rule in India through its value-loaded institutional framework obliged society to march forward towards secular democracy. The religious bound caste ridden society could not prepare itself to succumb such manipulating change. On such background the democratic polity appeared on the Indian horizon as means to nation's social- economic development. However, the democratic values enshrined in the constitutional framework could not reflect in socio-economic life. The tradition bound unequal values in all respects are being still playing dominant role in Indian society which retarded the healthy working of democracy as a way of life. Dr. Ambedkar has offered his theoretical tenets as a panacea over the social malady.*



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**The colonial modernity of alien rule in India through its value-loaded institutional**

**I.** The enlightenment movement in India brought about through the colonial modernity has provided different tenets for social dynamics. Dr. Ambedkar himself was a product of this process who initiated to make an enquiry into the realm of such different theoretical tenets. As a rationalist, he looked at Hindu social order from the bottom and offered a materialistic analysis. The vertical steel frame of graded caste order condemned the Untouchables to the lowest rung as slaves<sup>1</sup> whereas at the top there were Brahmin castes that followed strict discipline over the centuries, violation of which provided offender punishment to the extent what his caste occupied the dignity in its hierarchical gradation.<sup>2</sup> Every cultured society, undoubtedly, needs to be built on the principle of division of labour which, to Ambedkar, profiles human ability. However, the division of labour in caste system has condemned the laborers into watertight compartments.<sup>3</sup> The prohibition on mobility<sup>4</sup> as the cardinal principle of caste system has divided and disintegrated the society<sup>5</sup> into number of isolated exclusive groups who strictly followed the ban on inter-caste dinner and inter-caste marriage;<sup>6</sup> and thus made them anti-social and inimical to one another.<sup>7</sup> An identity of individual corresponded exclusively to the caste to which he belonged and not to his religion as Hindu.<sup>8</sup> The religion

on spiritual and moral ground has legitimized such fragmented socio-economic order<sup>9</sup> which is incapable of forming the morality, society and nation.<sup>10</sup> Dr. Ambedkar, thus, admitted that the caste system has disorganized and demoralized the Hindus.<sup>11</sup> He, therefore, stood for the total annihilation of caste system and visualized the new society consisting of many interests, full of channels for change and would be governed through the values-liberty, equality and fraternity.<sup>12</sup>

**II** An enquiry into Hindu religion and society in 19<sup>th</sup> century India on the part of social reformers made them conclude that unless and until the inhuman Hindu social order is brought to the level of humanity, the rebuilding of nation would not be attained. The liberals and radical reformers directed their efforts to social reforms on modern philosophical line; whereas the revivalists, by glorifying the ancient Vedic age and discarding the western philosophy and tools, stood for social reforms.<sup>13</sup> Their revivalist tone of Vedic ancient age subsequently resulted in militant political nationalism by the newly born Hindu nationalists-Lal-Bal-Pal trinity at the cost of sacrifice social reforms and secularism as they severely opposed social reformists. Bipin Chandra Pal built up the structure of his Hindu nationalism on the cultural Vedic foundation.<sup>14</sup> This provided the space for feudal-rural caste ridden Hindu masses to enlarge the scope of national movement against the alien rule.<sup>15</sup> Tilak followed the same line and succeeded in mobilizing mass in the national movement. Such strategy resulted in the dichotomy- social v/s political reforms; and the militant Hindu nationalists, thus, gained decisive triumph over the reformers. M. G. Ranade urged the interdependence of both political and social reforms as the nature taught us the rule of comprehensive change.<sup>16</sup> Dr. Ambedkar boldly asserted that the Hindus may not be fit for political power or reforms as they condemned Untouchables to the loathsome conditions by discarding the elementary civil rights necessary for their survival.<sup>17</sup>

