



Self-Knowledge As A Form of Resistance To Oppressive Regimes: A Historical Analysis

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, I have discussed how Self-knowledge and Self-realization can be a form of resistance to oppressive regimes of totalitarianism, colonialism and majoritarian States. An individual who engages in Self-realization through productive work and love through which his uniqueness is realized will have a fulfilled life and thus would not surrender to oppressive regimes that seek to curb his individuality. However, when the Self is not realized the man seeks a mechanism of escape to which he could surrender the responsibility of his Self and thus he surrenders to these regimes. In the colonial context also the path to liberation is through the realization of the Self by the masses that would resist the colonial regime.

Keywords: Self-knowledge, Self-realization, Productive work, Spontaneity, Love, Mechanisms of escape, Freedom.

Introduction:

“If I am not for myself, who will be for me?

If I am for myself, what am I?

If not now-when?”

-Talmudic Saying,

Mishnah, Abot.¹

The question that the modern man must face is not just to be or not to be but also of ‘what to be’. When this question is answered with Self-knowledge it leads to a fulfilled life but if not dealt with, it leads to loss of freedom and uniqueness of the Self. Here in this paper, I will be discussing how without Self-knowledge the man fails to realize his true potential and purpose and therefore, never attains meaning and fulfillment in his life. It is for this reason that he surrenders the responsibility of his unrealized Self to the oppressive regimes of totalitarianism, colonialism and majoritarianism. It is only through Self-knowledge that these regimes can be resisted and thus this paper aims to historically analyze the problematic of the modern man in attaining Self-knowledge in different contexts and in the process it also attempts to offer solutions for the same.

Erich Fromm and Realization and Knowledge of the Self:

Erich Fromm was a social psychologist, psychoanalyst, sociologist, humanistic philosopher, and democratic socialist. He was a German Jew who fled the Nazi regime and settled in the United States. ²Fromm realized the importance of individuals living a life of freedom and self-realization and not the one that was dictated by the oppressive regimes. It is for this reason Fromm studied the socio-psychological reasons of the man surrendering to an authoritarian regime.

¹ Fromm, Erich. “Fear of Freedom.” Routledge and Keagen Paul, 1942.

² “Erich Fromm”, Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation, 17th September, 2020, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ErichFromm>
- Erich Fromm.

In this seminal work, Fromm argues that in the Middle ages man had a sense of belonging due to the ties of community and church and as he belonged to these his role in the society was decided as a knight or as craftsmen and this gave his life a purpose but once the modern age came, these traditional ties were dissolved and man became alone.³ Now, the individual realized that he had freedom from his old ties but now he was alone, and thus to escape from this aloneness which could cause mental disintegration in a man, he tried to escape this suffering in various ways.⁴

The man tried to alleviate his suffering with Renaissance and Reformation. In the Renaissance period, he hid his unrealized and alone Self through achieving fame for his work of art and thus validation helped him escape from his aloneness and in Reformation, this was attempted by man by complete surrender of his Self to God.⁵ However, he was realizing the more he aimed at silencing his aloneness and anxieties that arose from it, the more powerless he was becoming. Thus, he engaged in frantic activity to silence these doubts but over a long time these emotions were accumulated and this resulted in feelings of hostility and resentment as seen from Luther's to Hitler's time.⁶ It for this reason that Fromm argues that, this hatred that one had for others was rooted in hatred towards one's powerlessness in the modern society.⁷

Fromm also discusses the "mechanisms of escape" utilized by the modern man to avoid aloneness. These comprise of authoritarianism where there is complete submission of one's freedom to a higher authority.⁸ Another mechanism of escape that Fromm highlights are 'destructiveness; as he states "destruction of world is the last, almost desperate attempt to save me from being crushed by it."⁹ This means man even attempts to destroy his world so that it does not destroy his vision of his Self which he constructs to avoid Self-knowledge and Self-realization. Another mechanism is also discussed in the text which is automaton conformity, where one loses their Self to conform to values of the society they live in and thereby develop a pseudo-Self which is a Self constructed for the society and away from the reality of one's true Self.¹⁰

