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RELEVANCE OF BASAVESHWARA'S AND AMBEDKAR'S THOUGHT'S OF WOMEN EMANCIPATION

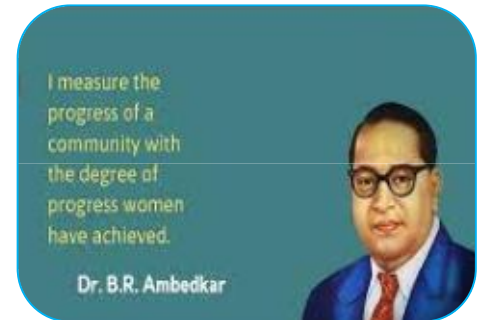
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ABSTRACT:

As pragmatists and emancipationists to the core both Basaveshwara and Ambedkar believed that in the absence of social equality, humanism, economic and political equality or justice and welfare of women's, no sort of independence would bring about either social solidarity or concreteness. They both were of the opinion that the first step towards the attainment of social solidarity and equality therefore was the liquidation of the hierarchical structure of society on the basis of Chaturverna.

KEY WORDS: *pragmatists and emancipationists , humanism, economic and political equality.*



INTRODUCTION:

The two advocated the abolition of privileges on the basis of caste or status and vigorously fought for the liberty and dignity of the individual. At the same time they were equality forceful in their advocacy of the equality in the society. Both sought to achieve their objectives through the following principles and here we are to check the aptness and relevance of the principles put forth by them to the present conditions of life and society.

Rationalism of Basaveshwara and Dr. Ambedkar as the basis of their (struggle) concept of humanism is much relevant to our times. They both stood against the inequality in the society on the basis of caste. Since the advent of Varnashramadharma in ancient times India has witnessed ruthless and miserable exploitation of Shudras people of the community were prohibited from possessing all kinds of human rights such as right of education, right to possess property, right to civic amenities, right of participation in the social activities, right of access to public places and such other facilities.

They were condemned as untouchables and were kept outside the civilized habit under total segregation. They were compulsorily assigned with the most inhuman and vulgar types of menial jobs, for which they were never given anything in return in economic terms. They were required to render these services to the people of higher caste of the society freely so that they can attain salvation. The life of this unfortunate lot was most pathetic.

Independent India has enacted a plethora of laws starting from some fundamental principles laid down in the Indian constitution itself to the proclamation of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. (Prevention of Atrocities) act of 1989, which aimed at the alleviation of the miserable condition of this most oppressed section of people of our country, but in spite of the legislative efforts made, the

position of the untouchables continues to grim. This indicates that law cannot solve the problems of untouchability; the remedy also does not so much lie in improving the laws as in changing the very attitude of the people towards untouchables. Such change of hearts of the people was attempted by both Basaveshwara and Dr. Ambedkar in their times.

If Basaveshwara launched a socio-religious revolution Dr. Ambedkar put forth a socio-political revolution. But their intention was very much the same. They both tended to remove the caste system, which threatened to rule the destiny of people in the country.

In the present day for our ill fate, we are witnessing numerous communal riots in India. If we go back to the sayings of Basava and Dr. Ambedkar in this context, we find their principles very much inevitable to the present's society and for its better progress.

What Basaveshwara said in his Vachana i.e. "God is one but names are many" is quite relevant. His vachanas relating to rationalism can give solace satisfaction, peace, contentment and happiness to human beings at all times. That is why it has been aptly remarked that.

"In the bed rock of society having faith in this religion, the values are still alive as they still influence the conduct and behavior of the people and exercise a holy and being influence on their way of life."¹

In India, all along the history, the Brahmin class has shown all the vices a privileged and entranced class and large numbers of them have possessed neither learning nor virtue. The whole class profited by the example of its leading personalities in every age and yet the public esteem went to the qualities rather than to any official status. The tradition was one of respecting learning and goodness in any individual who possessed them. There are belonging to the depressed classes being so respected and sometimes considered as saints. Even today, in this modern economic age, the influence of this tradition is remarkable and because of it Dr. Ambedkar became the supreme leader of India and moved the hearts of millions without force or compulsion or official position or possession of money. It is this cultural background of the country, which makes the tents of great saints like Basaveshwara relevant even to contemporary times.

