



Research Article

Dr.B.R.AMBEDKAR VIEWS ON RELIGION: A PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 11th May, 2018

Received in revised form 7th

June, 2018 Accepted 5th July, 2018

Published online 28th August, 2018

Key words:

DR BR Ambedkar, Religion,
Philosophy, Buddhist

ABSTRACT

Objective of study: The objective of the present research work was to study the views of Dr B R Ambedkar on religion and philosophy. **Methodology:** The information was collected through literatures and speeches recorded. **Results:** Ambedkar interpreted the basic tenets of religions from the dalit viewpoint of the prevailing socio-cultural situation in India. He saw religion not as a means to spiritual salvation of individual souls, but as a 'social doctrine' for establishing the righteous relations between man and man. His philosophy of religion does not mean either theology or religion. The Conversion Event of 1956 spearheaded by Babasaheb Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, the turn of events and debates that preceded it as well as the various ways in which scholars have looked at the Neo-Buddhist movement in India, can be seen as constituting a 'critical event' not only in the biography of the Indian Nation but also in the biographies of those who identify themselves as Buddhists in India today. **Conclusion:** The present study is an exploration of the ideas of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar views on religion.

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INTRODUCTION

Theology and religion may be linked together; but they are not philosophies. When we talk of philosophy of religion, it is taken as a critical estimate of the existing religions in general, and in particular to evaluate the teachings and doctrines of each religion, whether it be Hinduism, Islam or Christianity, in relation to man and society, because, as I think, a religion, ignoring the empirical needs of either man or of society, does not come upto the expectations of an intellectual like Ambedkar. Before I venture to come to the main subject, I would like to bring to your notice the fundamental differences between philosophy, religion, theology and philosophy of religion. The elucidation of these terms, I hope, would help you to understand Ambedkar's philosophy of religion. You may believe it or not, the text of this article, I wonder, would make you plunge in some sort of amazement to the extent to which you would not have thought of it. Let me now proceed to analyses.

Religion

Religion is described as "man's faith in a power beyond himself", or a "belief in an Everlasting God". The basic and decisive nature feature of religion believes in the Supernatural. Professor Bettany has defined "Religion broadly as man's attitude towards the unseen and whatever consequences he believes or attitude produced on his conduct or on his relations

to fellow men" Ambedkar took religion to mean "The propounding of an ideal scheme of divine governance the aim and objective of which is to make the social order in which man live a moral order".

It is evident that although a certain and universal definition of Religion is impossible, it may be said, man's faith in some sort of 'divine power' omnipresent and omniscient, is the basis of Religion and this divine power instills in man is a feeling of devotion towards the supreme authority. If you take faith in the proper sense of trust or spiritual conviction, religion faith or intuition. Philosophy is based on any field of knowledge, whereas religion is based on faith and involves devotion towards the supernatural, the divine power (NK Singh, 2003)

Philosophy of religion

It may be asserted that philosophy of religion is neither philosophy nor is it religion or theology. The philosophy of religion is something different from them. It involves the language which is related to religious discussion, religious thinking, which may also be anti-religion. Philosophy of religion is not a religious experience, nor is it connected with any faith, worship and ritualism. It is an examination of what religion or theology stands for like the belief in the existence of God, life beyond the empirical world, rituals and ceremonies emerged in the long process of social development, divine authority over moral standards, infallibility of sacred book, immortality of soul and its transmigration. Philosophy of religion is not an appendage to any religion. It is an evaluation of religious life of a particular community in view of the existing conditions of man and

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society. Philosophy of religion, in fact, involves a 'critical reason' with regard to the presuppositions, ideals and practices, rituals and behaviour-patterns of the existing religions. While evaluating them, it sees human interest at large. The main subject of philosophy of religion is an examination of the relevance of a particular religions' social and moral norms.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study used only secondary sources of data. Secondary sources like Related Books, Journals, Ambedkar's Essay Notes and Internet sources. Researchers used analytical design of the study.

Objectives of the study

1. To study the Ambedkar views of religion.
2. To study the Ambedkar's philosophy on religion an Indian Society Context.

RESULTS

Ambedkar's views on philosophy of religion

Philosophy of religion is not a religious experience, nor is connected with any faith, worship and ritualism it has no link with dogmatism, authoritarianism, scholasticism or with any kind of revelation and divine power. It is not embedded in reverence towards the great religion of the world like Hinduism, Islam Christianity, Jainism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Judaism. It has its own method to look at this religion which may be infallible to most of the protagonist of religious faith. The main object of the philosophy of religion is to examine the relevance of particular religion social and moral norms, and thus, to save mankind from dogmatic beliefs and harmful practices. Dr. Ambedkar took the word philosophy "in its two folded sense that is "It means teachings as he did when people spoke of the philosophy of Socrates or the philosophy of Plato", and in other sense" it is meant critical reason used in passing judgements upon things and events" and he also says that study of philosophy of religion involves the determination of three dimensions, first is religion to mean theology, both of which deal the highest metaphysical abstractions and divine reservation (BR Ambedkar, 1987). It is the philosophy of religion is to know the ideal scheme for which religion stands and justifies it is to adopt the criteria for judging the value of the ideal scheme for which religion stands and justifies it. To adopt the criteria for judging the value of the ideal scheme of divine governance for which a given religion stands. Philosophy of religion is to study the Revolutions which religion has undergone.

According to Ambedkar, the philosophy of religion involves the determination of three dimensions, the first being religion to mean theology, both of which deal with the highest metaphysical abstractions and divine revelations. The second dimension of the philosophy of religion is to know the ideal scheme for which a religion stands and justifies it. The third dimension of the philosophy of religion is to adopt the criterion for judging the value of the ideal scheme of divine governance. From time to time, a religion must be put on its trial. "By what criterion shall it be judged?" (BR Ambedkar 1967).

