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RESEARCH ARTICLE



## THE HUMANIST MANIFESTO: REREADING DR. B.R. AMBEDKAR'S ANNIHILATION OF CASTE

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### ABSTRACT:

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was a social, political and economic reformer who advocated the ethical values of humanism i.e. liberty, equality and fraternity. He gave a great blow to the hegemony of Hinduism to rid it of the crudeness of untouchability and the impurities of social inequality. Dalit literature is based on Ambedkar's philosophy. *Annihilation of Caste, An Undelivered Speech, 1936* is the quintessence of the Ambedkarite ideology. The undelivered text is an encapsulation of his dissection of the caste system in India. His mission is to annihilate the pernicious practice of caste discrimination and his vision is to set up a casteless society. This paper is intended to show that Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was not antagonistic to Hinduism; rather his earnest endeavour, as a humanist, had been to purge Hindu religion of the impurities and incongruities.

*Keywords : Dalit literature, Humanism, Exploitation, Injustice, Annihilation of Caste*

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"What *The Communist Manifesto* is to the capitalist world, *Annihilation of Caste* is to India" - Anand Teltumbde

Marxism which is based on dialectical progress and historical materialism is the ideology of the exploited and aims at setting up an exploitation-free and classless society. Dialectical progress proposes to destroy old form in order to bring progress and the basic tenet of historical materialism is that religion, ethics, art, literature and culture are inspired by economic forces. *The Communist Manifesto* (1848) which was written by the arch architects of Marxism, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels is about the formation of a communist society with the termination of capitalist social system through a violent class war. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar devoted his life to reform the caste-ridden Hindu society. Though Dr. B. R. Ambedkar considered Indian Marxism to be incomplete as it was not concerned with the elimination of caste discrimination and untouchability the visions and missions of both Marxism and Ambedkarism are almost alike- the formation of classless and casteless society respectively. If Marxism is a politically inspired movement Ambedkarism is a mass movement with a view to broadening and deepening the process of social awakening. Ambedkar criticized Communists for ignoring the social divide between a Brahman worker and a Dalit worker. He compared Brahminism with capitalism in terms of the conspiracy of exploitation.

Dalit literature which came into existence in 1958 in the Mumbai conference of Maharashtra Dalit Sahitya Sangha in the presence of Jyotiba Phule and Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar was a manifesto of human rights which spoke against the prevalent practice of caste discrimination. Dalit literature helped formation of the Dalit identity and an alternative ideology to Brahminism. One important facet of the revolutionary project of Dalit literature, according to Sharankumar Limbale:

"is the establishment of the full humanity of the Dalit. This literature asserts the Dalits' selfhood, history and agency. They are actors here, and not the ineffectual, helpless figures of the 'liberal-reformist' upper caste authors' creation, dependent on the goodwill and

assistance of the dominant society for succour. In and through this literature, Dalits are no longer a people without history, much less the subalterns of society's history, its demonized Ravana or violated Angulimala, Eklavya or Shurpanaka. Here, they are the central figures of their own history, and from this history they derive the confidence and the right to assert their humanity."

Dalit literature is "writing about Dalits by Dalit writers with a Dalit consciousness. The form of Dalit literature is inherent in its Dalitness, and its purpose is obvious: to inform Dalit society of its slavery, and narrate its pain and suffering to upper caste Hindus." Great men of India strove for the upliftment of the marginalized sections of society but it was Dr. Ambedkar who felt the wounds of the deprived Dalits. He believed that a country pervaded with the rigidity of caste system is a country of stagnation and the country cannot ensure social justice and insure Dalit rights. In order to achieve social reformation, he argues, Hindu scriptures, consisting of the Vedas, Upanishads, Smritis and Puranas, including the Ramayana and the Mahabharata which validate the caste system, are to be denied as dominant discourses. In his opinion, true religion is not to have belief in one's own method of the efficacy of prayer and worship, rather the essence of religion is to uplift individual and to deliver the messages of equality, liberty and fraternity. Ambedkar himself defined fraternity as "a sense of common brotherhood of all Indians, all Indians being one people. It is the principle which gives unity and solidarity to social life." He was of the opinion that a person should be valued for his merits, education and spirits and not on the basis of his hereditary class position. He knew that law is a weapon to fight against discrimination and to ensure equality of opportunity. Dhananjay Keer, the biographer of Ambedkar, says:

"In his philosophy, law had a place only as a safeguard against the breaches of liberty and equality; but he did not believe that law can be a guarantee for breaches of liberty or equality. He gave the highest place to fraternity as the only real safeguard against