

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar: The Pillar of Unity and National Integration

Those who serve the mankind without any discrimination they only serve the nation.

(Balakrishnan)

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Abstract

India was really fortunate to have many distinguished scholars, intellectuals, politicians, and freedom-fighters, who defeated the powerful British by their wisdom, sacrificed themselves for the mission, and saved the future generations from the tyrant and barbaric rule. One among such eminent personalities was Dr. Bhim Rao Ramji Ambedkar, who after independence was given a stupendous task of drafting the constitution of India. In this paper, the researcher attempts to explore and analyze Dr. Ambedkar's struggle and contribution for the integration of the nation. That is why the researcher makes an attempt to pen down some points to recall people about his mission to integrate the disintegrated population of India.

Keywords: *Caste, discrimination, hierarchy, integration, oppression, stigma.*

Introduction

The idea of national integration is innately complex in nature as it incorporates an extensive collection of interrelated cognitive, affective, and behavioral activities. Cognitive domain deals with thinking and beliefs, the affective domain deals with feelings and emotions, whereas the behavioral domain deals with actions and activities (Beg, Kidwai, 2013). Our country, India has been gifted with great minds from time to time to perform great acts. It is through such great sons of the soil that the subjugated people realize their own worth and stand against all odds of discrimination and injustice for building a new India. One among those sons was Ambedkar, a patriot who devoted himself for the well-being of India and her people. His thinking regarding diverse cultures, races, languages of Indian population, his emotions for subjugated fellow natives, and his way of framing the constitution regarding their rights engraved in the constitution determines his extreme exertion for integration.

National integration refers to the existence of a deep sense of belongingness towards one's country, feeling of togetherness and unity towards natives belonging to different sections of population. It is a socio-psychological process through which social bonding

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and harmony is developed in the hearts and minds of the people which led to the escalation of feeling of brotherhood and steadfast loyalty to the nation. The key reason behind this social bonding and unity in a multi-cultural country is preservation of peculiarities of each and every group rather than discriminating and devaluing the humans on the basis of diversities (Beg, Kidwai, 2013).

Casteism

Prejudicial or biased treatment of different categories of people, especially on the basis of caste, is casteism. Like termites, casteism seeped into all aspects of Indian society and ate the vitals of internal unity of India (Beg, Kidwai, 2013). It is a disease which deteriorates people's rationality to such an extent that the citizens of a country look upon themselves only as followers of a discriminatory social system with little regard to the constitution. It is the caste which decides whether a group deserves respect and rights or not in which one class is considered degraded and the other permanently privileged not because of any accomplishments but as a result of mere birth into a particular social stratum. Caste system provides the society with readymade channels of hatred and isolation, in such a situation it is impossible to assume national integration because national integration means feeling of oneness, brotherhood, mutual love, and respect for fellow citizens. Casteism is a system which allows one class of people to degrade and trample the rights of other class of people, restrict their mobility by forcing them to continue their generational jobs, which is an absolute injustice.

Thought-provoking incidents of Ambedkar

Ambedkar was himself victimized by caste discriminated society from his early life, in school he was not allowed to mix with the children of upper caste or to touch the tap to quench his thirst unless some upper caste children open tap for him even his sister used to cut his hair as the Barber refused to serve low caste people (Meena Bardia: 2009). He wished to take Sanskrit as one of the subject during graduation but was not allowed to do so because Sanskrit was considered pure language and was not meant for low caste people. Their movement was restricted on roads during morning and evening hours (when the bodies cast long shadows) because Brahmins considered their shadows also impure. The Brahmins considered themselves so much superior that they don't even bowed to the idols of lower caste. Casteism was so severe that it divided the deities also. Public places were not kept open for them, they were not allowed to milk the cows, carry an umbrella, to wear golden ornaments, shoes, and cover upper part of their body (Shankar Rao: 2009). This attitude and its practices have virtually affected the spirit of integration and is responsible for corruption and nepotism in social and public life. Its

continued presence and practices, had hampered the smooth functioning of democracy and attainment of the goal of an integrated society.

Stigmatic influence of casteism

It is really not easy to wash off the germs of casteism in India as we know that the people who embraced Buddhism as a revolt against the oppression and injustice of Brahmanical hegemony in order to free themselves from the oppression of upper castes were then labelled as 'untouchable Buddhists' They converted to another religion but still they find themselves strictly caught in a Vicious circle of hierarchy throughout their life. One can judge how acute the stigma of casteism in India is (H.S. Dwivedi and Ratan Sinha, 2005). It is so deep- rooted in Indian people that its mark does not seem to disappear even after conversion. Today also endogamy is harshly followed in some areas, if someone wishes to marry in other caste- such marriage is considered impure, the couple is ridiculed and even punished by their own people.

