

Philosophical Implication and Relevance of B. R. Ambedkar's Ideas in Marxist Perspective: A Socio-legal Analysis

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Abstract: Babasaheb Bhim Rao Ambedkar (1891 – 1956) social reformer, thinker, philosopher and great architect of Indian Constitution, always tried to extend progressive thought & ideas for betterment of human existence in general and sectional upliftment of highly depressed, down-trodden class in particular. Reflection of discontentment regarding graded inequality and exploitation in Indian social system in 20th century are noted here from the writing and speeches of Dr. Ambedkar, published in book and papers, from time to time. His firm faith, belief and thoughts rotated around the basic concept of equity, equality and his deep-rooted idea for establishing an egalitarian society. He raised his voice throughout his life in most assertive but systematic manner for social, economic and political upliftment of marginalised communities in India. Hegemony and exclusive superiority of elite class in any existing social system always polluted and corrupted the core values of human development. That is why the opening line of Indian Constitution starts with “WE THE PEOPLE” and maximum credit goes to Dr. B.R. Ambedkar the chairman of drafting committee at that time. Article 17, 23, 24 and article 32 of the constitution regarding the abolition of untouchability, forced labour practice, trafficking in human being, child labour, and right to constitutional remedies, in case of violation of such rights and other right in the list of fundamental rights are of utmost importance for sustainable development of human values and culture. His ideas and thoughts with certain degree of variation, if not similar are scrutinised and examined here as well in Marxist spectrum in this paper.

Keywords: Historical Consciousness, Dialectic Materialism, Proletariat, Bourgeoisie, Egalitarianism, Das Capital, Fatalism

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I. Introduction: -

The history of the world is nothing but an extension of progressive ideas and thoughts for the development of human culture and civilisation. There is no society without historical consciousness. What constitutes historical consciousness, however, is not uniform in all section of societies. Thus, the past remains constant, but writing about the past changes frequently¹. Facts in history are always sacred, though interpretations forwarded by the historian and other writers, differ diligently in a different perspective.

Bhimrao Ambedkar and Karl Marx were forced to live a marginalised life but both of these two great personalities contributed and enriched the human culture across the globe. Their firm belief rotated around the basic concept of equity, equality and deep rooted idea of establishing an egalitarian society. Reflection of discontentment of Bhimrao Ambedkar regarding graded inequality in 20th century in Indian Social system are noted in the writing of all paper and books published from time to time. He raised his voice in most assertive but systematic for social economic and political upliftment of marginalized communities in India. Hegemony and superiority of elite class in any existing social system always polluted and suppressed the core values of human development. Consequently, Karl Marx and B.R. Ambedkar both tried to attract the attention in favour of

deplorable depressed masses. Though they used different name in their writing for these pauperised people of society and worked for betterment of these lowered class people. The contemporary issues and problem of their age immensely knocked their hearts and mind and compelled their impulse to prescribe some alternative prescriptions, after conducting the series of test in psycho-social pathology.

Comparative Variables: - Karl Marx was humanistic rational philosopher which he maintained throughout his life and had expounded theoretical proposition of communism. But B. R. Ambedkar was a political analyst and legal expert analysed the issues in the capacity of an upright intellectual. He also embraced Buddhism towards the end of his life, around 1956. It is an ironical fact that due recognition is delayed usually in favour of distinguished thinkers and philosopher, sometime even due fame is denied to original revolutionary writers. It happened in matter of B. R. Ambedkar and Karl Marx. In fact, due reward and recognition was accorded them very late posthumously.

B.R. Ambedkar died in 1956, but he was honoured for his contribution (Drafting of Indian Constitution) after 34 years in 1990 with title of *Bharat Ratna* (Highest Civilian Award in India). Whereas Karl Marx died in 1883, and Bolshevik Revolution occurred 40 years after his death in 1917. Moving ahead for comparing the personality of these two thinkers will be in fact a comparison of B. R. Ambedkar and Karl Marx. It is well known fact that Ambedkar in later part of his life believed in Buddhism and wanted it to develop a genuine path of solving existing problems in the society and communism took shape mainly upon the philosophy of dialectic materialism of Karl Marx, leading towards the establishment of egalitarian world order. The lecture on "Buddhism & Communism" delivered by B. R. Ambedkar at the international Buddhist conference held at Kathmandu to celebrate 2500th anniversary of Buddha is taken as the base where from some inference may be drawn to compare Ambedkar's view and Marxism. B. R. Ambedkar always preferred, while working as chairman of drafting committee of Indian Constitution, to have a concept of welfare state based on socialistic pattern of Indian society. The Constitution of India envisages a democratic republic making India in true sense the largest democracy of the world. The Constitution of India drafted under the headship of B. R. Ambedkar (26th Nov 1949) endeavours to translate all human values into practice and to establish a welfare state. He put more and more emphasis that there must be Justice, social economic and political; liberty of thought, expression, belief faith and worship; equality of status and opportunity; fraternity among all citizens assuring the dignity of individual. The class struggle and theoretical explanation regarding exploitation of surplus labour given by Marx became the basis of communism. But Ambedkar as follower of Buddhism, stated that there is *Dukkha* (sorrow) in the world that may be interpreted in pluralistic form of its expression.

