

# The Problem of Caste and Its Solution Reflected in Dr B.R. Ambedkar's an Annihilation of Caste

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## Abstract:

The Annihilation of Caste, Ambedkar, probably for the first time, raised many profound questions with respect to caste. First, he rejected the definition of caste on the basis of division of labor and argued that it was not merely a division of labor but a division of laborers. Ambedkar gave illustrations in this speech on how dalits were deprived of education and freedom of occupation and were subjected to stigmatized manual labor, all resulting in their virtual economic slavery, how they were segregated and deprived of basic rights such as drinking water even from public wells, and above all how they were made victims of Social persecutions Ambedkar (1936) argues that the worst feature of the caste system is „anti-social spirit“ in the following words, Caste does not result in economic efficiency. Caste cannot improve, and has not improved, the race. Caste has however done one thing. It has completely disorganized and demoralized the Hindus. The Hindus often complain of the isolation and exclusiveness of a gang or a clique and blame them for anti-social spirit. But they conveniently forget that this anti-social spirit is the worst feature of their own Caste System. One caste enjoys singing a hymn of hate against another caste as much as the Germans enjoyed singing their hymn of hate against the English during the last war. Unlike a club, the membership of a caste is not open to all and sundry. The law of Caste confines its membership to persons born in the caste. Castes are autonomous, and there is no authority anywhere to compel a caste to admit a new-comer to its social life. Hindu Society being a collection of castes, and each caste being a closed corporation, there is no place for a convert. Thus it is the caste which has prevented the Hindus from expanding and from absorbing other religious communities. So long as Caste remains, Hindu religion cannot be made a Missionary religion

**Keywords:** Caste, Annihilation, Hindu Religion, FourVarna,Veda, Shastras, Equality Democracy and Untouchability

Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar also known as Babasaheb Ambedkar, was one of the most prominent lawyers, economists, politicians, and social reformers who inspired the Dalit Buddhist movement and campaigned against social discrimination against the Untouchables. He played a significant role for the upliftment of the downtrodden. He was considered a messiah for a suppressed class as he belongs to the untouchable's community. He is considered as a great critique of the caste system One of the greatest contributions of Dr.Ambedkar was in respect of fundamental rights and directive principles of state policy enshrined in the constitution of India. The fundamental rights provide for freedom, equality, and abolition of untouchability and remedies to ensure the evolution of rights. He took a leading part in the framing of the Indian constitution, outlawing discrimination against untouchables, and skillfully helped to steer it through the assembly. He resigned in 1951, disappointed at his lack of influence in the government. In October 1956, in despair because of the perpetuation of untouchables in Hindu doctrine, he renounced Hinduism and became a Buddhist, together with about 200000 fellow Dalits, at a

ceremony in Nagpur. Ambedkar's "Annihilation of Caste" is a revolutionary speech prepared by him at the 1936 Annual Conference of Lahore. Due to certain misapprehension, it was not delivered in the conference. Ambedkar invited the socialists to fight against the caste system and he asserted that caste is not just based on the division of labour but it is the division of laborers.

Caste is a system in which the determination of position, rights, and duties of an individual is done on the basis of the birth of such individual in a particular group. In other words, we can say that the status of an individual is determined by birth. As we have evidence of the Varna system in Hinduism which divides its society into 4 classes or castes the upper is Brahmins including priests and intellectuals. They themselves claim to have all good qualities like honesty, integrity, cleanliness, purity, austerity, knowledge, and wisdom. They are assigned to spiritual tasks like teaching and studying Vedas, perform sacrifices and religious ceremonies, etc. Then after Brahmins, Kshatriyas were the warriors, police, and administrators basically protectors of society. They are expected to show considerable strength of body and character. Then Vaishyas, were farmers, merchants, and business people. Their duty is to protect animals and the land, to create wealth and prosperity, and to give taxes to the Kshatriyas. The lowest class are the Shudras, consisting of artisans and workers. They have to render service to the other upper class above them.

