Philosophy of Hinduism and A Critique for Liberation Religion

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Abstract

This paper is an attempt to explore and systematically present the critique of religion with special reference to Hinduism as found in the writings of Ambedkar. 'Philosophy of Hinduism' is a classical work by Ambedkar in which he is engaged in a philosophical critique of Hinduism both as a religion and a social order.

Keywords: Ambedkar, Hinduism, Theodicy-Model, Christian philosophy, Liberation of religion, Socratic irony, Mythical theology

Introduction

Government of Maharastra published the collected works of Ambedkar in the year 1987. This particular work is entitled 'Philosophy of Hinduism' is "significant and unique in several aspects. Firstly, the contents of this work were hitherto unknown. These are the unpublished writings of Dr. Ambedkar which were in the custody of the Administrator General and the custodian of Dr. Ambedkar's property. … These writings had assumed such significance that it was even feared that they had been destroyed or lost. There is a second reason why this work is significant… his interpretation of the philosophy of and his historical analysis of the Hindu religion … throws new light on his critique of religious thought. The third important point is that his analysis of Hindu Philosophy "… (is) a definite approach to the strengthening of … the solidarity of Indian society based on the human values of equality, liberty, and fraternity. The analysis ultimately points towards uplifting the down-trodden and absorbing masses in the national mainstream"[1].

Indigenous Analysis

For a philosophical analysis of Hinduism, Ambedkar uses the academic insights gained by his ardent studies of various sciences particularly of philosophy, history, anthropology of religion, sociology of religion and philosophy of religion. By combining the insights of these social sciences, he employs a multi-disciplinary approach to study, understand, and critically evaluate Hinduism. In the process of his analysis of Hinduism, one could infer the truth that Ambedkar has developed his own theory of (indigenous) analysis of religion in his attempt to understand the nature of Hinduism and evaluate its social function. By specifically analyzing Hinduism as practiced in the Indian Society Ambedkar contributes to a critique of religion for societal liberation by developing a specific theory of analysis or a philosophy of religion in the contemporary Indian Socio-philosophical tradition. One of the reasons for making such a claim is that, 'we usually depend upon the western model for analysis of religion, especially of the so-

called the 'Theodicy-Model'[2], as employed in the context of Christian philosophy of religion', whereas, Ambedkar analysis of religion is purely an Indian approach to the problem of Indian society.

In the following lines, we try to unearth the philosophical criterion as employed by Ambedkar and systematically formulate or consolidate his critique of religion for liberation. By studying the methods of analysis as used by Ambedkar, the research-interests of the researcher are as follows:

- Firstly, to identify the method of analysis as employed by Ambedkar.
- Secondly to evolve a philosophical criterion for a critique of religion and society for liberation from the standpoint of Ambedkar.
- And finally to formulate a theoretical ground of a Philosophy of Liberation of religion and society in the most Indian (indigenous) way possible. These research purposes are interrelated to each other. In fact, this has been the one of the central objectives and intended contribution aimed by this research thesis.

Ambedkar's Philosophical Analysis of Religion

We shall now proceed to analyze the philosophical analysis of religion as engaged by Ambedkar in his work on 'Philosophy of Hinduism'. In the very first statement itself, Ambedkar clarifies his fundamental socio-philosophical concern of his exposition. He begins by asking, "what is philosophy of Hinduism"[3]. In order to engage into a systematic analysis of the question, he attempts to seek clarity to two more interrelated questions: 'what is philosophy and what is religion?' and what is the relation between philosophy and religion'. In order that his analysis is to be based on certain rational criterion, he rises these questions. He clarifies that his purpose of entering in to such an analysis is to study and to evaluate the philosophy of Hinduism for constructing a social order based on the principles of Justice and equality. Following the writings of Prof. Pringle-Pattison, Ambedkar clarifies his application of the meaning of the terms- *Philosophy and Religion and Philosophy of Religion*. He then proceeds to point out that his analysis of Hinduism is based on the insights provided by the theoretical perception called philosophy of religion.

An inquiry in to the *meaning of meaning* (called the problem of meaning) is the basic way that serious philosophical queries have been carried out by philosophers. Clarity of the very question itself is the precondition for clarity of a response. Great philosophers like Socrates, Plato, Descartes and many others functioned in their philosophical tasks only in this manner. Doubting the very doubt itself is the philosophical technique applied by Descartes. Plato in his Dialogues is found engaging into a 'Socratic irony'[4] to clarify the concepts taken for understanding. Clarity of the very question itself would contribute to clarity of the response. This is one of the major reasons that philosophy is considered critical and presupposition-less science. Ambedkar following the same tradition of critical inquiry engages into a serious academic attempt to discuss the meaning of the questions that he has undertaken to study. He says, "One must define (clarify) what he understands by religion (the point of inquiry here) as there are no agreement as to its exact definition"[5].

Philosophy, Religion and Philosophy of Religion

Ambedkar takes note of the different *sense and reference* of the use of the terms philosophy, religion and philosophy of religion. He claims that the use of the term philosophy refers to the 'teachings of great thinkers such as Socrates, Plato and so on.' It is also used in the sense of a viewing the things together. He says, "Philosophy is an attempt to see things together – to keep all the main features of the world in view, and to grasp them in their relation to one another as part one whole. It is a 'is a synoptic view of reality; it is a world-view; it is a world-ground'[6].

He says, "while religion is something definite, there is nothing definite in philosophy." Combining Philosophy and religion, for Ambedkar, it meant "as an analysis and interpretation of the experience in question in the bearing upon our view of man, and the world in which he lives"[7]. He claims that he uses the term philosophy of religion in the sense that it is a *descriptive, normative and critical science* that helps towards the authentic understanding of religion. It describes the theoretical nature of the religion for analysis; it proceeds to investigate the given description, and evaluates and suggests the foundational norms of religion. According to Ambedkar "Philosophy of religion is to me … is both descriptive as well as normative. In so far as it deals with the teaching of a Religion, Philosophy of religion becomes a descriptive science… in so far as it involves the use of critical reason for passing judgement on those teachings, it is a normative science"[8]. According to him, a study of a philosophy of a religion takes into account several important dimensions such as "that it is a study of the Mythical theology or mythical religious truth-claims of a religion; it is a study into the civil (social) theology of a religion; it is a study into the natural theology of religion; That it is a study into the revealed theological claims of a religion. Moreover, it is a study of the historical development of a religion[9].

