

## Globalization and Its Ethical Limitations

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### Abstract

This paper philosophically deals with the theme of globalization from a subaltern perspective. Globalization is perceived as a boon rather than a bane in our time. Economic liberalization, internet revolution, capitalism and international integration are the few decisive opportunities that have been brought forth by globalization. However, normatively, has the benefit of globalization been felt by a big share of the population called Dalits? Has it improved the socio, economic, cultural and religious condition of Dalits at least in principle, or has it made their life worse off? - These are the few normative questions conceptually addressed in this paper.

**KEYWORDS:** Globalization, Multiculturalism, Subaltern, Moral Philosophy

### Introduction

We need to have moral clarity about ends and means. One can deliberate about best means but one should not deliberate about ends. When we have that clarity then we can have the audacity to hope for really a just society. "Democracy functions properly if only if there is no ambiguity about the essential moral structure of society. There are certain basic ends, certain absolute truth that has to be acknowledged. One can debate about morals as to how to achieve this just society, but if the moral ends themselves become a matter of debate then we allow the country to a short road to chaos" (Baron, 2009). Barrack Obama in his, 'Audacity of hope', recalled that the 19th century America saw moral geniuses who were the moral absolutist. They were moral absolutist about slavery; there was no ambiguity about the issue of slavery. Obama acknowledges, the fact that I am African American running for president because they were people who saw moral absolute (Obama, 2006). Untouchability is morally wrong; there is no space for debate about it. When one loses sight of that moral absolutist position, the road to chaos in the society opens up. Sometimes absolute truths are absolute.

Untouchability is an abhorrent practice, which is morally questionable. Historically, however, it was business, as usual, for dominant castes, to mistreat the ex-untouchables (Dalits). Conversely, with the advent of imperial power, the ex-untouchables were positively treated in 1936 by the British government for the purpose of giving some concessions because of their disadvantageous position in the social hierarchy. They came to be later known as scheduled castes and were called "Harijans" by M. K. Gandhi.

### Who are Dalits?

Dr Ambedkar, in his "Caste in India, Their Mechanism, Genesis, and Development", addressed the origin and development of caste in a unique manner. Ambedkar believed that it is a complex task to explain the origin of the caste system. The Aryans, Dravidians and Mongolians came to India and settled there; which gave rise to a new, homogeneous cultural identity. It is in this homogenous society that caste began to flourish. Ambedkar believed, if caste was a federation of heterogeneous

groups coming together, then the annihilation of it would have been a simple job. The priestly caste in order to maintain purity within their priestly group closed themselves from within with the introduction of strict endogamy. Later other groups closed themselves too in the imitation of the priestly caste. There was a group of people known as the untouchables (Dalits), who remained outside the traditional caste division; being subjected to socio, economic, cultural and religious segregation (Ambedkar, 1916).

Ambedkar further believed, Manu was not the creator of casteism, but the upholder of Dharma associated with caste hierarchy. Since caste originated in a homogenous specificity of Indian Culture, it becomes radically impossible to annihilate, added to the religious injunction professed by the Purusha Shukta that makes the destruction of caste an unachievable phenomenon (Ambedkar, 1916).

However, Dalits continue to live with untold humiliation and indefensible caste-based discrimination till date. Whose shadow is considered polluting to the higher caste groups. The caste discrimination has taken modern form today, which is why the government machinery refuses to call them Dalit (which means 'broken people'); the judiciary mechanism is in a hurry to dilute the law that protected them from century-old immoral behaviour.

After having analysed, who are Dalits and how historical injustice was meted out to them now let me define and elucidate 'globalization', and then let me conceptually evaluate their condition in the era of globalization. This paper normatively posits that globalization does not seem to be helping the Dalits, instead, globalization has provided newer forms of caste based discrimination.