Under the caste system an individual is not allowed to change its status for instance, in November 1935 some untouchable women of village Zanu in Ahmedabad started fetching water in metal pots which was considered as one of the luxury items, this enraged the upper caste Hindus and they assaulted the untouchable women for their shamelessness. This means that untouchables cannot have access to any luxury items even if he/she can afford to buy it as this was considered as an affront to their dignity. We can say that it is the rigid form of stratification system, which restrict the mobility and distinctness of status. Due to the caste system, several evils prevail in the society and the untouchables were subjected to oppression for instance oppressed untouchables in Maratha under Peshwas. They were being made to attach brooms on their waists so that used paths by them could be clean by the broom in order to stop Hindus from being polluted. They had to carry an earthen pot hung in their neck so that they could spit in.

Caste system leads to untouchability.

The caste system has condemned large groups of people to a life of degradation without any hope of redemption. It has created untouchables, an evil that has been sapping the very vitals of society. This untouchability is reduced to the state of natural slavery and hindered the growth of brotherhood; holding off the national unity as it disallowed any type of social intercourse. As BR Ambedkar rightly said, 'untouchability of Hindus is a rare phenomenon, humanity in any other part of the earth has never experienced it. There is no such thing in any other society. It restricts the growth of brotherhood among people and also it holds off national unity and creates obstacles to social progress.

According to Mahatma Gandhi, untouchability is the hate fullest expression of caste. There is an anti-social spirit in Hindus because of the caste system. This anti-social spirit is not confined to caste alone but can be seen in sub-castes as well. For instance, Brahmin's foremost concern is to avoid interaction with other groups as those of non-Brahmins and non-Brahmins' foremost interest is to avoid any interactions or social gatherings with Brahmins. This led to a lack of brotherhood among Hindus. Till the caste system prevails Sanghatan(unity) would be impossible among Hindus. For instance, a Hindu

would never come to rescue a Hindu as they lack fellow feeling and also the reason in difference due to caste. On the other hand, a Muslim and a Sikh would come to rescue their brothers respectively because they have fellow feelings in them.

Caste system denies equal rights of the individual, that's why it is considered as undemocratic. As Ambedkar himself said, "If I find the constitution being misused, I shall be the first one to burn it". Democracy is based on principles of equality, fraternity, and liberty. On the other hand, the caste system is based on inequality of status and opportunities, which often creates conflict and tension in society. It acts as an obstacle in the normal and smooth functioning of democracy. No doubt India has got political freedom but it must be the concern of every individual that real freedom cannot be cherished without the attainment of social and economic democracy. It is unfortunate that the Indian society is sharply divided into various castes and sub-castes which acts as a barrier due to rigidity and division of society based on caste consideration.

The caste system has literally split up the society into hundreds of hereditary castes and sub castes and encouraged a spirit of exclusiveness and class pride, narrowed the outlook, and created wide gaps between the various sections of the community. The caste system resulted in a lot of evils because of its rigid rules. It perpetuates the exploitation of the economically weaker and socially inferior caste. For instance, we have evidenced in the text the oppression by Hindus to the Balais, the untouchable community. Hindus asked the Balais that if they wanted to live with them they have to obey certain rules. These rules were discriminatory to a large extent, like they couldn't wear dhotis with colored or fancy borders, couldn't wear gold-lace bordered purees, in Hindu marriages, balais must play music, they must render services without demanding their income, etc. And if they disobey any rules they were kicked out of the villages. Also, Balais had no access to the land and wells which were surrounded by Hindus even though they didn't have access to their lands. After continued oppression and being persecuted by their upper castes they submitted petitions to darbar but didn't get any relief and were finally compelled to leave their homes.

