

Sikh Theology and Dalit Identity in Punjab

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1. Dr B.R. Ambedkar and Sikh religion

Punjab is an important part of India, which is known as the land of saints, patriots and brave human beings. Peoples of Punjab are very religious. They worship Hinduism, Sikhism, Islamism etc among these religions there are different classes of people lived here. The lower class of any religion is treated as Untouchables. They are ill-treated by the other classes of society. Sikh theology believes in the equality of human beings. It believes that all human beings are the children of same father, God. Sikh theology does not believe in untouchability. In society religion plays an important role to guide mankind. Society and religion both are necessary for each other. Without society there can be no religion and without religion we cannot imagine society. In society there is different kind of people which belonged different classes. All classes of society upper, middle and lower jointly make a society. Lower class of society is called depressed class. Sikh theology is against the un-touch ability of society. It raised a high voice against untouchability. Once a time when Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was eager to embrace Sikhism but later he gave up this idea.

Dr.B.R.Ambedkar and Sikh Theology

Log kahte hai badalta hai zamana aksar

Mard woh hai jo aksar zamane ko badal dete hai.

One of the greatest lawyers, jurists, educationalists, consistence social revolutionary of modern India Dr Bhim Rao Ambedkar was such a great man who has played the part of destiny in the liberation of suppressed humanity in India. He was the youngest child of his parents Ramji Sankhpal and Bhimabai. He was born at Mahau in central India on April 14, 1891AD. He was a passionate crusader against the inhuman evil of untouchability. What the stigma of untouchability meant Ambedkar realised it during his school times. Once in a journey Ambedkar and his brothers had faced many difficulties. As the cartman came to know that they are untouchable he refused them to take with him. With difficulties they soothed the cartman's anger by paying double fare. They travelled with thirst but nowhere could they get water to drink. The cartman followed the cart on foot. This incident was the first rude and shattering shock to the budding mind of Ambedkar. On that day he knew that he belonged to a family that was untouchable.

This was not an end. After few days this impression became confirmed when mad with thirst Ambedkar was drinking water stealthily at a public water course. He was discovered and beaten badly. Yet another shock awaited the growing and understanding mind of Ambedkar. It was scene when Ambedkar came to know that his hair defiled the purity of the razor of the barber who regarded even the buffalo-shaving as a better and holier affair than tonsuring a human being who was his co- religionist and his countryman. All

such insulting refusal and ill treatment must have engendered in him a burning hatred for Hinduism. In boyhood Ambedkar experienced at the hands of his co-religionist the galling humiliation and the inhuman treatment under which his whole community had been labouring for untold ages.

For the untouchables there was all around a scorching desert. Ambedkar and his brother usually mad to squat in a corner of the class. At that time every untouchables bear such kind of these insults. They were not allowed to take up Sanskrit as second language. It was the key to the study of the Vedas which were neither to be heard nor to be read by the Shudras and the Ati Shudras-untouchables. Hindu leaders defined a Hindu as one who had faith in the Vedas, but the pity of it was that 70% of Hindus were forbidden to study much less to listen to the Vedas. That was another pill of poison that was rammed down the unwilling throat of two Hindu boys by the defenders of Hinduism.

With the passage of time the ill-treatment with untouchables encouraged Ambedkar to take steps for the improvement of their conditions. He wanted to abolish inequality of society. Ambedkar attacked the government on the senseless diction of martial and non-martial races and appealed to the British Government to keep faith in Mahars and not to disband them from the Army after world war 2nd was over. The social and religious struggle of the untouchables took a different turn after 1927. In 1929 Ambedkar at Jalgaon advised the untouchables to embrace any other religion that would regard them as human being, give them an opportunity to rise, act, eat and live like human beings.

At Yeola conference Ambedkar recount the plight of the depressed classes in all spheres and also exhorted untouchables to sever their connection with Hinduism. He referred that unfortunately he was born a Hindu untouchable but solemnly assure that *he will not die a Hindu*. After this address all parties and social institutions tried their best to impress Ambedkar. Muslim, Christian and Sikh leaders telegraphed Ambedkar that they were ready to welcome and honour untouchables. Sikhism impressed Ambedkar because the doors of Sikhism and Sikh Gurudwara's remain open for all. In 1936 Dr. Ambedkar addressed Sikh mission's conference and expressed his approval of the principles of equality among the Sikhs. Dr. Ambedkar was very much impressed by Sikhism but with the passage of time he had given up the idea to embrace Sikhism and turned to Buddhism.

The relation between Ambedkar and Akali leaders becomes controversial. Ambedkar was a famous leader of depressed classes. If he and his six crore untouchable followers converted to Sikhism Ambedkar's position would become more powerful than Akali leaders. S. Baldev Singh and

Master Tara Singh were not ready to accept it so they tried their best that Ambedkar remain far from Sikhism. They directly or indirectly insulted Ambedkar. When Ambedkar came to know that there is also untouchability among Sikhism then he gave up the idea to embrace Sikhism. At last in Dec 1954 he made up his mind to embrace Buddhism. On October 14th, 1956 his conversion process from Hinduism to Buddhism completed.

2. Conclusion

Dr. Ambedkar's efforts improved the condition of depressed classes. Sikh theology also believes in the equality of mankind. Ambedkar wanted to embrace Sikhism but the Akali leaders played a vital role to sent Ambedkar far from Sikhism. Although Ambedkar did not embrace Sikhism but both Ambedkar and Sikh theology favoured to uplift depressed classes.

References

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