Arobindo Ghosh came up with organic concept of Hindu society and nationality composed of religion, creed and faith.<sup>18</sup> Sawarkar of Hindu Mahasabha built up his concept of nation on the foundation of religion, ethnicity, culture and historical heritage, which finds its organic nexus to the holy Hindu land.<sup>19</sup> The most fundamental version of Hindu society and nation initially conceptualized by Hedgewar and subsequently developed and enlarged by Golwalkar. Golwalkar looked at Hindu society as an omnipotent giant organic structure reflecting it in the state of God and hence regarded the Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras as integral to its organs.<sup>20</sup> These Vernas are obliged to perform their duties and services towards the organic society from their respective graded position within the Verna-Caste system. Such concept of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangha has condemned an individual

under an absolute totalitarian control of state-society-nation. The Hindu nationalism founded on Varna-Caste shall be cracked, Ambedkar predicted, as it was lacking morality and solidarity.<sup>21</sup> His materialistic secular concept of liberty and equality provided to maintain healthy cross human relationship on socio-economic plane by restoring human dignity that would certainly be a path to fraternity necessary for nation building.<sup>22</sup> By discarding such false notion of Hindu nationalism, Dr. Ambedkar boldly and unequivocally asserted that the nationalism is to be founded on the value-‘all men born equal and remain equal until the death.’<sup>23</sup> Such concept of secular nationalism may, certainly, be extended to the world nationalism that comprehensively covers humanity.

**III** Gandhiji being essentially a religious man, deeply believed in ethical values that the constant assault of a bunch of ethical principles on human mind could turn man into moral being. However, in a tradition bound society men do not readily succumb to the conscious efforts at manipulating change.<sup>24</sup> This led Gandhiji to conceptualize secularism, social dynamics and nationalism on pragmatic- practical plane to be suited to his anti-colonial strategy by uniting tradition-bound, ignorant Indian masses irrespective of their sectarian and divergent interests.

Gandhiji’s conception of religion was the bunch of high moral and ethical principles upheld by all religions.<sup>25</sup> This made him spiritualize politics<sup>26</sup> and conceptualize secularism<sup>27</sup> without making rational enquiry into religion unlike what enlightened concept of materialistic western secularism did. By avoiding the clash of interests or class war<sup>28</sup> between haves and have-nots on economic front, Gandhiji asserted, the possession of property in a personal capacity of a rich man as the trustee, required him only its reasonable consumption and the rest of property is provided for social consumption in accordance with equal distribution.<sup>29</sup> His dream, in last phase of life, for classless and casteless society<sup>30</sup> was countenanced by such non-violent pattern of socialism or trusteeship that would be a panacea on socio-economic malady.<sup>31</sup> The massive industrialization generating from the free competition and market system, to Gandhiji, would turn it into the exploitation of poor masses. Instead, he urged the village self-contained manufacturing mainly for use.<sup>32</sup> The non-violent tools, predominantly insisting on the concept of changing of hearts were visualized by Gandhiji for establishing socialism through the trusteeship concept of productive reciprocal relations among the haves and have-nots followed by the principle of equal distribution, has carried on an innate drawback that no one could be converted into a moral being against his own. Indeed Gandhiji may be labeled as an utopian socialist or anarchist. Unlike Gandhiji, Dr. Ambedkar asserted the socialism, can be organized and maintained within the rigid constitutional framework<sup>33</sup>

through the nationalization of key industries including the agriculture. This is to be attained through guaranteeing the individual liberty and equality as a way to human liberation. An incentive for creativity of individual could be maintained through the liberty and human dignity through the equality.<sup>34</sup>

The feudal structure of economy corresponded its deep nexus to the rigid hierarchical caste structure on occupational plane. Dr. Ambedkar admitted that the caste order was consecrated by the religion and made it sacred, eternal and inviolate<sup>35</sup> which he wanted to destroy. Gandhiji's lifelong glorified the birth based on Varna system, discarding caste and untouchability as part of custom and regarded it as an ideal form of society.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, Gandhiji reconciled the ancient Varna order with the self-sufficient feudal economic village order of medieval age so as to offer it for resolving the problems created by capitalism for 20<sup>th</sup> century India. Obviously Gandhiji's concept of Varna order, which asserted equality among the Vernas leaves the individual condemned under an absolute power of society that discarded equality between man and man and prohibited him from the vertical mobility according to his own skill and ability.

