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### 'Dr. B. R. Ambedkar and Different Dimensions to Social Change'

On

09<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> September 2017

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## **Parvati Temple and Kalaram Temple Entry Satyagraha : A Step towards Dalit Emancipation**

**Prashant Vasant Ransure**

Arts, Science and Commerce College, Ozer (Mig), Nashik.

"I like the religion that teaches liberty, equality and fraternity."

- Dr.B.R.Ambedkar

"Man and morality must be the centre of religion. If not, Religion is a cruel superstition."

- Dr.B.R.Ambedkar

The two temple entry one in Poona at Parvati on 16<sup>th</sup> October 1929 and another at Kalaram Mandir in Nashik on 2<sup>nd</sup> march 1930, were considered to be the landmark in the Dalit emancipatory movement, these temple entries, are not just for getting right for worshipping the Hindu god and goddesses but it is a symbol of the emancipatory movement of the depressed people, it serves as a symbol of achieving freedom in every dimension, of social endeavour. These two temple entries set landmark examples in Indian history for the emancipation of the depressed classes from the clutches of slavery, inhumanness and bigotry by high caste people, and a step towards gaining human rights.

Inspired by the Mahad satyagraha there were two temple entry satyagraha efforts in 1929 – one in Kali Temple, Kapilmuni, Khulana in Bengal ( July 9, 1929 ) and another one in the Parvati Temple, Pune. Ambedkar took "Religion to mean the propounding of an ideal scheme of divine governance the aim and object of which is to make the social order in which men live a moral order"<sup>1</sup>.

According to Ambedkar, the philosophy of religion involves the of three dimensions, the first being religion to mean theology, both of which deal with the highest metaphysical abstractions and divine revelations. The second element of the philosophy of religion is to know the ideal scheme for which a religion stands and justifies it. The third element of the philosophy of religion is to adopt the principle for judging the value of the ideal scheme of divine governance<sup>2</sup>. From time to time, a religion must be put on trial. "By what criterion shall it be judged?" The criterion, for him, was some sort of revolution, which took place in the field of science, philosophy of religion. In fact, a revolution could change the authority and contents of a relation. The revolutions of scientific nature during the Middle Ages diminished the divinity of religion and the authority of church<sup>3</sup>. There was a time when religion had covered almost the entire field of knowledge such as Biology, Psychology, Geology and Medicine. Religion claimed infallibility over whatever it taught. But bit by bit, the vast empire of religion was destroyed because of religious insurrection that had taken place in the history of some religions. For examples, the Copernicus Revolution freed Astronomy from the domination of religions and the Darwinian Revolution freed Biology and Geology from the trammels of religion. Religious revolution at times becomes a great blessing,



for it establishes 'freedom of thought', and it enables society to assume control of itself dispelling most of the fears and superstitions that people used to face earlier<sup>4</sup>.

From among the revolutions of various kinds, Ambedkar considered 'Religious Revolution' to be the most significant and immense one, because "that revolution touches the nature and content of ruling conceptions of the relations of God to man, of society to man and of man to man... that it has brought about a complete transformation in the nature of religions as it is to be taken by savage society and by civilised society although very few seem to be aware of it'. In other words, the religious revolution results in far-reaching changes, because it is always a revolution in the norms of the socio-moral life of the people as Ambedkar considered it to be. Ambedkar's philosophy of religion, in my opinion, encompasses and examines the following ideas: (i) That all religions are true and equally good; (ii) That God is an essential element of a religion; (iii) That religion must necessarily nourish a scheme of divine governance, an ideal for society to follow; (vi) That the relation of morality to God and religion is necessary; (v) That the tests of justice and social utility to judge the relevance of a religion must be applied; and (vii) That whether or not a religion should be based on rules<sup>5</sup>.