Ambedkar's approach towards national integration

Ambedkar's academic distinction as a constitutional expert, his intimate knowledge about law, and rich experience of the social problems helped him to carry out his mission successfully. He publicly proclaims his idea that, "Every man who repeats the dogma of mill that one country is no fit to rule another country must acknowledge that one class is not fit to rule another class." He wished to dismantle the hierarchy of caste, as this system led one class to get utmost privileges and other class to suffer extremely. He condemns such a society which is based on false standards, in which man's own enmity towards other man is reflected in the form of religious hypocrisy. He denied his birth religion for its discrimination and injustice and revolted against it in his book "Annihilation of caste". According to Maclver and Page, "when status is wholly predetermined that men are born to their lot without any hope of changing it, then class takes the extreme form of caste" (Shankar Rao: 2009). Ambedkar along with hundreds of his fellow caste converted to Buddhism in order to free themselves from the captivity of untouchability. He perceived caste based discrimination as the greatest enemy to the unity of the country (Dwivedi Ratan Sinha: 2005). He wished to cease the narrow conflicts that arise in the name of caste, language, religion, or region in order to rebuild a society where every individual has full opportunity to grow according to his worth and ability. The atrocities caused by the upper caste on their community forced them to stand against the hierarchical system and thus gave birth to Law of "Abolition of untouchability". Ambedkar stands to transform age-old caste based discrimination as a human right issue. He raised his voice to rescue the downtrodden and subjugated from exploitation and

discrimination. He believed that any improvement in the status of downtrodden to vanish the discrimination is conducive for national integration because discrimination grows a sense of step motherly atmosphere around people and create rifts in the relations and disintegrates them emotionally, psychologically and finally territorially (Dhanraj, S & Palanisamy, A).

All kinds of discriminatory activities are harmful for the integration of a diverse society as it creates breaches in relations and would thus balkanize the people of the nation. After a hard struggle Ambedkar was finally ready with the constitution of India as an instrument of justice in which he took into account the diversity of cultures, religions, regions, languages, castes and their related issues that helped in the promotion of national integration.

Dr. Ambedkar's Mission and Aim to Recreate the Society on Democratic Ideals:

Ambedkar's mission was to seek justice for the depressed and subjugated class to relieve them from the shackles of captivity. He was of the opinion that Man's mission in life should be to oppose and fight against injustice and wrong taboos so that the oppressed are released from the lifelong confinement. He wanted people to stand and fight against the horrible customs until those are eradicated from the society. He staunchly opposed the hierarchal caste system that denied liberty and equality. His aim was to rebuild the society along the contemporary democratic ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity, in which people can express themselves in a decent manner (A. M. Rajasekhariah And Hemalata Jayaraj: 1991). He believed that unless society is secularized, democracy could not function properly because by treating unequal's equally, that would automatically violate the principle of equality and thus the task of democracy would remain incomplete. That is why there has been a need to have special safeguards for people to terminate their prolonged subjugation (H.S. Dwivedi and Ratan Sinha, 2005). Ambedkar was an iconoclast who did not hesitate to disparage the beliefs, customs, and ideas of a religion that led to the creation of the Varna system and caste based discrimination. He urged people to stand and fight against discrimination with the slogan "Educate, organize, and agitate" as he always fought for self-respect and justice. He advocates social mobility both vertical and horizontal because it facilitates social transformation, it discards the ascribed status and focuses on achieved status by providing opportunities to prove themselves worthy, which truly enhances national integration. He stands against the stiff hierarchical system with the intention to promote social change by eliminating all types of injustice and oppression.

Ambedkar and Education:

Ambedkar advised lower caste people to understand the importance of education 'to raise their standards through education so that they may become aware about their rights and get rid of their miseries. He taught them to keep their ambitions high and use political power as a means to save themselves from all kinds of oppression (Shambhu Lal Salvi: 2018). Education can end the social slavery and enlighten the downtrodden masses to gain social status and freedom from the captivity of upper caste.

Ambedkar and women:

Ambedkar deserves the credit for illuminating the candle of self – respect and strong determination for self- improvement among women. He tries to make them aware about their rights and believed that if the oppressed will not stand for their rights - no law, no parliament, no judiciary can guarantee them their rights, that is, why he continued to emphasize them regarding the consciousness about their rights. He believed in the power of women and their role in social change. He realized that women have become the target of the patriarchy and rigid hierarchical social structure for long time (A. M. Rajasekhariah and Hemalata Jayaraj: 1991). He struggled against unjust and abusive traditions such as devdasi system, child marriages, etc. He believed that women are caged in the ring of male dominant society, where they have no powers to decide for themselves. He introduced many provisions for women in the Constitution so that they may come out from the world of deprivation and live a dignified life.

