

ABSTRACT

The objective of my thesis is to explain and examine the concept of Socio-Philosophical implication of Untouchability after B. R. Ambedkar. Untouchability is not a legal term as nothing is constitutionally defined as untouchable. Untouchability is a social sanction embodied in the society as a custom. According to Ambedkar, Hinduism and *Hindu* civilization is the source and locus of untouchability. The fourfold division of castes gave birth to thousands of castes each associated with a particular occupation or skill and some were placed below even the lowest members of the society and treated worse than animals. They were untouchables. During the birth of Ambedkar, the *Mahar* community in which he belongs was treated as untouchables. The origin of untouchability has brought to the surface two sources of which one is the general atmosphere of scorn and contempt spread by the *Brahmins* against those who were *Buddhists* and the second is the habit of beef eating kept on by the broken man. All broken men are untouchables and all *Buddhists* are broken man for being retained their habit of beef eating. So, all *Buddhists*, according to *Brahmins*, were untouchables.

Untouchability, in any form, is a serious threat to humanity because members belonging to untouchable castes were deprived of the basic rights. Even having been achieved an unparalleled level of education and of influence as a barrister by profession; Ambedkar was the great victim in Indian religious system. He, therefore, dedicated all his powers and skills to the uplift of his people and to overthrow of the cruel system that held tens of millions of people in its thrall. He fought his struggle simultaneously on the political, social, economical fronts by writing books, founding political parties and trade unions, establishing consciousness-raising societies, news papers, schools, college, and hostels, and organizing a number of historic nonviolent demonstrations. His aim was to awaken the untouchables to their rights and to impress upon their minds the falsity of the religion they possessed in such

ignorance which treated them badly. In this thesis, I propose to address from anthropological and historical standpoint the origin of untouchability. So long we do not come to know this point; it would be difficult to evaluate the *pros* and *cons* of this concept. Apparently, it is by and large conceived by modern men that untouchables, of any form, is a social evil and prima facially it would appear to be case. Having said this, it is, at the same time, necessary to know why untouchability as a social evil had been prevailing from years after years. Therefore, it would be necessary to highlight the source and locus of untouchability. Although Ambedkar had condemned Hinduism as the source of untouchables, but there is divergence of opinions regarding this point as many would feel that it was not Hinduism, but something else which actually germinate assists to this social evil.

It is true that humans are the superior agents in the globe by virtue of possessing humanity and rationality. Humans have the ability to judge what is good or bad, what is right or wrong and what one ought to do and not ought to do. That is why, in traditional ethics humans are considered to be the only legitimate moral agents. Humans are autonomous and their autonomy is guided by their rationality. Humans are rational and self realization is the key of human beings. But when we come to know that there underlies some discrepancies or inequalities in the society, then surely human's rational position puts under scrutiny.

We know that untouchability was prevailing in barbaric fashion during eighteenth century onwards and it is prevailing till today in our society in many different ways. The intellectual class of the present Indian society actually plays dual roles regarding this issue. In public places they are used to state that the concept of untouchability has no rational basis and it should be eradicated in its all forms from the society. However, they play different role in their practical life. Thus, untouchability is not something manifested in outer gesture, it is something lies within. We feel that untouchability is a social evil and no one can support it. There is no scientific or rational basis of untouchability. Untouchability has no constitutional

basis. The so-called untouchability that we witness in India is a social issue and it is totally based on prejudices and false religious perceptions. The concept of untouchability is not a legal concept, nor even be a concept that can be solved legally. It is rather a social concept that cannot be solved politically. On the contrary, the concept of caste system has been politicized. Thus, instead of solving this problem the political system of India actually lingers it. It was happened in the past and it continues at present as well.

The issue of untouchability is unanimously condemned by all. It is still prevailing in the society not in the same sense as B. R. Ambedkar himself had been suffered, but in an invisible way one can easily realize if he is conscious of it. How can we overcome the concept of untouchability? Fortunately, we have already overcome the dark age of untouchability. In the past, untouchables were identified by physical appearance because at that time some physical bars were imposed on untouchables in terms of their dress, food, cloths etc. Equally, the upper caste was so vocal in favor of untouchability. However, over the course of time, there we notice a drastic change as far as untouchability is concerned. The same has happened in other parts of the world. This is the blessing of civilization. Thus, untouchability in most Indian states is not visible in barbaric fashion. An untouchable does not find any difficulty when he travels by bus or train. He may not find any problem to take food with others belonging to higher castes. These are good signs. But at the same time when we come to know that there are some societies where untouchability is a cause of concern, then we feel disgrace ourselves as the most intellectual representative of the globe.

Ambedkar has argued that though he was born as a *Hindu*, but he would certainly not die as a *Hindu*. We know that at the end of his life he accepts Buddhism, because he had no choice as everything has been undertaken by him under compulsion for doing social well being. He had shown his polemic attitude to Hinduism due to his non- acceptance of four-fold class system and undue prominence towards *Brahmins*. According to Ambedkar, this class system has

created division among men and it has injected the seed of exploitation and oppression of the lower caste people or the so called downtrodden. In this regard, he had burnt the *Manusmriti*, particularly in those portions which deal with discriminations among men. It is true that this type of class discrimination finds no entry in Buddhism. In this respect, we can readily refer to the story of *Chandalika*, which has written by Rabindranath Tagore. The *Buddhist* monk *Ananda* could address *Chandalika*, an Untouchable girl, in the eye of other *Hindu* people, namely, curd-seller, bangle-seller etc, as a human being at par with others.

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