

दिक्षाभूमी गौरव ग्रंथ

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खंड - २

अतिथी संपादक

यशवंतराज मनोहर

मानद संपादक

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मुख्य संपादक

द्रिपककुमार खोब्राडे

सहसंपादक

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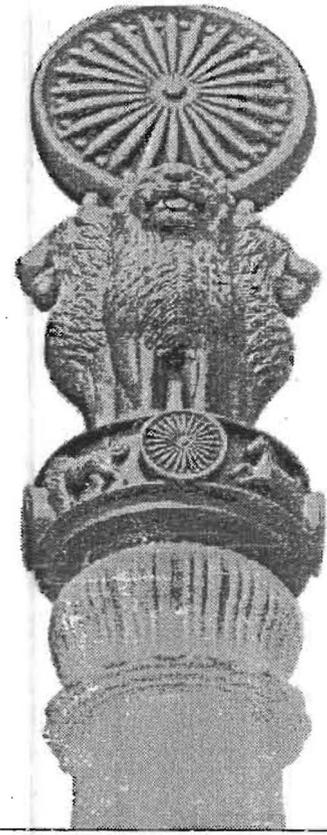
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आम्ही, भारताचे लोक, भारताचे एक सार्वभौम समाजवादी धर्मनिरपेक्ष लोकशाही गणराज्य घडवण्याचा व त्याच्या सर्व नागरिकांस :

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याद्वारे हे संविधान अंगीकृत आणि अधिनियमित

करणे स्वतःप्रति अर्पण करित आहोत.

REVOLUTION OF RELIGION: A MEDICINE FOR UNTOUCH- ABILITY

■ Dr. Manik Sonawane

Behind every revolution there may be so many reasons but to take that movement to stage of peek the role of writers and philosophers is very important, for example French revolution. From childhood onwards Ambedkar have gone through untouchability, discrimination, social injustice. From these experiences he had a vision, but as an educated person after his broad reading about caste system and his people problems his vision got modified and became great vision. This is great vision because it is not only his but it's his people's vision. His way of working on mission for is people vision is really in progress. He has seen his dreams fulfilling one by one. For example as maker of the constitution, he had already achieved several things to that end. He described the provision for the study of pali made in the constitution, the inscription of a Buddhistic aphorism on the frontage of the imposing Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi, and the acceptance of the Ashoka Chakra by Bharat as her symbol, as his personal achievements. The Government of India had declared Buddha Jyoti a holiday mainly through his efforts. He had effected this wonderful change, he proudly stated, without any opposition; so lucid and effective was his exposition in Parliament. None of the eighteen nations, he observed, that attended the Rangoon Conference had made such progress in these matters.

Besides, he had established two colleges, one at Bombay and the other at Aurangabad, where 3,400 students were studying and where he could encourage the study of Buddhism. He pointed sadly to the fact that Buddhism had disappeared from the place of its birth. He would achieve his goal with or without help. Soon after, Ambedkar unveiled an image of the Buddha in a newly constructed Buddha Vihara at Dehu Road near Puna. He had brought the image from Rangoon. On that occasion he said that the honors of establishing the image of Bhagwan Buddha twelve hundred years after the fall of Buddhism went to his people. It was great event, and without doubt it would be recorded in history. Another announcement made in the early part of the year by Dr. Ambedkar was regarding the starting of a Buddhist seminary at Bangalore to train preachers for propagation the faith in India. A plot of five acres of

land was donated by Maharaja of Mysore when Dr. Ambedkar had met him at Bangalore early in June 1954.

The present article deals with what are the reasons behind Ambedkar revolution on religion? Is Deekshabhoomi is mission to complete great vision? And the present scenario of downtrodden people in India or how far is Ambedkar vision?

The reasons behind Ambedkar revolution on religion:

Ambedkar father had retired from the army and the family had moved first to Dapoli, in the Konkan, and then to Satara, where his mother died shortly after their arrival. In Satara they found that no barber was prepared to cut their hair (contact with Mahars brought pollution even to the 'clean' Shudra caste to which the barbers belonged), and Ambedkar's own hair used to be cut by his elder sister. He could not understand why, despite the presence of so many barbers in the town, not one of them was prepared to cut their hair. Questions of this sort disturbed him more and more deeply as time went on, and as one humiliating incident after another burned into his brain the consciousness that he was a Mahar and that for his Caste Hindu co-religionists contact with a Mahar brought pollution.

