Ambedkar and Kanshi Ram: A Comparative Study of Ideology on Caste Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This paper is an attempt to identify and contextualise the idea of Dr. Ambedkar and Manyavar Kanshi Ram to the overarching context of Indian environment on caste perspective. The contribution of Dr. Ambedkar to understand the complexities of Indian society has acquired greater prominence in contemporary India. His ideas and works offer and reflect solutions to several problems of India. It is also examine the idea of caste and caste identity on ecological and caste assertion among Dalits for social mobilization. This study trace to the differentiation and nature of perception on caste in modern India and document the essence of caste and caste identity, ideas of both thinkers in connecting the relation between their own ideologies.

Key Words : Ambedkar, Bahujan, Caste Identity, Dalit assertion, Mobilization, Ideologies

INTRODUCTION

Babasaheb Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, the Chief Architect of Indian Constitution was a scholar par excellence, a philosopher, a visionary, an emancipator and a true nationalist. He led a number of social movements to secure human rights to the oppressed and depressed sections of the society and did much for emancipation of women, labor class as well. He stands as a symbol of struggle for social justice. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar thoughts and ideologies has reflected significant importance in tracing the history and growth of social, political, economic, democratic and concept of social justice thought in India. Babasaheb Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar initiated the Dalit movements in western India and Manyavar Kanshi Ram led the Bahujan movement in north and central India, two outstanding leaders of the Dalit movement, Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar and Manyavar Kanshi Ram, may have fought for the same things but could not have been more different.

The major difference in perceptions and visions of both the Dalit ideologue may be observed in their views of caste and emancipatory political actions. Ambedkar wanted the annihilation of caste. However, Bahujan Politics, which Kanshi Ram developed in Uttar Pradesh, was different from Ambedkar concept and was based on awakening the Dalits towards the restoration of their caste identity and self-esteem. Manyavar Kanshi Ram said, about in 1962-63 when I got the opportunity to read Ambedkar’s book Annihilation of Cast then I also felt that it is perhaps possible to eradicate casteism from the society. But later on when I studied the caste system and its behavior in depth, gradually there was a modification in my thoughts. I have not only gained knowledge about caste from the books but from my personal life too. After understanding its functions in Indian society, I have stopped thinking about the annihilation of caste. The late founder of the BSP said this himself as, Ambedkar learnt from the books but I have learnt from my own life and people. He used to gather books, I tried to gather people.

In this study we focused on ideologies of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar and Manyavar Kanshi Ram beings at all levels of perception like socio-political, economic, democratic, philosophical, educational, empowerment of women,
labour class and Dalit. The study seeks to resemble and differentiate the ideological gap between both mentor ideologies.

The purpose of my research paper is to focus on the ideologies of Dr. Ambedkar and Manyavar Kanshi Ram with special reference to differentiation. It will explore the actual theme of change in ideology how Dr. Ambedkar were reflective in some ways compared to Manyavar Kanshi Ram, this research will provide the knowledge about reasons how Manyavar Kanshi Ram were differ in some thought of perception in caste genesis and its consolidation in society.

**Idea of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar on Caste and its Perception:**

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar in Annihilation of Caste, tried not only as crusader against the caste system, but a valiant fighter for the cause of the downtrodden in India as well, but he is also considered to be an elder statesman and national leader whose contribution in the form of the Constitution of India will be cherished forever by posterity. In fact his fight for human rights and as an emancipator of all those enslaved in the world gave him international recognition as a liberator of humanity from injustice, social and economic. According to him, an ideal society should be mobile, should be full of channels for conveying a change taking place in one part to other parts. In an ideal society there should be many interests consciously communicated and shared. There should be varied and free points of contact with other modes of association. In other words there should be social endosmosis. This is fraternity, which is only another name for democracy. Democracy is not merely a form of Government; attitude of respect and reverence towards fellowmen. - Dr. B. R. Ambedkar in Annihilation of Caste.

The caliber of Manyavar Kanshi Ram to capture the state power used to call himself an opportunist being was contrary to Dr. Ambedkar who focuses on means while for Kanshi Ram it was the end which was most important for emancipation of Dalits as to accomplish his agenda B.S.P. Party made government with BJP three times and answered his critiques, argumentum that during that period the BSP had further strengthen its political agenda and increased its vote percentage from 10 to 20 per cent while the BJP only maintained its earlier vote percentage, to the charge of his being opportunistic, he replied that, he did not believe in the status quo but in continuously change his position. He left his family in 1960s and declared that the Bahujan of this country would be his family. He never wanted any post and never married for the cause of the people of this country.