Thus, we see as Balzac stated, "man has a horror for aloneness."¹¹ He goes to attempt to escape aloneness as it disintegrates his mind in the way hunger and poverty disintegrate his body. It is to save one's self from this disintegration also surrenders to totalitarian regimes.¹² As it is for this reason, Germans felt resentment against the rich and the powerful but they could not resist the powerful and thus began resenting the powerless and poor.¹³ This was a sign of a psychological crisis. Another factor that contributed to submission of masses to the Nazi regime was the economic crisis which led to poverty of masses and thus they sought refuge in strong authority of Hitler in Nazi Germany in these times of uncertainty.¹⁴ Thus, men chose new bondages and lost his Self since he could not be alone in these times of uncertainty.

This problem can only be solved, argues Fromm, by engagement of the Self in spontaneous activity which is an end in itself and not for any social validation, success or riches.¹⁵ Thus, one expresses their integrated

³ Fromm, Erich. "Fear of Freedom." Routledge and Keagen Paul, 1942. (Foreword, pp. ix.)

⁴ Fromm, Erich. "Fear of Freedom." Routledge and Keagen Paul, 1942. (Chapter 1, pp. 15,53.)

⁵ Fromm, Erich. "Fear of Freedom." Routledge and Keagen Paul, 1942. (Chapter 3, pp. 41,57.)

⁶ Fromm, Erich. "Fear of Freedom." Routledge and Keagen Paul, 1942. (Chapter 3, pp. 80,81.)

⁷ Fromm, Erich. "Fear of Freedom." Routledge and Keagen Paul, 1942. (Chapter 3, pp. 100)

⁸ Fromm, Erich. "Fear of Freedom." Routledge and Keagen Paul, 1942. (Chapter 4, pp. 122.)

⁹ Fromm, Erich. "Fear of Freedom." Routledge and Keagen Paul, 1942. (Chapter 4, pp. 153, 154.)

¹⁰ Fromm, Erich. "Fear of Freedom." Routledge and Keagen Paul, 1942. (Chapter 4, pp. 159,163.)

¹¹ Fromm, Erich. "Fear of Freedom." Routledge and Keagen Paul, 1942. (Chapter 1, pp. 16.)

¹² Fromm, Erich. "Fear of Freedom." Routledge and Keagen Paul, 1942. (Chapter 6, pp. 180.)

¹³ Fromm, Erich. "Fear of Freedom." Routledge and Keagen Paul, 1942. (Chapter 6, pp 189.)

¹⁴ Fromm, Erich. "Fear of Freedom." Routledge and Keagen Paul, 1942. (Chapter 6, pp. 184.)

¹⁵ Fromm, Erich. "Fear of Freedom." Routledge and Keagen Paul, 1942. (Chapter 7, pp. 222.)

personality through their work and through love where freedom and equality of each is realized and Fromm offers the same solutions to contemporary democracies and individuals¹⁶.

The Colonial Violence and the Individual Self: Frantz Fanon's Wretched of the Earth:

Fromm discusses Self-knowledge in its European contexts but it has different meanings in a Colonial context. This is discussed in our paper through the work of Frantz Fanon. Fanon was a French West Indian psychiatrist and political philosopher from the French colony of Martinique.¹⁷ In the course of his work as a physician and psychiatrist, Fanon supported Algeria's war of independence from France and was a member of the Algerian National Liberation Front.¹⁸ One of his most famous works, *The Wretched of the Earth* discusses the violence of colonialism and the necessity of organized struggle of masses to contest it.¹⁹

Fanon discusses how "Colonialism is not a thinking machine, nor a body endowed with reasoning faculties. It is violence in a natural state."²⁰ He states how colonial violence does not only keep the colonized at a respectful distance but it also needs to dehumanize them.²¹ No effort is spared to demolish their traditions, in substituting their language with the language of the colonizers and thereby, the culture of the colonized is demolished.²² He highlights how "the colonized are exhausted to a mindless state and if they resist guns are pointed at them. Shame and fear warp their character and frame their ideology."²³ He thus emphasizes the psychological degradation of the native's Self under colonialism and offered solutions to the colonized to achieve liberation.