Ambedkar's understanding of Religion

Having clarified the different areas of general concerns in an academic analysis of religion, Ambedkar claims that he employs philosophy of religion in the sense of Natural and Social theology. He points out that there are three important theses that form the subject matter of a philosophical analysis of religion both in natural and social theology. They are: '(1) The existence of God (2) God's Providential government of the universe and (3) God's moral government of mankind (society).' Ambedkar observes, "I take Religion to mean the propounding of an ideal scheme of divine governance the aim of which is to make the social order in which men live a moral order. This is the sense in which I shall be using the term Religion in this discussion"[10].

However, he notes the difficulty of separating the essential characteristics of a religion from those of unessential due to the historical layers through which a religion has grown to the present day. He quotes Prof. Robertson Smith's work on 'The religion of the Semites' who says, "the traditional usage of religion had grown up gradually in the course of many centuries… the record on the religious thought of mankind … in religious institutions, resembles the geological record of the history of earth's crust; the new and the old are preserved side by side or rather

layer upon layer"[11]. Due to these factors, it is difficult to enumerate the essentials of a religion. The same thing is true of Indian religions as well. Because of its historical layers, Hinduism has the possibility of containing doctrines that are almost diametrically opposed to each other. He says, "… the Veda, contains not only the records of different phases of religious thought, but of doctrines (that may be) opposed to each other"[12].

The need of an epistemic criterion for Analysis of religion and society

Having defined the content of his use of the concepts of philosophy, religion and philosophy of religion, Ambedkar's analytical interest is to find out whether Hinduism as a religion and social order is an ideal scheme of divine governance whose aim is to make the social order a moral order. He says, "I shall be concerned within this study of Hinduism … putting Hinduism on its trial to assess its worth as a way of life"[13]. According to Ambedkar an important dimension of Philosophy of religion is concerned with "the criterion to be adopted for judging the value of the ideal scheme of divine governance for which religion stands. Religion must be put to trial. By what criterion shall it be judged? That leads to the definition of norm"[14]. He observes that since Hinduism like any other positive religions, has a written form constitution. Its scheme of divine governance is easily deducible from such constitution. Among the Vedas, the sacred book called *Manu Smriti*, is one such written constitutions that provides the Hindu scheme of divine governance' easily accessible to the test of social utility morality. It is said to be "the Bible of the Hindus, and containing the Philosophy of Hinduism"[15]. Hence, he involves himself to the analysis of the Vedic world-view as illustrated in the Vedas relying heavily on the claims made in the *Manus Smriti* of the *Rg Vedas*. If so, the query that arises here is to find out the criterion that Ambedkar used for a critique of religion and in particular to the analysis of Hinduism as religion and social order. This is our concern here.

Revolution as a need

Having insisted the necessity of a philosophical criterion, Ambedkar suggests that a 'philosophy of a religion must be judged, based on its *"Revolution"* because the mother of Philosophy is revolution. Accordingly, Ambedkar holds, "As for myself I think it is safe to proceed on the view that to know the philosophy of any movement or the institution has undergone. Revolution is the mother of philosophy and if it is not the mother of philosophy, it is a lamp, which illuminates philosophy. Religion is no exception to this rule. The best method to ascertain the criterion of which to judge the philosophy of (any) religion is to study the Revolutions which religion has undergone. That is the method I propose to adopt"[16]. And he adds, "Progress in philosophy has come about by theoretical revolutions that has taken place in the history of philosophy. Therefore, revolution is the criterion by which a religion and its social order need to be critiqued." For, He says, "To me the best method to ascertain the criterion by which to judge the philosophy of Religion is to study the Revolutions which religion has undergone. That is the method I propose to adopt"[17].

Revolution as understood by Ambedkar

However, what does he mean by revolution should be clarified here in order to understand Ambedkar's philosophical analysis of religion. By revolution, he clarifies that it is meant to be both a conceptual or theoretical and social in nature. By social revolution he means alternative changes in structures of society towards an egalitarian social order. If any religion does not pass the test of 'such revolutions' both theoretical and social then, it tends to be not positivistic. Here Ambedkar's acumen of a quality of a philosopher is worth pondering. Like a good philosopher who opts for an epistemic-criterion to judge any truth-claims, Ambedkar first proposes his criterion of an analysis and then proceeds to employ it in his critique of Hinduism as a social order. Before taking up the study of Hinduism or any other religion, he proposes a specific methodology of analysis to study the nature of such religion. Instead of basing himself on certain presuppositions, Ambedkar like that an analytical philosopher, suggests a methodology of epistemic understanding of the phenomena to be analyzed.

From the above discussion, one could clearly establish that according to Ambedkar, an epistemic criterion is of utmost necessity to accept something to be true. For, he holds that a truth claim of a religion must necessarily pass through the test of reason, that it (religion) should undergo conceptual and socio-structural revolution or at least conceive the possibilities of revolution. Ambedkar observes that religion at its initial stage is an all-embracing factor. It included geology, biology, medicine, superstition, exorcism, psychology, physiology and so on. However, as times changed, especially after the famous Copernican Revolution, many of these sciences were separated from religion. Then came the Darwinian revolution. This has brought about lots of changes in religious worldviews. Religion by allowing itself conceptual and structural changes in tune with the socio-historical and scientific times, it progresses and becomes more authentic and a 'great blessing'. "*It has established freedom of thought*"[18]. By the process of 'secularization', religion has freed itself from its age-old false belief-systems and social practices. Thus for Ambedkar, "Revolution touches the nature and content of ruling conceptions of the relations of God to man, of Society to man and man to man. How great was this revolution can be seen from the differences which divide savage society from civilized society." Ambedkar further points out, "there is no doubt that this revolution in religions has been a great blessing. It has established freedom of thought. It has established control of itself, making its own, the world it once shared with superstition, facing undaunted the things of its former fears and so carving out for itself, from the realm of mystery in which it lies, a sphere of unhampered action and a field of independent thought"[19].