### **What is Globalization?**

The process of globalization cannot be seen in a strictly definitional way. Some argue it as a set of experimental space. These experimental spaces are technological, the flow of financial capital, political and cultural. Others look it as a new industrial revolution driven by powerful new information and communication technologies (Kumar, 2001). Appadurai argues, "we can do our best to see globalization as just a new phase of capitalism, or imperialism, colonialism, or modernization or developmentalism" (Appadurai, 2001). Further, Tomlinson observed, "Globalization refers to rapidly developing process of complex interconnections between cultures, institutions and individuals worldwide. It is a social process which involves a compression of time and space, shrinking distances through a dramatic reduction in the time taken either physically or representational, to cross them, so marking the world seen smaller and in a certain sense bringing human beings 'closer' to one another" (Tomlinson, 1996).

Academically, the term globalization includes mixed concepts such as homogenization, differentiation, hybridization, plurality, localism, and relativism (Jogdand, 2002). An analysis of the above mentioned views of scholars help us to conclude that globalization is a current debate best understood in practice. Although, globalization is well comprehended in the area of empirical research, nevertheless, moral and political philosophy has contributed substantially by normatively evaluating, assumptions and norms that are embedded in the idea of globalization.

Martin Heidegger though did not articulate the idiom of globalization in his philosophical writings, yet, recent philosophers locate few areas in his writing that seem to have anticipated the discourse on globalization- that was to evoke the contemporary political philosophers in recent time. Heidegger was aware of the free flow of ideas in the then western world. Therefore, he has made statements like 'abolition of Distance'; 'virtual-reality'; 'everything is equally near and equally far'; 'uniform distanceless', etc (Heidegger, 1950). Political philosophy is concerned as to what should be the normative approach of a state towards a global force called globalization. Does the state have a moral obligation to analyse the impact of globalization towards its citizens? What if globalization does not assist in the establishment of an egalitarian society! What if social inequality increases, the poor become worse off; does a state have an ethical obligation to protect a historically oppressed group with positive discrimination and affirmative action. These are the some of the few normative puzzles political philosophers have to resolve while dealing with the idea of globalization. Though, John Dewey, optimistically envisioned a 'new world' with the advent of globalization, yet he expressed confused reaction considering the constitution and preservation of a democratic society. He feared that an excessive movement of people would hamper to have a stable democratic society (Dewey 1927, 140). In fact, political philosophers have certainly raised normative concerns around the idea of globalization. Likewise, it makes perfect sense, when we normatively analyse the status of Dalits in a globalised world. Whether their life has become better off or worse off in the era of globalization? It seems to me perfectly plausible, that by raising such normative concerns pertaining to Dalits, in the light of the available empirical evidence, we substantially contribute towards the discourse of building up of a just political society.

### **Impact of Globalization on Dalits**

In this section the paper would theoretically argue and normatively analyse the impact of globalization towards the life of Dalits. This section too will take recourse to available empirical evidence (wherever necessary), in order to back the philosophical arguments. Globalization is analysed under the rubric of affirmative action, religion, Diaspora, and the private sector.

**Affirmative action:** Normatively, affirmative action is not introduced as a substitute for economic emancipation. The objective of affirmative action is for representation and to correct the injustice done to a community, in this case, (the ex-untouchables) are unjustly treated for thousands of years. Therefore, lowering down the objective of reservation to economic emancipation is to miss the very principle of reservation itself. Today's generations of people have forgotten rather pretend to be unaware of the immoral treatment done to the ex-untouchables. This sense of indifference in understanding the crime committed makes dominant people abuse and defame Dalit students. The case of suicide of Rohit Verma in the prestigious University of Hyderabad is a burning example as to how even in the era of globalization Dalit scholars are discriminated on an institutional basis. Furthermore, the phenomena of under implementation of reservation in the admission policy of Jawaharlal Nehru University, MPhil/ PhD written exam is another example as to how a historically segregated section is systematically deprived of higher education in the institute of higher learning. This raises few normative questions for self-examination, whether the fruits of globalization, in terms of liberal learning, understanding the social identity, conflicts and power relation have failed to enlighten and educate the political citizens!

Whether the democratic state has moral obligation to act further when the original principle of affirmative action has failed or is under - implemented?

