

DR.B.R.AMBEDKAR: A RAY OF HOPE FOR DOWNTRODDEN IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Dr.Babasaheb Bhimarao Ramji Ambedkar popularly known as Dr.B.R.Ambedkar was born in 1891 was a multifaceted personality, an intellectual revolutionary, a ray of hope for downtrodden in India and a statesman of the 20th century. He was the 'beacon of light' for the millions of depressed, oppressed and exploited people of India. The contributions of Dr.B.R.Ambedkar pervade the entire gamut of social sciences. Therefore his legacies to knowledge make him to socialist, historian, economist, political thinker and strategist, law maker and cultural revolutionary. It would be very difficult and at times even meaningless to classify his contributions as economic, sociological, political and cultural with regard to multi-disciplinary nature of his thought-process. The present paper is to make an attempt to recognize the interrelationship in Dr.Ambedkar's thought process so as to appreciate his ideological basis of political, economic and social justice towards upliftment of downtrodden class in India.This research gives closer and analytical insight into the thoughts of Dr.Ambedkar and provides an answer to the question of whether we the Indian, achieve human equality, gender respect in the society, social justice in the light of social and political philosophy of him whose memory will ever guide the nation on the path of justice, liberty and equality.

KEYWORDS: Dr.B.R.Ambedkar, Social Justice, Empowerment, Untouchables, Democracy

Introduction:

Dr.Babasaheb Ambedkar was born as an untouchable Mahar and like Stalin, in unfavourable social ambience, yet the way he revolutionized the social life in India is unique. Abraham Lincoln united the southern and the northern states of America and for the first time, assuaging the tension between the Blacks and the Whites, laid the foundation of a democratic government in his country. Stalin on the contrary, restricting all individual liberties, established the socialistic pattern of economy in his country. Dr.Ambedkar intending to integrate socialism with democracy, legally demolished untouchability which had religious sanction of thousands of years, presented the nation with a constitution based on the principle of equality for all human beings, thus laying the foundations of democratic values after two and half thousands of years. The life of such a unique personality as Dr.Ambedkar although exciting and full of conflicts, is equally edifying. He played an important role in the welfare of the downtrodden in India

Objective of the study:

1. To provide a survey of socialistic, economic ideas of Babasaheb Ambedkar with a view of delineate a place for him as a social reformer in Indian philosophy.
2. To analyse the Dr.Ambedkar's theory of 'social and women empowerment thought narrating the causes and sources of underdevelopment and poverty with a view to appreciate the relevance of his policy prescriptions to promote human resources development and empowerment of the *Dalits*
3. To evaluate the various development programmes for promoting the socio-economic empowerment of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes i.e.*Dalits* under various five-year plans with a view to throw light on the extent of '*Dalit*' emancipation.

Dr.Ambedkar on Social Justice:

Many countries as on today have reservation policy regarding employment, educational and housing opportunities for the poor and the different types of religious, linguistic and other forms of minorities. In other words, reservation is accepted as a policy instrument to create economic and social opportunities for the welfare of the discriminated and oppressed calss.

Since, India under British rule from the beginnings of 20th century the idea of job reservation in government services for minorities was discussed and time and again had become a matter of collective bargain between Hindus and Muslims and thus, it had become a political controversy. Thereby, reservation was viewed as a instrument of equitable distribution of government jobs.

'The Mysore, the 1918 committee headed by Sir Lesley Miller, then chief justice of Mysore recommended reservation for non-Brahmin communities and preferences to duly qualified candidates of the depressed classes in the services. In Bomany presidency also the Marathas were given reservation and the Lingayats of the Bombay-Karnataka area were grouped along with Marathas into an intermediate group and given job concessions. In 1927, reservation was provided to different communities including the Brahmins in the Madras Presidency. Since 1925, the British Indian government followed a policy of reserving a certain percentage of direct appointments to the Government service to reduce communal inequalities"ⁱ.

Dr.Ambedkar was successful in convincing Mahatma Gandhi about the need for separate constitutional opportunities for depressed classes. This is obvious from the Poona pact between Gandhiji and Dr.Ambedkar. The Kaka Kalekar Commission, the Backward classes commission, set up the government of India in 1953 made the following noteworthy recommendations:

1. Undertaking caste-wise enumeration of population in the Census of 1961
2. Relating social backwardness of a class to its low position in the traditional caste hierarchy of Hindu society
3. Treating all women as a class "backward"
4. Reservation of 10 percent seats in all technical and profession institutions for qualified students of backward classes

5. Minimum reservation of Vacancies in all government services and local bodies for other backward classes on the following scale: Class I-25%, Class II-33% and Class III and IV-40%.