Here he states the importance of violent resistance in contesting the monopoly of violence unleashed by the colonizers on the colonized.²⁴ Violence is offered as a solution that would bridge the gap between the oppressive power of the colonizers and the suffering and powerlessness of the colonized. This is also the solution to the problem of Self-knowledge and Self-realization which are thwarted by the cultural, social, political and violent oppression of the colonial regime. As Fanon states "at the level of individuals, violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and his despair and inaction, it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect."²⁵

However, the violence and resistance that Fanon discusses in his work are not that of individuals but the organized violence and resistance by the masses from across the colonized Nation. These masses would come from interior villages and towns of the Nation where the National culture has survived and they would unite with the elite and fight for the social and cultural liberation of all the colonized and not just for the political independence of the Nation.²⁶

Therefore, Fanon teaches us the importance of revolution which causes the transformation in "spectators crushed with their essentiality into privileged actors, with the grandiose glare of history's floodlights upon them and thus the thing which has been colonized becomes man during the same process by which it frees

¹⁶ Fromm, Erich. "Fear of Freedom." Routledge and Keagen Paul, 1942. (Chapter 7, pp. 223, 234.)

¹⁷ "Frantz Fanon." Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation, 25th August, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frantz_Fanon - Frantz Fanon.

¹⁸ "Frantz Fanon." Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation, 25th August, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frantz_Fanon - Frantz Fanon.

¹⁹ Frantz Fanon. "The Wretched of the Earth." Grove Press, 1961. (Chapter 1, pp. 51,96.)

²⁰ Frantz Fanon. "The Wretched of the Earth." Grove Press, 1961. (Chapter 1, pp. 23.)

²¹ Frantz Fanon. "The Wretched of the Earth." Grove Press, 1961. (Preface by Jean Paul Sartre, pp L.)

²² Frantz Fanon. "The Wretched of the Earth." Grove Press, 1961. (Preface, Sartre, pp. L)

²³ Frantz Fanon. "The Wretched of the Earth." Grove Press, 1961. (Preface, Sartre, L.)

²⁴ Frantz Fanon. "The Wretched of the Earth." Grove Press, 1961. (Chapter 2, pp. 96.)

²⁵ Frantz Fanon. "The Wretched of the Earth." Grove Press, 1961. (Chapter 1, pp 51.)

²⁶ Frantz Fanon. "The Wretched of the Earth." Grove Press, 1961. (Chapter 4, pp. 180.)

itself.”²⁷ He emphasizes the importance of reclaiming of their humanity and subjectivity by the colonized which is essential for gaining Self-knowledge and Self-expression.

Individual Self Knowledge and Colonial India:

The impediments to Self-knowledge have been discussed so far in our paper that comprise of totalitarian regimes and colonialism. While Fromm discusses the socio-psychological reasons that are at work, when an individual surrenders to the oppressive authorities, Fanon discusses the importance of reclaiming humanity and subjectivity by the colonized masses which is essential for gaining Self-knowledge and Self-expression. However, in the Indian context, this individual Self is rigidly tied to the Brahmanical structure of the varnashrama system (caste). The varnashrama system categorizes men according to the caste they were born in, with Brahmans at the top of the hierarchy as priests, followed by Kshatriyas as rulers and warriors, vaishyas as the traders and at last, Sudras as the laboring and the toiling class. The problem of the caste system is that it is an unequal and discriminatory system that denied equal opportunities to all. It denied Hindus the opportunity to choose their profession and thus it is based on birth and not on merit and therefore it denies the opportunity of acquiring Self-knowledge and Self-expression to the individual when his fate is already sealed. Thus the individual Self was already unfree in its socio-cultural roots in the Indian context.

