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Untouchability and Struggle for Equality in Dr. Ambedkar's Waiting for Visa

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Abstract

Dr. Ambedkar was an Indian jurist, economist, politician and social reformer who inspired the Dalit Buddhist movement and campaigned against social discrimination. The chief purpose of Ambedkar's autobiography is to reveal to the world people the inner working system of hierarchy and traditional custom of untouchability exited in India. Dr. Ambedkar's Waiting for a Visa shows precisely its relevance to the present time and situation how the evil practice of untouchability affects and disturbs immorally the lower caste people in India. People of Dalit community are still being insulted and humiliated at large scale by the upper caste people under the immoral and traditional influence of the dictatorial and hierarchical system. Ambedkar's moral consciousness and correctness is thoroughly thematic conscience of Waiting for a Visa. As a true autobiographer, Ambedkar himself wrote his autobiographical account with his own hand before going to pressman for typing and publication. It discusses briefly the relevant matters of caste-prejudice and introduces judiciously objective observation of Ambedkar's painful experiences. It has been revealed from the author's point of view. The theme of untouchability is tied to loneliness with regard to Ambedkar and his brothers. He considers himself isolated and insecure. As a true autobiographer, Ambedkar himself wrote his autobiographical account with his own hand before going to pressman for typing and publication. It discusses briefly the relevant matters of caste-prejudice and introduces judiciously objective observation of Ambedkar's painful experiences. It has been revealed from the author's point of view. The theme of untouchability is tied to loneliness with regard to Ambedkar and his brothers. He considers himself isolated and insecure. The relationship between father and children is an important theme in the first chapter. Tension between life and death due to existence of untouchability is prominent. The theme of alienation appears evidently in autobiographer's life as he reveals that they were humiliated everywhere they tour.

Keywords-*Autobiography, Discrimination, Untouchability, Humiliation, Struggle*

Introduction

An autobiography is truly an actual, factual and historical portrayal of an author's life story authored by himself or herself, whereas a memoir is generally a story in which the writer writes his/her own memories from a particular time period. An autobiography consists of several segments of a great man's life while a memoir consists of one segment of a person's life. So an autobiography is comparatively lengthier than that of a memoir in a literary description. Since autobiography and memoir are constantly utilized identically, most of the people easily get confused in identifying them. Though these both literary forms are nonfiction in writing narration and are too much similar, yet both literary genres have distinctively a separate identity as a work of literature. The autobiographer, Ambedkar is exactly unbiased in judging and introducing factual experiences and actual events occurred in his life. Like a true autobiographer, Ambedkar authored his Waiting for a Visa in impartial and neutral technique of literary writing. On the one hand it is highly a subjective narrative of the author's individual life, on the other hand it is authentically an objective originality of Ambedkar's life and his other contemporary people's painful experience as the author introduces the same thematic concerns, existence of untouchability and its immoral and evil effects upon the innocent people in Indian national life.

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Waiting for a Visa is an unfinished autobiographical document written by B. R. Ambedkar during the period of 1935–36. The manuscript was published as a booklet, posthumously, on 19 March 1990, by the People's Education Society. The book consists of a brief introductory passage followed by six sections relating Ambedkar's experiences with untouchability, starting from his childhood. These sections are- A childhood journey to Goregaon becomes a nightmare, Back from the west, and unable to find lodging in Baroda, Pride, awkwardness and a dangerous accident in Chalisgaon, Polluting the water in the fort of Daulatabad, A doctor refuses to give proper care and a woman dies and a young clerk is abused and threatened until he gives up his job.