Two types of Religion

After having pointed out that *Revolution* as one of the criteria for an analysis of religion, Ambedkar proceeds to classify two different types of religions. Such a classification is made based on certain conceptual grounds. The first one according to Ambedkar, is the religion of the Savage society and second one is the religion of the Civilized society. In the religion of the civilized society, Ambedkar introduces two sub-divisions. They are (a) the religion of antique or ancient society and (b) the religion of the modern society. Now, we shall clarify the differences

between the religion of the savage and the religion of the civilized society from the point of view of Ambedkar. Ambedkar attempts to highlight the differences between these different types of religion in the following manner.

The religion of the Savage Society

According to Ambedkar, the religion of the savage society does not permit itself to undergo any radical theoretical revolution. It is only "concerned with life and the preservation of life and it is these life processes which constitute the substance and source of the religion of savage society"[20]. Here, He adopts the explanation provided by Prof. Crowley to explain the religion of the savage society. He says that such a religion, 'does not enter into his professional or social hours, his scientific or artistic moments; practically its chief claims are settled on one day in the week from which ordinary worldly concerns are excluded. In fact, his life is in two parts; but the morality with which religion is concerned is the elemental. Serious thinking on ultimate questions of life and death is roughly speaking, the essence of his Sabbath; add to this habit of prayer, giving the thanks at meals, and the sub conscious feeling that birth and death, continuation and marriage are rightly solemnized by religion, while business and pleasure may possibly be consecrated, but only metaphorically or by an overflow of religious feeling'. For Ambedkar, the principal things in the Religion of the Savage society are presence of the facts of human existence such as life, death, birth, etc., Through the ritualistic, ceremonial magical, fetishist practices, the religion of the savage seeks for life and its preservation"[21].

Characteristics of the savage society

- There is no trace of the idea of God. It is a religion with out any philosophy of God.
- There is no bond between morality and religion. Its end is life and the preservation of life. They "constitute the substance and source of the religion of the savage society"[22].
- Thus, there is no practical relationship between human life and its everyday suffering and alleviation of such sufferings.

However, this does not mean that the savage religion did not have any morality at all. It had morality in the sense of certain do's and don'ts or taboos. "In the savage society there is morality but independent of Religion however, morality is present in the form of rules and laid down by the savage society for the preservation of life"[23].

Religion of the civilized society

On the contrary, the religion of the civilized society allows itself to the possibilities of a conceptual revolution. In the religion of the civilized society, "God comes in the scheme of religion (and) morality becomes sanctified by Religion"[24]. The religion of the civilized society has undergone conceptual changes over the period of History, and it has carried on differences regarding the conception of God, Society and Man. In it, "every social act had a reference to the Gods, as well as to men, for the social body was not made up of men only, but of gods and men"[25].

Two stages of the civilized society

Ambedkar distinguishes two stages of the religion of the civilized society: The first is the religion of the antique society and the second is the religion of the modern society. In the antique society, religion is founded on kinship between God and its worshippers. It is centered on the way God has been conceived by such society. It is a kind of ontologism applied in such religious worldview; where as, in the modern society the idea of god has been trans-placed from its composition. The idea of God has been conceived from the standpoint of human life and his social existence. In this sense, such a religion tends to be more anthropocentric rather than God-Centric. The former believed in the idea of the existence plurality of Gods. Its gods were an exclusive to each ancient groups of the antique society. God was conceived based on human community. Its idea of God therefore is communitarian. "God had become the god of the community and the community had become the chosen community of God"[26]. Therefore, the god of Antique society is not a universal god, the god of all. They did not have the idea of humanity in general.

In the ancient society, God was conceived to be 'the father of his people' but the basis of this conception of Fatherhood was deemed to be physical, and particular. Whereas in the modern society, the idea of divine-fatherhood has become entirely dissociated form the physical basis of natural fatherhood. In its place, man is conceived to be created in the image of God. God was given an ontological status whose nature is to transcend and immanent. In such a composition, the idea of God as the creator and governor of universe has emerged in the modern society. He is given an absolute status both morally and existentially. The concept of a morally based humanity was envisioned in the religion of the modern or civilized society.

Two types of revolution

Ambedkar talks of two types of revolution: the external and the internal types of revolution. The external revolution refers to the factors responsible for conceptual changes in religion regarding its idea of God, morality and social order. The scientific factors like the Copernicus revolution, Darwin's ideas of evolution are cited as examples. The internal revolution refers to actual the conceptual shifts in the understanding of religion as the result of its response to the challenges or revolt provided by scientific factors. That a true religion should under go these changes in order to be relevant to contemporary needs of human society, is the point of insistence that Ambedkar brings home here.

Main features of Savage and Modern Societies

For the sake of clarity of analysis, we shall systematically cognize the fore-going discussion as follows: According to Ambedkar,

- The Religion of the savage society is group or clan-centered. In it, there is no idea of a universal morality.
- The religion of the antique society had the idea of God but, it could only be at the level of national religion.