The unfree roots were further utilized by the British colonizers in India. This was a result of realization by the colonizers that they belonged to an alien culture and thus they needed the knowledge of Indian customs and traditions for an effective administration of India. This knowledge was hitherto monopolized by Brahmans and therefore, the colonial empire in India and Brahmans became allies of each other to facilitate the colonial aims of political dominance and economic exploitation. As Brahmans supported the colonial regime, the latter supported Brahmanical dominance over the Indian society and abstained from reforming the Indian traditions. As a result, the Indian society was displaced in two ways, it was politically and economically oppressed by an empire that had no concern for its welfare and socially oppressed by Brahmans who monopolized subordinate administrative posts and prohibited the entry of lowered castes from the same. Thus, the equal opportunity was denied in India which is again a pre-requisite for Self-knowledge and Self-realization. As without the equal opportunities of pursuing one’s potential to one and all, no Self-knowledge or Self-realization can be achieved. The tallest figures in India attempted to solve this problem of caste-based tradition and British induced colonial modernity in India. Two such figures that we will be discussing are Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar.

Gandhi and Necessity of Individual Self-Knowledge:

Gandhi was an anti-colonial Nationalist and a political ethicist who employed non-violent resistance to lead the successful campaign for India’s independence from British rule and in turn inspired movement for civil rights and freedom across the world.²⁸ His solution to violence of colonialism was Self-knowledge and Self-discipline by the individual.²⁹

However, this was missing from India when Gandhi entered its politics. The problem of lack of individual Self-knowledge and freedom was realized as an outcome of colonization by Gandhi. Therefore as Uday Singh Mehta argues that, Gandhi stated that the knowledge and interiority of the Self could contest the violent colonial rule as such a regime could never Self-introspect as it stands on the edifice of greed and

²⁷ Frantz Fanon. “The Wretched of the Earth.” Grove Press, 1961. (Chapter 1, pp. 2.)

²⁸ “Mahatma Gandhi.” Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation, 3rd October, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mahatma_Gandhi - Mahatma Gandhi.

²⁹ M.K. Gandhi. “Hind Swaraj and Other Writings, With an Introduction by Anthony Parel.” Cambridge University Press, 1997.

violence.³⁰ It is this kind of rule which deprives one of their selfhood and thus Gandhi was against it, as people under such a rule could never be free or attain self-rule or Swaraj.³¹

He also realized the importance of morality resulting from Self-knowledge and Self-discipline in democratic politics, as the philosopher Martha Nussbaum has pointed out, “one must learn how to cultivate the inner world of human beings, equipping each citizen to contend against the passion of domination and to accept the reality and equality of others.”³²

This was necessary as it was difficult for India to defeat a militarily and commercially superior empire. He states further in *Hind Swaraj* that, even if the British left India, mere “political freedom” based on fear and Self-defence would not be enough as soon it will be “British raj without the British”, if the state machinery remained the same, India would not be free.³³ Thus, Gandhi realized without Self-knowledge and Self-discipline, and love for one another, freedom would become anarchy in no time.

He further discusses that it was not solely the British who were responsible for the colonization of India, it is Indians, according to Gandhi who gave up their sovereignty and Self-knowledge due to lure of silver and other commercial goods imported from Europe to India.³⁴ Indian princes, on the other hand, needed East India Company’s help to fight each other and consolidate their power and thus asked company for military and fiscal assistance.³⁵

He also states that, as Indians lost their morality and self-knowledge, it was easier to divide them and thus the Hindus and Muslims who lived in peace earlier and knew that hostility would be fatal to both, now fought each other during colonial rule.³⁶ In this fight against the “enemy”, there was an obvious need for a third party to decide what was right and thus British not only took decisions for Indians but also divided them.³⁷

Gandhi also highlights in the text how through western institutions the colonial imprint was being left on India and until this was resisted, Indians would remain colonized in their minds and would oppress their countrymen. He begins with a critique of the British parliament itself which was being worshipped across the world for its superiority as an institution. For Gandhi, parliament was like a ‘sterile woman’ or a ‘prostitute’, former because it always needed “outside pressure” to act and latter because it was ‘under control of different ministers from time to time.’³⁸ These men who were supposed to be elected representatives of the people, indulged in bribery and served their interests. Thus, while representation was ensured, people with power had no living conscience and thus could not contribute to the well-being of the society.³⁹

³⁰ Uday Singh Mehta. “Patience, Inwardness and Self-Knowledge in Gandhi’s *Hind Swaraj*.” *Public Culture*, 2003. (pp 357.)