A cursory look at the social scenario of India at present exhibits a pathetic state. The country is sought to be divided on caste, religion, race, language and region for the personal aggrandizement of few people. Emotions of the people are unnecessarily wiped out in these lines. Unequal distribution of economic resources of the country has created a wide gulf between the rich and poor. Social inequalities based upon the status of individuals are still persisting. Although political equality is reached under the constitution and the representation and of people Act, it is only formalistic as only rich are capable of contesting and winning elections. The poor are only passive participants in the political process in the form of exercising their franchise.

Even that is interfered with by goonies, Vandalism and undue influences by the wealthy and mighty people. Quarrels in the name of religious have reduced the country's religious state to the lowest level the modern materialistic outlook the life; spiritualism has taken the back seat. In spite of the constitutional directives to bring about socio-economic equality no much progress is made in this direction.

In spite of all these kinds of economic, political, social, religious and spiritual inequalities, the people of the country have been readily responding to the calls given by great thinkers for the eradication of these inequalities. Attempts made by Jayaprakash Narayan in the recent past for total revolution bear testimony to this. Hence re-enunciation of Basaveshwara's ideas of equality is all the more relevant in the present day situation of the country. The concept of political equality has to be revalidated by social, economic, religious and spiritual equality. That could be made possible, among other things by the reinforcement of constitutional philosophy with the Indian philosophy propounded by great saints like Basaveshwara in respect of concepts of equality and equity. This would have way for the Indianised constitutional jurisprudence which would be far more effective.

Though one may note that untouchability is on the decline, yet in spite of Basaveshwara's efforts, the conditions in relation to caste are no better in the 20th century than in the 12th as revealed by the detailed analyst's made in the earlier part of this chapter. It is true that the constitution of India

has declared to secure justice, liberty, equality and fraternity to all citizens. It is equality true that series of legislative measures have also been taken up in that direction. But in spite of all these efforts, the problem is still not completely solved. This forces us to search our hearts and find out where the defect lies.

It needs a good machinery to implement the laws. In addition, changes of hearts among the people at large by a process of reasoning is much more essential, if the recipient people do not possess the necessary will to faithfully and whole heartedly follow the declared law, it is not only extremely difficult, but also rather impossible to bring about the desired social change.

In this connection an absorption of the historic movements such as that of Basaveshwara's into the jurisprudence with a view to project the plethora of laws that are declared by the independent India are nothing but mere reflection of the spirit of the people looked at from the historical perspective. That will go along way in setting the people's heart and soul in such reformatory laws.

Dr. Ambedkar's views on the origins of the servile classes—the Shudras and the untouchables, and also the origin of the caste system, are sociological theories largely involving historical facts. As students of philosophy, we are not mainly concerned with the question – whether these theories are correct or not. It is, honestly speaking, the task of a historian or of a sociologist to examine them thoroughly. But what ethical significance these theories have, is a question that we are directly concerned with. We can only say that whatever might have been the motive behind the struggle for supremacy between the different classes in Indian society there was a lack of the social harmony—social humanism, viz., democracy-liberty, equality and fraternity. Kant's principle, "Treat every human being as an end and never as a means", was obviously violated, and this resulted in tragic social behavior—patterns and iniquitous human relationship based on caste and untouchability.

Even Dr. Radhakrishnan honestly acknowledged that the Hindu social order degenerated into an instrument of exploitation, tyranny and oppression. It tended to perpetuate inequality and inhumanity and developed the spirit of separatism, hatred and enmity, low and high. This spirit killed the feelings of love, goodwill and brotherhood. Human rights like education, arms and property were denied to millions of men and women in the Hindu social system. Apart from Shudras and other poor classes, Hindu society created millions of Untouchables, whose humanity was so mutilated that they, though living, look like dead persons. Caste and untouchability gripped the mind and paralyzed the reasoning power of educated masses. Humanism, if it at all existed, was buried which amounted to total suspension of human rights and humanistic values. The Varna system was responsible for such a state of human affairs in Indian society, because it rested on the spirit of inequality and exclusiveness.