- The religion of the modern society has both the idea of a universal God and universal morality.
- Thus, there has been a transformation in the history of religion. There has been conceptual revolution in the truth-claims of religion. From group-identity, there was a change (revolution) to the idea of trans-group identity (national) and from the national identity, there emerged a revolution to the idea of God and morality to be universal and all-embracing of humanity and its social existence.
- There has been a revolution or ideological change regarding the notion of God. From no idea of god, to an idea of a god of this or that particular group's god or gods and from the group-gods to an idea of a national god and from the idea of a national god to the idea of a universal god.
- From the concept of a plurality of God, changed from an idea of a singular God of human society. And such a god has been conceived to be creator, governor of morality.
- There has been a shift from the mere idea of fear of god to the idea of social existence based on morality.
- Ambedkar points out that revolution or conceptual change is the necessary prerequisite to the authenticity of religion. Thus, there has been a change or revolution in the concepts of morality as well as God in the history of religion.
- Revolution in the sense of theoretical and social has been the hallmark of religion in general. It has undergone changes from ancient to modern society. From the idea of natural gods to supernatural gods, and from the idea of supernatural gods to an idea of a single Creator –God and from the idea of a single creator-god to an idea of a moral God (who is the governor of morality in society) and from the idea of a moral-God to an idea of humanistic God. Thus, **revolution is the way religion has progressed towards the modern society.** It is an essential criterion for the authenticity of the truth claims of any religion.

The Principles of Utility and Justice

After having clarified the features of the religions of the savage and the modern society and specified that revolution is one of the touch stones of verification to count the progress of religion, Ambedkar proceeds to spell out that the other norms or criterions to judge the authenticity of a religion are the concepts **Utility and Justice**. Ambedkar adopts Utility as a criterion of religion from his idea of the antique society. The concept of Justice, he says, is adopted from the idea of modern society. He says, "at the one hand of the revolution was the antique society with its religious ideal in which the end is the society. At the other end of revolution is the modern society with its religious ideal in which the end is the individual (concern of the individual in the society). To put the same fact in terms of the norm, it can be said that the norm or criterion for judging right or wrong in the antique society is Utility while the norm or the criterion for judging right or wrong in the modern society is Justice. The Religious

revolution was not thus a revolution in the religious organization of society resulting in the shifting of the center –from society to the individual – it was a revolution in the norms"[27].

The concept of utility he claims that he adopts from the idea of the antique society. In the antique society, utility was the criterion to judge right or wrong. The welfare of the tribe as a whole is considered the essential morality of the tribe. In addition, God must be useful in sustenance, and preservation and protection of tribe. The utility God is to protect the tribe not as individual but as society as a whole. He says, "Utility as criterion was appropriate to the antique world in which, society being the end, the moral good was held to be something of social utility"[28]. Thus, Ambedkar observes, "to my mind there is no doubt that they are the real norms by which to judge a philosophy of religion. In the first place, the norm must enable people to judge what is right and wrong in the conduct of men. In the second place, the norm must be appropriate to current notion of what constitutes the moral good"[29].

Having pointed out the types of norms as to be adopted for a critique of religion, Ambedkar proceeds to adopt the norm of Justice to testify the truth of Hinduism both as religion and a social order. Because, according to him, Justice as a criterion is appropriate to the modern world in which the individual in the society is the end and the moral good of the society does justice to the individual. The norm or the criterion of judging the appropriateness of religion according to Ambedkar should not only be 'Godly' but also be earthly. These concepts of Ambedkar very well advocate that he is a lover of religion and not a denier of religion.

The necessity of religion and the need for secularization of Religion

Ambedkar is not a denier of the need of religion. For him, religion is necessary; it is a social necessity to provide a moral unity. "Religion is a social force ... religion stands for a scheme of divine governance. The scheme becomes an ideal for the society to follow. The ideal may be non-existent in the sense that it is something, which is constructed. However, although non-existent, it is very ... it has full operative force, which is inherent in every ideal"[30]. The norm of utility in religion would promote unity of society as a whole. For Ambedkar, religion must progressively be secularized according to the dictates of the conceptual and scientific changes that occur in human society. He says that religious ideal has hold on humankind, irrespective of any early gain. Its power is to be extended to material benefits. Therefore, to ignore religion is to ignore a live-wire[31].

The criteria for a critique of religion above spelt out are as follows:
- An authentic religion should undergo revolution both conceptual and social in view of the changing nature of human society because, human society is not a static phenomenon but it has grown from ancient to modern type of society.
- An authentic religion should be judged based on an ideal scheme of divine governance. In other words, it should be morally based, the morality of which should do good to the individual in the society. The moral basis of the religion of the ancient society is Utility and the moral basis of the modern society is Justice. Thus, according to Ambedkar,

Revolution, Social Justice and Utility are the guiding norms for a critique of religion for emancipation.

- In short, the concept of change or revolution and the concept of Justice are principles of verification of the authenticity of religion.

Having clearly formulated the principles that are employable to a critique of religion, Ambedkar proceeds to testify the philosophy of Hinduism based on these criteria. Now the problem before Ambedkar is to analyze whether Hinduism as a religion and social order could be verified based on the above mentioned norms or criterion, namely the concept of revolution, the ideals of morality.

Revolution as the principle of verification in Hinduism

According to Ambedkar, the Philosophy of Hinduism is neither based on the notion of revolution nor would allow the possibility of any revolution. Because of its insistence on the infallibility of Vedas as only revealed truth, Hinduism does not contain the possibility of accepting any criticism or theoretical revolution in its thought-pattern. In contrast to Hinduism, the very basis or the philosophical foundation of Buddhism lies on the acceptance of the reality of Change as the ultimate fact of reality. Ambedkar points out, "The Hindu is not prepared to face any inquiry"[32] and the fact that he is not prepared to face any inquiry implies that he is not ready to change from his Vedic belief system. 'The determined notions of morality regulate the life of the Hindu. It orders him how during life he should conduct himself and how on death his body shall be disposed of. It tells him how and when he shall indulge in sexual impulses. It tells him what ceremonies are to be performed when the child is born. It pre-writes what caste category the child is born. It tells him what occupation he can take to, what woman he should marry. It tells him how he should behave in the daily life. In short, the Hindu way of life is deterministic; it is against the principle of any change or revolution or freedom. He is enslaved to his thought-pattern and its resultant social system called Casteism. "There is no act of the Hindu which is not covered or ordained by (his) Religion"[33]. Thus, according to Ambedkar, the philosophy of Hinduism does not practice or even conceive the possibility of any revolution.