³¹ M.K. Gandhi. “*Hind Swaraj and Other Writings*, With an Introduction by Anthony Parel.” Cambridge University Press, 1997. (pp. 73-74.)

³² Martha Mussbaum. “*The Clash within: Democracy, Violence and India’s Future*.” Harvard University Press, 2009.

³³ M.K. Gandhi. “*Hind Swaraj and Other Writings*, With an Introduction by Anthony Parel.” Cambridge University Press, 1997. (pp.73-74.)

³⁴ M.K. Gandhi. “*Hind Swaraj and Other Writings*, With an Introduction by Anthony Parel.” Cambridge University Press, 1997. (pp. 40.)

³⁵ M.K. Gandhi. “*Hind Swaraj and Other Writings*, With an Introduction by Anthony Parel.” Cambridge University Press, 1997. (pp.41.)

³⁶ M.K. Gandhi. “*Hind Swaraj and Other Writings*, With an Introduction by Anthony Parel.” Cambridge University Press, 1997. (pp. 59.)

³⁷ M.K. Gandhi. “*Hind Swaraj and Other Writings*, With an Introduction by Anthony Parel.” Cambridge University Press, 1997. (pp. 60.)

³⁸ M.K. Gandhi. “*Hind Swaraj and Other Writings*, With an Introduction by Anthony Parel.” Cambridge University Press, 1997. (pp. 30.)

³⁹ M.K. Gandhi. “*Hind Swaraj and Other Writings*, With an Introduction by Anthony Parel.” Cambridge University Press, 1997. (pp. 32.)

He also critiqued other institutions such as railways, as he stated it connected areas that were naturally segregated and this led to spread of disease and was responsible for transporting of grains to grain-abundant areas at the cost of grain scarce areas which in turn led to scarcity, poverty and famine.⁴⁰ Medicine was another western practice that he critiqued as it made the human body weaker as once a person indulged in food or alcohol, he might be treated with medicine but would not learn to control his appetite. He does not suffer for his indulgence and thus medicine inhibits one from attaining Self-discipline and thereby Self-knowledge.⁴¹ Though a former lawyer himself, Gandhi also critiqued law as he discussed, how quarrels were accentuated by lawyers as they took people to resolve their differences in the courts and earned profits from them or otherwise these differences would be resolved within one's community.⁴²

He also critiqued machinery, which although made the life of man easier but also consumed his space and time and made him work like a beast and made material pursuit his only aim. People lost inner strength in the madness to pursue wealth, which was an ideal propagated by the western civilization and followed even in colonies.⁴³ Thus, Gandhi discussed how Western civilization and its colonization prohibited development of Self-fortification and Self-knowledge in an individual.⁴⁴

Gandhi also offered solutions to these problems such as, use of soul-force or satyagraha, which meant refusing to do what one's conscience does not allow and if this refusal is punishable by law, one must be ready to suffer this penalty for one's belief system. This would lead to internal Self-fortification and gain of self-knowledge. Thus, as Uday Singh Mehta argues that, for Gandhi self-knowledge was the deepest critique of the British empire.⁴⁵ As domination, excessive power, and prosperity were dangerous 'surrogates' because they hindered Self-knowledge and gave rise to politics and morality devoid of real content, relying on the surrogates.⁴⁶

Gandhi also discussed how Self-fortification could be attained through patience and non-violence towards the other and the Self, which could be enhanced by Self-sufficiency and Self-reliance and not complete dependence on machinery for one's everyday life. As David Hardiman argues that, Gandhi encouraged the use of products produced by Indians, that is, Swadeshi products and not exported ones.⁴⁷ He also emphasized Sarvodaya or public welfare and aparigraha that is non-possessiveness.⁴⁸ He leads a non-cooperation movement too. He also argued for the dignity of manual labor and a more equitable division of labor. He also favored the use of the spinning wheel as it would provide an additional source of income to the poor and would lead to the saving of money by producing one's clothes.⁴⁹ Such an individual and society would not indulge in excesses at the cost of those who were less privileged. Such a society and individual that Gandhi

⁴⁰ M.K. Gandhi. "Hind Swaraj and Other Writings, With an Introduction by Anthony Parel." Cambridge University Press, 1997. (pp. 47.)

