

PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt / Egyptology

BR Ambedkar on Indian Religion

Dr. Karnika Dubey

Ph.D, Department of History, Barkatullah University, Bhopal, India

E-mail Id: karnikadubey@gmail.com

Dr. Karnika Dubey. BR Ambedkar on Indian Religion--Palarch's Journal Of Archaeology Of Egypt/Egyptology 17(7), 10831-10838. ISSN 1567-214x

Keywords: Religion, Philosophy, Theology.

Abstract

From the Dalit point of view of the prevailing social-cultural situation in India, Ambedkar interpreted the basic principles of religion. Instead, he saw religion as a 'social doctrine for establishing the upright relations between man and man rather than as a means for individual souls' spiritual salvation. His religious philosophy does not mean either religion or theology. Theology studies God's nature, characteristics and functions; religion deals with divine things. Theology and religion may be linked, but philosophies are not. When we are speaking about religious philosophy, we are considering the teachings and doctrines of every religion, regardless whether it be the Hinduism, Islam or a Christianity, as a critical assessment of existing beliefs in general concerning man and society. This is because, as I think, a religion that disregards the empirical necessities of both man and society is not up to its expectations. I want to go to the main topic before I start, please note the fundamental differences between Religion, philosophy, theology and religious philosophy. Everyone I hope you will help to understand Ambedkar's religion philosophy by elucidating these terms. So this paper will highlight Ambedkar views on Indian Religion.

Introduction

We must return today to the thoughts of Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar on religion. He helps us to fight a resurgent Hindutva, aimed at Dalits, Muslims and dissidents in general. It helps us develop a critique of religion as a phenomenon more generally. Rethinking Ambedkar's religion was not sufficiently studied. Firstly, because the question of religion in India is historically reduced to the 'Hindu-

Muslim question.' And, secondly, as 'progressive' have always failed to respect religion, liberals are insisting that religion is or should be a privately held matter and Marxists demanding that religion is a false awareness among persons who do not recognize their real economic interests. However, in our day-to-day life – politics and people alike – religion continues to play a decisive role, and most of us remain but a helpless witness.

On Indian Religion

Rethinking religion by Ambedkar is an enormous subject. I can only highlight a few important aspects of this here and invite you to discuss them further. First, Ambedkar was intimidated by and understanding the fearless and trenchant criticism of religion. It was unique – because public figures in his time either criticized religion as a divisive or irrational force or felt like Gandhi that every religion is true and respectful. Our modern sensitivity to sarvadharmasamabhava, which is equality between all the religions of the State and Indian laicism, takes part in this very idea of the intrinsic goodness of all the religions. Although Ambedkar insisted that religion was necessary to public life and inevitable, he denied strongly that all religions are good. Ambedkar (also for the sake of alienating sympathizers like the Lahore's JatpatTodakMandal, that then refused to allow him to deliver his Caste Reading) was saying that religion can be criticized and must be criticized when he diagnosed Hinduism as a religion of inequality by sanctifying caste or by converting to Buddhism with his followers. This was not a rejection of religion but a more just and just religion.

Secondly, Ambedkar has been fighting against the identity reduction of religion. Modernity, we know, emerged in Europe by opposing Religion and State to Church in relation to reason. Yet modernity has not abolished or made religion private. As pointed out by German philosopher Carl Schmitt and contemporary philosophers like Hegel, religion continued to play its role in public life, even in the forming of the modern European State (Christianity, Europe, Hindus, India, Confucianism/China, Islam/Near East, and so on). Religion, therefore, re-entered modern discourses, but so to speak in the back door. Religion has now been recognized as the sign of culture/civilization, not as a religious one. This (potentially false) equation of culture and religion was universalized by colonial rule and as religion-cultural communities, it anthropologies and managed people worldwide. Nationalism, as in India, therefore also took the form of religious nationalism predominantly.

Hence critique of religion, as it was perceived as a critique of national society in Ambedkar's day, had become a dually difficult task. So it offended a lot of his time, even Gandhi when Ambedkar criticized Hinduism because it also seemed to be a critique of Indian nationalism. But Ambedkar was not dismissed. Ambedkar openly said that nationalism excluding and persecuting a large number of the people of the nation – namely the untouchables – was hardly worthy of its name. Alongside Rabindranath Tagore, Ambedkar, who dared to criticize

nationalism, was a very rare brave person at the height of the nationalist movement in India – the risky business of any public figure. And so it is important that Ambedkar redefined the majority and minority categories from being religious-cultural to being jurist-constitutional, when he called untouchables as the 'social minority' and asked for the separate electorate in the Depressed Classes, at the same rate as separate electorates in the Muslim classes. That, as we are aware, was crucial in India's post-1947 history of democracy.