Kanshi Ram was a sharp learner and understood well the contradictions of our society and different castes. He was simple in his approach and was never a rebel rouser in the public. He spoke from his heart and did not hide his personality behind the garb of artificial arguments and fictitious propaganda. His focus was more on the community and its empowerment through political action. One thing which many of Ambedkarite blame him was not really following Buddhism as a precondition for changing the system. Even when technically Kanshi Ram did not embrace Buddhism yet none can actually say that they followed ‘Hindu rituals’. In fact, the most positive aspect of Kanshi Ram was that he never ever believed in Brahmanical rituals and was totally committed to the cause of Dalit empowerment through political action. His experiments with the most marginalized communities in Uttar-Pradesh, is an example for other to follow.

Ambedkar was theoretical but Kanshi Ram was practical, Kanshi Ram as activist, organizer and leader can best be characterized by his drive to make our democracy more diverse and more responsive to Dalits and other unprivileged sections of society. It may be too early to fully assess his role and contribution; however, there is enough evidence to speculate about his legacy. Kanshi Ram fulfilled a vacant role in the long history of Dalit struggles that even B.R. Ambedkar was unable to fulfill. He successfully transformed Dalit society into a political force and thereby also fundamentally transformed the character of Indian politics. He not only raised the aspirations of Dalits to include the capture of political power but also demonstrated that this was possible through his leadership of the Bahujan Samaj Party. Kanshi Ram brought to fruition the unrealised vision of Ambedkar. However, in making this dream possible, Kanshi Ram made radical departures from our received understandings of the supposedly natural character, not just of Dalit, but of Indian politics. There is no doubt that Kanshi Ram was inspired by the idea of mobilizing the Bahujan of Indian society (Dalit, Tribal, OBC and Muslims, 85 Percent majority the as-so called Bhujan).

Ambedkar and Kanshi Ram-so alike, yet so different, Ambedkar provided an ethical context to the politics of Dalit liberation since morality was very important to him. Kanshi Ram chose to be pragmatic in

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his attempt to politically empower Dalits. He was unmindful of the means of acquiring political power, emphasizing the end, i.e. attainment of political power. If he was criticized for his ‘opportunism’ he used to immediately reply that if Brahmins can become influential by being opportunistic then Dalits too could use opportunism to empower themselves. Kanshi Ram believed that until a casteless society was formed it was necessary for Dalits to strategically use their caste as a tool in their own emancipation and to dethrone Brahmanism. While Ambedkar saw the abolition of the caste system as vital for Dalit emancipation, Kanshi Ram and favoured the awakening of Dalit and backward identities in order to link these with the Bahujan movement. Kanshi Ram transformed Ambedkar’s slogan, abolish the caste system propagated in his book, Annihilation of Caste into promote the caste system to mobilize Dalit towards the restoration of their caste identity and self-esteem.

Idea of Manyavar Kanshi Ram on Caste and its Perception:

Kanshi Ram was a true visionary who reinvented the ideological baggage that he inherited from Ambedkar. He was not afraid of redrawing and rethinking the nature and character of Dalit politics to take corrective measures on the way to achieving political power. Ambedkar initiated the movements and mobilizations for Dalit emancipation in western India and Manyavar Kanshi Ram led the Bahujan movement in north and central India. The Bahujan movement, as reflected in the formation of the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and its noteworthy success in previous elections in Uttar Pradesh, is most of the time understood as merely an extension of Ambedkar ideas and politics. We usually do not pay attention to the underlying variations and difference of perceptions, visions and strategies in the ideas and political actions of Dr. Ambedkar and Kanshi Ram. During the 1980s, when Kanshi Ram was sowing the seeds of BSP politics in Uttar Pradesh, he too associated himself with Ambedkar articulation. Both were of the view that political power is the master key through which one can open all the doors of progress and recognition, and to achieve this, it was very important for the Dalits to unite.

Manyavar Kanshi Ram a leader despite the fact that the leader himself never liked the term Dalit in his entire life. According to Kanshi Ram, as himself writes, Ambedkar called the politics of emancipation of marginalized groups Dalit movement while Kanshi Ram preferred term it the Bahujan movement avoiding the use of the word Dalit. The journey of Kanshi Ram, from a Ramdasia family in Punjab to Poona, as a research assistant in Explosive Research and Development Laboratory in 1958 does not stop here. Rather it was the land of Ambedkar where he started his political expedition. Author himself writes that later when he was working in Poona, Kanshi Ram saw and understood the plight of Dalits in India, which awakened in him the recognition of his own Dalit Identity. From then he started travelling the entire country with bicycle to comprehend and mobilize the subjugated people of this country. He not only passed from Kanyakumari to Kashmir but also paved his visit to the North. It would be interesting to see the sacrifices of conventional political parties and their leaders in comparison to the sacrifice of Manyavar Kanshi Ram. The most fascinating and provoking facet is the ideological divergence between Dr. Ambedkar and Kanshi Ram’s Politics and philosophy. Manyavar Kanshi Ram was the true follower of his predecessor but he devised his own stratagem and philosophy on the basis of his own pan Indian experience. He thoroughly read Ambedkar but in his political formulations he made the political statement of Ambedkar political power as the master key his most important schema.