⁴¹ M.K. Gandhi. "Hind Swaraj and Other Writings, With an Introduction by Anthony Parel." Cambridge University Press, 1997. (pp. 63.)

⁴² M.K. Gandhi. "Hind Swaraj and Other Writings, With an Introduction by Anthony Parel." Cambridge University Press, 1997. (pp. 58.)

⁴³ M.K. Gandhi. "Hind Swaraj and Other Writings, With an Introduction by Anthony Parel." Cambridge University Press, 1997.

⁴⁴ M.K. Gandhi. "Hind Swaraj and Other Writings, With an Introduction by Anthony Parel." Cambridge University Press, 1997. (pp. 36.)

⁴⁵ Uday Singh Mehta. "Patience, Inwardness and Self-Knowledge in Gandhi's Hind Swaraj." Public Culture, 2003. (pp 423.)

⁴⁶ Uday Singh Mehta. "Patience, Inwardness and Self-Knowledge in Gandhi's Hind Swaraj." Public Culture, 2003. (pp 424.)

⁴⁷ David Hardiman. "Gandhi in His Times and Our Times. Permanent Black." 2003. (pp 1-84.)

⁴⁸ David Hardiman. "Gandhi in His Times and Our Times. Permanent Black." 2003. (pp 1-84.)

⁴⁹ David Hardiman. "Gandhi in His Times and Our Times. Permanent Black." 2003. (pp 1-84.)

aimed for, would have internal strength, self-control and self-knowledge thus would neither need power over others and nor would surrender to unjust power itself.

Ambedkar's critique of Indian Tradition and Caste System as an Impediment to Attainment of Self-knowledge:

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was an Indian jurist, economist, politician, and social reformer who campaigned against caste-based discrimination against the untouchables and inspired the Dalit Buddhist Movement in India.⁵⁰ Ambedkar had realized that the Brahmanical caste system was an impediment to the realization of the potential of the Self and it denied equal opportunities to the untouchable castes.

Ambedkar also stated how this Brahmanism was an enemy to the development of Indian society.⁵¹ By Brahmanism, he did not mean the caste Brahmins as a community who were the originators of Brahmanism.⁵² Brahmanism for Ambedkar meant "negation of the spirit of liberty, equality, and fraternity" among Indians.⁵³ He believed that this pervaded in the consciousness and practices of masses in their everyday life.⁵⁴ It does not only include denial of social rights to Depressed Classes such as inter-dining and inter-marriage but it also included civic rights such as use of public wells, public conveyances and other public places. It denied public amenities to the millions of Indians who were lowered castes.⁵⁵ Ambedkar protested along with masses of lowered castes for the same in Mahad Satyagraha in 1927 for allowing of use of wells to lowered castes. He also critiqued the Brahmanical caste system as it decided not only the professions and promotions of the lowered castes but also their living spaces.⁵⁶ Ambedkar also gives example for the same, as in the Bombay presidency, men from Depressed classes were neither given opportunities as railway clerks nor as a mechanic class but only at the lowest grade.⁵⁷ He discussed the plight of the Depressed Classes and also the problematic of solutions offered to the menace of caste by his fellow Indians.

He stated "to agitate for and to organize inter-caste dinners and inter-caste marriages are like forced feeding brought about by artificial means. Make every man and woman free from the thralldom of the Shastras, cleanse their minds of the pernicious notions founded on the Shastras, and he or she will inter-dine and inter-marry, without your telling him or her to do so."⁵⁸ Thus, he wanted to demolish the edifice of Shastras on which the Brahmanical caste system stood and not its symptoms.

