

The Nature of Hinduism, Buddhism and Christism on Caste System: In View of Ambedkar's Philosophy – A Critical Elucidation

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ABSTRACT

The History of India is an open page of many heroic personalities who were thrown up during the British period to lead the destiny of India towards emancipation. Among these stalwarts, Babasaheb Ambedkar is very important icon. The foremost perspective on focus of this paper is on Ambedkar's ideology on the "nature of the religion" especially Hinduism, Buddhism and Christism on the impact of the lives of the Dalits in the Indian society. He was not only the architect of Indian constitution but also the Messaiah (Christ) for the up liftment of Dalits in India. He also has spoken and written against the Hindu social order, which is based on the nature of the religion on equality, superiority and degradation of many. He vehemently attacked the theory of birth, death and reincarnation, which according to popular Hindu belief is tied up with the development of caste system.

For my global Seminar presentation, I have Chosen the title called "The Nature of Hinduism, Buddhism and Christism – in view of Ambedkar's Philosophy- A critical elucidation," which makes an exploration of Ambedkar's ideology on the system of religion in India that marks a notable divergence of the nature of religious faith and policies on the attitude of inequality of untouchable Dalith. The system of the faith according three big religions Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity which share equality, fraternity and liberty for all the people on this earth .However, there is enormous impact on the religious policies.

Keywords: history, Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, equality, fraternity, liberty, discrimination

INTRODUCTION

The Theory is that the caste in which the person is born is a sign of reward or punishment due to from One's actions in previous births and that is a pattern of divine justice. He believed that there was no link among three religions like *Hinduism, Buddhism and Christism I mean Christianity*. Ambedkar paid attention in respect that all human beings are equal in the sight of *God almighty*, as no one is high or low. So that's why, he thought about other Minorities like *Muslims and Christians* etc. He was determined to start struggle against the Hinduism for the privilege of the depressed classes against untouchability. He painfully supported Hinduism though there were many in equalities, he observed. He expressed his views that his parting with Hindu religion as it was a painful for him. He further observed that *liberty, fraternity and equality* are the prime principals of an ideal social system.

According to *B.R. Ambedkar's ideology "untouchability"* came about 400 AD. Hindus themselves –as responsible for pushing people into "*untouchable*". Biggest hurdle in India was its *Hinduism*. In particular, the Brahmins who were defenders of culture and religion. They were only forced *Dalits* to embrace *Islam* and *Christianity*. But some Dalits decided that they would not accept Islam at any cost, even if they die, but Dalits preferred to convert into Christianity rather than Islam, because of Hinduism's hatred attitude. Dalits, to destroy Brahmins *dharmabhiman (religious pride)* by having Dalits *swabhiman (self respect)* and *rashtraabhiman (pride in nationality)*, Dalits themselves converted into Christianity by the miss behaviour of Hindus in India. This is how *scheduled castes* were converted into *Christianity*. In view of *Ambedkar's philosophical ideas, the nature of religious system* and attitude is different. He said that the philosophical ideas of *Hinduism* actually are from the branch of the *Vedic tradition*. But according to the philosophical ideas of *Buddhism and chrisetism (Christianity)* have mainly depended upon the importance of *Dharma, ahimsa, love and compassion* and also *forgiveness*. Both *Buddhism and christiesm* believe that life is full of sufferings. *Christianity preaches that "love and compassion on sinner who confesses which lead to eternal life (heaven)"*, but

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while *Buddhism* preaches that the “suffering can only be ended through right actions throughout the life “. But *Hinduism* is different that “*wrong should be punished and good should be rewarded*”.

According to the *critical elucidation* of *Dr.Baba Saheb Ambedkar* who is an embodiment of *Messaiah* for the Dalits, “*The Nature of Hinduism, Buddhism and christism*” which depended upon the aspects of *dharma and ahimsa of Buddhism*, “*good for reward bad for punishment of Hinduism and “Love and forgiveness” of christism*, according to his analytical views are appreciable in view of Ambedkar’s aspect. Dr. Ambedkar criticises Hinduism why because for its wrong attitude of categorisation of *casteism* up to the present hierarchical order of the society by the name of caste. He also understood that caste and its way of division which deep rooted in Hinduism as the evil of the society. But he analyses that caste and its division are the main motto of the basis of the Hindu religion.

