



EMERGENCE OF Dr.B.R.AMBEDKAR IN POLITICS - A STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Caste in India means an artificial chopping off the population into fixed and definite units, each one prevented from fusing into another through the custom of endogamy. Thus the conclusion is in evitable that Endogamy is the only characteristics that are peculiar to caste, and if we succeed in showing how endogamy is maintained, we shall practically have proved the genesis and also the mechanism of Caste According to Ambedkar: It is a pity that Caste even to-day has its defenders. The defences are many it is defended on the ground that the Caste System is but another name for division of Labour and if division of labour is a necessary feature of every civilized society then it is. Argued that there is nothing wrong in the Caste System. Now the first thing to be urged against this view is that Caste System is not merely division of labour. It is also a division of labourers. Civilized society undoubtedly, needs division of labour. But in no civilized society is division of labour accompanied by this unnatural division of labourers into water-tight compartments.

KEYWORDS: Panchamas,Bainiyas,non-Brahminism,Aryasamaj,Bahujan-samaj

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of the national social as described it urges us to reconsider our reading of the mass efforts of social reform trained on the Depressed Classes that emerged from all political quarters at this time, usually understood as the rise of nationalist and reformist consciousness, as well as a moment of competition among state officials and the various nationalist and loyalist Madras political parties to win the Depressed Classes electorate's loyalty. Rather than displaying sympathy or even paternal indulgence toward the oppressed, however, political leaders of India's nationalist and sub-nationalist parties in Madras instead expressed their wariness toward the political interests of Dalits.

One prominent Congress site newspaper, New India, described their situation vis-à-vis Panchamas thus. We have 50 millions of untouchables, think of them all becoming our enemies. If 50 millions of people become our enemies, what will be our position? When you find that his education and welfare are being taken care of by foreign agencies, he takes full advantage of the powers of mischief that he possesses. What is the use of local self-government if in our own house there is perpetual war in effecting reconciliation? (MLCP, inNew India, October 24, 1916.)

The loyalist non-Brahmins' periodical Justice, in a similar vein, admonished its readers, avowing that there was "to both the Brahmins and the other high caste Hindus [i.e., themselves]...a danger behind them. If they do not treat the Panchamas as human beings...they [the Panchamas] will assert their rights."(Justice, March 7, 1918, cited in GOR 748 Confidential, March 29, 1919, p. 17 ;) If Madras's elite politicians thus sought to tame a stirring giant, the government, for its part, worried that "if they did not deal

adequately with the position of the depressed classes... [Their discontent] will unquestionably be utilized for political and anti-Government purposes."(GOR 748 Confidential, March 29, 1919.) The invention of the national social was not, therefore, a matter of competing to win Dalits over by offering them genuine gains in rights; if gestures of reconciliation were made, they were only intended to stave off the threat that unleashed Dalit animosity would result in "perpetual war." The national social represents a consolidation of otherwise opposed forces—diverging political interests and the imperatives of the colonial state—that came together to decisively arrest any talk of rights by Depressed Classes leaders.

The promise of the social continues to be held out to Dalits to this day. Consider as a typical example of enlightened public opinion in India PrafulBidwai, activist, journalist, and long-time editor of The Times of India, who recently made an impassioned plea for a return to nationalist-era social reform without any awareness of how particular problems came to be understood as social in the first place. Above and beyond the necessary legal measures that might be taken to stem the rising tide of violence against Dalits, he argued, "India has had a great social reform movement...[that] was an integral part of the freedom struggle...[and it] must be revived and re-energised...to combat...[the] evils [that keep Dalits]...in a state of permanent subjugation."("Redif News, October 22, 2002). Yet the permanent subjugation of which India's public citizens ruefully speak is inseparable from the historical conditions under which that subjugation was consigned to the distinct realm of the social, which acquired in those struggles the definition and intelligibility that in large measure it still possesses today.



In fact, British rule produced a remarkable amount of statistical and analytical documents in which references to caste appeared prominently, but did not form an all-powerful 'colonial' consensus about this or any other aspect of society. Anyone moving from revenue records to judicial codes, local censuses, and descriptive writings of soldiers, missionaries and other semi-official observers can meet the same people who are being represented and 'compulsory' in all kinds of guise. ', depending on what commentators have done in a given region, are understood by terms such as caste, tribe, race, sect, nationality, religious community and occupation, or as their coarse equivalents is understood by the many local terms used.