Untouchability and Struggle for Equality in Dr. Ambedkar's Waiting for Visa

Dr. Ambedkar was an Indian jurist, economist, politician and social reformer who inspired the Dalit Buddhist movement and campaigned against social discrimination. The chief purpose of Ambedkar's autobiography is to reveal to the world people the inner working system of hierarchy and traditional custom of untouchability exited in India. Since Colombia University of America makes out correctly the literary significance of Ambedkar's waiting for Visa, It is being taught as a text book in that of university that shows beyond doubt its justification at global level. Ambedkar's Waiting for a Visas how s precisely its relevance to the present time and situation how the evil practice of untouchability affects and disturbs immorally the lower caste people in India. People of Dalit community are still being insulted and humiliated at large scale by the upper caste people under the immoral and traditional influence of the dictatorial and hierarchical system. Ambedkar's moral consciousness and correctness is thoroughly thematic conscience of Waiting for Visa. As a true autobiographer, Ambedkar himself wrote his autobiographical account with his own hand before going to pressman for typing and publication. It discusses briefly the relevant matters of caste-prejudice and introduces judiciously objective observation of Ambedkar's painful experiences. It has been revealed from the author's point of view. The theme of untouchability is tied to loneliness with regard to Ambedkar and his brothers. He considers himself isolated and insecure. The relationship between father and children is an important theme in the first chapter. Tension between life and death due to existence of untouchability is prominent. The theme of alienation appears evidently in autobiographer's life as he reveals that they were humiliated everywhere they tour. The theme of name and identity emerges again in fourth chapter at the time when Ambedkar and his brothers were suffered much.

The title, "Waiting for a Visa" has exactly a metaphorical interpretation a government authentically issues "Visa" when the person is a formally approved citizen of a nation, so it signalizes that the nation will take complete custody of the safety and preservation of that person. Therefore the title Waiting for a Visa justifies its appropriateness show the Dalit society still hopes for dignified acceptance within other communities. The autobiographer states: 'Foreigners of course know of the existence of untouchability, but not being next door to it, so to say, they are unable to realize how oppressive it is in its actuality. It is difficult for them to understand how it is possible for a few untouchables to live on the edge of a village consisting of a large number of Hindus, go through the village daily to free it from the most disagreeable of its filth and to carry the errands of all.' The influences of Ambedkar's aunt on Ambedkar can be compared to the influences of Gandhi's mother on Gandhi. Like Ambedkar, Gandhi was greatly influenced by his own mother, Putlibai. In his autobiography, The Story of My Experiments with Truth, Gandhi writes: 'The outstanding impression of my mother has left on my memory is that of saintliness. She was deeply religious. She would not think of taking meals without her daily prayers. Going to Haveli the Vaishnava temple was one of her daily duties. 'Unlike Gandhi, Ambedkar remained deprived of his mother's love and affection in his childhood days. Ambedkar had the greatest source of inspiration and impression like his aunt's kindness. Similarly both Ambedkar and Gandhi were highly influenced by their family female members through their kindness and saintliness respectively. As an autobiography is a real record of a great man's goodness and badness, the autobiographer reveals his weakness. The author reveals the moral significance of being courageous in difficult times and situations. Ambedkar reveals: 'We mustered all the courage we possessed. We had travelled far from Masur. It was more that than three hours. But there was no sign of Koregaon. There arose a strange thought within us. We suspected that the cartman intended treachery, and that he was taking us to some lonely spot to kill us. We had lot of gold ornaments on us, and that helped to strengthen our suspicion.'

The second chapter of the autobiography narrates elaborately that Ambedkar returned to India from the west after completion of his studies and was unable to find his habitation to stay in Baroda. It narrates the deep rooted division that presented not only in Baroda but also in entire Indian societies. This painful division could be observed on the ground of castes and religions. Ambedkar records: My five years of staying in Europe and America had completely wiped out of my mind any consciousness that I was an untouchable and that an untouchable where never he went in India was a problem to him and to others. But when I came out of the station, my mind was considerably disturbed by a question, where to go? Ambedkar and the Parsi inn-officer made a compromise by which Ambedkar presented falsely his name as a Parsi, then he was allowed to stay in the inn. But on the eleventh day of his stay this fraud was cleverly discovered by other Parsi people. Undoubtedly, this untruth spoken by Ambedkar became the main cause of oppression and humiliation regarding his name and identity. A group of angry Parsi people that were with sticks reached the Parsi