In his schema of seeking power Manyavar Kanshi Ram being seemed to be against annihilation of caste as, transformed the slogan abolish caste system into promote caste system to mobilize Dalit for the restoration of their caste identity and self-esteem. Ethics and morality, conversion to Buddhism, separate electorate and reservation were the few areas where Kanshi Ram was not only against Ambedkar but also very innovative in defining the Dalits and their identity. He wanted to change the psyche of Dalits from very humble support seeking Dalits to a very assertive and helping to others. Manyavar Kanshi Ram idea was to transform society into a Samatamulak (egalitarian) society, with each caste seen as equal and having its own caste identity, and this was the philosophical underpinning of BSP. In short, the vertical pyramid structure of caste system should be drawn in horizontal line. So he came up with concept of politicizing the caste consciousness of marginalized communities.

Manyavar Kanshi Ram did not only offer the fearless critique to mainstream political formulations but he also not spare the Dalit’s leadership. He lamented in his only and famous book, The Chamcha Age: An Era of Stooges.
According to Manyavar Kanshi Ram, these were the Chamchas (stooges or agents) created by mainstream political parties to oppose and compete with the genuine champions of the Dalits cause.

Kanshi Ram viewed caste as a double-edged sword and he wanted to use it in a way that benefited the Bahujans but destroyed Brahminical hegemony. He wanted to rouse the consciousness of the Dalit and backward classes and believed in associating them with Bahujan society. However, he disagreed with Ambedkar’s demand for a separate electorate for Dalits even though, like Ambedkar, he too wanted Dalits to attain respectability and glory in mainstream society. Kanshi Ram’s idea was to transform society into a Samtamuluk (egalitarian) society with all castes seen as equal and each having its own caste identity. This dream of a Samtamuluk society was the philosophical underpinning of the BSP. Kanshi Ram’s and by consequence of the BSP ideology was based on Ambedkar’s theory of the origin of the Dalits (arising from a Aryan Non-Aryan difference). But crucially, Ambedkar had refused to accept Manu as the founder of the caste system in India while Kanshi Ram gave Indian politics the new concept of Manuvad (conceptual ideology of Manu). Kanshi Ram always kept in mind Ambedkar’s motto that political power was the master-key for Dalit liberation and that acquiring this master-key should be the Dalit war-strategy. But he used to say that Ambedkar learnt from books while he had learnt from his own life and people. He further said he used to gather books; I tried to collect people.

The propaganda of Kanshi Ram was not merely of mobilization and criticism of Manuvaadi lobby and its stooges but he also devised many strategies to dig out the affirmative plan of action pertaining to Dalits and subaltern classes being used as political resources to instill the confidence among wretched masses. Along with these he also instructed to collect information from the various castes about their caste history, caste heroes, and their sect (Panthis) Gurus like Saint Ravi Das, Saint Kabir, and Swami Narayan. It is interesting to see that how those castes which were once the untouchable, unspeakable and un-see able have now become the tools to capture the state power that reminds of Mao-Tse Tung of China wherein he used his vast population as a positive tool to mobilize against the imperialist power to make a poor China into a hunger-free China.

In his speeches, Kanshi Ram always asserted that the sapling of Dalit politics originated in Maharashtra but it grew and was nurtured in the soil of Uttar Pradesh. Ambedkar called the politics of emancipation of marginalized groups the Dalit movement while Kanshi Ram preferred to term it the Bahujan movement. He usually avoided using the word Dalit and said that Dalits have to give up their attitude of crying, begging and demanding. He said they have to become very strong and emancipate themselves from the vicious circle of Dalitness (to being a sense of Dalit) so that they could be charitable to others instead of demanding charity.

Ambedkar associated the emancipation of Dalits with their religious emancipation and because of this he quit the Hindu religion and embraced Buddhism on 14 October, 1956. On the contrary, Kanshi Ram said religious emancipation is only possible through political liberation. They were willing to convert to Buddhism only when the Bahujans acquire power in the government. That is why in spite of using the symbols of Buddha in their politics; Kanshi Ram did not convert to Buddhism. One of the important reasons behind this was also that most of the rural Dalits of Uttar Pradesh are associated with medieval sects (Bhaktikaleen) such as the Ravidas Panth, Kabir Panth, and Shiv Narayani. The people of these sects believe in creating a space for themselves while residing in the cultural milieu of Hindu society. They will not be able to associate themselves with Buddhism. Somewhere Manyavar Kanshi Ram used to fear that this can spread discontentment among rural Dalits.