According to philosophical analysis reveals that each shift of *Hindu religion* is based on the *caste division* for its *selfish motto*. One of the major emphases of his mission is that Ambedkar’s attempt to justify *casteism* by categorisation of the work with profession by religious beliefs is a first step to make the realm or morality as a dictatorship. But as per as the external considerations are no longer above moral aspects for the nature of all the three major religions.

Amedkar makes such a morality on the basis of religion, which he construes as the *Dharma* which is qualified as the realm of morality. But it is on behalf of *Christianity* he had different opinion on its unpractical attitude on its “*doctrine of forgiveness*”. According to *Indian Hindu philosophical ideals*, *morality* is an interesting aspect on behalf of *Vedas*. The aspect of *Dharma and Karma* had involved into the metaphysical rules that held sway over the lives of individual selves on this earth. But it’s impossible to trace out all the nuances of meaning of *Dharma* which go through before it settled down to trace the meaning for *virtue* which leads to good behaviour and to be raised to the status of the first ambitions of human beings. These passions are four in number; they are *Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha*.

As per as the notion of *Hinduism* is concerned that *Vedas* are *hymns*, but the so called gods whom we refer as not human beings but they are embodiment of truth and reality. According to *Vedic philosophy*, “the basic principal of the universe, which the ultimate reality on which the cosmos exists. So that’s why, truth and right are interlinked which these to penetrate through illusion and understand that the ultimate reality of human existence is to understand what is right and what is wrong”. To be enlightened these things one is to know what is right and wrong, as for these are not two separate things but ultimately these two are the same. “*The purusasukta* has the first reference through which the division of *Hindu society* by caste”. As per the cycle of *rebirth* is espoused in the various Indian traditions which represents a rejection of the *Brahmanical motto*. And as per *Hindu philosophy* anybody can be achieved the residence in heaven through the acts of rituals and good deeds which lead the soul must return to the natural world, except *Dalits* and down trodden. This is the meaning according to the *Upanishads*.

THE ETHICAL PHILOSOPHY OF CASTE SYSTEM

The Indian caste system, with its intricate laws about what members of each caste may not do, is accepted by the *Upanishads* as part of the proper order of the *Indian society*. It is also the part of the quest for the spiritual perfection which in return is elevated to the highest of the four ambitions of human life. This *ethical philosophy of casteism* from the early period gradually became a big stain which provoked Ambedkar from the beginning.

The *moral doctrines of Hinduism* are based upon the teachings of the *Upanishads* and of certain scriptures which derived from the *Vedas*. “*Hindu ethics* are mainly subjective or personal. Its purpose is to eliminate such mental impurities as greed and egoism, for the ultimate attainment of the highest good”⁸. The *Vedas* defined an elaborate detained way of life based on the division of the society into four *varnas, priests, warriors, tradesmen and servants* and for the three highest orders, and four stages of life, (*ashramas*). Apart from caste, a person’s duties in the *Hindu tradition* are determined by the status of caste to which he belongs. The life according to *Hinduism* as a journey to the shrine of truth.

According to the social ethics of Hinduism is the conception of *Dharma*. A person’s *Dharma* is not imposed by himself but of society. But it is something which he is born because of his actions in

previous lives. *Dharma* determines according to a man’s deeds of proper attitude towards the outer world. *Hinduism* also emphasises the relative nature of *Dharma*, and does not recognize absolute good or evil, according to his/her deeds.

In his article “*Philosophy of Hinduism*” in which Ambedkar criticised of *vedic* and *Hinduism’s* philosophical and *sociological aspects* that appeared good. He also spoke about the *philosophy of religion*. It also conveys both his general criticism of *Hinduism and philosophy and sociology of religion*. His analysis in this begins with his working definition of religion, “I take religion to the near propounding of an ideal scheme of divine governance the aim and object of this is to make the social order in which men live a moral life”. From this definition, it is very clear that how deep and bitter experience he had about religion’s impact upon the lives of the Dalits. So it has to be illuminated through this comparison of other thinkers and philosophers of religion. Moreover, he considers it as ideal scheme of divine governance. The important points which we have to perceive in this article are that one thing he reforms the nature of religion in an ideal and divine manner, on the other hand, he insists that it is meant for maintaining certain social orders. At this juncture, one can understand that how Ambedkar’s interventions are full of oppressed attitude towards *Dalits* which creates so many problems of the contemporary society.

