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## DR. B. R. AMBEDKER'S CRITIQUE ON RELIGION

**Balasaheb Ramchandra Salve**

Associate Professor and Head, Department of Philosophy,  
B.N.N. College, Bhiwandi.

**Abstract:-** Dr. Ambedkar (1891-1956) is politically well known in India as an architect of the Indian Constitution. His role in framing of the Hindu Code Bill is also relatively known. Ambedkar who was born in an "untouchable" family carried on a relentless battle against untouchability throughout his adult life. In the last part of his life, he renounced Hinduism and became a Buddhist. What were his reasons for doing so? What is his concept of religion? The present research paper concentrates on his philosophy of religion.

**Keywords:** Dr. Ambedkar, Indian Constitution

### INTRODUCTION:

To Dr. Ambedkar, religion was most essential to society so also to man. He was born in an untouchable community and hence was forced to live the life of unimaginable hardships and difficulties. The very touch to him by a caste Hindu or his touch to a caste Hindu was supposed to be heinous. In fact the untouchables were never treated equal to human beings and were given worse treatment just as animals. Under the circumstances a man like him who acquired honour in learning from abroad, could have thought of having no necessity of religion to a man. The western knowledge influenced him a lot. Similarly the Marxist revolution and philosophy which influenced more than half of the western world before 1920 could have also influenced Dr. Ambedkar, the poorest among the poor for revolt against religion and breaking of all human relations based on philosophy of religion. But he did nothing against any religion or religious life of the society. Primarily it seems that Dr. Ambedkar wanted a noble religious life and freedom to his people to practice religious life. Even in the aims and object of the 'Bahishkrut Hitkarini Sabha', which he established in 1924, he had given stress on "to promote the spread of culture among the depressed classes. This is also sufficient to prove that he was after all to seek culture development of his people and cultural development of a society cannot be built up without a sound base of a sound religious principle. Religion is a very broad concept and its dictionary meaning is 'belief in the existence of a supernatural ruling power, the creator and the controller of the universe, who has given to man a spiritual nature which continues to exist after the death of the body'. It is thus religion is very broad concept and it always tries to channelize human life to sublime path. It is the religion which teaches a man to lead a life based on moral codes. It is the religion which teaches a man to become noble and allow after becoming noble in their personal lives. Dr. Ambedkar had such a noble vision of religion and he wanted religion as a necessity to channelize human life to a sublime path.

In one of the speeches Dr. Ambedkar made in 1939, he told his followers "Simply education is not sufficient for the development of a man". Character is more important than education. Further, he told in the same speech that it pains me to see youths growing indifferent to religion. Religion is not opium as it is held by some. What good things I have in me or whatever have been the benefits of my education to society, I owe them to the religious feelings in me. I want religion but I do not want hypocrisy in the name of religion".

The Mahad Satyagriha of 1927 is the real expression of Dr. Ambedkar's philosophy of religion. It is here in the speech that he made, he clearly told that castes are curse and untouchability is worst in it. pointing out to the slogan of Lokmanya Tilak 'Swaraj is my birth right', Dr. Ambedkar told that if Tilak had been born among the untouchability, he would have raised the slogan 'Annihilation of untouchability is my birth right. It is this that the form of untouchability which he had to carry while living as an untouchable, made him to think of religion and even of good religion, His whole philosophy therefore about religion moves around a man and

not man around philosophy. Religious philosophy is always related to God and ethics. Besides it is also true that religious philosophy is in abstract way to think boundless matters and numberless things. In the speech at Mahad after burning of the Manu Smriti, what he suggested was not the life of compact mental religion but religion open to all, wherein all people will live as brothers and sisters. It was thus Dr. Ambedkar wanted religion to make a human life equal to all. So far as the religious philosophy of Dr. Ambedkar is concerned, it could be said that he was seeking asylum in the philosophy of religion as the last and sublime home of oppressed. And it is thus that he had given reasons and explanations as to what he calls religious philosophy. According to him, it is very difficult to get. This is probably due to two facts. In the first place while religion is something definite, there is nothing definite as to what is to be included in the term philosophy. In the second place philosophy and religion have been adversaries if not actual antagonists as may be seen from the story of the philosopher and theologian. In this justification of the above mentioned two facts he had given an example of a story. The story goes on with philosopher and a theologian. There was dispute among them. The theologian accused the philosopher that he was "Like blind man in a dark room, Looking for a black cat which was not there". In reply the philosopher charged the theologian saying that he was like blind man in the dark room, looking for a black cat which was not there but he declared to have found there. Therefore to Dr. Ambedkar's philosophy of religion is nothing but confusion and there cannot be an exact definition.