Naturally, a feeling of dissatisfaction with the social order of Chaturvarnya—which, later on, assumed the form of a rigid and static caste system—grew in Dr. Ambedkar, who consequently stood for a radical change in order to establish right relations between man and man in Indian society, but he advocated social change with patience and peace, and not with violence, hatred and revenge. It is peace, and not violence, which can result in bettering human relations in all human societies.

Dr. Ambedkar's attitude towards religion is not spiritual; his approach to religion is intellectual and socio-political; while explaining the evolution of religion Dr. Ambedkar developed his theory of God, it means that according to him the concept of God is human creation, man developed the theory of God to explain natural phenomena, when Dr. Ambedkar says that the said natural power has become malevolent he thereby denotes that evil tendencies which give rise to practices like untouchability.

Thus, Dr. Ambedkar rejected the concept of God, as a result the concept of God created religion or God based religion was not acceptable to him, perhaps it was one of the reasons why religion like Islam or Christianity were not acceptable to him, because both the religions were founded on the doctrine of divine omnipotence, perhaps because of his factor only he could not take a categorical decision about religion or conversion till 1954. But Dr. Ambedkar thought that religion is essential to society according to him, "some people think that religion is not essential to the society, I do not hold this view, I consider the foundation of religion to be essential to life and practices of life. He also held that limitations imposed on social life take the form of religion. He said, he wanted a religion which instructed people, how they should behave with one another and prescribed for man his duty to

another, and religion with god in the light of equality, fraternity and liberty is useless. He also held that religion was necessary for the development of an individual. He argued Hinduism had lost these values and could not be reformed, so he wanted to give up the Hindu religion. He found the principles of liberty, equality, fraternity and the values necessary for the recognition of Indian society based on Buddhism. Hence he adopted Buddhism, he regarded religion necessary for social reconstruction, he also thought that religion is the essence of cultural evolution and heritage. He considered religion in relation to individual and society."²

In these days religious issue has been politicalized by our politicians to earn their votes. So they have been exploiting the people in the name of such irrational issues, temple and masjid building. One should be aware of the recent religious communal riots as a result of such issues, due to which so many innocent brothers and sisters of both the communities of the Hindus and Muslims were killed ruthlessly, the government always performs its post mortem duty of providing compensation to the bereaved family, is it a solution? Day by day such riots have been increasing and the death toll of the innocent is always on the increase. In the event of such irrational and inhuman acts, Dr. Ambedkar's message of god based religion is danger to our society, for brotherhood, equality of the people is the timely solution and the most relevant to our time. Dr. Ambedkar once said that "Hinduism was separated from morality; it had degenerated and has become corrupt. He was of the opinion that for the growth of strong and powerful nation morality was essential. So he wanted such a religion, morality based on values like equality, liberty and fraternity, that is for him religion was a system of such socio-cultural values which would bring all the individuals on equal place and would create a powerful political community, in his opinion so called might of the Muslims was due to their religion."³

Analyzing the thoughts of Dr. Ambedkar, it became quite clear that he was a rationalist and not against Hindu religion, "but he was against that religion which teaches one man to hate another, he accepted that the religion teaches the lesson of equality and brotherhood but the Hindu religion did not accept the principles of equality and brotherhood in general behavior. So it is destructive for humanity, due to this inequality his attention ultimately went towards Buddhism which gives importance to the principles of equality. So Dr. Ambedkar tried to understand the Indian society not on the basis of religious faith but from the human view point of realism."⁴

After studying the caste system of India deeply, he concluded that the varnashram system is responsible for the exploitation of untouchables and the women, so until and unless it is not destroyed from its roots the reform is not possible. He had to bear dishonor and disgrace on every step of his life, because of being a shudra. He had to face his dishonor from the life of a student to the life of a barrister. This is the reason that a great hatred was created in his mind for caste system and he took his pen against caste system and that continued throughout his life and tried to show that class system is a blot on the fair name of Hindu society and without destroying it, no good can be brought to Hindu society, for this reference his books: "Jatibhed Ka Vinash Hindu Nari Ka Uttan and Pattan and What Congress and Gandhi Have Done to the Untouchables? Are to be noted specially. He exposed the ills of Hindu society through the medium of these books. It is a reality that his bearing and tolerating the troubles and suffering created by caste system not only invested its reasons but he also searched out its real solutions and accordingly he struggled to bring a drastic change in the system of society."⁵