In its first clarification, as Indian tradition explicitly exhibit no more *mukti* from cycle of rebirth and death. B. R. Ambedkar's explanation to this invisible '*dukkha*' comes in the sense of ignorance and poverty. The philosophical basis of communism is well connected to this idea where poverty is attacked severely and dubbed as man made evil. Mahatma Buddha did not try to expound a new religion either in the name of God or anything supernatural, but he criticised and condemned hypocrisy of upper elite class in his age. In this way, Ambedkar believes that there is scope at maximum for Marxism within the fold of Buddhism. Buddha in 6th century B.C. propounded his philosophy of *Dukkha* (the suffering of people), approximately 2350 years before Karl Marx. It may be justified here that explanation and elaboration of Buddhism in this perspective was mainly a thought process of Ambedkar's life and history.

It is also observed that communism put more and more emphasis on collective ownership of property. But it should not be taken a new idea of Marxism as Ambedkar repeatedly asserted its fundamental proposition of Buddhist philosophy, where a call for '*Sangham Sarnam Gachchami*' is very cleanly maintained. In fact, it was pronounced in the form of the organisation of the *Buddhist Sangha*. He further stated that the Buddhist rule for '*Sangha*' (simple well organised life on collective basis) are, more severe and hard than any rules that Marxism claim to have initiated in a form of strategy. Therefore, Ambedkar seems to have formed the opinion that Buddhist philosophy provided a solid base which was adopted later on with different names like communism or Marxism. These ideas and views definitely bridge the distance and creates similarities between two great luminaries in this modern age. Marx and Ambedkar both were against private ownership of property and both of them expressed their belief in collective ownership, easy for inclusive growth and development. This view of Ambedkar seems to be the product of his belief in Buddhism. Another inspirational point is observed that he subscribed also to the Buddhist philosophy which organized the displaced persons "*PARIVARAJIKAS*" into a body with some specific rules and manuals of the simple life. While Marx coordinated for a collective call to the *PROLETARIAT* (suppressed class) to organize themselves into a body of workers to fight against the cruelty and atrocities of the affluent, influential class (*BOURGEOISE*). Reflection of such perception, in fact, indicates a similar thought process, where Ambedkarites' viewpoints become more humane and attractive. B.R. Ambedkar favoured providing basic minimum safeguards, though legal and constitutional in nature (PART – III Fundamental Right of Indian Constitution). Article 32 is to be cited as the best weapon to protect themselves from the atrocities/onslaughts of the rich and influential class. Marxism wanted to arm the proletariat with collective

bargaining power. But both thinkers genuinely believed in organizing the poor with different approaches & mechanisms.

In terms of private property to be possessed and to be maintained by the individual's communist philosophy and Ambedkarite thoughts are, if not the same, but similar to each other. Ambedkar seems to be fully guided and inspired by Buddhist philosophy given in 'VINAYPITAKA'. Whereas Marxist thinkers take inspiration from given philosophy and doctrines in the book 'DAS CAPITAL'. Ambedkar, while writing in his book (*The Buddha and his Dhamma*) try to quote a reference from 'VINAYAPITAKA' a Buddhist scripture. It is mentioned that 'Bhikku' (wandering person) is permitted to have as much as seven small personal belongings;

These seven personal belonging are in the name of a 'Lota' for getting water, a razor, for cleaning and removing hairs, a 'bhikshapatra' for taking food, a needle, for sewing purpose and three 'chivaras' clothes for covering the body. He further, stated that these personal belongings, seven in number as the necessity of life, reminded the essence of Marxism which also rejects the notion of ownership of private property. Ambedkar also interrogatively asserted; "can there be any greater and strict rules as regards private property than is to be found in Buddhist scripture, 'VINAYPITAKA'. The answer to this question definitely leads us to accept that there is minor differences between 'VINAYAPITAKA' and 'DAS CAPITAL'. As far as the views of both are concerned, the basic ideology focus mainly on upliftment of poor people, but Marxist views are found aggressive in its posture and presentation.

