

## The Resume

The preceding study is an exploration into the nature of Hindu Caste hierarchy and graded-inequality in the Hindu social order which constituted the bedrock of all reality, possibility and prospects of the socio-economic, cultural and political life of the Hindus all through the ages; as well as, the ideals and objectives of the socio-cultural and political reforms and movements as enunciated by B. R. Ambedkar to the effect of eradicating the evils in the prevailing order, and why the ultimately, with his followers, embraced Buddhism.

That the Brahmins made the laws of the state, sanctified the position of the king by coronation, exercised all authority on matters religious, educational and legal and had also domineering role in ministerial affairs; that of themselves the *kshatriyas* formed the ruling class- the kings, the generals, the soldiers, and the bureaucrats; that the lower two castes- the *vaishyas* and the *shudras*-demographically even being the majority could never enroll themselves in professions reserved for the two high castes; and that in terms of human rights, equality, and liberty, the sudras and the untouchables were never treated with minimum social justice laid the pedestal of socio-religious ethics, economic and professional order of the Hindu society and state-system; and this order of things remained unchanged for centuries till the dawn of modernism in the recent past. Change is the law of history, but in India the wheel of change moved too slowly to be noticeable.

The fact that the British Government for the first time established the rule of law and, of course, secular law can not be denied. The threshold of opportunities put forward to the low-caste communities and Untouchables by the British was best utilized by B.R. Ambedkar in organising and educating the lowest of the low and thereupon he began the agitation for the assertion of their rights. The agitation was reformative in nature and was aimed at transforming the Hindu society by annihilating caste and untouchability and establishing basic human rights.

His mission to bring about a change of the Hindu social order failed owing to the unrelenting attitude of the high caste Hindus.

Perturbed and frustrated, Ambedkar ultimately turned to Buddhism, the ideals and philosophy of which he had been meditating upon for a period of twenty years since 1936. Buddhist philosophy, religion, ethics and social order, to him, proved to be the fountain of greater humanism, social justice, equality, liberty, brotherhood and non-violence. Ambedkar understood that in a caste-ridden society devoid of a socio-cultural revolution or at least rudimentary reforms and annihilation of caste, there could be no emergence of true nationalism. Whereas people were caste-conscious but not class-conscious, there could be no class-unity or class-based organisation without which no path could be made towards a socialistic society and state either through revolution or democracy.

Headed by Ambedkar, the conversion of thousands of 'dalits' to Buddhism signalled the alternative strength of Indian culture which could mitigate the scourges inflicted upon them by *Brahmanical* system. This conversion though did not alter much the demographic ratio of the Hindus and the Buddhists, never the less, it brought back a confidence in the minds of the untouchables and the down-trodden that they could take resort to the ideals of the Buddha, and they need not have to seek refuge to any other religion of foreign origin ; and it set a trend in the subsequent time that more number of 'dalits' followed the path of Ambedkar as to the question of a new religious identity on their rejection of Hinduism. But since the neo-Buddhists deified Ambedkar and added his name with the three jewels of Buddhism and thus it became:-

- (i) *Buddhang Smaranang Gachchhami,*
- (ii) *Dharmang Smaranang Gachchhami,*
- (iii) *Sanghang Smaranang Gachchhami,*
- (iv) *Bhimang Smaranang Gachchhami,*

Many Buddhists in different countries mainly the 'Hinayanists' criticised this step. The conversion process, however, gave the 'dalits' a new identity outside the periphery of the Hindu *varna-jati* system.

This new identity inspired the 'dalits' to initiate another round of adventure into the realm of education, literature and culture. As a consequence of their new identity the efflorescence of 'Dalit' literature and culture reflecting and articulating demands in terms of human rights in a democracy seemed very much natural. But 'Dalit' literary and cultural movement did not remain confined to the neo-Buddhists only; it also involved within itself the non-Buddhists 'dalits'. Thus the movement set up a bridge of communication between all types of 'dalits' strengthening the path of every possibility of more number of 'dalits' becoming Buddhists in subsequence.

Sometimes it is said that movements are in the nature of "process" in society. The question is how the process can become a "structure" in society that is a product of the continuing process. Usually a name is given to the continuing transaction or interactions going on between individuals occupying certain role position in society. These roles are basic elements of social structure, whereas the interactions between them are the processes of day to day social life. However there is a difference between a social movement conceived as a process and familial socialisation as process. The process called social movement seems to have no such continuity as is found in the family. However the social movement gets this continuity as soon as it is institutionalised like religion, education or family. Movements are collective attempts to bring about a social change or to create an entirely new social order or to prevent such changing of specific social institution. B. R. Ambedkar's Neo-Buddhist Movement based on a socio-religious philosophy was a collective and conscious attempt to change the condition of the untouchables in India.