### **Parvati Temple Satyagraha**

In the Public meeting organised in Mumbai, to extend support to 'Parvati Temple entry Satyagraha in Poona' (October 16, 1929). Dr. Ambedkar explained in brief a history of Satyagraha in Poona and emphasized that it is the pious duty of every person from the depressed classes to support this Satyagraha in every possible way. He asked the gathering whether they were ready to go to Poona for the Satyagraha if it was needed, which were responded by the public with huge response. Addressing this gathering Dr. Ambedkar said:

"That there are people who are advising the Depressed Classes to have policy of wait and watch for the change in the attitude of the upper Castes and Class.' For the change in the temperament, i.e to feel compassion for the untouchables. What a deplorable advice! On the one hand the Congress has given the ultimatum to the British that if the Dominion status is not granted by December 31, 1929, they will sever all relations with the British government. On the other hand, these same people are advising the depressed classes people, to wait and watch for getting human rights and social freedom. I wonder if this is not a deception! Clearly this is the meanness of the upper castes that they have not granted social freedom to the Depressed Classes despite a wait for thousands of years. And now, again they are advising us to 'wait'. This is nothing but their sweetened deception. But the depressed classes are no longer so ignorant that they will become prey to such cunning of the upper castes. The untouchables have become now dignified and awakened and the "Poona Satyagraha' is the proof of it; in Mumbai also the untouchables have firmly resolved to start the Satyagraha for temple entry. Dr. Ambedkar advised the depressed classes that they had the right to protest against any kind of exploitation<sup>6</sup>.

### **Kalaram Temple Satyagraha**

The next stage of Dr. Ambedkar's mass movement came in the form of temple entry agitation at the Kalaram Temple at Nasik. A call was issued to untouchables all over the Maharashtra to come to Nasik on March 1, 1930 and assert their right to worship Lord Ram in the Kala Ram Temple. Thousands of untouchables flocked to Nashik in response to Dr. Ambedkar's call. The



mass movement initiated by Dr. Ambedkar gathered further impetus.

In the public meeting, Dr. Ambedkar explained the purpose of the struggle and recounted his efforts towards peaceful negotiations.

Dr. Ambedkar said that "we will not die if we are not allowed to enter the temple, nor are we going to be immortalized by gaining entry. We are fighting for equal rights as human beings, and we are not going to accept anything less he said to thunderous applause".

It was in this year that Mahatma Gandhi as the generalissimo of the Congress inaugurated his great movement for the liberation of the country on March 12, 1930, and transformed the whole country into a theatre of passive resistance, vast crowds facing battalions of mounted police, rounds of firing and terms of jail life.

Ten days before the Dandi March of Gandhi, Ambedkar, the father of Indian social unrest, launched his temple entry movement at Nasik. Arrangements for this movement had been going on for over three months. Dr. Ambedkar was guiding, inspiring and organising it from Bombay through his letters and lieutenants. The Depressed Classes at Nasik had formed a Satyagraha Committee and through its Secretary, Bhaurao Gaikwad, informed the Trustees of the famous Kalaram Temple that they would launch Satyagraha, if the Trustees did not throw the temple open to the Untouchable Hindus before a particular date. Simultaneously, a clarion call was issued to the Depressed Classes to come to Nasik to assert their right of worshipping Shree Rama in the said temple. In response to this call of the Satyagraha Committee, about 15,000 volunteers and representatives assembled in a specially erected pandal in the Depressed Classes locality at Nasik. Notable among those present were Deorao Naik, Rajbhoj, Pradhan, Shivtarkar, Patitpavandas and B.G. Kher<sup>7</sup>.

At last the day of action dawned. It was Sunday, March 2, 1930. In the morning at ten, a Conference was held under the Presidentship of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar in the pandal to consider the situation and adopt ways and means for launching the Satyagraha.'

Dr. Ambedkar put forward a thought-provoking speech about the entry of Kalaram Temple. He said, "Today, we are about to enter the Temple. But the entry in the Temple would not solve the whole problem. Our problem is comprehensive. It is political, social, religious, economic, educational etc.' The issue of Kalaram Temple entry is an appeal to the Hindu mind. The high caste Hindus deprived us from the far ages. Whether the same Hindus are willing to grant our humanitarian rights will be the question raised by this Temple entry Satyagraha. Whether the Hindu mind is willing to accept us as human beings, this is the question to be tested through this Satyagraha. This *Satyagraha* is one of the efforts for bringing about a change of heart among the high Caste Hindus. Hence the success of this effort depends on the Hindu mind-set.