**IV** The Marxist theory of social dynamics visualized that the development in productive forces through the dialectical method at a particular stage of period corresponds to the specific form of society, and as such is a continual process towards the growth that destroyed the old structure and provided for new one.<sup>37</sup> The productive relations between man and man irrespective of their will are determined by these productive forces which constitute the foundation of society as its economic law, and the superstructure, resultant of the first consists of political, legal and other occasional ideological framework.<sup>38</sup> The reconstruction of capitalist society is a part of such lengthy historical process, which provided the objective conditions for transmitting it into a more rational stage of communist society.<sup>39</sup>

Deleting aside the exaggerative part of Marxist tenet, Dr. Ambedkar regarded it to be true<sup>40</sup> and added that the social and religious revolutions have also contributed a lot in shaping the historical growth of society.<sup>41</sup> Engels has admitted that the other factors, besides the economic have also equally contributed to such growth.<sup>42</sup> To Ambedkar the change in economic order at the bottom may not certainly correspond to the change in superstructure, the conscious manipulating efforts need to be made for it.<sup>43</sup> Instead of treating Marxism as dogma, as Lenin argued, Dr. Ambedkar presumed it as directive line to the struggle of proletariat.<sup>44</sup> He, therefore, commented on the Marxist dogmatic system of social dynamics as 'no one can create an ideal society with a single stroke of a pen.'<sup>45</sup>

The violent tools enforced for a noble end in Marxism, have also destroyed the other valuable humanitarian values.<sup>46</sup> The bloodshed revolution as an inevitable phase in Marxist social dynamics for leveling the society on equalitarian values was denounced by Dr. Ambedkar. Instead, he believed in Buddhism as value-loaded noble means for the restoration of equalitarian democratic society which avoided the violence in case of allowing the coercive power for maintaining the just social order.<sup>47</sup> Dr. Ambedkar would not be ready in any circumstances to have equality at the cost of sacrificing liberty and hence visualized the growth of human personality on materialistic and spiritual (moral) planes simultaneously in a free and fair social environment.<sup>48</sup> Marxism has certain limitations, inadequacies and ambiguities on theoretical and practical plane.<sup>49</sup> Marx was neither a system builder nor positivist scientist.<sup>50</sup> His scientific vision has provided the tools for the understanding of society that he wanted to overthrow.<sup>51</sup> However, Marx has also believed, later on, in a peaceful change. D.K. Bedekar argued that the seeds of change are first occupy within the heart of society; subsequently the revolution as the means transmits the same into a new form. As such, the peaceful change may occur in advanced countries like, U.K. and U.S.A.<sup>52</sup> Dr. Ambedkar also visualized the socio-economic change peacefully through the democratic way.<sup>53</sup>

The lack of economic equality in French revolution led Dr. Ambedkar to welcome the Russian revolution.<sup>54</sup> However, he regretted the sorry situation of liberty therein.<sup>55</sup> The dogmatic political apparatus in Russia did not permit criticism of government.<sup>56</sup> Dr. Ambedkar regarded the socialism in Russia as the resultant form of coercive will of dictatorial rulers and not that of popular will;<sup>57</sup> and the legitimacy that countenanced it was provided by the Marxist tenet of surplus value.<sup>58</sup> Thus the dictatorship that exists in Russia is the one that is knowingly planned with a lot of violence and bloodshed.<sup>59</sup> The ideology which is imposed on Russian people, to Dr. Ambedkar, could not be sustained through the means of coercion.<sup>60</sup> He, therefore, predicted that such dictatorial form of government would never lead the country towards classless society.<sup>61</sup> The official version of socialism later on has also been denounced by the Euro-communists on dictatorial and illiberal grounds.<sup>62</sup> If the democratic and socialist countries forgo their capitalist and dictatorial policies respectively, the new form of ideology consisting of the tenets of both liberty and equality, Dr. Ambedkar admitted, would mark the beginning of true democracy leading the world towards prosperity.<sup>63</sup> Despite the differences between Dr. Ambedkar and Marx, the later has carried an impact over the first.<sup>64</sup> Marx has provided the deep analysis of changing perspective of

productive relations between man and man that solely affect the process of social dynamics and avoided other factors that occupy in the analysis offered by Dr. Ambedkar.<sup>65</sup>