There is yet another criticism that Ambedkar levels against the philosophy of Hinduism. He says that a Hindu holds the belief that 'all religions are true and good'[34]. Upholding such a position according to Ambedkar is "positively dangerous" for it is a convenient way of avoiding the application of reason or criterion to acceptance or non-acceptance of religion. By doing so, Hinduism avoids that criticism that could possibly be pointed against it. It is not ready to face and 'change of ideas and its social practices'. For Ambedkar, Religion being a social force, is an institution or an influence, which could either be oppressive or not conducive to the growth of the individual in the society. A religion could also be liberative. Whether a religion is oppressive or liberative is revealed only by a methodological rational analysis only and not by any unconditional acceptance of the dictates of that religion. Ambedkar says, "Religion (as) social institution and like all social influences ... may help or harm a society which is in its grip"[35].

To substantiate his view Ambedkar quotes the words of Prof. Tiele, who observes, " Religion is ... one of the most mightiest motors in the history of mankind, which formed as well as

tore asunder nations, united as well as divided empires, which sanctioned the most atrocious … deeds the libinous customs … inspired most admirable acts of self renunciation, devotion which occasioned the most sanguinary wars, rebellions, and persecutions, as well as brought about freedom, happiness and peace of the nations"[36].

Religion as Liberative force

Religion, conceives Ambedkar, could function as an instrument of oppression or liberation depending upon its worldview and its social practices.   If religion is based on the notion of revolution or change then it is liberative and if religion propagates infallibility and total surrender to its totalitarian perspective then, it would be oppressive. This points towards the need for engaging a methodological reason or applying a standardized criterion to judge whether a Religion is a force of liberation or oppression. A Hindu according to Ambedkar tries to 'avoid such inquiry' for the fear of being exposed of its static-oppressive social and moral order. Religion needs to be dynamic for Ambedkar, because it is concerned with love of truth. "Unless religion is dynamic and begets in us the emotion of love for something, then it better to be without anything that we can call religion; for religion is perception of truth and if perception of truth is accompanied by our love for it, then it were better not seen at all"[37]. However, this does not mean, Hinduism should be left free from critical analysis. Ambedkar continuos to employ the other criteria namely the norms called utility and justice on Hinduism to judge its philosophy. Consequently, the next pivotal question that he elaborately discusses is this: "I propose to apply both the tests, the test of Justice and the test of utility to judge the philosophy of Hinduism. First, I apply the test of Justice"[38].

Justice as a principle of verification in Hinduism

Before applying the criterion of Justice, Ambedkar clarifies the concept of Justice. Adopting the concept of Justice as explained in the writings of Prof. Bergbon, he notes that the principle of justice is a compendious one and it includes most other principles, which has become the foundation of a moral order. Justice has always evoked the ideas of equality, of proportion of "compensation." Equity signifies equality. … concerned with equality in value. If all men are equal, all men are of the same essence and the common essence entitled them to the same fundamental rights and to equal liberty"[39]. Ambedkar conceives the principle of Justice as containing the notions of liberty, equality and fraternity. Justice according to Ambedkar implies the notion of individual liberty, social equality and a fraternal human community.

The principle of Justice according to Ambedkar is one of the essential criteria for an authenticity of a religion. He says, "social scientists have examined the philosophy of Hinduism and its social order from various perspectives." Having clarified the notion of Justice as liberty, equality and fraternity, Ambedkar examines the philosophy of Hinduism on basis of these basic ethical principles: Ambedkar's analysis of Hinduism is constitutive of the following questions. They are: "Does Hinduism recognize Equality?"[40] "Does Hinduism recognize Fraternity?"[41] "Does Hinduism recognize liberty?"[42] "does Hinduism recognize equality, liberty and fraternity? Does it

satisfy the test of social utility?"[43] These are the guiding questions for Ambedkar to scrutinize the philosophy of Hinduism on the touchstone of Justice.

Ambedkar establishes the conclusion that the philosophy of Hinduism does not promote nor contain the social value of justice. He justifies this thesis by exposing the caste world-view as enunciated in the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads* and other Hindu scriptural tradition. He extensively quotes those verses from *Maunsmiriti* of the Vedas that propagate caste system as a moral order. He points out that the moral order grounded in the Vedic world view is not-moral because it promotes a society of graded inequality, value hierarchy and value-dualism and exclusivism of the-social-other.

The Critique of Ambedkar that Hinduism does not promote Justice can be categorized in the following manner: He selects number of verses from the Vedas especially from the *Manusmiriti* where caste system is justified as a social and religious order and is also provided with a divine sanctity. He is also seen involving in a theoretical discussion on to the axiological basis of Vedic and Vedantic philosophies of Hinduism and systematically establishes the conclusion that the Philosophy of Hinduism is not grounded in justice and therefore, its religion is oppressive. He says, *Manu*, the author of Vedas, is a "staunch believer in social inequality, and he knew that the danger of admitting religious equality. If I am equal before God why am I not equal on earth? (asks Ambedkar*). Manu* was probably terrified by this question. Rather than admit and allow religious equality, to affect social equality, the preferred to deny religious equality"[44].