Dr. Ambedkar also said that Hindus have faith in caste not because they are inhuman or wrong-headed, they observed caste because they are deeply religious; therefore, Hindu religion is the enemy number one which has promoted the caste system, it is the Shastras which teach people the religion of caste, the caste will continue till Hindus follow the teaching of Shastra. He further said that the caste Hindu will behave with untouchables in the degraded way not because they like to behave with the untouchables as their enemy but they behave in that way because they are compelled by the Shastras; hence he pleaded that to remove the caste means first to remove the Shastras.

A brief survey of the ideas of Basaveshwara regarding emancipation of women establishes the fact that he was thinking far ahead of his times, his disapproval of the fallacy that woman is only a piece of jewelry in man's possession is as much relevant today as it was 800 years ago. Basaveshwara is the first social reformer to declare that woman equal with man. This is relevant to the modern times

because, though such equality is declared under the constitution fifty years ago still much is to be achieved. Declaration of the present Indian government of reserving 33% of seats in legislature and employment's is an index to the inequality still operating in Indian society.

Another unique contribution of Basaveshwara which is relevant today is his grant of freedom of thought to women where by he enabled them to participate in these spiritual deliberations at the Anubhava Mantapa. The kinds of religious inequalities that are practiced in the modern India demand for the revival of Basaveshwara's philosophy in its right perspective. Basaveshwara repeatedly asserted that the relationship between husband and wife is a sacrament and not a social contract to be easily done away with. Principle of monotheism is applied to both god as well as marriage. This principle is having its own importance in the modern times where allegiance to wife by husband and to husband by wife is in its endangerment due to the erosion of independence values and more and more westernization.

Implementation of intercaste marriages and widow remarriage, disregarding various taboos and also liberating woman from their confinement to kitchen and maternity home and enthrobbing them into all walks of life is not an ordinary achievement of Veershaiva movement.

It is true that a plethora of laws are passed in our country aiming at the emancipation of women as has been noted in the second section of this chapter. Which are responsible in reducing the gender gap to a considerable extent? But still woman has been the target of all kinds of exploitations, injustices as she is still seeing her body to men by force, she is raped, made a prostitute and destitute and many of these questions still remain answered.

"Dr.Ambedkar is hailed as the great emancipator of women, his concern for women constitutes one of the major dimensions of his social philosophy, he not only wanted to ensure social equality between man and man but also equal status and dignity between man and woman."⁶

He criticized the traditional and conservative values and made Manu, the Hindu law giver, responsible for the decline of the status and dignity of women in India. "According to him, egalitarian principles prevailed during Buddhist period and it was a revolutionary act on a part of the Buddha and to the Buddha to having allowed women to take sannyas or arivraja (nun hood) as a member of Sangha; under the Brahminic theory women and Shudras were not eligible for knowledge and thus, for sannyas. In allowing women to become Bhikkunis (nuns) the Buddha not only opened for them the way to liberty he also allowed them to acquire dignity independent of sex?, thus the effort of Lord Buddha was the beginning of the revolution and liberation of women in India.

Dr. Ambedkar championed the cause of women as well as the miserable plight of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes throughout his career. He discussed a number of problems for Indian women and sought for their solutions in Bombay legislative debates. His arguments on the maternity bill and on birth control were quite relevant to recognize the dignity of women.

At all India Depressed Classes Women's Conference held at Nagpur on 20th July, 1940, Dr. Ambedkar emphasized that there could not be any progress without women. He spoke "I am a great believer in women's organization, I know that they can improve the condition of the society if they are convinced in the eradication of social evils they have rendered great services."⁷

He underlined that women should learn to be clean and keep themselves away from all vices. They should educate their children and instill high ambitions, be inculcated with ideas that they are destined to be great. The sense of inferiority complex should be eliminated from their mind and heart.