He goes on to state "so far as Caste and Varna are concerned, not only the Shastras do not permit the Hindu to use his reason in the decision of the question, but also they have taken care to see that no occasion is left to examine rationally the foundations of his belief."⁵⁹ He thus discusses how Shastras prohibit self-reflection

⁵⁰ "B.R. Ambedkar." Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation, 5th October, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/B._R._Ambedkar -- B R. Ambedkar.

⁵¹ "Dr. B.R. Ambedkar on Brahmanism." Velivada. com, 22nd August, 2017, <https://velivada.com/2017/08/22/dr-babasaheb-ambedkar-brahmanism> .

⁵² Dr. B.R. Ambedkar on Brahmanism." Velivada. com, 22nd August, 2017, <https://velivada.com/2017/08/22/dr-babasaheb-ambedkar-brahmanism>

⁵³ Dr. B.R. Ambedkar on Brahmanism." Velivada. com, 22nd August, 2017, <https://velivada.com/2017/08/22/dr-babasaheb-ambedkar-brahmanism>

⁵⁴ Dr. B.R. Ambedkar on Brahmanism." Velivada. com, 22nd August, 2017, <https://velivada.com/2017/08/22/dr-babasaheb-ambedkar-brahmanism>

⁵⁵ Dr. B.R. Ambedkar on Brahmanism." Velivada. com, 22nd August, 2017, <https://velivada.com/2017/08/22/dr-babasaheb-ambedkar-brahmanism>

⁵⁶ Dr. B.R. Ambedkar on Brahmanism." Velivada. com, 22nd August, 2017, <https://velivada.com/2017/08/22/dr-babasaheb-ambedkar-brahmanism>

⁵⁷ Dr. B.R. Ambedkar on Brahmanism." Velivada. com, 22nd August, 2017, <https://velivada.com/2017/08/22/dr-babasaheb-ambedkar-brahmanism>

⁵⁸ B.R. Ambedkar. "Annihilation of Caste: An Undelivered Speech." Arnold Publishers, 1936.

⁵⁹ B.R. Ambedkar. "Annihilation of Caste: An Undelivered Speech." Arnold Publishers, 1936.

for Hindus and thereby stalls their growth as humans.⁶⁰ It colonized the minds of people and justified oppression and thus kept them away from the genuine core of humanity where man treats the other as equal and does not oppress them but helps in making his surrounding a better place.

While Ambedkar realized the problem of Colonialism he also knew that mere political freedom from it without social freedom from the menace of caste would not lead to the liberation of the masses. It is for this reason he argued for freedom from the thralldom of Shastras and thereby annihilation of caste itself or otherwise, Indians would remain unfree as long as Caste pervaded their conscience.

However, towards the end of his life, Ambedkar had realized that Brahmanism was engraved in the consciousness of caste Hindus who were reluctant to contest it as they were benefitting from the privileges it gave them. Thus, Ambedkar converted to Buddhism along with other people of the Depressed Class as this was a religion devoid of caste and all men would be treated as equals here.

Nevertheless, in Independent India, Ambedkar contributed to the drafting of the Indian Constitution and it is because of his efforts against the caste system and his contribution to drafting our constitution that caste-based discrimination was criminalized in the constitution of independent India. Thus, he made efforts for equality through constitutional morality in independent India. He attempted to protect the Self of the lowered castes by giving them constitutional safeguards against caste-based discrimination.

However, the problem of Self-knowledge and Self-expression persists in post-independence India even when constitutionally we have been granted the freedom from all oppressive ties and freedom to pursue our aspirations but the rigid control of the caste system continues to hold sway over the full actualization of spontaneous true Self as we see in various instances of brutal violence against Dalits in all parts of India. The reason behind this is that the Caste system pervades our consciousness and deflects any opportunity of Self-reflection where we realize the uniqueness of our Self and allow others to do the same.

Realization of the Self in Post-Independence India:

The realization of the Self is attained through breaking the chains of oppression, through love where the individuality of each is respected, and with engaging in productive and spontaneous work that expresses our integrated personality and does not aim at acquiring power or wealth but enjoys the work as a part of the Self. The further we go from such a Self, the nearer we come to mechanisms of escape such as majoritarian, authoritarian, and populist regimes that remove our anxieties on questions regarding the Self. However, this comes with a price. We surrender the dignity and integrity of the Self and lose it and in the process, we do not even shy away from oppressing those we consider inferior to ourselves and thereby indulging in sadistic strivings.