Ambedkar observes that the theory of the origin of the different caste groups, namely the theory of *Purushasukta*, uphold inequality. He says, "it is indisputable that the Vedas lay down the theory of *Chaturvarna* in what is known as the *Purushasukta*. It recognizes the division of society into four-sections as an ideal. It also recognizes that the ideal relationship between the four sections is inequality"[45]. The Caste system practiced in the Hindu society is upheld and sanctioned by its religious texts, namely Vedas. For example, the *Manu,* the author of *Manusmiriti*, provides a detailed version caste practices. He confines slavery to the *shudras*, the discriminated sections in the caste-hierarchy. He is opposed to inter-marriage, advocates endogamy in order to maintain the rigidity of Casteism. He is anxious to preserve the rule of inequality. He prescribes graded laws and punishment for those who disobey the caste regulations. Even more, he provides a divine sanction theory, to the practice of caste. "*Manu* degrades the birth of the *shudras* as base-born. They are progeny of fornication and adultery between men and women of the superior caste"[46]. The theory of *Ashramas*, illustrated in the Vedas, excludes the *Shudras*, (dalits) in the scheme of its four stages of life. It prohibits the *Shudras* from the benefit of the Vedic utterances of Vedas and performances of sacraments. Thus, it paves way for the practice of excluding the-other, which is opposed to social unity. The Vedas upheld a theory of occupational-determinism, according to which, the *Shudras* are to remain ever-slaves. Therefore, the philosophy of Hinduism cannot be said to promote of the principle of equality.

Caste is more than the mere division of labour. It is a division of labourers. It determines one's occupation according to the pre-determined theory of caste-birth. Caste prevents social

mobilization. It creates contempt of labour and labourers. It is a division of labour accompanied by the division of labourers"[47]. Some have also asked, "if as a form of social and religious organization, the Hindu social order stands discredited, does it stand on a different plane in as far as its economic organization is concerned? Does it recognize liberty in the choice of occupations and equality in its selection? Does it provide access to education to all? "the principles on which the caste-system is based, are sound enough to promote economic efficiency, encouraged equality in the distribution of wealth and income and reduce the poverty of the common masses?"[48] these questions need to be addressed not only because of their importance but because of Hinduism is probably the only religion to lay down a well articulated framework of economic relations for various caste-groups. Like its social and religious counterparts, the economic base of the caste system was not merely an ideal. The ideal was put in to practice and was, therefore, real. Caste miserably fails to be able to sustain every individual as a fraternal member of the society.

Hinduism does not recognize liberty. Liberty, to be real, must be accompanied by certain social conditions such as social equality and economic security and equality of educational opportunities Denying these social conditions to the discriminated people, it upholds and sanctions the theory that 'the might is the fittest to survive'. It practices a philosophy of power relations wherein the poor and the weak are progressively silenced and negated. Hinduism does not also recognize fraternity is the opinion of Ambedkar.

Employing insights from the writings of John Dewey, an American philosopher who propounded the theory of instrumentalism, Ambedkar notes that, Hinduism is individualistic and not socially-oriented. It does not promote fellow feeling. He proves this by pointing out the social existences of different caste groups in the Hindu society. He analyses the characteristic features of caste as hierarchical, which is not structured to promote fraternity. Hinduism does not also promote the spirit and the practice of education for all. Once again, Ambedkar leans very heavily on the Vedic texts, to prove that education or Vedic learning has been kept the priority of high-caste other, in rejection to the low caste-other.

Even in education, Vedic learning alone is treated as the highest and the sublime form of learning, Which means, that the Philosophy of Hinduism does not encourage a scientific inquiry of reality. Therefore, Ambedkar observes, "Illiteracy became an inherent part of Hinduism by a process which is integral to it, it denied education to the people, namely the so-called untouchables. The notion of "education for masses" is absent in the philosophy of Hinduism. Thus, it has paved the way for 'secrecy of knowledge, monopoly of knowledge, and as a result, monopoly of societal power, at the expense denying the right of the suffering-other and sanctioning their denial as divine-based. According to Ambedkar Hinduism does not recognize liberty for, liberty, to be real, must be accompanied by certain social conditions, such as social equality, economic security, education for all. Of all these conditions Hindu social order, Ambedkar proves that, it does not promote liberty[49]. The fact that Hindu social order, namely caste-system 'denies freedom of vocation' and it 'pre-ordains' it, according to one's caste category, proves that it does not promote liberty.

Hinduism does not also promote economic security and viability on an equal basis, to every member of the society. Ambedkar argues that, since economy is in the hands of the few, and the poor dalits are made-servants to the system and the high caste people, they are denied of economical security. This paves way for a class of society that remains economically dependent on the high caste-other. Forbidding the educational avenues to the Shudras, is the way, the philosophy of Hinduism has promoted the power interests of the so-called high-caste. It negates the education of the masses. Therefore, it cannot be said to promote liberty.

The denial of the rights of the women is also an issue. The Vedas deny equal and the dignity of women. It considers women to be treated under control of the male supremacy. Therefore, it cannot be said to promote liberty. Fraternity is fellow feeling. It is empathy to identify oneself with the-other in the society. It is 'relationality' and against individualism. It is brotherhood. It helps to sustain the moral order in the society. It is a natural sentiment. Ambedkar accuses the philosophy of Hinduism as individualistic and exclusivistic, because of its principle and practice of casteism. It promotes continuos hatred among the different members of the sub-caste groups. It promotes graded-hatred. The high caste negates the low castes and the low caste avoids the high caste. It is ritualistic and priestly, wherein some are considered to born 'holy' because of caste-determinism. Through religious ceremonies such as '*upanaya*' the social-other is negated. It requires the instrumentality of the priests. It holds that the role of priests is indispensable and the role of the social other is dispensable. The identity of the *Shudra* is deniable. Since every thing is determined by caste hegemony, Hinduism loses the spirit of sharing. Be it marriage, customs or any other, everything is caste-bound. Therefore, the philosophy of Hinduism cannot be said to promote fraternity. Knowledge, wealth, and labour and the dignity of labour are denied to the so-called *Shudras*. Therefore, caste-order is not justice-based. In *Upanishads*, the metaphysical theory of negating the world as *Maya*, has its social content of practicing a hierarchical negation in the society. Ambedkar observes that, not only Vedas recognize inequality, but also the *Bhagavad Gita*. Noting some important pronouncements from *Gita* Ambedkar, says that, " *Gita* is *Manu* in a nut shell"[50].