But it wasn't everything. Ambedkar argued, too that religion is truly vacuuming its real importance to reduce religion to cultural identity. He then had to rescue religion from self-proclaimed religionists who had made religion a mere set of cultural characteristics and practises and turn the two crucial philosophical and theological dimensions into religion. This was the third major aspect that should be addressed in Ambedkar's rethinking of religion. Ambedkar says in his text "Philosophy of Hinduism" that religion constitutes a human condition because it addresses the basic issues of life, such as birth and death, nutrition and disease. But it doesn't, at any rate, mean that religion is the same in every place and at all times to say that religion is part of human ontologies. In order to understand religion, we must pay attention to the convulsive changes that religion has undergone throughout the world. The history of religion is a history of revolutions, Ambedkar's says, "The mother of philosophy is Revolution," said Ambedkar. Interestingly, the conventional Modernity narrative did not go through Ambedkar. It was not really his defining event that the rise of science and his supposed triumph over religion took place. To Ambedkar, God's invention was the most important revolution in religious history!

This is Ambedkar's account of religion in a fascinating way. Ambedkar argued that early forms of religion have no concept of God or even of morality, through an anthropological study of "primitive" religions. Religion concerned about the propitiating forces of nature, such as sun, rain, wind, pestilence etc. with death, sickness, birth, growth and nourishment, scarcity and so forth. They were a-moral: they were placated, harnessed and even fought sometimes. Society was moral as human interaction norms, but it was a separate domain from that of religion. Religion was, in all its demands, risks and prosperity, simply about life.

It was only in ancient times that the idea of God was integrated into religion, as opposed to primitive ones, and this led to the first revolution in religious history. The concept of divine origin was non-religious. It probably stemmed from devotion towards large and powerful men – heroes and kings – or from pure philosophical speculation about the world's author/architect. A second major revolution followed the invention of God. This was religion's integration with morality. In the past, the relationship between gods and people were seen as kinship – often called gods/moms. The term 'political society' – used here by Ambedkar – was comprised of offspring and worshipers of a common parent-god, and therefore competing politics had competing gods. In other words, rules of lineage and parental relationships apply more than abstract moral rules to human

interaction. Later, however, the god-human relationship turned from kinship to that of faith and belief, when society came to be conceived as composed exclusively of people and gods into transcendental figures outside political society. Instead, God now seemed to be watching over the public and public world – and regulating his own consciousness and behaviour. The loyalty of lineage was replaced by moral orders. It became possible to imagine a policing of people adoring various gods, just as the universal God could be imagined, supervising the affairs of universal humanity regardless of the fact that humanity was divided between different nations or polities. Morality and religiousness coincided. After a religion change, a necessary nationality change was no longer implied.

Note Ambedkar's is a more complex storey about change in the relation between politics and religion rather than the standard narrative of secularisation. It is not as though religion in modern times is irrelevant to politics. In modernity, religious affiliation and political affiliation, instead because of changes to the nature of religion and the nature of the relations between man and God, are no longer straightforward. In complex ways, they come together and sometimes even compete. In public life, but with very different normative principles, religion continues to play a role. To quote Ambedkar,

So in the religious organization of society, the Religious Revolution hasn't led to a shift from society to the individual – it has been a revolution of standards. ... There might be controversy regarding the morally superior of the two standards. But I believe there can be no serious dispute that these are not the standards. There was a mistake (p. 22)

In other words, debates about religion take the form of debates in modernity, in which religion is no longer restricted to mere cultural identity, around the normative framework of public life.

This brings us to Ambedkar's fourth important rethinking aspect of religion, namely, his understanding of the relationship between religion and morality. On the face, Ambedkar was saying something very simple – the morality of a religion which it promotes among its followers must be judged. Here, Hinduism is obviously desirable, because it sanctifies hierarchy, inequality and untouchability. On the other hand, the Buddhism, as it does not discriminate on caste, sex and species grounds, has historically admitted low-caste people and women to the sangha and criticized the sacrifice in the Vedic fire of innocent animals. But Ambedkar clearly does not only moral value values in the name of religion, but it is far more complex here. Ambedkar offers us a pure, barest form of conception of religion, that is, religion without the mediation from gods and prophets and without founded on any concept that an eternal inner being, such as soul and atman, is written in The Buddha and his Dhamma just before his death. The religious subject, not the soul, but the ordinary, deadly, final man in his/her daily life, is for him the subject of religion. He made the Buddha stand out from

Krishna, Christ and Mohammed because the Buddha never claimed to have been a messenger either of gods or of gods. His words were neither revelations of nature nor words of God. The Buddha never claimed any miraculous powers or special insights into foreign matters (such as what happens afterlife, what is the nature of the self and so on). Buddhist writings have been simply meditations on the human condition and nothing but the "dependent" origin, i.e. interrelated, unessential nature) and the "non-violent" (the philosophical concepts of the shunyata, of emptiness), of the duke (personal and social suffering) and of the world. Based on this understanding that the world is ephemeral and always changing, without the guarantee of God's grace, and without an afterlife of soul, and for the same reason, imbued with an infinite potential for transformation, Ambedkar suggested that the new Buddhism should be a world religion and that it would transform lives for the better in this very place. Therefore, his focus on sila– without which knowledge was futile. And therefore, Ambedkar says that religion is moral and moral religion in the Navayana.