Ambedkar admitted to the Government Middle School at Satara, and the reason for his being able to speak to the toll-collector in Persian was that he had been compelled to take that language instead of Sanskrit. Even in their high school days neither Bhimrao Ramji nor his elder brother were ever allowed to study 'the language of the gods'. They were Untouchables, and the Brahmin pundits simply refused to teach them. This was not the only bitter pill he had to swallow during his student days. He and his brother were usually made to squat in a corner of the classroom on a piece of sacking that they carried with them to school each day. The teachers refused to touch their exercise books, and some of them would not even ask the two boys to recite poems or put questions to them for fear of being polluted. Even when the family moved to Bombay, and Bhimrao was attending a leading government high school, the same cruel persecution continued. One day the teacher asked him to come to the blackboard and solve a problem. Instantly the class was in an uproar. The reason was that the Caste Hindu boys were in the habit of keeping their lunch boxes behind the blackboard, and the presence of an Untouchable so near the blackboard would have polluted the food and made it unfit to eat. Before Bhimrao Ramji could reach the blackboard and touch it, therefore, they darted across the room and threw the lunch boxes to one side. As though incidents of this sort did not make life hard enough for the sensitive boy, his teachers did their best to

discourage him. One of them went so far as to tell him that education was of no use to him. After all, he was a Mahar, and what did a Mahar want with education? But the young Ambedkar, who was already beginning to have a mind of his own, angrily told the man to mind his own business.

In Ambedkar words, after returning from England, in accordance with the terms of the agreement, he came to serve under the Baroda Durbar. He could not get a house to live in at Baroda. Neither a Hindu nor any Muslim was prepared to rent out a house to me in the city of Baroda. Failing to get a house in any locality, He decided to get accommodation in a Parsi Dharamsala. After having stayed in America and England, He had developed a fair complexion and an impressive personality. Giving himself a Parsi name, 'Adalji Sorabji', He began to live in the Parsi Dharamsala. The Parsi manager agreed to accommodate him at Rs.2 per diem. But soon the people got wind of the fact that His Highness the Maharaja Gaekwad of Baroda had appointed a Mahar boy as an officer in his Durbar. His living in the Parsi Dharamsala under an assumed name gave rise to suspicion and his secret was soon out. On the second day of his stay, when he was just leaving for his office after taking breakfast, a mob of some fifteen or twenty Parsis, armed with lathis, accosted him, threatening to kill him, and demanded who he was. He replied, 'I am a Hindu.' But they were not to be satisfied with this answer. Exasperated, they began to shower abuses on him and bade him vacate the room immediately. Politely he asked for permission to stay for eight hours more. Throughout the day he searched for a house to live in, but miserably failed to get any place to hide his head. He approached his friends but all turned him down on some plea or the other, expressing their inability to accommodate him. He was utterly disappointed and exhausted. What to do next? He just could not decide. Frustrated and exhausted, he quietly sat down at one place, with the tears flowing from my eyes. Seeing no hope of getting a house, and no alternative but to quit, he tendered his resignation and left for Bombay by the night train. One of the strangest features of this incident was that Ambedkar should have been driven from a Parsi dharamsala by Parsis. The Parsis were not Hindus but Zoroastrians of Iranian descent, but owing to their long residence in India they had become deeply infected by the poison of the Hindu caste system.

Ambedkar was not only driven from the Parsi dharamsala but, virtually, from his own office as well. His staff, including the peons, was all Caste Hindus, and even though they were his subordinates they treated him like a leper. Fearful that contact with him would bring pollution, the peons threw files and papers on to his desk from a safe

distance. Drinking water was not available to him in the office. Thoroughly mortified by the caste-ridden atmosphere of the place, Ambedkar was forced to seek refuge in the Baroda public library.

Incidents of this kind having led him to decide in favour of the renunciation of Hinduism and conversion to some other religion, Ambedkar naturally devoted much thought to the question of which religion would be the best for the Untouchables to adopt. Should it be Christianity? Or Islam? Or Sikhism? Or should it be a new religion, founded by Ambedkar himself?

In his 'Reasons for Conversion' speech in Bombay three months later, in which he related some incidents from his own life which had led him to decide in favor of the renunciation of Hinduism and conversion to some other religion, he told his audience, 'If you continue to remain in the fold of Hinduism, you cannot attain a status higher than that of a slave. For me, personally, there is no bar. If I continue to remain an Untouchable I can attain any position that a Hindu can. But it is for your emancipation and advancement that conversion appears to be very necessary to me. To change this degraded and disgraceful existence into a golden life conversion is absolutely necessary. I have to start conversion to improve you lot. I am not at all worried about the question of my personal interest or progress. Whatever I am doing today, it is for your betterment and in your interest.' Then, in words reminiscent of the vows taken by the Buddhism, in the great Mahayana sutras, he concluded, 'You look upon me as a "God" but I am not a god. I am a human being like you all. Whatever helps you want from me, I am prepared to give you. I have decided to liberate you from your present hopeless and degrading condition. I am not doing anything for my personal gain. I will continue to struggle for your uplift and to make your life useful and meaningful. You must realize your responsibility and follow the path which I am showing you. If you follow it earnestly, it would not be difficult to achieve your goal.'

After one by one problem faced by the caste system Ambedkar started searching for solution as Gautam Buddha searched for truth and find his destination. His mind concentrated not on his own problem but those who are facing the same. The infection of untouchability and discrimination was speeded in human society in Hindu hierarchal system. His problem was not suppression but eradication.

Is Deekshabhoomi is mission to complete great vision?