While explaining the philosophy of religion, Dr. Ambedkar cited some of the definitions of the philosophy of religion given by Prof. Pringle-Pattison, Prof. Robertson Smith, Prof. Max Mullar and others. He had also given the description of philosophy long ago made by Plato as the synoptic view of things. Prof. Pringle Pattison gave explanation of Plato's description of philosophy, as "It is the attempt to see things together to keep all the main features of the world in view and to grasp them in their relation to one another as parts of one whole. Only thus can we acquire a sense proportion and estimate aright the significant of any particular range of facts for our ultimate conclusions about the nature of the world-process and the world-ground. Accordingly the philosophy of any particular department of experience the philosophy of religion, the philosophy of art, the philosophy of law, is to be taken as meaning, an analysis and interpretation of the experience in the question in its bearing upon our view of man and the world in which he lives". Then Dr. Ambedkar further gave explanation as to how Prof. Pringle Pattison showed relationship between means, religious experience and philosophical between means, religious experience and philosophical conclusions, so also between the religious of civilized world and uncivilized world. Thereafter he says that "If this is philosophy of religion it appear to me that it is merely a different name for that department of study which is called the comparative religion. He then gives his own idea for the concept of philosophy of religion. He says "I am using the title philosophy of religion to denote something quite different from the sense and aim given to it by Prof. Pringle Pattison. I am using, the word philosophy in its original sense which was two-fold. It meant teachings as it did when people spoke of the philosophy of Socrates or the philosophy of Plato. In another sense it meant the critical reason used in passing judgments upon things and events. Proceedings on this basis philosophy of religion are to me not a merely descriptive science. I regard it as being both descriptive as well as normative. In so far as it deals with the teachings of a religion, philosophy of religion becomes a descriptive science. In so far as it involves the use of critical reason for passing judgments on those teachings, the philosophy of religion becomes a normative science. From this it will be clear what I shall be concerned with in this study of the philosophy of Hinduism. To be explicit I shall be putting Hinduism on its trial to assess its worth as a way of life".

Further he had given, in the course of explanation, the definition of the term of philosophy of religion that he had used, according to him the study of the philosophy of the religion involves the determination of three dimensions which he mentions, religion is the first and to him religion is the first and to him religion was theology. Then he had given explanations of the definition of religion and even of the theology. He concludes, theology in three different thesis namely, (1) "the existence of god; (2) God's providential government of the Universe and (3) God's moral government of mankind, I take religion to mean the propounding of an ideal scheme of divine governance, the aim and this is the sense in which I shall be using the term religion".

The second dimension, what he mentions is "the ideal scheme for which a religion stands".<sup>16</sup> "the third dimension what he had given in the philosophy of religion is the criterion to be adopted for judging the value of the ideal scheme of divine governance for judging the value of the ideal scheme of divine governance for which a given religion stands". This he had tried to explain and define religion.

Religion is a necessary of man necessity of man that is what Dr. Ambedkar told. But while admitting the necessity of religion to a man he had not neglected the stages of development of religion from the savage society to the civilized society. The relationship between religion and God so also between religion and mortality were also explained by him in their proper perspectives. And lastly in the discussion of the philosophy of religion he came to call "religion as a social force". Dr. Ambedkar pointed out that "material comforts by no means the solvent of all human ills". In a way, religion to Dr. Ambedkar was the driving force for human activities. According to him, "man cannot live by bread alone. He has a mind which needs food for thought". Dr. Ambedkar regarded slavery as an anti-thesis of a religious society. To him religion was for the service of man and not man as a means to religion.

Dr. Ambedkar's understanding of religion was social as well as personal. It is true that philosophical base is

there in his understanding as well as explaining the philosophy of religion; he is more concerned with man and his welfare than the philosophy of religion and its domain. He did not like religious discriminating between two followers of it. In regard to Hindu practice of life he once told, the religion which discriminates between two followers is partial and the religion which treats cores of its adherents worse than dogs, criminals and inflicts upon them insufferable disabilities is no religion at all. Religion is not the appellation for such an unjust order”.

Religion to Dr. Ambedkar was an authority to secure social status so also to grant poverty to people and therefore he did not want such a religion. He says, “Religion must be judged by social standards based on social standard based on social ethics”. In fact he treated religion as a source of social and spiritual unity. He wanted to have a religion in the sense of ‘spiritual principles’ to truly ‘universal’, applicable to all countries and to all races.<sup>24</sup> However, studying unequal life and unequal treatment in Hinduism and in other religions, he was much worried and wanted universal religion to all men to unite them and to inspire them.

Dr. Ambedkar mentioned four different stages of a religion. Accordingly “the first stage was that in which religion has gone in its original form and was matter of personal salvation of man’s soul. In the second stage it meant the maintenance of human brotherhood based on moral rules governing the conduct of human being towards each other. In third stage men worshiped those great heros or personalities who satisfied the wants of their lives. And in its last stage man had worshipped a person who performed miracles”. All this stages DrAmbedkar did not accept. And so against these four stages, he had given his four characteristics of a religion as follows – (i) “religion in the same of morality must therefore, remain the governing principle in every society; (ii) religion, if it is to function, must be in accord with reason which is merely another name for science; (iii) its moral code must recognise the fundamental tenets of liberty, equality and fraternity. Unless a religion recognises these three fundamental principles of social life, religion will be doomed; (iv) religion must not sanctify or ennoble poverty”.

However, the religion which dominated and life in India was not inconsistent with the four characteristics of religion that Dr. Ambedkar had given, naturally he turned to draw attention of the people towards the evil practices as well as evil philosophy in Hinduism. According to him religious conceptions in this country were so vast that they covered every aspect of life from birth to death. He therefore, as was more interested in a pure religion, made an attempt not only to compare Hinduism, with other religion but pointed our inhuman gradations of man in Hinduism. And to him the real religion is open to all and based upon human brotherhood, taking all people to prosperity materially and spiritually.

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