As we know, Ambedkar was a trenchant critic of traditional Brahman karma – who said that in his previous life the suffering was the result of sins. The modern Nationalistic Theory of karma – which says that one should take action as a sacrifice, without fear of or desire for the consequences of war, was also sharply criticized. Ambedkar claimed former justified the current situation of untouchables, caused by its previous failings. A review of Bhagavadgita's revolution and counter-revolution in India and revised Buddhist texts suggested that every action would have an unavoidable result regardless of the delay or delay, which had a worldwide effect and affected the lives of the collective. In other words, every actor was ultimately to blame not just for himself, but for the rest of the world in general. It was, therefore, moral to have responsibility. By revising the theory of karma theory, Ambedkar's daily activity was the critical site of moral judgments, where everyday violence and discrimination was perpetrated in caste. The nationalistic elite, therefore, refused to give spectacular revolutionary, extraordinary or sacrificial action its centrality.

But to be moral was not merely to follow the right rules, Ambedkar further argues. Morality had no authority whatsoever. The sources told us precisely what to do and how to do it. It was about principles. The Rules require conformity. Manusmriti was precisely such a complex set of rules, which requested adherence. However, principles do not tell us what to do. What to do? They demand understanding and judgement. Rules are obedient; principles are creative. Regulations establish principles produce accountable liberty. Real religion is a religion which promotes innovative, responsible and free religious subjects, rather than rules. The Annihilation of Caste's quote:

It is possible that the principle is wrong, but the act is responsible and aware. While the rule may be correct, the act is mechanical. A religious show may not be a good act, but it should be at least a responsible act. A remarkable and counter-intuitive statement, if any – that an action is a religious act when it is done

wrongly or correctly! Naturally, it could be asked why it is called religion when Ambedkar's real stake is morally responsible. Here the storey is even more interesting. It is clear that Ambedkar has silently moved as a purely mentalist and rational judgement from the modern Kantian sense of morality (Kant said that morality needed no religious backing). The morality of Ambedkar clearly demanded a certain sanctity, beyond the sanctity of reason. It needs a commitment that is similar to religious faith and inspires a battle, even a sacrifice, if necessary. Not because Ambedkar is conventionally a traditionalist (though he did take tradition quite seriously, both as an object of critique and as a source of new ideas, as proven by his life-long engagement with Sanskrit and Pali texts). This is because the new world needs a religion much more than the old world" as Ambedkar stated in his 1950 essay *Buddha and the future of its Religion*. This means that morality as religion is the need for modernity in particular. Returning to his early distinction between rules and principles, Ambedkar says that the new world needs religion because the law, the rule of law, is an ineffective and unreliable tool for the transformation of society, in which, as moderns, we place our belief too firmly. Again, to quote him:

[Law] is designed to maintain the minority within the social discipline range. The majority is left to support their social lives through postulates and moral sanctions. Therefore religion must remain the guiding principle in all societies, in the sense of moralism. From the greatest constitutionalist and juridical reformer of our times, this unequivocally tells us that Ambedkar here rethought religion regarding the limitations of the modern State and the 'rule of law' of contemporary liberalism. (It was no accident that after having resigned from Nehru's cabinet as minister of law, after he finally converted to Buddhism, he was unable, by law, to totally reform the Hindu joint family at the core of discrimination both between women and men in India.)

This is then Ambedkar's last important aspect of rethinking religion, which I would like to highlight — that Ambedkar is posing religion as a force that functions at national and legal limits. The biggest evidence of that is that Ambedkar writes '*Buddha or Marx*' on 2 December 1956, just four days before he dies! In this essay, he demonstrates the commonalities of Buddhism and Marxism – including the understanding that private property causes all inequalities (hence the Buddhist conception of the bhikshu and the Marxist conception of the proletariat, referring to those who have nothing to lose and therefore those who potentially are the real force of change). However, Marxism goes alongside Buddhism, because it inevitably turns to the State as the primary instrument of social change after having wanted religion as the opium of the people" (as did, in his times, both Soviet socialism and Nehruvian socialism). Dictatorship and violence, as we know. The results. Marxism, therefore, sacrifices freedom to ensure equality. According to Ambedkar, the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' is in contrast to the old Buddhist sangha that institutionalized the democratic governance of those who entered the community of the follower voluntarily. Buddha was, he said, more flexible in the non-violence principle than in the

democratic principle. In contrast to Gandhi and the orthodox Jains, Buddha realized that violence was inevitable and even just in some cases. But Buddha never forgave dictatorship, because he had to emerge from the change in dispositions because he believed that right conduct could never be enforced or coerced. Changing the provision required religion rather than law. A declaration of Ambedkar's argument that where the jurisdiction of the State ends religion comes into being is as obvious as possible:

In their political philosophy, the Communists themselves recognize that their State theory as a permanent dictatorship is a weakness. The State finally deserts protection under the plea. They take shelter. There are two questions they need to reply. When's it going to get gone? When the State withers away, what is the place? ... At the very least, there is no satisfactory answer to the question of what the State would do if it wiped away, but it is more important than the issue of the state waning. Is Anarchy going to succeed him? If that is the case, it is unnecessary to build the Communist State. Religion is the only thing that can sustain it after strength is withdrawn.

Views on the Shudras' Real Position:

"Who was Shudras in his book? How did they become? Ambedkar has the fourth Indo-Aryan Society Varna, (1946) The Vedic literature creator was part of the Aryan race. It was pointed out. They came from abroad and invaded India. These natives were called Dasus in India. And the Aryans were racially different. That's the Dasus and the Aryans were a dark race and white the breed. The Aryans overcame, and Dasas or Dasus have been conquered and enslaved Shudras. - Shudras. The Dasas and Dasus are the fourth largest varna popularly referred to as Shudras. The Shudras were black racially that's like Dasas and Dasus. In the Vedas, there was not any evidence that the Aryan race invaded India and conquered it. (Ambedkar, 65) Dases or Dasus are Indian natives. The Aryans, Dasa and the evidence were irrelevant. Dasus had different elements. The Vedas don't help Aryans differed in colour from Dases and Dasus in the claim that they are different. There was a mistake (Ambedkar, 85)

Conclusion

Let me conclude here by mentioning the unparalleled originality of Ambedkar in the rethink of religion. In contrast to the modern thesis of secularisation, which sees pure politics emerge after religion has been ceased, Ambedkar's proposal is that religion is brought into play when secular politics fail or are exhausted. Therefore, it is an error, as many, to believe that Ambedkar conceptualized religion as a policy subordinate tool. He certainly called his religion the ideals of 'liberty, equality, fraternity' - the French Revolution's clearly political slogan. But unlike everyone else, it must not be forgotten that Fraternity became a possible basis for equality and freedom. The Fraternity was a Community of compassion and understanding, not mere discipline, rule, nor pure political rationality. This

could be guaranteed by good faith and other silatatowards only. (Karunain, Buddhist terms). This means that Ambedkar is not understandable within the framework of liberalism of secularism and religious tolerance in his rethinking of religion. It cannot even be understood in the context of 'civil religion,' as proposed in *The Social Contract* by Jean Jacques Rousseau. For one thing, civil religion is a religion that clearly serves the modern State, shorn by the Church and by theological elaboration. Civil religion, on the contrary, is based on a concept of natural and native equality for humanity, so that the imagination of a primaeval and pre-presented political community can be made possible, as Rousseau said all men are born equal." But since Ambedkar did not remember us every human being, rather than every human being, is not born equal. There is no previous political community which later becomes corrupt and can be recovered from an unprecedented primitive state. It was necessary to build political communities from an old situation of hierarchy and exploitation, painfully and against all odds for the first time ever. Therefore there was the need, because nothing less or less than religion would, for a new and unprecedented religion.

References

1. BR Ambedkar, "The Philosophy of Religion", quoted in *Writings and Speeches*, Vol. 3, 1987, p. 4.
2. D. Keer, *Dr. Ambedkar—Life and Mission*, op. cit., 455, Vol. 3,
3. Pringle Pattison, *The Philosophy of Religion*, op. Cit.
4. *A Dictionary of Philosophy*, 1967,
5. BR Ambedkar, *Writings And Speeches*, Vol. 3.
6. G.T. Bettany, *Encyclopedia of World Religions*,
7. BR Ambedkar, *The Buddha and his Dhamma*, Bombay, Siddharth Publication 1957,
8. BR Ambedkar, *Philosophy of Hinduism*, 1978, pt. I,
9. Jump up to a b Pritchett, Frances. "In the 1900s" (PHP). Archived from the original on 6 January 2012.
10. Ambedkar, B. R. "Waiting for a Visa". Frances Pritchett, translator. Columbia.edu. Archived from the original on 24 June 2010. Retrieved 17 July 2010.