It is for this reason that in India we face a Majoritarian State which suppresses the minorities, the lowered castes and any sources of dissent. The farther caste and patriarchy took us from ourselves in our post-colonial State in India, the more we became prone to accepting such a Majoritarian State. At the root of this lies the frustrations of unfulfilled life in a country as poor as ours and thus we see joblessness, caste and gender-based brutalities and Self-knowledge and Self-expression becomes an even more difficult task in such harsh conditions in India. Thus, we accept a State that promises to 'heal our wounds' by inflicting wounds on others. Our own unfulfilled lives make us deflect from Self-introspection and knowledge and indulge in sadistic and masochistic strivings and believing in post-truth 'realities' which are not true but convenient.

Conclusion and Solution to Problems of Lack of Self-Knowledge:

⁶⁰ B.R. Ambedkar. "Annihilation of Caste: An Undelivered Speech." Arnold Publishers, 1936.

Self-knowledge offers us the solution to problems of Totalitarian regimes, Colonial empires, and the Majoritarian States of our times. The importance of Self-knowledge has been discussed in various ways by Fromm, Fanon, Gandhi and Ambedkar. Fromm discusses how the main task of the man is to give birth to his Self and for this Fromm states “ the individual has no choice but to unite himself with the world in the spontaneity of love or productive work or else to seek a kind of security by such ties with the world as destroying his freedom and the integrity of his individual self.”⁶¹ Thus, man has to engage with reality with the uniqueness of his self and only then can he live a fulfilled life where he does not surrender to any oppressive power. Fanon on the other hand introduces us to the different reality of colonized Nations that face cultural, societal, political and individual displacement and violence and thus he argues for gaining the subjectivity of the oppressed Self through organized resistance that involves masses from all spheres of the Nation and only then an effective resistance can be given to the violence of Colonialism and liberation can be achieved.⁶² This subjectivity is essential for the realization of the uniqueness of the Self. Gandhi discusses the Colonized India and argues for Self-knowledge, Self-discipline, non-violence and Self-sufficiency as forms of resistance to the excesses of the colonial regime.⁶³ Ambedkar on the other hand states the importance of ending the thralldom of Shastras that gives legitimacy to the Brahmanical caste system. He knew how caste denied his integrity to the individual and realization of the potential of his Self.⁶⁴ Therefore, Ambedkar made efforts to overcome this.

Thus, we now know how the Self needs to engage in the spontaneity of work and life and not just pursue greed and power but work on the realization of his uniqueness and in leading a fulfilled life. A society consisting of such Self-realized individuals would defeat oppressive regimes and brute power. I would like to conclude with the words of Mahatma Gandhi “**Swaraj or Self-government means continuous effort to be independent of government control, whether it is foreign government or whether it is national. Swaraj government will be sorry affair if people look up to it for the regulation of every detail of life... real Swaraj will come not by acquisition of authority by a few but by acquisition of capacity by all to resist authority when it is abused. In other words, Swaraj is to be attained by educating the masses to a sense of their capacity to regulate and control authority... it means consciousness in every villager that he is maker of his own destiny.**”⁶⁵

⁶¹ Fromm, Erich. “Fear of Freedom.” Routledge and Keagen Paul, 1942. (Chapter 1, pp 18.)

⁶² Frantz Fanon. “The Wretched of the Earth.” Grove Press, 1961.

⁶³ M.K. Gandhi. “Hind Swaraj and Other Writings, With an Introduction by Anthony Parel.” Cambridge University Press, 1997.

⁶⁴ B.R. Ambedkar. “Annihilation of Caste: An Undelivered Speech.” Arnold Publishers, 1936.

⁶⁵ M.K. Gandhi. “The Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi: The Voice of Truth.” Navjivan Publishing House, 1968. (pp. 441, 454.)

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