The criterion, for him, was some sort of revolution which took place in the field of science, philosophy of religion. In fact, a

revolution could change the authority and contents of a relation. The revolutions of scientific nature during the Middle Ages diminished the divinity of religion and the authority of church. There was a time when religion had covered almost the entire field of knowledge such as Biology, Psychology, Geology and Medicine. Religion claimed infallibility over whatever it taught. But bit by bit, the vast empire of religion was destroyed because of religious revolution that had taken place in the history of some religions. For examples, the Copernicus Revolution freed Astronomy from the domination of religions and the Darwinian Revolution freed Biology and Geology from the trammels of religion.

Religion necessary in Hindu society

The role of religion has pervaded all aspects of man's life it is essential for man. To Dr Ambedkar religion was a necessity in life and he did not agree with those especially the Marxist thinkers who rejected it. Then there arises a question of does Dr Ambedkar subscribe to the view that religion is reactionary and there is no necessity of it in human life? Not at all as he said some people think that religion is not essential to society. I do not hold this view. I considered the foundation of religion to be essential to the life and practice of society.

Dr Ambedkar did not agree with Karl Marx and other Marxist thinkers that religion had no importance in human life. He observed man cannot live by bread alone. He has a mind which needs food for thought. Religion instills hope in man and drive him to activity. It is a different matter that he criticized and rejected Hinduism as a religion but religion had a role to play in human life which can hardly be over looked by mankind. Dr Ambedkar was well convinced that religion not only develop a good character, but also molded the structural aspects of human society. Why did Dr Ambedkar consider religion to be a necessary part of human life? Because religion is primarily a valuing attitude, universalizing the will and the emotions, rather than the ideas of man. Ambedkar did not agree with those who believe that religion arose in magic. Ambedkar emphasized on the necessity of religion has a social base, in the absence of social life there is no need of any religion religion, and religion has to play social life. A religion is social in the sense that is primarily concerned with society, and not with the individual (Meena B 2009).

Ambedkar's interpretation of hindu philosophy of religion

In Ambedkar's interpretation, Hindu philosophy served neither social utility nor justice for the individual. But he began his critique of Hinduism saying that the Hindu was not prepared to face inquiry. 'He either argues that religion is no importance or he takes shelter behind the view fostered by the study of comparative religion that all religions are good.' Ambedkar said, both these views were mistaken and untenable. Firstly, religion was a social force. Those who denied the importance of religion failed to realise how great was the potency and sanction that lay behind a religious ideal, as compared with a purely secular ideal. A religious ideal had a hold on mankind which transcended considerations of earthly gain. This could not be said of a purely secular ideal. Therefore, to ignore religion was to ignore a live wire. Secondly, to argue that all religions were good was, according to Ambedkar, a false notion. Everything depended upon what social ideal a given religion held out as a divine scheme of governance.

As far as Hinduism is concerned his whole discussion is a diatribe against its denial of the concepts of individual dignity and justice. Quoting extensively from the Manusmriti, Ambedkar showed that social and religious inequality were deep-rooted in Hinduism. Manu did not stop at a non-recognition of individual human worth, he advocated a debasement of it. This, Ambedkar said, was clear from Manu's explanation of the origin of various castes and his condemnation of even the innocent practice of a low-caste child being given high-sounding names. Hinduism, he said, did not recognize human liberty, since there could be no liberty without social equality, economic security or access to knowledge, all of which Hinduism was opposed to. Hinduism did not even recognize fraternity though it said that the divine spirit dwelt in all human beings because fraternity could only be born of fellow-feeling and Hinduism with its unending process of splitting social life into smaller and smaller community-based fragments and its emphasis on a secular as well as religious hierarchy, discouraged the emergence of fellow-feeling.

Caste and Hindu religion

Caste is an essential feature of Hindu religion. According to Ambedkar, the Hindu religion, as contained in the Vedas and the Smritis, is nothing but a mass of sacrificial, social, political and sanitary rules and regulations, all mixed up. What is called religion by Hindus is nothing but a multitude of commands and prohibitions. Religion in the sense of spiritual principles, truly universal, applicable to all races, to all countries, to all times, is not to be found in them; and if it is, it does not form the governing part of a Hindu's life. What the Hindus call religion is really Law, or at best legalized class-ethics. The first evil of such a code of ordinances, misrepresented to the people as religion, is that it tends to deprive moral life of freedom and spontaneity, and to reduce it to a more or less anxious and servile conformity to externally imposed rules. Under it, there is no loyalty to ideals; there is only conformity to commands. And the most objectionable part of such a scheme is that this code has been invested with the character of finality and fixity (Pringle P, 1974).

CONCLUSION

He concluded his analysis saying that on the criterion of 'justice' Hinduism was found wanting, in so far as it was inimical to equality, antagonistic to liberty and opposed to fraternity. Thus, if Hinduism were to lay a claim to 'justice', it could only be in the purely legal not moral sense. For, in the legal sense, whatever was in conformity with law was just. In the moral sense, justice involved recognition of human equality.

Acknowledgements

All the authors are thankful to the Principal and Management, Bangalore University, Bangalore for their support to conduct research work.

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How to cite this article:

Maheshwarappa M and Basavaraju TB (2018) 'Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Views on Religion: A Philosophical Analysis', *International Journal of Current Advanced Research*, 07(8), pp. 15060-15062.
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.24327/ijcar.2018.15062.2749>