According to Ambedkar caste system is an abominable social menace which the *vedic* tradition onwards which brought up for its selfish motto. It can be destroyed the development of the society’s progress. He also argues the same that the social situation of the community which practices badly by the religion has also clear impact on the construal of moral principles. He also says that the distinction of necessary and sufficient conditions of a normative account is useful to understand the role of social elements. According to him, *Hinduism* can influence of the social situation especially the caste – hierarchy. The whole idea of Ambedkar worked out his criticism is on only caste system which is a big social menace right from the *vedic tradition* onwards.

Ambedkar says for so many times that the *Hindu ethics* largely talks about the significance of *social hierarchy*. “*The notion of duty according to caste is an important bad idea among all the religious and non-religious ethics*”. According to the notion of *Karma theory*, Ambedkar explained that *karma theory* says that we will reap the fruits of our own deeds of our future. Moreover, our destiny depends upon our deeds. Basing on this, Ambedkar argues that one’s own deeds never define *Varna (caste)* to which he/she belongs. Birth in a particular caste does not decide the fate of the destiny of a person the superstition which deeply rooted in *Hinduism*. *Karma theory* also says a particular caste is only responsible for the deeds of the previous life.

Ambedkar mainly emphasised of *Hindu ethics* and *karma theory* is that it is not that much of basic facts of life, because which is created man’s selfish motto. According to *Hindu ethics*, which focuses on the monolithic nature, is a kind of extension of *Hindu karma theory*. Why Ambedkar criticises for the way of *Hindu ethics* for the implementation of caste system only in India. First, it is *Hinduism* which tries to define the division among the humans on caste line which is absolutely human creation only. It also says that it is a divine creation, but Ambedkar gives sociological evidence by reading the famous *hymn Rig Veda X.90* in which he explains its content as well as form.

THE CONVERSION OF AMBEDKAR INTO BUDDHISM

Here we have to learn one important thing that why Ambedkar converted into *Buddhism* are so many reasons that it emphasises that the norms and rules of *Buddhism’s* are *non-violence, Dharmam, saranam and gachami* which show *mercy and love* even normal and *downtrodden* people in the society. That’s what he examined in the world *Buddhist Conference held in Kathmandu in November 1956* where he converted into *Buddhism*. He likes the *philosophy of Buddhism*. So that’s why he accepted *Buddhism*. According to *Buddhism*, man must have the freedom of thought whatever the caste it is and whatever the religion it doesn’t matter. Ambedkar also writes that “*Buddhism* is totally opposed the Brahmins on the issue of caste system. It also denied that the *Vedas* were sacred. The *Buddhism* also denied that whatever *Vedas* said was final. So that’s why Ambedkar says that *Vedas* were infallible. According to *Tvijja Sutta, Lord Buddha* declared that the *Vedas* were like *waterless desert, a pathless jungle and in fact Vedas are unreliable*. No man with intellectual and moral thirst can go to the *Vedas* and hope to satisfy thirst”. Ambedkar makes it clear that *Buddhism* is the only way for the humanity for receiving peace of mind. So that’s why he rejected *Hinduism* which creates division among the people. Ambedkar says that the practice of sacrifice in *Vedic tradition and in Old*

Testament Christian tradition (B.C.) is un ethical and in human. In most of the cases, deities in this tradition were so cruel that they were not satisfied with the sacrifice of animals, they needed human blood. To get human blood, no *Brahmin, Kshatriya or Vaishya* was ready to sacrifice himself, so only weaker sections of the then society like the *Shudras* who became the target victim. The poor *Shudras* were slaughtered and sprinkled the blood over the fire to please the deity and the body of the victims were thrown away for vultures or given back to the families.