Dr. Ambedkar accepted the existence of two antagonistic classes in India as they survive everywhere. However, he argued that the haves in India irrespective of their socio-religious difference are aware of their class consciousness, unlike the have-nots. The haves have unitedly added fuel to the sectarian socio-religious feelings of have-nots to keep them divided.<sup>66</sup> Such a situation did not exist elsewhere in other countries. Dr. Ambedkar, therefore, attacked the both Brahminism and Capitalism simultaneously.<sup>67</sup> Despite the economic exploitation of the proletariat classes by their masters, they followed the caste disparity among themselves.<sup>68</sup> The Marxists in India have remained apathetic over the problem of caste and particularly that of untouchability<sup>69</sup> as they regarded it the superstructure. In fact, simply the class struggle is incapable of destroying the steel frame of caste system as it carried reciprocal antagonistic social interests of various castes.<sup>70</sup> Lacking such vision the Marxists could not see the relevance of anti-caste movements launched by the social reformers.<sup>71</sup>

V The social dynamics of Marx visualized the contradictory and conflict laden transition of society from feudalism to capitalism.<sup>72</sup> However, the imperialism is capable enough to reduce the transitional destination between the two. This resulted radically in the dawn of capitalism in India. The traditional caste-religious values have reconciled with the new-born capitalism and still they play dominating role in the new version. The Congress, consisting of reciprocal divergent socio-economic interests controlled by the economically dominant classes and upper caste elites, was founded with the view of destroying imperial rule.<sup>73</sup> These dominant classes in association with the middle class Hindu elite, Dr. Ambedkar admitted, were aiming at occupying all the existing posts which were captured by the colonial masters.<sup>74</sup> As such, the fundamental radical socio-economic change in the life of exploited masses would be far away from the aims and objectives of Congress.<sup>75</sup> Dr. Ambedkar was, therefore, convinced that simply the transfer of power from alien to native rulers would not create socio-economic justice;<sup>76</sup> it could only be attained through the mobilized organizational strength of exploited.<sup>77</sup> This made Ambedkar to make an enquiry into the capitalist economy.

Dr. Ambedkar believed in liberal parliamentary democracy for providing in it the individual liberty. However, he denounced the liberty therein on economic front<sup>78</sup> as the adverse unequal economic environment prohibits an individual from enjoying certain rights guaranteed by the constitution. Dr. Ambedkar observed, 'Parliamentary democracy took no

notice of economic inequalities and did not care to examine the result of freedom of contract on parties to the contract, in spite the fact they are unequal in their bargaining power.’<sup>79</sup> The right to contract as an integral working part of economic liberty has flourished, expanded and regulated capitalist mode of production on the footing of laissez-faire theory of free market that regulates the economic life of poor masses. An organic numerous castes and sub-castes comprising the graded structure of Hindu society and the new-born capitalism in India jointly prohibited lower caste masses from enjoying the fundamental liberty. Dr. Ambedkar was unhappy over such sorry situation in his last speech delivered in the Constituent Assembly.<sup>80</sup> It made a little sense to have liberty at the cost of equality and vice-versa. Dr. Ambedkar expected moral and material growth of an individual simultaneously through his concept of state socialism, organized within the legal framework, as means to promote creativity and dignity of an individual and make him capable enough to enjoy fundamental liberty, as ensured by the constitutional framework in a free and fair social environment.

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*“On the 26<sup>th</sup> of January 1950, we are going to enter into a life of contradictions. In Politics we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality. In politics we will be recognizing the principle of one man one vote and one vote one value. In our social and economic life, we shall, by reason of our social and economic structures continue to deny the principle of one man one value... We must remove this contradiction at the earliest possible moment or else those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy.”*

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