

## BOOK REVIEWS

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**Legacy of Ambedkar-Analysis and Appraisal, Edited by Lancy Lobo and Dhananjay Kumar, 2019. Jaipur : Rawat Publication. ISBN 13: 9788131610688. MRP: Rs. 850**

The book under review brings together select papers presented in a national seminar on the 125th birth anniversary of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar on Ambedkar's legacy. Analysis and appraisal of his contributions in unbiased and objective manner remain relevant in the present time. This edited volume addresses four specific questions – (i) Why has electoral democracy alone been viewed as Ambedkar's contribution for dalit politics? (ii) Why has Babasaheb's dream for state socialism to be enshrined in the Indian Constitution been sabotaged by political parties? (iii) Why have several of his ideas on economics, labour, national security, foreign relations, and training schools for budding politicians not been executed? and (iv) Why have his ideas on caste annihilation, social reforms, and liberation of dalits from the oppression they suffered at the hands of upper-caste Hindus not been studied and reviewed with the kind of focus and critical appreciation they truly deserve?

In the first part of the book, social, political and constitutional aspects of Ambedkar's legacy are analysed. Bhikhu Parekh's essay on 'Ambedkar's Legacy' brings out the originality of his contribution. He focuses on the question of untouchability as product of the uniquely Hindu form of inequality as embodied in the caste system. Identifying the six distinguishing features of the caste system as outlined by Ambedkar, Parekh highlights two particular features — (i) inequality in Hindu society was minutely graded; and (ii) the caste profoundly shaped the Hindu's identity or sense of himself.

According to Parekh, Ambedkar explained the continued existence of untouchability for nearly two millennia in terms of three interacting factors — the ideological, the economic and the political. Quoting Ambedkar, Parekh concurs that Dalits may be recognized as a governing community and that sense of dignity and self-respect must be maintained by them. Here he alludes to Ambedkar's call for forming alliances with like-minded political groups for capture of political power. Ambedkar's ideas of 'relative autonomy' refers to reservation in areas of life and weighted representation in legislatures. It must, however, be noted that Ambedkar cautioned against 'careerism' and 'hunger for power' of the Scheduled Caste representatives and their neglect of their communities.

Parekh acknowledges Ambedkar's strong advocacy of certain guiding

principles of Democratic India. He discusses three interrelated ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity. These ideas constitute Ambedkar's conception of 'social democracy' in India. The most crucial idea is that of fraternity, which denotes fellow feeling among all citizens of India. The notion of nationhood, based on fraternity, can be strengthened by internal struggle against oppressive social order. In other words, constructing a nation remains a political project in Ambedkar's thought and practice. Parekh considers this as the single most crucial contribution of Ambedkar.

All the same, Parekh identifies three main limitations of Ambedkar. First, he contends that Ambedkar's critique of untouchability was insufficient, because it did not take into account the changing moral culture of the wider society in India. Secondly, Ambedkar homogenized both the untouchables and the caste Hindus and ignored their internal differences. Parekh asserts that Ambedkar was wrong to take a Manichean view of Hindu society and make it the sole basis of his emancipatory strategy. Thirdly, Ambedkar's thoughts had a strong statist and elitist bias.

J.S. Gavai's essay dwells on the constitutional legacy of Ambedkar in the light of the performance of successive governments. As regards his political legacy, Gavai asserts that fanaticism and capitalism have already swallowed politics.

The second part of the book focuses on the sub-theme of Caste Annihilation and Ambedkar. Ajeet Kumar Pankaj's essay on "Ambedkar's idea of Social Democracy" discusses Ambedkar's formulation of 'One-Man, One Vote, One Value'. He further relates the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity to Buddhist doctrine of 'Prajana', 'Samata' and 'Karuna'. He validates constitutional provision for Untouchables as means of social democracy, and maintains that such social, economic, educational and cultural safeguards are necessary to address the issue of discrimination faced by Dalits.

Martin Macwan's Paper on "Annihilation of Caste" raises the question — Can Gandhian Thoughts Annihilate Caste? He says No. Macwan takes the view that caste manifests itself through interconnected social, economic, religious, political and cultural systems; and that it cannot be annihilated by those who are powerless. He also raises the question — is caste constitutional or anti-constitutional? He contends that Buddhism is the answer, and goes on to say that Dhamma, and not a hierarchical and structural institutional religion is the key to emancipation of Dalits.

Part Three of the edited volume deals with the sub-theme of 'Constitutional

Legacy of Ambedkar'. Pooja Singh's paper analyses the question of socio-legal justice in regard to the Constitution of India. She refers to Articles 15(1), 16 (1), 19 (1), 23 and 24 of the Indian Constitution and shows how they serve as direct hammer on the institutional inequality prevalent in our political order. C. Sheela Reddy's essay on "Philosophy of Dr. Ambedkar in the making of the Indian Constitution" focuses on rights and social justice. Shiv Shankar Das' paper on "Ambedkar's Idea of Strengthening Democracy in India: In the Context of Training School for Entrance to Politics" advocates training for budding politicians and legislators in parliamentary procedures, law-making, along with a strong foundation of morality, education and oratory skills. He posits certain essential questions about Ambedkar's political school.

Part Four of the book focuses on the sub-theme of 'Legacy of Ambedkar in Globalization Era'. Arjun Patel's paper on "Relevance of Ambedkar's Economic Thoughts in the era of Neoliberalisation" examines Ambedkar's idea of state socialism and discusses his socio-economic programmes such as nationalization of agriculture, industrialization, labour's participation in the production process. Patel addresses the question of implementation of Ambedkar's ideas from the perspective of New Economic Policy. But it does not shed light on the intellectual and political challenge posed by the phenomenon of globalization.

Preeti Oza's essay on "Repositioning Ambedkar Today" aims to assess Ambedkar's ideas from the perspectives relating to identity politics and contemporary Buddhism. She finds Ambedkar's distinction between religion and Dhamma useful, since Dhamma refers to righteousness applied to real life. As regards identity politics, her formulation on politics of domination and politics of resistance is instructive, in terms of grappling with the Dalit mobilization under the wider political dynamics in the country. Joseph M.T.'s essay on "Engaged Buddhism' of Dalits in Maharashtra" does well to point out the extent of internal differentiation among the Navayana Buddhists of Maharashtra, especially in Aurangabad.

All in all, this edited volume carries a number of essays on the legacy of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, which enlighten us about the rich complexity of Ambedkar's thoughts on the themes outlined above. Questions raised in the introduction by editors, however, are not attended to, by way of offering insights in response to those questions in a summarized form. That would have added value to the excellent volume of papers relating to the appraisal of Ambedkar's legacy.

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