Conceptual Conception: - B.R. Ambedkar embraced Buddhism on 14th October 1956, under the guidance of Buddhist monk *Chintamani*. He believed in the philosophy of egalitarian society so as to bring sustainable progress in the life of poor people by way of persuasion, legal protection enshrined in the Indian Constitution. The Constitution of India, so astutely drafted by Ambedkar, won appreciation all over the world by constitutional and legal luminaries. Hence on 5th June 1952, Columbia University² conferred on B.R. Ambedkar the degree of 'Doctor of Law'.

His Concern of '*Dukkha*', the abolition of poverty was an ideal far superior to Marxism. In a practical way Marxist present the justification that non-violent means can never impress the bourgeoisie class to go without huge profiting surplus. Thus, Marxian philosophy believed in the hatred of one class against another class, whereas Ambedkarites thinkers wanted to bring change by love, sympathy and persuasion in legal discussion. A more interesting common similarity is also noted down when issues for the new order and changed system of governance is to be designed and established for continuation of survival of all people in the country. Marxist always preferred to establish the dictatorship of proletariat by means of offensive revolution. Ambedkar raised his doubts on its practicability and perfection and asserted vehemently; how long this dictatorship would survive. It will disrepute the image of proletariat because it is not based on lasting foundation. Ambedkar perceived, on the other hand, a system based on reformation of mind set and constitutional provisions. He is of the view that there will be no trouble if such mindset is prepared with reformatory measures as well as protective provisions in the constitution like Article 17, 23, 24, etc. B.R. Ambedkar also asserted: 'Nobody can remove your grievances as well as you cannot remove these, unless you get political power into your hand.... We must have a government in which men in power will not be afraid to amend the social and economic code of life which the dictates of justice and expediency so urgently call for³.' That is the logical presentation, where it is observed the word '*WE THE PEOPLE*⁴' of India in the opening line of Indian constitution 1950 thereby, ensuring equality before law, rule of law and supremacy of law, the three golden triangle meant for securing justice to all citizens of the country. This is the reason exclusively to have formed an opinion in favour of Ambedkarites thought, emanating from love, affection and constitutional safeguards. A system based on force will collapse as soon as the fear or force is withdrawn. He further explains that basic rule of governance will be accepted, if the mindset of people is shaped with persuasive assertion and constitutional arrangements and that gives the foundation for a true democratic system.

Issue of Brahmanism with certain degree of variation in thought process of Ambedkar and Karl Marx, some parallel lines may be also drawn here. He was well connected with fight against Brahmanism, caste order throughout his life and Marx waged war against capitalism as long as he lived, till 1883. Thus, it may be stated that both of them stood against the system because Capitalism and Brahmanism were exploitative and discriminatory in its nature and its application.

Hence, both personalities basically have the same objective in their own thinking and ideas when they started to oppose ferociously the above-mentioned system. The only strategic difference noted that Ambedkar was against Brahmanism and Capitalism where as Marx was against Capitalism only. It is because caste order and

brahmanism did not exist in that society to which Marx belonged in 19th century Europe. But both of them are associated with the concept of Socialism in one way or other way. It seems to be pertinent to note down that while both were concerned with specific aim and objective of changing the social order and to establish egalitarianism. Ambedkar believed in state socialism within a democratic system, where Marx was of the view that poverty cannot be abolished within capitalist society. Emancipation of poor people seems to be possible in the opinion of Karl Marx, in socialist order under worker's control in which human need and not the deeds determine the allocation of resources. These two great luminaries as reformer and philosopher can be compared with regard to their clear views towards religions. It is like opium of the masses as Marx felt, and recourse to religion in social matter amount only to befooling the common people. Religion in his own perception is an illusion which eases the pain produced by oppression and exploitation. From Marxist stand point of view, religion does not simply relieves the effect of oppression, it is also an instrument of that oppression. It works as a system of social control maintaining existing order of exploitation and reinforcing class relationship in the *haves and have not*. By offering all illusion of hopes and situation, it prevents thoughts of our system and dissuades ideas to get it altered.