The ideology of Purity and Pollution

For, Ambedkar, the theory of pollution is not originally untouchability, those who shared the caste-world-view, in order to resist those who did not share such ideology, introduced the concept of 'out-caste' whose original meaning is not untouchability but it is meant that there is separate group which does not share or which resists the idea of casteism. Ambedkar notes that the Buddhists are one such group of people who do not share the caste-ideology and who were the first to oppose caste and any other forms of segregation. He observes that the institution of caste is composed of certain universal Hindu ideas. These include the Hindu pollution concept such as the social units of *Jatis* (endogamous large-scale descent-groups), the cognitive categories of *Varnas* (ranked classification of *jaitis*); the associated concepts of caste *dharma* (*varunashramdharma*) (religiously sanctioned duties of for the caste members) and sub-caste division of labour"[51] all contribute to the practice of the division of human beings as pure versus impure. Such a position can neither be spiritual nor human. According to Ambedkar, Hindu caste

social order is invested with the ideas of purity and pollution. This principle pervades and partly explains the hierarchy of castes. People are considered to be endowed with the capacity of pollution, either temporarily or permanently. Those who are closer in the upper ladder towards the Brahmins, are considered to pollute temporarily where as the so-called untouchables are considered to be a permanent pollutants and therefore they are impure and are to be avoided. In recent decade, the concept of Hindu purity-pollution is characterized of Hinduism, by social anthropologists like A. M. Hocart (1950); M.N. Srinivas (1952); Louis Dumont (1970); Mckim Marriott and Ronald Inden (1973, 1977). A central point in Hinduism is that, it sanctions this theory of purity and pollution.

Given to the four-fold caste order, except the Brahmins, all the others are considered to possess the capacity towards pollution. According to Ambedkar, the practice of pollution came to be upheld by the food practices; eating meat is one of the customs that makes one caste as pure or impure, for those who eat meat are treated as impure and those who do not are considered as pure. Ambedkar in his article on '*who were the Shudras*? points out that the principle of graded inequality is the basis that determines the Hindu social order. He clarifies that in the Vedas, the chapter on *Purusashkta*, provides the instrumental-rational basis for the socio-religious practices of caste system. According to him, "the *Arya samajists* have made a mistake of preaching the idea that Vedas are eternal without beginning and end, without end and it is infallible"[52]. The metaphor of the *Purushasukta*, is a theory of the origin of the Universe. Its cosmogony interpretation of the emergence of the social system is strongly opposed by Ambedkar. He also questions the theory of the divine sanction for the establishment of the so-called *'sacred institution'.* Ambedkar rises strong objection to the claim of *Manu*, the author of the *Purushasukta,* that Veda is the only and ultimate sanction of *dharma*. He charges that it is *Manu* who has invested the ideal of c*harutrvarna* as a social ideal called *dharma,* divinely ordered and its truth claims are infallible.

Attempt to provide a divine sanction to caste-stratification by the author of the Vedas, is deliberate attempt to deify the social practice and by deifying caste-stratification it is meant to promote a collective consciousness that casteism is moral. Thus, Hinduism has paved a way for permanent system graded inequality that alienates every individual with the-other. We shall take note of the analysis of Ambedkar regarding *purushasukta* as follows:

1. Real is elevated to the dignity of an ideal**.**
2. No community has given the *de facto* state of class composition a legal effect by accepting as a dejure connotation of an ideal society.
3. No society has accepted d the class composition as an ideal. At the most, they have accepted it as being natural*. Purushasukta* goes farther. It not only regards class composition as natural and ideal, but also regards it as sacred and divine.
4. The number of classes has never been a matter of (religious) dogma in any society known in history. The scheme of *purushasukta* makes the division of society into four classes a matter of dogma.

5. The scheme of *Purushasukta* fixes a permanent warrant of procedure among the different classes, which neither time nor circumstances could alter. The warrant of procedure is based one the principle of graded inequality among the four classes"[53].

Scriptural basis

Given to these analyses, Ambedkar points out that the scriptural basis of Hinduism, namely the Vedas, preaches the political idea of class-divided or composed society as its ideal'[54]. The chapter on *Purushashukta* is hence a politically motivated and religious sanctioned class-division whose main purpose is to provide a scheme of graded inequality. In such a class-division, there is not a single possibility of progress. One's position in the society is doomed forever, allowing no possibility of self-improvement. It is a "permanent occupational categories"[55], whose aim is to perpetuate socio-political profit in favor of the dominant class, at the expense of the dominated class. The fixed gradation in the caste system is to serve the fixed motives of the so-called superior classes through out their life. Therefore, the concept of *chaturvarna* is not only a functional classification but it is an attempt to consolidate the value-graded system, where in those who occupy the higher order are the privileged class to enjoy the labor of those who occupy the lower strata of the society.

In the four-fold social classification, the *Brahmins* are placed in the highest order, as custodians of knowledge, the *ksatriyas* are meant for protection or fighting and the *Vaishyas* are meant to do the trading and the *Shudras* are determined to serve the above three-others, by their unconditional obedience to do the menial types of jobs, like scavenging, cleaning and so on. Thus, the scheme of *Chaturvarna,* according to Ambedkar is a social practice of the denial of the human dignity and fundamental rights of the lowest sections, namely the dalits (oppressed community) of the Indian Society.

How does it (Hinduism) practice the denial of the rights of the dalits, is the query we shall try to respond from the findings of Ambedkar? Ambedkar clearly summarizes the socially degraded status of the dalits, as sanctioned in the Vedas as follows:

Social degraded status of dalits

1. 'that a *Shudra* (dalit) was to take the last place in the social order.
2. Since he is impure, from birth onwards, he is not sacred, and no sacred act must be performed in his presence.
3. He must be debarred in hearing or listening to religious utterances.
4. He does not deserve any social or individual respect.
5. His life is of no of worth, and therefore, could easily be put to an end, if and when situation demands.
6. Education is prohibited he must not acquire knowledge of any kind and especially the knowledge of Vedas and *Sanskrit*. He should be kept ignorant. By keeping ignorant, he may easily be domesticated for the socio-political interests of the dominant group.