The caste system protects the privileged caste and thus, builds up economic discontent and social prejudices. A person born in one caste was doomed to remain in it forever, and keep a check on economic and intellectual advancement and a great stumbling block in a way of social reforms because it keeps economic and intellectual opportunities confined to a certain section of the population only and denies them to other. For example, Shudras and untouchables had to perform all the menial tasks. They could not do anything for their own development even if they afford to do so. The worst thing is that they could not have access to education as they cannot be permitted to devote themselves to any educational or scientific profession, even when they have natural aptitudes and physical and intellectual equipment for it. A worthy and capable person are prevented by caste rigors from getting their proper and rightful places, even there next generation has to follow the same rigidity of the caste system, and they too remain closed slaves and bonded laborers. The caste system however is guilty of just the opposite demerit. It does not make proper provision for low-born talents or high-born incompetence. Barred to religious practices:

As far as Hinduism is concerned the lower caste people were not even allowed to touch the holy scriptures and they were devoid to enter temples. They were even not allowed to recite or hear the Vedas. They couldn't make sacrifices as Brahmans could do. Everyone was compelled to abide by these rules when the penal system came into effect as there was a requirement of the penal system to maintain

Chaturvarnya (a division of society into four classes). For example, we evidenced in the text that Manusmriti prescribes such heavy sentences as cutting off the tongue or pouring of molten lead in the ears of the Shudra, who recites or hears the Veda. Origin of caste system: It is difficult to establish when the caste system originated, but there is no doubt that the institution of caste for the convenience of the ruling class leading to their successful administration by them. There are different theories about the establishment of the caste system. These are Religious mystical, Biological, Socio- historical theories.

#### Grounds for the defense of caste system

Even today there are many supporters of the caste system, reasons for support vary. On the basis of the profession: The caste system is being defended on the basis of labor but in reality, it is the division of laborers as Ambedkar asserted that the 'caste system is not merely division of labor. It is also a division of laborers. It means that the laborers are graded as one above the other, but this stratification is not based on the innate capabilities of an individual but rather based on the social status or social background of his family and this stratification based on the occupation has harmful effects. According to Ambedkar unemployment in our country which exists at a high rate is the result of the caste system.

A Hindu is not free to change his occupation according to his changing circumstances. For instance, if a Hindu remains to starve because of his financial condition and he aspires of a better occupation that does not belong to his caste, then he has to abandon his desires. So, this division of labor is based on the division of choice and individual preferences and desires nothing matters as they are bound by the caste system. There is no efficiency in a system where neither men's heart nor their minds are in their work. So caste proved to be pernicious for economic organization.

Some defenders defend the caste system biologically in order to preserve their blood and race but even ethnologists have claimed that men of pure blood and race do not exist anywhere in the world. The caste system was said to preserve the mixture of races but in fact, the caste system came into effect long after the mingling of blood and culture of different races. Ambedkar claimed his argument by asking several questions. For instance, what racial difference do we find in the untouchables of Madras and untouchables of Punjab? What racial difference is between the Brahmin of Madras and Pariah of Madras? The untouchable of Punjab and madras are of the same race and Brahmin of Madras and Pariah of madras are of the same race Caste system is negative as it prohibits intermarrying of different castes just to preserve their purity but what's the problem in interdining between different castes as it cannot impure the blood. So-called superior Hindus By claiming the caste system as based on eugenics is just an excuse in order to preserve their superiority and social status. Even scientists have claimed the caste system based on eugenics a futile or worthless argument.

#### Effects of caste system on Hindus itself

The effect on Hindus are completely unacceptable they have become insensitive towards individuals other than their caste. For a Hindu everything is his caste his responsibility, his loyalty are limited only to his caste. Caste has bound a Hindu to a great extent. A Hindu cannot show sympathy, or loyalty other than his caste. He cannot give charity to the needy or appreciate a deserving person other than his caste. They are bound to give charity only to his caste members. All these restrictions have made Hindus insensitive towards others. In fact, a Hindu will follow the leadership of any leader only if he is of the same caste of his. for example a Brahmin will follow a leader only if he is a Brahmin, and a Kayastha will follow only a leader if he belongs to the Kayastha.