While Ambedkar believed in Buddhism, a religion which is responsible to the rational urges and aspiration of mankind and is forward looking. He also condemned Brahmanism which is ritualistically complicated and discriminatory. He was highly critical to this Brahmanical thoughts and religion as practiced in 20th century India. He also asserted that religion which treats million of its followers and supporters worse than thieves and dogs and inflict upon them innumerable disabilities, is not a religion at all. But Ambedkar never endorsed anti-religious ideas and view of the Marxist thinkers. He considered the foundation of religion very essential to our life and society where we live amicably. It seems that his perception of true religion was its universal application to all communities, categories and all races of the world. Hence it is noted that B. R. Ambedkar never discarded the concept of religion as it was done by Karl Marx, but at the same time, he did not adhere to that religion which was exploitative, painful, discriminatory and against the interests of the general masses. It is pertinent to note here that Article 17 in fundamental right of Indian Constitution (Abolition of Untouchability) was inserted seriously before ensuring the right to freedom of religion (Article 25 – 28) given in the Part III of the Constitution. Indian constitution 1950 has provided the legal framework for its abolition. "It has declared that untouchability is now abolished and its practice in any form is forbidden. The endorsement of any disability arising out of untouchability shall be an offence punishable in accordance with law".⁵

The Asiatic mode of production and social order of 19th and 20th century differed from European pattern of life where Ambedkar and Marx were an eye witness of their age. Ambedkar belonged to a society which had a very strong old age religious and social injunctions and the whole traditional cultural order was classified in distinct *varna* system based on the notion of graded inequality. This type of social hierarchy existed as well as dominated in India for more than three thousand year to which he was an eye witness throughout different phases of his life.

This is the reason to address himself a subject to caste based discrimination and exploitation that went ahead without interruption, nowhere found in European societies and culture. He shares his feeling and views that "even if class consciousness is aroused and developed it may at best eliminate classes but it cannot demolish deep-rooted historic caste consciousness on our country. On the other side Marx Survived and sacrificed a lot in a society, which was not characterised by caste system based on hierarchy model with all sanctity of religion. He concentrated mainly on mode of production & social formation for making his interpretation about European society where unit of analysis remains class instead of caste like Indian traditional social order. He explains mode of production in two tier system, namely infrastructure (economic) and superstructure (ideology & polity) Marx also believed that changes in infrastructure also called as basic structure will bring corresponding changes in superstructure of society namely values, culture and social attitudes. It is very interesting and important to note here that superstructure always become dominate in the process of social change in human civilisation but in the last stage basic structure (economy) determine the entire process of social change. An indepth and critical review of Ambedkarites thought prompts us to accept that B.R. Ambedkar was very near to such explanation as found in the writing of 'LOUIS ALTHUSSER'⁶ another Marxist French philosopher. In the given context of Indian situation, he envisions superstructure dominating as well as determining the basic structure. He further affirmed that caste may be taken as a case in point for analytical exposition and mere changes in basic structure cannot alter social structure because Indian social order came to exist over thousand years, therefore, a person born in lowered caste failed to break rigidity & complexity and social hierarchy in India. Such explanatory social analysis as elaborated

above enable us to write that both of them were near to each other. They try to discard the existing exploitative dominant system and accumulation of private property which perpetuate to extract at maximum the labour surplus in human society. In spite of this similarities, they differ on many theoretical and technical issue, signifying the importance of two great personalities. Their ideologies must be analysed and understood with full care and caution. There is well known and established Marxian dictum that history of all civilisation, from primitive society to the present-day world order, is nothing but history of 'class struggle', a unique & universal feature of human development. There has been a group of people privileged and other as underprivileged both known differently in different society, through the ages of history. These two classes carried on uninterrupted fight, a fight that ended each time, either in favour of revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common crushing of the contending class. Our present day society has sprouted from the ruins of feudal society and is more and more splitting into two opposite camps- *bourgeoise and proletariat* (rich and poor).