This diversity remained in evidence even after the mid-century when the comparatively disorganized efforts of earlier regional data-gatherers began to be replaced by the launch of a whole host of vast pan-India data surveys. These included the Indian District Gazetteer (1869), the decadal All-India Census (since 1871), provincial statistical reports (such as the Twenty-volume Statistical Account of Bengal, 1875-7), the encyclopaedic Tribe and Caste Survey (since 1891), and centralized enumeration and reportage in all other practices that became a hallmark of the Victorian Raj. For all their flaws and 'orientalist' prejudice, these works deserve to be taken seriously, not least because so many Indians found it useful to adapt their terms and concepts to their own purposes. This was especially from the later nineteenth century, when complex changes in the so-called public culture of the Raj prompted many politically active men to attempt to increase their regional prestige and influence by establishing 'modernized' voluntary organizations which came to be known as caste unions and caste reform movements (ibid)

By the mid-seventeenth century, Dutch and English writings on India had adopted these usages from the Portuguese, employing them with similar ambiguity and in conjunction with other precise terms, including race, class, nation, sect and tribe. In maritime trading ports, early travellers and officials met forms of social organization that were apparently heavily influenced by Brahmanical conventions. This probably reflects the fact that the artisans and mobile commercial people who joined with the East India Companies in this period were gaining ritual and practical advantages in adopting these 'traditional' caste forms. Describing life in the commercial port of Surat in 1689, the English traveller Ovington reports: 'Among the Baniyas [Baniya: commercial caste group] 24 castes [sic], or sects, are counted, both of which constitute one marriage. Avoid indiscriminate mixing, , and eating together (ovington-1929:168)

This account is actually written in the same language that was used 200 years later to 'essential' colonial proclamations about the 'dominant' and 'inhuman' qualities of India's so-called 'non-martial race' (Nandi.1983) Was also that in a caste society people are politically free, that caste is an 'autocrat' and a weak institution and a tool of 'tyrants'. Thus the 'innocent and consequential' bunnies have a 'fear of blood', Ovington says; they have an 'autocratic government [which] breaks their spirits; this combined with the hot climate undermines and sanctifies their constitutions'. His account

also emphasizes the conventions of strict ritual avoidance, which he claims are observed among SuratBania groups, especially pollution-removers ('halaltheives'), as 'separate from all the rest of the caste', as a thing. Unclean' (ovington.1929, opcit)

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the non-Brahmin movement
2. To understand the Aryasamaj as reform society
3. To identify Maratha non-Brahmin movement
4. To find out the non-Brahmin movement in madras presidency

Modernity of Non-Brahmin 'Caste Sentiment'

This was the context in which so-called non-Brahminism emerged as a political force uniting activists of mixed service, commercial groups and superior 'clean'-caste/sat-shudra 'peasant' groups in the Madras and Bombay Presidencies. These were the areas where the provincial administration was most feared by the alleged Brahmin conspiracies. This made his officials particularly eager to promote anti-Brahmin sentiment as retaliation for the voice of 'Brahmin rebels' in the newly enlarged municipal and provincial councils. This strategy in Madras resulted in the creation of the Justice Party, whose leaders formed the first Indian ministry of this presidency under the diocesan constitution of 1919(Baker.1976). This Madras-based organization was established in 1916 in close collaboration with the colonial scholar-officials. The organization had no real party structure at the time when elections were held to elect new voters who were suffrage under the Montagu-Chelmsford 'Diarchy' constitution in 1920. Some of the candidates who won seats in this election were allies of justice;

The Madras authorities nevertheless considered almost every victorious non-Congress candidate to be a winner on behalf of the non-Brahmin 'party'. There are close parallels here with the origins of the non-Brahmin confederacy of the Bombay Presidency, which was founded in 1920 under the sponsorship of ShahuChhatrapati, the Maratha ruler of Kolhapur State. This Kolhapur dynasty, which claimed direct succession from the original Maratha statebuilderShivaji, was the leader of the 'depressed class'; B.R. Ambedkar was closely associated with. He was also a follower of AryaSamaj, a prominent supporter of Maharashtrian social 'uplift', and an early proponent of the move to create separate electoral constituencies for non-Brahmins (omvat.1976:184-85).