The third chapter of the autobiography, Ambedkar records the description of dignity, crudeness and menacing accident in Chalisgaon. Ambedkar narrates awkward accident that happened to him in Chalisgaon. He was being taken to Maharwada from the railway station. In 1929 Bombay Government had appointed an enquiry committee to inspect the grief and grievances of the Dalits. Ambedkar had been

appointed a member of this committee. After completing the work of investigation of allegations of coercion and cruelties and grievances of Dalits, Ambedkar left for Bombay. He carried out fairly true investigations in the district of Khandesh. He got down on the Dhulia line to enquire the matter of social boycott against Dalits in the village. He went to the village and inspected the situations and conditions. He went back to Chalisgaon. He found the untouchables waiting for him. He was honorably garland and requested earnestly to go to Maharwada. It was about two miles from the railway station. There was a river between station and Maharwada village. After long wait he was made to sit in a Tonga. There were totally two people in it, Ambedkar and the driver. The driver, Ambedkar was not a fully experienced man. Just after the started the Tonga was collided with the motorcar. Ambedkar was thrown down and was badly injured. Tonga fell down from the culvert into the river. He was helpfully taken to Maharwada amidst the cries and lamentations of the people. On the investigations Ambedkar came to know that Tongawala was not ready to carry on untouchable passenger. In Gandhi: His Life and Thought, Gandhi's biographer, J. B. Kripalani aptly remarks: 'In India, the Brahmin may be as poor as the untouchable but he will not be ill-treated on that account. Untouchability in India, as the race and color problems in the West, rest upon the idea of the superiority of one section of people over another on account of their birth.' The untouchable, in spite of his being treated cruelly by the caste Hindus, yet continues to profess the Hindu religion. Ambedkar powerfully struggled for getting water and suffered insults and injustice. Similarly Gandhi fought for the removal of untouchability.

In his autobiography, The Story of My Experiments with Truth, Gandhi writes: The question of untouchability was naturally among the subjects discussed with the Ahmadabad friends. I made it clear to them that I should take the first opportunity of admitting an untouchable candidate to the Ashram, if he was otherwise worthy. In the fifth chapter of the autobiography, Ambedkar introduces impersonal reference of an untouchable school teacher and his sick wife regarding untouchability. The autobiographer narrates the brief account of horrible story of caste discrimination through giving the reference of the letter that was published in Gandhi's Journal, Young India dated on December 12, 1929. This letter was written by a Dalit teacher who suffered injustice and lost his sick wife due to the lack of proper medical treatment by a Hindu doctor. The letter tells: I went to call a doctor but he said he would not go to the house of a Harijan, nor was he prepared to examine the child. Then I went to Nagarseth and Garasia Darbar and pleaded them to help me. The Nagarseth stood surety to the doctor for my paying his fee of two rupees.

Conclusion-

In waiting for a Visa Ambedkar tirelessly struggles for his education, water, food, shelter and safety. It is exceptionally appreciable and inspirational. With the help of moral and humanitarian values like meekness, kindness, courage and patience Ambedkar endeavors powerfully to overcome the immoral thinking, attitude of the Hindus who were responsible for this injustice. He fought bravely against conservative tradition, custom, false belief, superstitions, social discrimination and immoral people who made Dalit people deprived of their basic and existential rights and due dignity on the ground of the hierarchical system in Indian national life. The autobiographer records sensibly this dreadful experience of the untouchable boy regarding the immoral practice of untouchability. These are the experiences of an untouchable boy who gets no regard and no dignity of human identity in his Govt. service as a village Patwari. It becomes pragmatically unfeasible for the untouchable boy to carry on his service as a village Patwari. The autobiography gives the reason why it becomes impractical to keep on his service. Because the villagers of biased mentality under the immoral practice of untouchability do not obey him. These are the deep rooted discrimination and prevalent practice of untouchability in prestigious Govt. offices in Indian society that might end his life. Following the description of Ambedkar's autobiography, Waiting for a Visa, on the conditions and positions of Dalit people in the biography of Ambedkar, Dr.Ambedkar Babasahab Ambedkar: Life and Mission, Dhananjay Keer writes: Their miseries did not end at this. As they were illiterate, ill-treated and untouchable for ages, all public services including police and military forces were closed to them. Naturally they followed hereditary occupations. Some of them plied trades of a lower and degrading order such as those of street-sweepers, scavengers and shoemakers. Ambedkar was essentially a man of moral consciousness, correct code of conduct and contribution. As a great reformer he appealed the human conscience of one and all with his universal appeal of mannerism, behaviorism with maximum intelligibility, sincerity and authenticity. His autobiography reveals how he struggles for basic essentials like water, food, education, shelter and safety under the existing system of untouchability.

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Conflicts of interest

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