Shift in Jurisprudential Paradigm: - The elite & influential segment of population though less in number, controls all means of production and exploit the working class people. Marx makes a call to all workers of the world to get united against the bourgeoisie class thereby overthrowing the from the centre power. But Ambedkarite thought insist to attack on prevailing Brahmanical order of Indian society with peaceful democratic method to achieve the power. Ambedkar believed that "power is a capacity to bring about drastic as well as desired changes in the condition of marginalised poor people". He further emphasised in his writing that depressed and suppressed class should educate organise and agitate to ensure their share in national resource and power.⁷ Politics is a means and tools for acquisition of power, to be taken on long basis as mission to create and build up a true democratic polity in India Making the core of his ideology, '*ONE MAN, ONE VALUE*', he worked relentlessly for democracy in every walk of human life – social, economic and political. He prioritised and placed on democratic structure the task of fulfilling 'Justice to all', the core content of any democratic order. Once social justice to all is ensured, welfare of all segments of population will be well protected. Implication to this concern for '*ALL*' in reality was his plea for state socialism in different field of economic life. He studied Bolshevik revolution and Great depression of 1932, but focussed mainly to the movement started by *Jyotibha Phule, Narayan Guru* and *Periyar Ramaswami Naiker* who were his forerunner.

It is now more interesting and desirable to note down certain reservations and limitation as well which are embedded in ideological contours of their philosophy. The most typical and complicated attributes namely *sanskaras*, religion, ritual, rebirth, caste, *gotra, jati* etc of Indian society were more dominant. While European society exhibited only economic determinant that failed in defusing the challenges and crisis, being experienced by Indian people in different walk of human life. Therefore, Ambedkar's ideology revolving around "*SARYAJANA SUKHAY*" (to bring happiness to all people) need to be taken as an alternative for an affirmative action in favour of all suppressed and poor population. When discussion and deliberation in the meeting of Constituent Assembly was going on, issues of most vulnerable and poor attracted the attention of all member. Consequently 'Sixth Schedule' in the draft of constitution was included as legal & constitutional safeguard for these poor masses. It is very clearly mentioned that "the tribal areas are to be dealt separately with Article 244(2) and provision for their administration are to be found in Sixth Schedule of Indian Constitution".⁸

Human life is also perceived and visualised by Ambedkarite thinkers, having reflective effects in three dimension, social, economic and political. They put emphasis mainly on state socialism, democracy, participatory economy and egalitarianism. Leading to the emergence of new order, free from all form of oppression and injustice. It is, therefore, necessity to search for new ways and means which may be more fruitful and provide answer to present day issues and crisis, in human society. The answer to address such ticklish issues may be reminded in the name of '*Arajakism*'. Here, the meaning of '*Arajak*' (weaker section) is expounded in the form of a community or a large section of population whose member in maximum, men and woman, earn the livelihood, rendering all time their physical labour.

The word '*ARJAK*' is so comprehensive used in Indian social setting, that it covers all the depressed, or marginalised under privileged communities. A very similar word '*Arzal*' is also used in urdu literature for oppressed and isolated ignoble poor people in contemporary writings. Hence, '*ARJAKISM*' may be defined as a new dimension of thought and belief based on the one hand complete denial of the whole God ordained brahmanical metaphysics of rebirth, blind faith in the myth of destiny of fatalism, hierarchy of caste structured social model, discrimination, oppression, exploitation and inequilibrium in inter-personal relation and above all antipathy towards progressive forces and inclusive development.

It also believes with full commitment and affirmative strategy to achieve egalitarian societal order based on the principle of human dignity, conviction in the equality of the species similarly born, secular attitude towards socio-cultural environment and justice in all walks of human life.

Conclusion: - It is through this ideological framework that one can diminish the anguish of abject poverty, social slavery, cultural retardation, political rupturing and corruption. Reference for such refresh ideas and thoughts may be added from *Kalamasutta* (Angutra Nikaya) where we find harsh reality for our easy understanding of philosophical implication in given context. It is mentioned that “do not believe in anything simply because you have heard it. do not believe in traditions because they have been handed down for many generations.. Have deliberations and analyse and when you find a proper reason for accepting something which is conducive to the good and benefit of one and all , accept it and live up to it.”⁹

Therefore, Ambedkar's ideas, thoughts including philosophy of this *ARJAKISM* require more time and attention for diffusion of current political and social crisis faced by suppressed and down trodden masses about whom Dr. Ambedkar expressed his serious and deep concern. It is now necessity of time and duty as true citizen of country that the word ‘WE’ given in the opening of Indian Constitution and various legal provisions enshrined in fifth and sixth schedule and above all *part III and part IV* (Fundamental Right and Directive Principle of State Policy) must be translated in its letter and spirit. Not only that the practical solutions to improve the condition of victimized humanity in present century across the world are to be searched and examined in the light of vision and mission of B.R Ambedkar, the great architect of Indian Constitution.

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