After the adoption of the constitution, Dr. Ambedkar was entrusted with a new responsibility of the Hindu Code Bill. He revised the Hindu code prepared by the B.N. Rao's committee and was daring enough to introduce the Hindu Code Bill on 5th February, 1951 in critical circumstances. "The Hindu Code Bill introduced only four new items in then existing law. They were abolition of doctrine of the rights by birth, right to property to women, right to have share by daughters from the parent's property and provision for divorce.

"The whole bill was not passed by the parliament, so he resigned his seat for the cabinet on 27thSeptember, 1951."⁸

A few months before the incident Justice Gajendragadkar of the Bombay High Court, a famous Jurist and Sanskrit scholar in course on his speech on "Hindu Code Bill" before the students of the Karnataka University, said: If Dr. Ambedkar gives up Hindu code his achievement would go down in history as a piece of poetic justice indeed. Destiny however seemed unwilling to concede to the law minister of the full laurels of a modern Manu."⁹

Dr. Ambedkar was excessively worried for the over growth of the population in India and he wanted certain measures for the birth control.

He advised that everybody should marry after they become financially able. According to him, marriage was an ability. Keeping in mind the problems of population also he advised that to have too many children was crime. Parents must be responsible to give each child better start than they themselves had. The women should be on friendly terms with their husbands and if he does not agree it results into a slave relation between the husband and the wife.

In 1936, meeting at the Domodar the Kersey Hall, Bombay the meeting was largely attended by men and women belonging to the Devadasi, Patraje Bhute, Aradhi and Jagiti communities and was held to accord to their mass conversion move inaugurated at Yeola. Dr. Ambedkar made a fervent appeal especially to the women as follows:

"Whether you change your religion along with us or not it does not matter much to me, but I insist that if you want to be with the rest of us you must give up your disgraceful life, you must marry and settle down to a normal domestic life as women of other classes do, not do continue to live under conditions which inevitably drag you into prostitution."¹⁰

Dr. Ambedkar's impassioned love for the fallen as whole community and his advice to rescue themselves from the disposed and disgraceful life were quite meaningful. Dr. Ambedkar accorded equal status to women and men in every sphere and he also warned women against the misuse of their rights. Therefore, it would be appropriate to regard Dr. Ambedkar as one of the saviors of Indian women. His contribution is unique and cherish able by the women of India. It should be the foremost duty of women's associations, groups and organizations to actively participate in the process of social change and welfare. The women's movement needs to be strengthened to overcome the artificial division and boundaries created by geography, economy and ideology.

Dr. Ambedkar also offered a ray of hope for mankind by removing caste distinctions. His strategies to remove the evils of untouchability stand quite relevant even today. Dr. Ambedkar believed that the establishment of democratic society in Indian would be possible only when the untouchables and the weaker sections of societies would be given the opportunity of enjoying basic rights. The chain of thoughts which guided Ambedkar's actions from 1928 onwards and which were circulated to ensure equality of citizenship for all the people of India culminated to the inclusion of Article 12 through 18 in the Constitution of India. He was of the view that if and when the depressed classes obtained the right of citizenship, the members of the orthodox society would see to it that they did not really exercise such rights.

Basaveshwara's ideas regarding the concept have great significance to a modern democratic society like India. In a democratic society, sovereignty lies with the public and this is no place for imperialism. In a democratic form of governance, the procedure followed is group discussion, group decision and group execution. The same procedure was established by Basaveshwara through the Anubhava Mantapa where people of different Kayakas held group discussions and arrived at decisions, which were put into practice. In a modern democratic society all men have equal right in the pursuit of knowledge, wealth and power. So was the case with the members of Anubhava Mantapa. Men of different occupations; irrespective of their socio-economic status, were provided with equal rights and respect. In a socialist society constructed by Basaveshwara there were no monopolies and no privileges. In a democratic economy everyone must be an earning member of the society. In a planned economy beggary and unemployment in any form are unthinkable.

He says that good conduct is heaven and bad conduct is hell, this aphorism of Basaveshwara serves as a beacon light to the modern world of materialists. Society being dynamic and progressive

gave life a scientific outlook, which is not repugnant to spiritual outlook. The aphorism “work is heaven” which contains a comprehensive view of his Kayaka concept is a fine outlook.

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