7. A dalit should not possess or acquire property. If he does, a *Brahmin* is religiously empowered to take away the property from him at his pleasure.
8. He should not hold administrative position in the society or state.
9. The only duty of a dalit is to obey, and such obedience is unconditional and non-questionable.
10. Obedience to the caste-hierarchy is his religion, *dharma*, and morality.
11. The higher caste people should not intermingle with the dalit community and possibly practice the method of exclusion, as to avoid pollution from the dalit community.
12. If the rule of exclusion is broken by not adhering to the *dharma* or morality of *Chaturvarna* by any individual there is a corresponding punishment, depending upon the caste one belongs to. If one is a dalit, the punishment is severe, and if it is a non-dalit, the punishment is not very severe.
13. A *Brahmin* is not supposed to live in a country ruled by a *Shudra*'[56].

According to Ambedkar, " for Hinduism, inequality is a religious doctrine adopted consciously and it is preached as a dogma"[57]. "It is a divinely prescribed way of life, it has become incarnate in Hindu society and is shaped and moulded by its thoughts and its deeds. Indeed, inequality is the Soul of Hinduism. He adds, " the social and religious analysis of Hindu religion and of its social order reveals that it is not based on these principles, ... goes against the framework of justice. On the other hand, it openly recognized inequality in the social and religious fields, denied liberty and severely lacked moral elements for the development and sustenance of fraternity. While philosophy of Nietszche is capable of producing Nazism, the Philosophy of Hinduism is capable of producing ant-socialism. While Nietszche intended the racial supremacy, *Manu,* the so-called law giver of Hinduism, intended Brahminical supremacy. He observes, "Hinduism is not interested in the common man. ... not interested in the society as a whole. The centre of its interest lies in a class-interests, and the interests of the social-other is sacrificed or denied to serve the needs of the high-caste-other[58]. Hence, according to Ambedkar, the philosophy of Hinduism cannot be called as the religion of humanity.

In the final part of his work, after having analyzed Hinduism on the rational and ethical and practical grounds of revolution, justice and utility, Ambedkar is inclined to ask, "what is the value of such religion to man?" And he adds: Could Hinduism offer consolation (compassion/affirmative justice) to those who have been crushed by Casteism?"[59]. In conclusion of his critique of the philosophy of Hinduism, he observes, "In Hinduism, there is no nourishment for ordinary souls, no comfort for human sorrow, no help for human weakness, ... it leaves men divorced from all communion with God. Such is the philosophy of Hinduism. It is the common man's damnation"[60]. Thus, we could infer the conclusion of this research inquiry as follows:

Characteristics of an authentic religion
- For Ambedkar, a critique of religion must be based and regulated on certain rational, practical and moral principles.

- The practical principle that verifies an authentic religion is that it should be guided by the principle of revolution. The revolution is classifiable into external and internal elements.
- An authentic religion should take into account progressive secularization of its foundations, in the sense that it should be relevant to the changing times and needs of human society.
- The metaphysical foundation of a true religion is constitutive of the metaphysics of change.
- An authentic religion must be grounded on the principles of justice and utility. It should be regulated by the practice of liberty, equality and fraternity.
- Religion is a human necessity. It could contribute social unity, provided it is based on the principles of revolution and social Justice. Since the philosophy of Hinduism can not be said to have founded on these principles, to consider it as a religion of societal liberation is not possible. The philosophy of Hinduism, as found in its scriptural tradition is not constitutive of the principles of revolution, justice and social utility. Given to its Caste-world view, and the social practice of Casteism, its philosophical ground is oppressive and therefore, cannot have the conceptual strength of promoting liberation of the socially weaker sections.
- Hence there arises the need for a religion that is based on the principles of social liberation that restores dignity, and affirms the life of the suffering-other in the society.
- A critique of religion in the Indian context presupposes a critique of Casteism in its social order. An authentic religion and religious is a critique of Casteism in favor of those who have been historically conditioned to the phenomenology of thrown-ness. That is to say it has to promote social justice as its ethical basis.
- A philosophical critique of religion should necessarily be a practical critique of discrimination in the society. And a critique of discrimination aims at the promotion of praxis of liberation.
- In brief, an authentic critique of religion and its social order addresses the problems of human society based on a philosophy of societal liberation.

Notes and References

The present chapter is an analysis of the original Text of Ambedkar, on the philosophy of Hinduism. Hence most of the references are bound to be from the same original text.

1. Vasant Moon (ed.) B.R. Ambedkar Writtings And Speeches, Vol. 3, Govt. of Maharastra, 1987, p. xi.
2. Theodicy – Model. Refers to the scholastic attempt to explain the nature of God through transcendental categories. It is mainly a problem regarding the concept of God and his relation to world.
3. Ambedkar B.R., Philosophy of Hinduism, Govt. of Maharastra Pub. 1987, p. 3.
4. It is the Socratic method of inquiry that is engaged to elucidate correct responses.
5. Ambedkar B.R., Op. cit., p. 8.
6. Ibid., p. 9.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid., p. 5.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid., p.6.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.

13. Ibid., p. 5.
14. Ibid., p. 8.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid., p. 8.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid., p. 9.
20. Ibid., pp. 10,11.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid., pp. 12-15.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid., pp. 22-23.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid., pp. 23-87.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid., p. 25.
39. Fernandes Walter., (ed.)., The emerging Dalit identity, (Indian Social Institute, New Delhi, p. 9.
40. Ambedkar B.R., Op. cit., p. 25.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid., pp. 36-80.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid.
46. Ibid., p. 67.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid., p. 29.
49. Ibid., p. 87.
50. Kolenda Pauline., Caste in Contemporary India, Rawat Pub, p. 62.
51. Ambedkar B.R., Who were the shudras? Vol. Iii, pp. 18.
52. Ibid. p.8.
53. Ibid. p.5.
54. Ibid. p.6.
55. Ibid. p.43.
56. Ibid., p. 66.
57. Ibid., p.77.
58. Ibid., p. 78.