Ambedkar abhorred this type of in human practices of sacrifice which according *Hinduism* and old *Christianity*. So that’s why he attracted a lot towards *Buddhism* where these types of in human activities were not there in *Buddhism*. As per as this fact is concerned that *Buddhism* concluded that the Brahmanical sacrifice was a false sacrifice. The so called Brahmins told that the victim could get salvation or his/her soul will get liberation by killing somebody. This is all nothing but hypocrisy of *Hinduism*. Therefore, there were 62 religious cults at that time of *Lord Buddha*, who opposed that practice of sacrifice of the system of the *Hinduism*. According to the theory of *Dharma of Buddhism*, Ambedkar says that the division of society was obnoxious to him. He said that the liberty is the birth right of all human including *Dalits*. Actually every human being’s life is so precious even including *Dalits*. He told that *Lord Buddha* advocated an open and free society. He also said that man must be recognized by his virtues and actions but not by birth. Moreover, when there is such a partiality of grading that one is high and other is low, but any how it might be lead to conflict and tension in the society. So that’s why Ambedkar converted into *Buddhism* easily on that good atmosphere.

Ambedkar says that “there is no morality regarding the caste system which is based on *Manusmriti*, in which first time *caste system* was described.” But *Buddhism* says that “*all human beings are equal and the freedom is also equal for all*. They may be weak economically and strong intellectually all are equal, this is a universal fact according to *Buddhism*.” Ambedkar enlightened that “*karuna-love* for human beings is only available in *Buddhism*”.²⁹ The following principles and features must have been very much attracted by Ambedkar in *Buddhism*. First *Buddhists* emphasises on reason as against faith or superstition. Second, the *Buddhists* reject the dogmatic beliefs such as god and soul, which are according to *Hinduism* and *christeism*. Third, the most important good feature is that *Buddhists* strongly opposite to the caste system. Lastly, *Buddhists* strongly emphasized that *Dharmam* is only *saranam*. In view, of Ambedkar that the *Buddhism* is the only religion which deeply rooted in morality. However, there are certain kinds of social and political reasons for his conversion into *Buddhism*. Ambedkar also considers *Buddhism* as a democratic system because *Lord Buddha* is great democrat. Moreover, it’s the only *Buddhism* which raised its voice as the social reformer against all evils which deep rooted in the *Hinduism*.

Whereas, as per as *Christian belief* is concerned that *JESUS CHRIST* when He came to this world, He says that “*the son of man came to this world for saving the people who are perishing from their sins, verse Luke-19:1*”. As soon as He came to this world, He did many wonders and miracles among the people and helped the poor and needy people a lot.”(John 1:1-3) But the *Christeism*, as the Bible teaches, that there is “*Equality, Love and Fraternity since the days of St.Paul in his letter to Galations chapter 3:26-28* which says that “*there is no discrimination in Christ between Jews, Greeks, man or woman and low or high*” which means “*you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus*, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothe yourselves with Christ. *There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*”

But contrary up to this teaching, Ambedkar found that *Dalits* who embraced *Christianity* are also discriminated. He also found that the Dalts who accepted *Jesus Christ* with the hope that they would regain their lost humanity and they would be considered as *God’s children*. But in reality, it is only a dream, as per as Ambedkar’s opinion is concerned. Ambedkar so many times talks about the latent exploitation and discrimination existing in *Christianity* towards *Dalits converts*. Actually the reason behind the conversion of *Dalits* into *Christianity* is the poverty and inequality faced by *Dalits* that made them to embrace the *Christianity*. Ambedkar also found that it is because of the poverty *Dalits* suffered and discriminated a lot shown by the other *high caste Hindus*, who converted into *Christianity*. He also senses that the *Dalits* are preached about the equality in *Christ*, but they felt as if they would certainly become on par with other people at least in *Christianity*. However, a great number of people converted into *Christianity* only to get food, shelter, and equality. Instead of getting equality, so many *Dalits* in those days were ill treated by high caste converted *Christians*. In the course of time, Ambedkar realized the conspiracy behind the upper caste *Christian’s* behaviour which

enabled them to exploit Dalits in a like manner. Ambedkar also understood that the Dalits are not included in flock of sheep to pasture but set apart and became caste away lost sheep. But according to Ambedkar the other caste people who entered into Christianity carried on the existing discrimination started towards Dalits. Even though their religion is changed but they did not change discriminated attitude and ill treatment towards Dalits. But the upper caste people are separated by caste even in Christianity in view of Ambedkar’s observation which caused him for converted into Buddhism where there is no such type of people even though there are so many upper caste and richest people. However, Ambedkar also observed that upper caste people who converted into Christianity have maintained the same distance and discrimination with the converted Dalits as it before had happened. The so called Dalits who are there in the faith are not being allowed to mingle with the upper caste *Christian community*. For example in Goa, there are so many upper castes catholic Brahmins who don’t want marry Christians belonging to the lower castes. When Ambedkar senses this discriminated attitude towards Dalits in Christianity he doubts whether God too has some hidden agenda for taking Dalits into His fold by the name of conversion.