Comparison of Dr. Ambedkar and Manyavar Kanshi Ram on Caste Perception:

The ideological thought of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Manyavar Kanshi Ram is supposed to be considered pro contradictory to each other. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar used the caste and its eradication on the basis of ethical means and always tried to eradicate the caste from the society to be the egalitarian society while Manyavar Kanshi Ram used the caste as a means of instrument for emancipation of Dalits and to strengthen the political base of Dalits and capture the power in majority of society in Indian social strata unless the society become the egalitarian.

For the eradication of caste, Kanshi Ram believed in the strategy that the Dalits should use their caste as a tool for their emancipation. He felt that as long as a casteless society was not formed, caste would have to be used to dethrone Brahmanism. Kanshi Ram’s idea regarding Ambedkar’s demand for a separate state for Dalits was also different. He wanted the Dalits to attain...
a respectable and glorious position in mainstream society and that they should not be treated as a separate entity. Strategically and politically, there is a great similarity between Ambedkar’s and Kanshi Ram’s thoughts on politics. Both of them thought that the Dalit should organize themselves into such a political power that the influential political groups fail to get absolute majority. In that situation they would come to the Dalits for support. While Ambedkar based his Dalit politics on ethical and moral values, Kanshi Ram’s way of Dalit politics was practical and pragmatic in approach. He believed in using instruments of dominant groups which had been applied for centuries to oppress the marginalized.

**Conclusion:**
Ambedkar tried to provide an ethical context to the politics of Dalits liberation; for him morality was more important for the attainment of political goals. However, Kanshi Ram, in his political experiment, did not pay much heed to the means of acquiring a political regime but laid more emphasis on the end the attainment of political power. For him the end justified the means.

This paper does not envisage, suggesting the fact that the views of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Manyavar Kanshi Ram are same on caste and its perception. But it does suggest the fact that both the ideologue holds remarkable congruencial views on the sensitivity of caste and its perception in modern India. Both also hold similar views on genesis and development of caste since earlier times in Indian history as well. The differentiation of views is that of, Dr. Ambedkar applied the instrumentalism of means while Manyavar Kanshi Ram are supposed to be, being opted the path of intra inclusiveness of social framework infrastructure among Dalits as ends and also Dalits were being mobilized by due efforts of Manyavar Kanshi Ram in Indian ecology of tradition society in post-dependence era which was being propelled by inspirational series led by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar in Pre-Independence era.

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Building on the author’s previous works discussing Gramsci’s and Ambedkar’s political philosophies in favor of subalterns and Dalits as well as the concept of ‘spirituality’ through which they affirm their full humanity, this essay more. Building on the author’s previous works discussing Gramsci’s and Ambedkar’s political philosophies in favor of subalterns and Dalits as well as the concept of ‘spirituality’ through which they affirm their full humanity, this essay explores their envisaged role of education in allowing the excluded to achieve participation in the democratic process. However, there is not a single study that analyses the international outlook of Ambedkar. Kanshi Ram was born to a Ravidasia Sikh family of Chamar caste on 15 March 1934 in Ropar district, Punjab, British India. Some sources say his birthplace was the village of Pirthipur Bunga and others that it was Khawaspur village. After studies at various local schools, Ram graduated in 1956 with a BSc degree from Government College Ropar. Career. Kanshi Ram joined the offices of the Explosive Research and Development Laboratory in Pune under the government's scheme of affirmative action. Kanshi Ram strongly inspired by B. R. Ambedkar and his philosophy. Ram initially supported the Republican Party of India (RPI) but became disillusioned with its cooperation with the Indian National Congress. The ideological differences between Kanshi Ram and Ambedkar arose mainly from their education and backgrounds. While Ambedkar studied at Columbia University and was trained in Western knowledge tradition, Kanshi Ram was born in a small village in Punjab and trained in the school of Pune's Dalit politics. Kanshi Ram's political arguments in favour of Dalits on the other hand merged historical and mythological contexts. Kanshi Ram and Mayawati transformed Ambedkar's 'abolish the caste system' into 'promote the caste system' to mobilise Dalits towards the restoration of their caste identity and self-esteem. Ambedkar, hailing from an untouchable caste background, was the pioneer in teaching the untouchables the art of using political weapons for the betterment of their conditions. Through his scholarly works and social and political struggles, Ambedkar challenged the Brahminical order of society and sought to uphold the basic human rights of the depressed classes. E.V. Ramasami's contributions were no less significant. The imprint of his struggles are to be found in the social and political spheres of the Tamil region in southern India. It is this area of comparative study that this book primarily deals with. The book analyses the relevance of their struggles in the context of contemporary conditions, noting the diverse trends in the post-Ambedkar and post-Periyar dalit struggles.