Thus the term non-Brahminism was an invention of the colonial political sphere. In both Bombay and the South, those who called themselves non-Brahmins were generally allies in a short-lived political alliance rather than members of an authentic ritual or moral community. Shahi 'non-Brahmins' such as ShahuChhatrapati inserted a strong element of sovereign varna-consciousness into the activities of these organisations, particularly through the sponsorship of thread-investment ceremonies for Marathas and other 'non-Brahmins' which seek formal recognition. joined their campaigns for As well as 'dvijas' of the Kshatriya varna (ibid), these groups used slogans and symbols depicting satirical or hostile views of



Brahmins that were common in many regional folk cultures as well as in 'modern' Hindu revivalist teachings. Were furthermore, those who claimed leadership of the two non-Brahmin organizations continued to make these views more widely known when their parties took power at the provincial level in the 1920s and 1930s.

In South India, in particular, increasing literacy in local languages helped spread awareness of regional identities, which were often perceived as resistance to Brahmins. Through school textbooks as well as temple worship, Tamil-speakers became acquainted with the stories of pious kings and warrior heroes who exemplified Tamil 'peasant' solidarity in the face of foreign invasion. Even as the widely circulated Rama epic gained a distinctly South Indian twist, Ravana, the heroking's monstrous foe, became the heroic centre of the story in the popular Tamil version of the story. In these regions, a mixture of devout devotional beliefs and appropriated Western ethnographic principles was typical in the proclamations of the Disputists, who represented the Brahmins as the descendants of foreign Aryan conquerors. Such writings further declared that the Brahmins of South India were still plotting to oppress the primitive 'sons of the soil' of the region, citing these groups for their Dravidian linguistic heritage and their perceived traditions of worthy 'peasant' qualities was being defined as a race on the basis of 1873) Maharashtra, too, gave rise to the Maratha-led Bahujan-samaj ('majority community') campaign, which appears to have authentic popular roots. Its followers fought with Tilak and other Brahmin nationalists for the right to include Shivaji as their heroic example. The politics of the Pune municipal council in the mid-1920s was dominated by fighting over the staging of rival Brahmin and non-Brahmin Shivaji fairs (festivals), as well as conflicts arising from proposals to install a municipal statue of an anti-Brahmin moralist. Jyotirao Govindrao Phule (1827-90) (Omv. 1976) Encouraging the growth of 'non-Brahmin' political organisations, the Madras and Bombay authorities claimed that they were recognizing a force that had long been active among the 'progressive' elements in these societies. In support of this, he pointed to initiatives being taken by Hindu princes and other notables in these regions, which are more 'nourishing' caste groups, representing such figures as brave modernists, who were 'Brahmin tyranny' 'by challenging the Hindu mind to 'unshake'. (gallanter.1984:36)

More importantly, the heirs of important Maratha-ruled princely states identified themselves as the cause of the Maratha Bahujan-samaj, citing both officials and Indian commentators in their long-running efforts to withdraw revenue from spiritual Brahmin feudal dynasties. Persuaded to see as efforts Social emancipation on the part of all Marathas and/or even all 'non-Brahmins' The most successful of these campaigns was carried out by Shahu Chhatrapati, the ruler of Kolhapur. As seen above, Shahu Chhatrapati was an early sponsor of the Bombay Non-Brahmin Association. Within its home state, this Maratha dynasty established a pattern that persisted into the 1990s when it launched a campaign to address the so-called backwardness of its region's 'non-Brahmin' subjects. This was again taken mainly for the 'peasant' birth of the better clean caste, i.e. Marathas

HINDUISM AS COUNTER – REVOLUTION

B.R. Ambedkar

It must be recognized that there never has been a common Indian culture, that historically there have been three Indias, Brahmanic India, Buddhist India and Hindu India, each with its own culture.... It must be recognized that the history of India before the Muslim invasions is the history of a mortal conflict between Brahmanism and Buddhism. (Ambedkar 1987,275). Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (1891-1956; known as 'Babasaheb' in the movement) came into politics claiming the heritage of the non-Brahman movement, between 1917 – 20 he returned to India after getting his degree in law in the US. He gave up service in Baroda after insults were heaped upon him as an untouchable. Settling in Bombay as a professor at Sydenham College, he associated with Shahu Maharaj of Kolhapur (notorious to nationalists as anti-Brahman and pro-British) in his initial political organizing. The autonomy of the Dalit movement was his concern, but it was to be autonomy in alliance with non-Brahmans. At the first Depressed Classes conference in Nagpur in 1920, which he attended in the company of Shahu Maharaj, he attacked not only nationalist spokesmen, but also Vitthal Ramji Shinde, the most prominent non-Dalit social reformer claiming to lead the "uplift of untouchables".