Our real problem is not going to be solved by entry into the Ram Temple. It will not bring about any radical change in our life. Nevertheless, this is a test to judge the high caste Hindu mind. Whether the Hindu mind is willing to accept the elevated aspirations of the new era that "man must be treated as man; he must be given humanitarian rights; human dignity should be established, is going to be tested. In order to achieve this goal, we have launched this Satyagraha. The main question is whether the high caste Hindus are going to consider these aspects and act accordingly.

We know that in this temple resides God made of stone. By having a mere glance at him or by worshipping him, our problem will not be solved completely. Millions of people might have visited



this temple and have had a glance at the god up till now. However, who would say that their basic problem was solved by this act? We know this. But our Satyagraha today is an effort to bring about a change of heart among the Hindus. With this principled position we are launching this Satyagraha.' 1 "At noon the Conference adjourned and again met at half past one.

At three in the afternoon, the congregation divided itself into batches of four extending itself over a mile-long procession. It was the biggest procession in the history of Nasik. At the head played a band after the military style redolent of the association of many of the Depressed Class members with military life. Then followed a batch of scouts. Behind them walked about 500 women Satyagrahis showing a revolutionary change in their outlook; and they were followed by a multitude of processionists enthused with an exalted spirit, but walking with a full sense of discipline, order and determination. As soon as the procession came up to the eastern gate of the temple, the District Magistrate, the Police Superintendent and the City Magistrate moved towards the gate of the temple. As all the gates of the temple were closed, the processionists proceeded to the Godawari Ghat. There the procession transformed itself into a meeting.

At eleven O'clock that night, the leaders again discussed the issue in all its aspects and decided to launch a non-violent struggle before the gates of the temple. This historic struggle thus commenced on the morning of March 3, 1930. The first batch of 125 men and 25 women was posted at the four gates of the temple, and over 8,000 enlisted Satyagrahis were awaiting their turn. But the gates of the temple were closed and barricaded. While the Satyagrahis squatted at the entrance, chanting hymns and singing bhajans, crowds of Untouchables numbering over 3,000 gathered in their vicinity; but the police were on the alert and kept them on the move. A strong force of armed police was posted at each gate. Two First Class Magistrates were on duty at the place since early morning to meet any emergency. Reynolds, the Police Superintendent, had shifted his office to a tent pitched right in front of the temple.

The touchables, too, were precluded from entering the temple as the gates remained closed, and their leaders were deliberating behind closed doors to find a way out of the impasse. A difficult situation would have developed had the gates been opened to the Caste Hindus. At night, a public meeting of the citizens of Nasik was held under the Presidentship of Dr. Kurtakoti, the Shankaracharya, but it ended in pandemonium due to the predominance of the orthodox people.

The Satyagraha struggle continued for about a month. April 9 dawned. It was the day of the chariot procession of the image of Rama. A compromise was patched up between the Caste Hindus and the Untouchables. It was decided that strong men from both sides should draw the chariot. Thousands of people assembled at noon near the main gate of the temple to see the sight. Dr. Ambedkar, with his choice gymnasts, stood near the gate. But before they could touch the chariot, they were engaged in broils by the riotous element of the Caste Hindus, and the Caste Hindus ran away with the chariot, as secretly planned, through a street, narrow, thorny and inconvenient on either side, and the mouth of which was guarded by armed police. A daring Bhandari youth by the name of Kadrekar broke the cordon of the armed police who were awaiting orders to fire, and in a moment crowds of Untouchables pursued the chariot amidst showers of stones and captured it. Dangerously wounded, Kadrekar fell down in a pool of blood. Dr. Ambedkar was protected by his men and as the umbrellas that protected his person were shattered, he too, received minor injuries. There was free fighting between groups