Movements are the ways, or 'processes', through which the new patterns of behaviours, new patterns of relationship, new value systems express themselves within the social systems. Society is no more a tangible entity than a pattern of relationship. Social movements are not ideosyncratic. Ordinarily a movement is not an institution like the basic institutions of family, education or religion, since there is no continuing function at the level of substantive analysis. But in Ambedkar's Neo-Buddhist Movement this limitation has been superseded. In other words the value system of equality and fraternity have found their place in it. Herein lies Dr. Ambedkar's credit. Ambedkar's protest movement was born out of a humanistic philosophy and social ide-

ology.

An ideology seeks to state what is worth achieving , for whom and on what ‘normal’, ‘ethical’ or ‘social’ principles. It has been shown in the previous chapters that any change involves an arrangement of existing beliefs in a society — movements of change tend to be in favour of those who are currently ‘deprived’ and ‘against’ those who are currently ‘privileged’. Thus movements of protest are characterised by the following features :

1. The existence of currently deprived potential beneficiaries, all or some of whom must be willing to make sacrifices, to ‘fight’ — all deprived persons or segments are not necessarily ready or willing to be mobilized; mobilisation would depend upon subjective consciousness of injustice and hurt as also objective circumstances of the viability of protest.
2. The existence of currently privileged potential losers, again, all or some of whom will resist change - the- phrase ‘all or some’ is used because neither the deprived nor the privileged are homogeneous, solitary groups.
3. The existence of an ideology which attacks and seeks to demolish the values /practices of existing inequality, enunciates values in terms of which changed relationships are sought to be established and states the means of bringing about these changes.
4. ‘Leaders’ who have seen the need for change, articulate it and who now initiate the process of mobilisation.
5. Active ‘followers’ who have been mobilised and will now assist in the organisational efforts.
6. The rank and file who will remain vitally involved but will participate in the movement in so far as it is consistent with their day - to- day preoccupations.

Correspondingly the ideology of a protest movement would be seen to encompass answer to the question : who is protesting against whom, for what reasons, with what objectives and by

what means? In the case of Ambedkar the protest was against 'Brahmanism' which was defined by him : Ambedkar protested against the inequality laid down in the *Manusmriti*. In other words the protest was laid against the four rank system of caste as in the *Manusmriti*, which was burnt by him and his associates assembled on 25, December, 1927.

It may be pointed out that Ambedkar convened a meeting in March, 1924 of persons sympathetic to the cause of the Untouchables, to discuss the need to establish a society which could place the social and political problems of the Untouchables before the government. As a result the Bahishkrit Hitkarini Sabha was established on 20 July 1924. The motto of the organisation was "Educate, Agitate and Organise." He wanted to awaken the Untouchables to a state of consciousness of their deplorable condition and thereby begin a movement for progress brushing all inertia and obstructions. He pointed out that though the Untouchables were Hindus yet did not constitute a part of the Hindu society mainly owing to inhuman discrimination and inequality — practised by the high caste Hindus.

The gradual unfolding of the ideology and strategy of the Untouchables' protest movement under Ambedkar between 1920 and 1929 consisted of the following ideas and objectives:

1. Untouchables might belong to the same religions but they were not a part of the same society as the caste Hindus. They constituted as separate interest group.
2. Untouchables had historically been an exploited group, untouchability was the culmination of a religious philosophy based on inequality.
3. The Philosophy of Brahminism was a philosophy of *graded inequality* and Hinduism was the same as Brahminism. It was inflexible and it frustrated all previous efforts for reforming its basic features.
4. The Untouchables sought equality and justice, not favours. Social graces were unimportant.
5. Justice demanded not just proportional representation ; but protective discrimination for the Untouchables.

6. The Untouchables would seek to attain legitimate equalitarian goals and special protection, in political and economic spheres, within the fold of Hinduism as far as possible , but would reject Hinduism if necessary.

Ambedkarite social reforms, held primacy over the political goal of self-government . To hold out the threat of religious conversion in full awareness of the Hindu fear of losing plurality and to seek a separate electorate and reserved seats to retain political leverage, were parts of the same strategy. The decade from 1930 to 1940 was to bring out more clearly the various aspects of the ideology and strategy of the Ambedkar -led movement of Untouchables so as to ensure their own social and economic uplift.

Increasingly, during the next decade , Ambedkar showed the awareness that, in the particular historical context in which he was functioning, the road to social betterment lay through the political channel and in politics the Untouchables could play no part unless they asserted their separate identity. And this came with his conversion to Buddhism along with his associates in 1956.

The identity as noted above is the key to transform an ideology into an institution. Ambedkar put forth the hypothesis that the Untouchables were historically 'Brokenmen' that is primitive tribes that were defeated and broken into segment. The settled tribes often allowed such Brokenmen to settle on the outskirts of their habitations because they needed men who could watch and ward against invaders. Ambedkar said that the Untouchables were originally only Brokenmen. It is because they were Brokenmen that they lived outside the village.

Usually the protest movement remains a temporary process and cannot become an institution like family. But in case of Ambedkar the Neo-Buddhist Movement launched by him on the basis of socio - religious equality became an institution. Protest thus converted itself into a family. Here in lies the greatness of Ambedkar. His Neo-Buddhist Movement grew into a Neo-Buddhist family.