Ambedkar's emergence into politics was cautious, very gradually he gathered a team around him, of educated and semi-educated Mahar boys, as well as a few upper-caste sympathizers, forming the Bahishkrut Hitakarni Sabha, which began to hold conferences around the province. In 1926, an explosive movement resulted when a conference at Mahad in the Konkan ended with a struggle to drink water from the town tank. The Mahad Satyagraha, the first 'untouchable liberation movement', did not succeed in getting water but did end with the public burning of the Manusmriti. The campaign was partly spontaneous and partly planned; Mahad had been chosen as a place where Ambedkar had significant caste Hindu support, where a tenant movement uniting Mahar and Kunbi peasants was beginning (which developed into the biggest anti-landlord movement in Maharashtra in the 1930s), and where the municipality had already passed a resolution to open public places to untouchables.

By the time of the Simon Commission Ambedkar had clearly emerged as the most articulate Dalit leader in the country with a significant mass base, and it was natural that he should be invited to the Round Table Conference. This led to the clash with Gandhi over the issue of an award of separate electorates to untouchables. For Gandhi, the integrity of Hindu society with the untouchables as its indissoluble part was a central and emotional question. The confrontation over Gandhi's fast and the Poona Pact (1932) disillusioned Ambedkar once and for all about Hindu reformism (when Gandhi undertook a fast in 1932 in protest against giving separate electorates to untouchables, Ambedkar finally gave into him, the result was the Poona pact); it inaugurated his radical period which led to an announcement in 1935 that he was "born a Hindu but would not die a Hindu" and the founding of the Independent Labour Party (ILP), a worker-peasant party with a red flag in 1936. The 'conversion' announcement set off ferment throughout the country, while



the ILP went on to become the biggest opposition party in the Bombay legislative council. With growing nationalist agitations and workers' and peasants' struggles, the 1930s was a decade of ferment. The ILP grew and became the only party in India which led struggles against capitalists and landlords along with agitations against caste oppression, calling for a radical opposition to the 'Brahman-bourgeois Congress' and seeking to pull in non-Brahmans as well as Dalits. While Ambedkar himself did not support a non-Aryan theory of Dalit-shudra identity, poems and songs published in his weekly *Janata* show how pervasive these ideas were, and how they lined anti-caste radicalism with calls for class struggle: Bhils, Gonds, Dravids, their Bharat was beautiful, They were the people, the culture was theirs, and the rule was theirs; The Aryas infiltrated all this; they brought their power to BartendDravidans were suppressed...Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vasihyas, all became owners Drinking the blood of slaves, making the Shudras into machines.

The Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Banias got all the ownership rights, all these three call themselves brothers; they come together in times of crisis and work to split the Shudras who have become workers "Congress", "Hindu Mahasabha", "Muslim League" are all agents of the rich, The "Independent Labour Party" is our true house...Take up the weapon of *Janata* Throw off the bloody magic of the owners' atrocities, Rise workers! Rise peasants! Hindustan is ours, Humanity will be built on labour, and this is our birth right! (Ramteke 1941)

The ILP led some major combined struggles in this period. The most notable of these was the anti-landlord agitation in the Konkan region of Maharashtra which brought together Kunbi and Mahar tenants against mainly Brahman (but also some upper-caste Maratha) landlords, climaxing in a march of some 25,000 peasants to Bombay in 1938. This was followed by a massive one-day united textile workers' strike against the black bill of the Congress government which outlawed strikes. Communists were involved in both of these, and at the massive peasant rally Ambedkar proclaimed, though very ambiguously, an admiration for Marxism:

The 1930s was thus the period in which Ambedkar expressed most strongly his major themes of unity and militancy, unity of workers and peasants, of dalits and non-brahmins (shudras), and unity with opposition parties against the Congress. It is striking that throughout this period (as later) it was the dominant caste peasants who were the main perpetrators of atrocities against Dalits in villages, and the latter under Ambedkar fought this vigorously. Nevertheless at a broader level he called for and tried to build 2 unities of Dalits with the Kunbi-Marathas, associated with the non-Brahman party and praised ShahuMaharaj as well as Phule. Ambedkar's position here was that at the caste level, Brahmanism was the main enemy, just as capitalism and landlordism were the main enemies in class terms. He consistently argued for the left and non-Brahman/Dalit forces to come together to form a political alternative that would fight both the Indian ruling classes and imperialism. Thus, for example, following the 1938 peasant and workers' struggles, he met with Periyar and Swami Sahajanand, the peasant leader of Bihar, in an attempt to form a broad front. Similarly, he tried to dissuade the non-Brahman leaders of Maharashtra

from merging their movement with the Congress, arguing that it would only make them the 'hamals' or coolies of a Brahman leadership.