A Hindu must be loyal to his caste, which means that he has to support his fellows only of his caste no matter whether they are right or wrong or good or bad. This means that virtue and vice doesn't matter only caste matters for a Hindu. Caste has completely demoralized and disorganized the Hindus. According to sociologists, there is a complete lack of "consciousness of kind" among Hindus. The only consciousness that exists is the consciousness of his caste. That is the reason they feel a lack of unity amongst themselves. They need to communicate or interact with other castes which can only make them an integrated whole. For example, the festivals are the same for everyone under Hinduism but the way of celebrating the festivals is different, by adopting these ways they have become separated within the same religion. They should celebrate or make joy together as this will arouse feelings of emotions and sensitivity towards their fellow beings. This caste system prevents the Hindus to come together and celebrating festivals together as it would be considered as going against their religion and an affront to their dignity. Why Hindus are bound to the caste system? Why they don't show the courage to destroy it?

The real reason lies in Hindu scriptures and Shastras. The system of classification, the Varna system that existed in the Vedic society that divided the society into four classes namely Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras, there we find evidence of a caste system. According to Ambedkar Hindus practice caste not because they are abnormal or insensitive rather they practice caste just because they are deeply religious people so this is not the fault of Hindus but their religion is at fault and Hindus are just obeying their religion. Hindus have not flaws but their religion, Hinduism have flaws. These are the reasons a Hindu complains of isolation, lack of unity among Hindus, not intermingling with others, not interdining, and not accepting inter-caste marriage. The root cause lies in Shastras. Ambedkar regrets for reformers of untouchability and claimed that even Mahatma Gandhi couldn't realize the root cause of the caste system practiced by people which lies in Shastras, a Hindu is just abiding by his religion as their foundation for the caste system emerged from their religion. So the Shastras compel them to be loyal to the caste system and even if they try to go against the caste system they have to face punishment like ex-communication.

According to Ambedkar the real remedy in the complete abolition of the caste system is inter-marriage, nothing else will serve as the solvent of the caste system. By inter-marriage, helps in the fusion of blood and this will create a feeling of oneness and then only the feeling of separatist and alienation or isolation will vanish. A Hindu has to discard the religious authority of the Shastras and destroy the religion of the Shastras. A Hindu must be free from the notions of Shastras, he must think rationally, unfortunately, to think with reason and logic prohibits in Shastras and Vedas. A Hindu needs to show the courage to reject these notions.

To conclude, the caste system was a very much stringent and rigid institution of early society that was responsible for the pathetic condition of different groups of the community and they were treated as suppressed and untouchable. Various successful steps were taken by different social reformers to eradicate this evil from the mind of the people because every individual's mind were responsible to generate this evil into one mind. This speech annihilation of caste as the name suggests emphasized to completely annihilating the caste system. Ambedkar has objections towards the attitude of untouchables by the upper caste Hindus. Through this speech, he made the people conscious of the political, economic, and social problems of the untouchables and asserted the need of paying special attention to the condition of untouchables. He attacked the orthodox notion of Hinduism and provoke people to

reject these notions of the caste system. Ambedkar criticized Brahmins who was responsible for social exploitation and the backwardness of untouchables, as Ambedkar says “You will succeed in saving Hinduism if you kill Brahmanism”.

But interestingly Ambedkar proposes the Annihilation of caste but not that of religion. Why? The answer is slightly complicated. He argues that the caste and its religious bases must be destroyed, for they stand against liberty, equal treatment, and fraternity that every human being needs to survive. Caste stands against the consciousness of kind and against national integration. Caste stands against the direct action of common people. So it must be destroyed. But we cannot destroy caste unless we destroy its sacredness sanctified by Hindu scriptures. The annihilation of caste also means destroying the Hindu religion’s rules of governance. Religion as rule or rules of precedence prescribed by Hindu scriptures must be destroyed.

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