Ambedkar and Constitution of India

Ambedkar remarked about the constitution as “It is workable, flexible, and strong enough to hold the country together both in peacetime and in wartime. Indeed, if I may so, if things go wrong under the new constitution, the reason will not be that we had a bad constitution, what we will have to say is that man is vile” (Salvi, Shambhu Lal 2018). He was of the view that good constitutions too can be failed by bad people. Good Constitution itself stands for the unity of the country, but the leaders need to display themselves capable of discharging the roles that the framers of the constitution envisaged for them. It is the authorities who need to ensure complete protection of the rights of the people. The vast masses of our country have deep attachment to their culture, religion, language, etc and gets very easily provoked over such issues. If Ambedkar would have restricted the choice and interest of people’s religion or language, it would have definitely created chaos and disintegration among people in the society. He has taken care of these things by assuring freedom of religion so that people can freely profess, practice and

propagate their religion (Vyas, Mohan Kishnan: 1993 p: 20) and can maintain their culture and language also which is a positive step for promoting national integration.

REFLECTIONS

- Ambedkar realized the fact that diversities are deeply embedded in the roots of India and the best way to deal with such diversities is to give them enough space to grow for a higher cause of national integration. Oppression and dictatorship are root causes of all deleterious social relations and are harmful for unity and integrity of the nation.
- It is not just a law and order problem which need to be tackled by the law only, but is actually a social problem which need to be solved by the citizens off course by changing their attitude. Recently, an excruciating news broke out that a man of Munikudali village in Seethanagaram Mandal, seeks permission from President Ram Nath Kovind to join Maoist movement in order to protect his dignity as he was humiliated, tonsured and assaulted in police custody because of being Dalit (The New Indian Express: 2020). The law of “Abolition of untouchability” celebrates its seventy years on paper in 2020, but it seems that much more time is required to change the attitude of the people to process the mind according to the law.
- Government shall not tolerate or accept any discrimination based on caste, creed and religion. The problems of national integration will be solved with ease, if constitutional provisions will be implemented sincerely. Constitutional makers have already taken into consideration the heterogeneities of the people on the basis of caste, color, religion, region, language so that all forms of discrimination are dissolved (Ranbir, Singh & Arya, Anupama: 2006).
- Government should ensure that the maneuver of political practices are just and equal to all groups and communities, no favour for any particular caste or community lead to the integration of the nation (Md. Asif, Nurjaman: 2014). The efforts to promote National integration will give positive results only when the gap between constitutional provisions and socio- political performance is bridged. This can guarantee a safe, secure, and prosperous future for all of us.
- It is the duty of the leaders to stick to the constitution and work for unity. They should not try to harm the integration of the country for their personal gains. They should always stand for justice and equality. The lack of ethics among leaders, leads to the advent of toxic leadership. Good governance with good intentions must be the hallmark of the government. They can gain the trust of citizens by working in concordance with the constitution.

In order to have a strong and unified nation, all kinds of discrimination need to be strictly tackled by the law, so that it will be completely abolished from the society because it prevents people to develop a bond of brotherhood with fellow citizens and is a standing challenge to the constitutional goals of democracy, equality and national integration.

CONCLUSION

The above study illustrates Dr. Ambedkar's victory as the chief architect of the constitution as he was committed to the well-being of India and her people. The tribute for this great accomplishment goes to Ambedkar and his enlightened mind. He presented the constitution as an instrument of national integration. His contribution is worth remembering at a time when the nation is at cross-roads, people are making divisions by hate speeches about other communities for personal gains. Baba sahib amalgamated every element of the diverse population of a nation under one umbrella by taking care of the rights of every community while drafting the constitution. The people of a multi-cultural country like India must recognize the country as diverse and regard cultural diversity as their duty to respect and safeguard it so that an Indian will feel safe and secure like home in any part of India that is a good way for the integration of the heterogeneous population. How cannot we call him the strong pillar of unity and national integration? Having such compassionate attitude towards every community of the nation irrespective of their diverse backgrounds, moves the country towards integration which disseminates peace, progress, and prosperity. National Integration need to be pursued devotedly as a top priority because it is not a one-time workout, rather it is a continuous process of Commitment and devotion for unity and integration, which will definitely lead the entire nation towards peace and prosperity.

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