However, according to *the Bible*, christeism doesn’t preach the *caste system* “it says *love your neighbour as you love thyself*” is the *fundamental principle of Lord Jesus Christ*. So here Ambedkar prays to *God almighty* that why He could not tell the people that creation which remains as the same without the smell of *caste system*. Moreover, Ambedkar also came to know that the *upper caste Christians* have had the notion of feeling that *Jesus Christ belongs to upper caste in the Bible*. So that’s why Ambedkar prays to God with a plea to Christ to be born as a *Chamaar or Mehaar or Mala or Madiga*. So that people do not interfere with the *Dalit Christ*. However, according to Ambedkar’s desire is that if *Lord Jesus Christ* is born in *untouchable community* it is very good for *untouchable* without disparity and partiality in India. His agony shows clearly that a *Dalit Christian* is not in a privileged condition for enjoying the *economic, political, cultural and social equality* but a *Dalit Christian* has been facing lot of additional humiliations even in the contemporary Indian society.

This is in terms of *oppression, humiliation and discrimination*, which a *Dalit Christian* faces among his fellow *Hindu Dalits* as well as in the *church*, at work places and in the society etc. Moreover, a *Hindu Dalit* is much better than a *Christian Dalit* because of their harassment in the church. Thus, Ambedkar can be ranked with the rare class of critics with a message of *social in justice, inequality and exploitation*, which he as a humanist who rebelled against the atrocities on Dalts especially. He also expressed his deep-rooted anguish and pain as he ablaze on the dehumanizing on caste system of *Hinduism* and disparity of *upper caste Christians* on behalf of the *welfare of the Dalit community*.

CONCLUSION

The concept of all the religious icons are the same towards the common people but it is the only problem with the mediators of the religious men like *Priests or Brahmins and Pastors or Bishops*. It is for their selfish motto they created so many problems. However, the problem lies with these people who are being called as mediators between *God and the people* in the society, and they are only who created a chaos in the society. For instance, *Lord Buddha* who sacrificed the *royal palace* and dwindled himself carnally without focusing on power and wealth when he saw a common poor man in the society. As well as *Lord Jesus Christ* also who always leads a life of simplicity and who associates Himself with the *poor and needy and also oppressed*. He always loves and cares for the perishing souls specially sinners, my focus is on the part of christeism which points out how upper caste distorts and damage the real image and preaching of *Christ* because of *His love, meekness and humble attitude who washed even His disciples feet by humble Himself who shows the for the eternal life*, as He says “*I AM THE WAY, LIFE AND TRUTH.*” His very purpose of coming into this world is for the *salvation* of the whole mankind, irrespective of *class, creed, colour, nation and caste*. The *church* distorted the teachings of *Christ* for their own benefit. However, actually *Christianity* is not a religion but it is a way of life which leads to eternal place by faith. But it reduced to merely a religion with its own rites and rituals. Moreover, there should be a virtuous conduct for entering into *eternal place*. “*The doctrine of love your neighbour as you love thyself*” is a *central ethical thought for Christeism*.” The most important fundamental *ethical* doctrine of Christeism is do not sin by keep up good conduct while several religions not practicing in reality. For example, according to *Genesis verses 39: 7-12* that say “*Now it came to pass after these things that Joseph’s master’s wife caste longing eyes on him, and she said, “Life with me.” But he (Joseph) refused and said to his master’s wife that “how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” that she caught him by his*

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garment, saying, “Lie with me.” But he left (flee away) his garment in her hand, and fled and ran outside”, which shows the abhorred attitude of maintaining holy life as a true Christian in the Christeism point of view.

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