**Religious Status:** Many of the Dalits are Hindu; nevertheless, as an impact of globalization, Semitic religions spread across the globe without major impediments; Christianity has been an alternative to the discriminated people. However, there are cases of caste discrimination in Indian Church; this contagious nature of caste-based discrimination makes the life of ‘Dalit Christians’ all the more painful by uncovering the untold misery caused to them in the former Hindu religious order. Arundhati Roy writes thus, “I grew up with my mother in a Syrian Christian family in Ayemenem, a small village in communist-ruled Kerala in southwest India. And yet all around me were the fissures and cracks of caste. Ayemenem had its own separate ‘Paraiyan’ church where ‘Paraiyan’ priests preached to an ‘Untouchable’ congregation (Roy, 2014).”

The Sikh community also fails to treat Dalits that indeed gave rise to the Sikh Ravidasia; Pasmada Muslims are the example as to how the universally acclaimed Islamic brotherhood treats their Dalit Muslim population at least, in the matters of liturgy and power sharing. Today, Dalits face religious discrimination, whichever, the religion they wish to get converted to. This situation raises normative queries as to whether Dalits have benefitted and are treated with equality like any other believers? Since there is an empirical evidence of violation of principles of equality at the religious space, this evokes few ethical challenges to the role of globalization. Globalization, that has enabled free movement of religious personnel and has ensured religious freedom on a global basis, yet somehow has failed to address the age-old cause of Dalits (Discrimination at religious space).

**Privatization:** Prof. Sukdev Thorat while addressing the issue of privatization and their impact on Dalit, states that the aggressive introduction of the private sector without concern for social justice is an instrument to perpetuate age-old discrimination. Isolation and exclusion are a human state that causes greater harm to the overall growth of an individual. Dalits have been forced into isolation and exclusion. Discrimination is a milder form of isolation and exclusion. Except for the Brahmins, every caste suffered discrimination. Warrior caste faced discrimination on the point that they cannot perform worship; the trading caste faced discrimination on the basis that they can neither perform worship nor participate in the army. The same logic can be applied to Shudras. However, Dalits not only faced caste based discriminations but also, faced isolation and exclusion. They were isolated and excluded from the society: which is anti-human and anti-social in nature. This excluded and segregated group had to be brought back to the human society. The constitution democratic India provided various mechanisms to bring the former untouchables into the so-called human society. However, the inception of the private sector without any space for social justice reverses the principles of justice enshrined in the constitution. Globalization which is a boon in itself has become a bane for the depressed class. Privatization in itself promises better opportunity and social mobility yet has failed to address the question of representation of a depressed group – this poses a moral challenge to the nature of operation and the very constitution of private sector.

**Diaspora and Dalits:** Ambedkar had observed in his “Caste in India, their mechanism, Genesis and Development”, that if Hinduism becomes a global religion,

then caste discrimination will turn out to be a global phenomena. In the era of globalization, as the Hindus migrated to the Americas, Canada, Australia and Europe, they have spread the horror of caste the place they migrated to. Durban conference was an example how people from various nations testified that they experienced caste based discrimination in the nations where Hindus migrated. A 'Dalit Maid' was discriminated at a dominant Hindu home in Britain, has given rise to a demand for an anti- discrimination law in the British parliament. The demand for an anti-discrimination law in other parts of the world has exhibited how global movement and free flow of labour has led to a spread of a criminal behaviour. The Indian Diaspora, which claims to be a sanitised, puritan and progressive community has modernised caste discrimination. Multiculturalism, which is good in itself, has become a vehicle of caste based discrimination and the proliferation of the same.

### **Conclusion**

As a concluding remark, this paper has normatively dealt the question of globalization felt by the subaltern. In the first section, the paper understood who Dalits are; in the second section, the paper understood the concept of globalization; in the final section, the paper delved deeper into the dilemmas experienced by the Dalit community in theory and practice, in the light of globalization. Questions of Political Philosophy such as justice, equality, and moral obligation of democratic state towards the life of Dalits in the globalised world became the core of the paper.

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