As a matter of fact the caste system came into being long after the different races of India had commingled in blood and culture. To hold that distinctions of caste are really distinctions of race and to treat different castes as though they were so many different races is a gross perversion of the facts. What affinity is there between the Brahman of the Punjab and the Brahman of Madras? What affinity is there between the Untouchable of Bengal and the Untouchable of Madras? The Brahman of the Punjab is racially the same stock as the Chamar of the Punjab and the Brahman of Madras is the same race as the Pariah of Madras. Caste system does not demarcate racial division. (Ambedkar 1979, 49).

It was not that Ambedkar denied 'racial elements' completely; for example, he referred to the early Magadha-Mauryan empires as being the work of 'Nagas'. He simply argued they should not be given causal priority in explaining caste. In his view, all the varnas included some kind of racial mixture; for instance the original shudras were a tribe of kshatriya Aryans who had been degraded due to conflicts with Brahmins, only later being assimilated with the conquered darker-skinned nonAryans. Similarly he rejected an analysis in terms of economic factors. In his famous phrase, somewhat similar to the way he discussed race, "caste is not a division of labour; it is a division of labourers. "Caste was thus neither racial nor economic. What then were the main explanatory factors, the motive of historical change that produced the caste system, this 'social division of the people'? With class and race rejected, and violence ignored, the emphasis is on ideological and religious factors. In Ambedkar's analysis these are interwoven as civilizational forces that produced the conflicts and changes in Indian society. Without a knowledge of the Indus valley civilization, he differentiated three major phases, as noted above, with the central element in them being the conflict between Hinduism as representing in equalitarian and oppressive elements, and Buddhism as the advanced, equalitarian and rational mode: (1) Brahmanism (the Vedic period, basically tribal in nature and characterized by varna among the Vedic Aryans, though this was not based on birth); (2) the 'revolutionary' period of Buddhism, marked by the rise of the Magadha and Mauryan states and bringing about a great advance in the status of women and shudras whose position had become degraded in the last stages of the Vedic period; and (3) the counter-revolutionary' period of Hinduism marked by the Manusmriti, the transformation of varna into caste, and the complete downgrading of shudras and (Ambedkar 1987, 316-17).

The triumphant Brahmanism began an onslaught on both the Shudras and the women in pursuit of the old idea, namely servility, and Brahmanism did succeed in making the Shudras and the women the servile classes: Shudras the serfs to the three higher classes and the women de serfs to their husbands. Of the black deeds committed by Brahmanism after its triumph over Buddhism this one is the blackest.

There is no parallel in history for so foul deeds of degradation committed by a class of usurpers in the name of class domination (Ibid., 336). It has to be noted here that in



using the term 'shudra' Ambedkar was clearly not referring to the untouchables, whom he saw as broken men' settled outside the villages; he was referring to the non-Brahman masses whom he saw, along with untouchables and tribals, as victims of the caste system.

CONCLUSION

By the 1940s, however, his hope that there would be a unified struggle was at a low ebb, and he was in his political writings treating "Hindus" as a "majority" that included non-Brahmans and was posed against such minorities as Muslims and Dalits. Nevertheless, Ambedkar's longer-term strategy was to break up that majority, to dissolve Hinduism itself, and do so by building a unity of Dalits and middle castes (non-Brahmans) which would be both a caste and a class unity of peasants and workers, against the Brahman-bourgeois Congress. The last years of his life saw a return to this kind of united front, expressed in the change of his Scheduled Caste Federation into the (hopefully non-caste) Republican Party. It participated in the Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti, organized to fight for a Marathi-speaking state and which was actually the first full left-democratic front of opposition parties. Ambedkar, in fact, had argued that the united front should continue even after the winning of a Marathi-speaking state, and fight for the interests of the rural poor; and a massive land Satyagraha led by his lieutenant Dadasaheb Gaikwad and communist peasant leaders followed in both 1956 and 1965.

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