

Analysis of Social Vision of Dr B R Ambedkar in Gail Omvedt' Seeking Begumpura

Manoj Pralhad Bhagat

Sundarrao More Arts Commerce and Science College, Poladpur, Raigad, Maharashtra, India
manojpralhadbhagat@gmail.com

Abstract: The word "Seeking Begumpura" derived from the poem composed by the great bhakti radical saint Sant Ravidas who imagined a city without caste, class, taxes and torture but equality and abundance for all. Gail Omvedt Seeking Begumpura covers the period of five hundred years from the Sant Ravidas (1450-1520) to the age of Dr B R Ambedkar (1891-1956). It gives us the vision of the anti cast Intellectuals . It is completely related to the vision of Ideal society in the context of India. The present research paper is an attempt to focus on the Idea of Utopia and the vision of the anticaste intellectual Dr B R Ambedkar.

Keywords: Casteless, Classless Society, Anticaste, Socioeconomic, Satyashodhak, Bahujan, Prabuddha, Utopia Subalterns, Dhamma, Morality, Liberty.

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Analysis

Gail Omvedt was an Indian -American sociologist and a prolific writer who composed numerous books on the issues of rights of women, dalit , labour, environment, Buddhism, caste, and the various saints from the Ravidas to the Tukaram. Her significant books include Seeking Begumpura, Ambedkar: Towards an Enlightened India , Gender and Technology: Emerging Asian Visions,

The book Seeking Begumpura is the product of five years of research and writing as a senior fellow at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi by Respected Gail Omvedt. The book is divided in twelve chapters.

The term utopia means the class of fictional writings that represents an ideal but nonexistent political and social way of life. It derives from Utopia (1515-16), a book written in Latin by the Renaissance humanist Sir Thomas More which describes a perfect commonwealth; More formed his title by conflating the Greek words "Eutopia" (good place) and "outopia" (no place) . The book Seeking Begumpura represents the idea of the anticaste intellectuals who were in fact not satisfied with the social, economical, cultural and political situation of their times. The vision is completely different from the orthodox community. Begumpura describes a land with no taxes, toil or harassment, where there is no hierarchy but all are equal.

The book Seeking Begumpura consists of the total nine chapters. First four characters covers the leading saints of the radical bhakti movement include Ravidas, Namdev, Chokhamela, Janabai, Nirmala, Soyra, Banka, Kabir, and finally Tukaram.

The next five chapters include the vision of the Ideal society include the social reformers of the colonial period - Mahatma Jotiba Phule , Pandit Iyothee Thas's and other members of his Sakya Buddhist movement. Pandita Ramabai is an important transitional figure one who actually sought to establish a utopian society of women. Finally, the Dr B R Ambedkar and E V Ramaswami Naykar brought these Vision to a climax in debates with Marxism and Gandhism. The book Seeking Begumpura gives the detailed analysis of the vision of Ideal society by Dr B R Ambedkar in the chapter no. Twelve. He categorically imagined casteless and class less society. His complete emphasis was on the creation of Prabuddha Bharat. In 1956 he adopted Buddhism at Nagpur with his lakh of followers. He opines that Buddhism can only serves the purpose of creating a just and moral society. The prevalence of inequalities in society may be annihilated with the complete adoption of Buddhists principles. The principles of liberty , equality and fraternity which are in the basic structure of Indian Constitution are derived not from the French revolution but from the Buddhism. The various practices and procedures of monasteries such as punishment for breaking five precepts and initiation of Dhamma were based on democratic principles. According to Dr Ambedkar religion should be scientific and it should be compassionate towards the deprived ones. It must provide equal rights to women in each and every field. The teachings

of Buddha is simple and mainly related to the mind of man. It gives significance to the nurturing of the moral values. Dr Ambedkar finds the ideology of Buddha as bahujaan hitay and bahujaan sukhay. He sends his monk in the different directions to spread the message of Dhamma. It is a liberal, scientific and compassionate religion. The teachings of Buddha are eternal but even then he did not proclaim them to be infallible. The religion of Buddha has the capacity to change according to times, a quality which no other religion can claim. According to Gail Omvedt Dr Ambedkar like many other believers of rationality thinkers formulated his vision of just world and concluded that religion will establish a just and egalitarian society. He did not see Buddhism as an opium of the people, but an empirical and social religion. His interpretation of Buddhism could be called a liberation ideology. It encompassed themes of an economically just social order. Buddhism emphasize on morality and achievement of just society. The Buddha did not tell people that their aim in life should be to reach some imaginary heaven. The kingdom of righteousness lies on earth is to be reached by righteous conduct. Dr Ambedkar was of the opinion that the society has to choose one of the three alternatives. Society may choose not to have any Dhamma as an instrument of Government. For Dhamma is nothing if it is not an instrument of Government. This means society chooses the road to anarchy. Secondly, society may choose the police, i.e. dictatorship, as an instrument of Government. Thirdly, society may choose Dhamma plus the magistrate wherever people fail to observe the Dhamma. In anarchy and dictatorship liberty is lost. Only in the third liberty survives. Those who want liberty must therefore have Dhamma.

In his popular book named Buddha or Marx he emphasized that Sangha as voluntary Communist organisation in contrast to the violence that pervaded and corrupted Marxism and the role of righteous king that is Chakravorty Raja. He quotes one of Lord Buddha's message which describes the plight of a state that falls into decadence, decline and chaos because its king does not follow the advice of his monk advisors and act to remedy poverty. In contrast to the Christianity according to Dr Ambedkar Buddha welcomed the prosperity by legitimate means. Prosperity, the ending of poverty, had always been a value with him and, consequently he valued development and industrialization along with the marxists and the nehruvian socialist.

II. CONCLUSION

Gail Omvedt' Seeking Begumpura gives us a detailed analysis of the anticaste Intellectuals' vision of an ideal and just society. The complete vision of casteless and classless society. The ideas of Sant Tukaram, Mahatma Phule, Periyar and Dr Ambedkar about the society are delineated strikingly. Dr Ambedkar finds solution to all kinds of oppression and exploitations in moral code of conduct that is observance of the Dhamma. A different kind of religion which is rational, egalitarian and has nothing to do with the world before birth and after death but in this life on the earth.

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