of Untouchables and Caste Hindus all over the city. This Satyagraha provoked considerable ill-feeling in the minds of the orthodox Hindus throughout the District. As a result of this tension children of the Untouchables were thrown out of schools, roads were closed to them, and necessities of life were denied to them in the market because they claimed equal rights with all other Hindus. Untouchables in several villages were maltreated. Despite these sufferings, the struggle at Nasik was paid. Attempts were being made to persuade both the parties to reach a compromise. Dr. Moonje and Dr. Kurtakoti the Shankaracharya, were trying to reach a settlement. The great multi-millionaire Birla also saw Dr. Ambedkar in Bombay in the middle of April 1930. But so firm was the resolve of the Depressed Classes that orthodox Hindus had to keep the famous temple closed for a whole year and the agitation continued.' Dr. B. R. Ambedkar had written two letters to His Excellency Governor of Bombay regarding the problems created by the bureaucracy during Kala Ram Temple entry Satyagrah at Nasik<sup>9</sup>.

### **"WHY NASIK TEMPLE SATYAGRAHA WAS GIVEN UP**

#### **"No Longer Needed"**

Nasik, November 19, 1934

Before a mammoth gathering of over 15,000 members of the Depressed Classes who assembled at Vinchur on the occasion of the 11<sup>th</sup> day death ceremonies of the late Mr. Dhondiba Runkhambe of Vinchur, Dr. Ambedkar made an important political pronouncement. He said he had been repeatedly asked why the Kalaram Temple Entry Movement had been suspended for the last two years. The only reason, he explained was that such a move was no longer needed. This, he said, may appear strange and surprising, coming as it did from the author of the temple entry Satyagraha. The Temple Entry Movement, he explained, was started because he felt that was the best way of energizing the Depressed Classes and making them conscious of their position. He believed that, he had achieved that purpose and therefore he had no more use for temple entry. Instead he strongly advised the Depressed Classes to concentrate their energy and resources on politics. Since in the coming Reforms they would be called upon to play an important part in moulding their own political future and, thus, their own standard. Concluding, he paid warm tributes to the Nasik Temple Entry Satyagrahis who he said, had not only awakened their brethren and made them realise their true position in Hindu Society but had also aroused deep sympathy towards the Depressed Classes throughout the civilised world. He also stressed the necessity of educating their children.' The Satyagraha at the Kala-Ram Temple situated in Nasik, a town in the Nasik District of the Bombay Presidency, was organised to establish the right of the Untouchables to enter Hindu temples. There were many minor Satyagrahas. Thousands of men and women from the Untouchables took part in these Satyagrahas. Both men and women belonging to the Untouchables were insulted and beaten. Many were injured and some were imprisoned by the Government on grounds of causing breach of the peace. This Satyagraha movement went on for full six years when it was brought to a close in 1935 at a Conference held in Yeola in Nasik District in which the Untouchables as a result of the adamant attitude of the Hindus in refusing to give them equal social rights resolved to go out of the Hindu fold. This Satyagraha movement was no doubt independent of the Congress. It was organised by the Untouchables, led by the Untouchables and financed by the Untouchables<sup>9</sup>.



### Conclusion

It is quite evident now that Ambedkar's philosophy of religion stands for the necessity of religion in society. Over a long period of social development, man has really become a 'religious being'. At present, religion has a hold on humanity. Besides, its spiritual aspects, religion gives us some secular ideals, and its power depends upon its power to confer material benefits to mankind. Although Dr. Ambedkar realised that 'to ignore Religion was to ignore a live wire'<sup>10</sup>. At the same time, he emphasised that: "Religion must not have multitude of commands and prohibitions, because such religion tends to deprive the moral life of freedom and spontaneity and tends to reduce it to a more or less anxious and servile conformity to externally imposed rules. He also disliked a Religion as a Law or as legalised class ethics as we find in some of the existing religions'.

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