Ambedkar in his lifetime used various methods and strategies to create a society based on the values of liberty, equality, fraternity and humanity through education, agita-

tion and organization. He gave to his people self respect, dignity and most importantly moral courage to fight any difficulties. He started political parties, fought for the transfer of power to the untouchables, liberated Hindu women from heinous Hindu laws tainted by male chauvinism, gave representation to the untouchables and made passionate plea to include OBCs (Shudras) in the process of democratization of the Indian masses, created political and legal structure to make it possible for social democracy to take its shape in heterogeneous country like India. His achievements are innumerable. For demolishing untouchability, discrimination and ill-treatment what was the medicine this question was challenging in Ambedkar mind. His achievements may warn that question that his will power is very strong. As it says he made revolution on religion in Nagpur. For fulfilling his great vision Deekshabhoomi is the final result of his research, he has done perfect medicine for improving humanity in mankind in India. It is a lesson for caste system, which has lost his memory of birth. After Ambedkar mass conversion, the influence of Buddhism on caste system shown good result even on Hinduism, for example allowing scheduled castes people into Hindu temples and bringing Hindu Gods to Scheduled caste people barracks (slam areas) called Harijana vihar.

And the present scenario of downtrodden people in India:

There are so many areas where there is need of a lot of improvements in backward classes in India. For example as per 1991 census, population of SC was 13.82 crore, which constituted 16.37% of the total population of the country. The decennial growth rate of Scheduled Castes (30.04%) in 1981-91 has been higher than the corresponding rate of total population (23.79%). According to 1991 census, the Scheduled Castes have a sex ratio of 922 females per 1000 males, which was almost at par with the average that of total population (923). As regards higher education, Scheduled Castes constitute 8.37% of total number of students pursuing graduate courses, 8% of those pursuing post-graduate courses and 2.77% of those carrying out research. According to Source, (Abusaleh Shariff, India: Human Development Report, A Profile of Indian States in the 1990s, Oxford University Press, New Delhi 1999.) 30.91% of Scheduled Castes households had electricity, as compared to 61.31% for non-Scheduled Castes households.

9.84% Scheduled Castes households had access to sanitation, as compared to 26.76% for non-Scheduled Castes households.

More than 20% Scheduled Castes population does not have access to safe drinking water. Comparable percent-

age of others is much less.

Monthly per capita expenditure (1987-88) was Rs. 133 for Scheduled Castes as compared to Rs. 169 for others in rural area and it was Rs. 185 for SCs as compared to Rs. 256 for others in urban area. This gap increased from the level existing in the year 1983-84.

57.5% of Scheduled Castes children under 4-years of age were reported undernourished in 1992.

Infant mortality among the Scheduled Castes was 91 per 1000 live births in 1992-93, as compared to 79 for all categories in 1992 and 73 in 1993.

The death rate among Scheduled Castes was 15.50% in rural area, as compared to 11.20% for others. It was 12.90% in urban areas as compared to 8.40% for non-Scheduled Castes.

Since our topic is related with the revolution on religion the main concentration is on what kind of changes came after conversion. In this context according to Paushali De and Runjhun Noopur in his article Untouchability: The Fact and The Illusion told that, Neo-Buddhists can be a good model for other Scheduled Castes for their development. During last sixty years the neo-Buddhists have done a remarkable progress. It was found in 1971 census that their literacy has become equal to that of the Brahmins and all other castes and Scheduled Castes lag behind them. The neo-Buddhists have modernized themselves, removed superstitions among themselves and entered into various professions and occupations. They speak on behalf of all weaker sections. They assert for removal of injustice, equal opportunity, organize them and have a clear perception of development. Now there are many more doctors, engineers, pleaders, professors, technicians, artists in films and on the stage, administrative officers. They have surpassed the dominant Maratha caste in many respects. They have ably utilized the policy of reservation in particular and policy of protective discrimination in general. They have made use of the Constitution and the political process in an efficient manner. There would be surprise if any other community has made such a remarkable development in such short period in the history of the world. Progress made by the neo-Buddhists is more because of the strong will for development created by their leader Dr Ambedkar. The spirit among the neo-Buddhists consists of removal of inferiority complex, willingness for hard work, sense of responsibility etc. This spirit is lacking in other Scheduled Castes. They may not follow the neo-Buddhists in totality. But the inspiration from them would be very useful for their development. The other Scheduled Castes should follow this model.

It is fact that total eradication of discrimination in caste

is not yet done. One or another way is seems in Indian society. Ambedkar attempt was really foundation for change. There is need of new ideas to look in to same problem with different solutions. In present globalization era what would be the solution for eradication of caste? According to Chandra Bhan Prasad and Millind Kamble in their article published in The Times of India, Pune. Wednesday, January 23, 2013. Says that more industrialization means more freedom to dalits, Capital is the surest means to fight caste, in dalits, hands, and capital becomes an anti-caste weapon. India can't really turn caste neutral until something replaces caste as a social construct. If India has to turn caste neutral, caste has to be made speechless. To that end, the language of caste must be ended. Learning English is the surest way to achieve this.

As a good missionary Ambedkar has made good foundation to build equality among Indian. His revolution on religion is solution for people those who are facing the same problem.

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