Hence, it may be observed that reservation of jobs and seats in educational institutions on low caste basis has been accepted as a instrument of social justice to provide equal opportunities for the depressed and backward classes in India. This is an important contribution of Dr.Ambedkar not only for SC's but also for the upliftment of other backward classes and women.

Dr.Ambedkar on Human Rights:

Dr.Ambedkar had provided for various constitutional safeguards to ensure human rights. Hence, they are the measures for achieving social justice in India.

Dr.Ambedkar came to be closely associated with the drafting of the Indian Constitution as the Chairman of the drafting committee and as a member of the Advisory committee on Minorities and Human Rights. As the questioned spokesman of the untouchables, Dr.Ambedkar kept in mind the interests of the Scheduled Castes while participating in the process of drafting the Constitution. But this does not mean that Dr.Ambedkar was not alive to other forms of social inequality and exploitation and the existence of other backward classes. In fact, Dr.Ambedkar was party to a general consensus in the constituent Assembly that the terms "Backward Classes" would cover three principal components the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and the other Backwards Classes. It was agreed that the other Backward Classes would be designated at the local level.ⁱⁱ

Dr.Ambedkar was successful in formulating a number of constitutional safeguards for protecting Civil Rights and ensure social justice through the state sponsored development programmes for protecting the human rights and promote total empowerment of Dalits in India. Accordingly, the state has accepted as its responsibility the task of promoting socio-economic development of the Dalits.

Strategy for Harijans:

The incidence of poverty, unemployment and underemployment is very large among Harijans and Girijans. Therefore several programmes like the schemes of industrial training, assistance for setting up cottage and small-scale industrial units etc. have been undertaken to increase their physical resource base and to increase their standard of living and ensure social equity among them. To make these programmes result-oriented, several State-sponsored organizations can be entrusted with the job of creating and nurturing industrial entrepreneurship among the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. In this connection, the role of cottage and small-scale industries, co-operatives, financial institutions, education etc., will have to be clearly defined. According to Dr.Ambedkar, if the industrial entrepreneurship developed properly, would definitely contribute its mite towards the battle against poverty, unemployment and underemployment.

After the promulgation of the Constitution, Dr.Ambedkar militated in favour of the reform of the Hindu personal law. He wanted to implement in a revised manner the Hindu Code Bill that the British had gradually evolved. After more than a century of legislation-ranging from the Abolition of Sati (1829) to the Hindu Women's Right to Property Act (1937)-they had decided in

the 1940s to consolidate in one code the reformed Hindu personal Law. In 1948, Jawaharlal Nehru entrusted the drafting of the new code to a sub-committee of the Assembly and nominated Dr.Ambedkar as its head.ⁱⁱⁱ

Dr.Ambedkar and Conversion:

The idea of converting to another religion in order to escape from the caste system logically ensued from Ambedkar's analysis of Hinduism, whose originality and strength laid in its demonstration that in this civilization social hierarchy was consubstantial to religion. To leave it was thus the only means to attain equality. The first reference made by Dr.Ambedkar to a conversion of the Untouchables dates back to 1927. During the Mahad Conference, he had indeed declared: "We want equal rights in society. We will achieve them as far as possible while remaining within the Hindu fold or, if necessary by kicking away this worthless Hindu identity. And if it becomes necessary to give up Hinduism it would no longer be necessary for us to bother about temples^{iv}. He has been converted in October 1956, a few weeks before his death on 6 December 1956. Buddhism formed the best possible choice for Dr.Ambedkar because it was an egalitarian religion born in India-not the creation of outsiders^v.

Conclusion:

Dr.Ambedkar gave an inspiring self confidence to the untouchables who were blind, deaf and dumb. Some called him Moses, some Abraham Lincoln and some Booker T.Washington. He was a splendid organizer. He began movements to give an identity to the untouchables. Then he built up organizations of land labour and industrial workers. His newspapers to create awareness. He was democratic to the core, so when he prepared announcements, it was through his party that he published them^{vi}. He practiced equality of human being. Hence, he has been regarded as 'A Ray of Hope' for downtrodden in India.

Notes and References:

ⁱ Thomas Mathew , Ambedkar:Reform or Revolution, New Delhi,1991, p.122

ⁱⁱ D.Jeevan Kumar, New Delhi, 1991

ⁱⁱⁱ CAD, vol.5, Speech of April 9, 1948

^{iv} Quoted in M.S.Gore, The Social Context of an ideology,: Ambedkar's political and social Thought", New Delhi: Sage Publications,p.91

^v For example, Hinduism took over Lord Buddha by making him Vishnu's seventh incarnation.

^{vi} Vasant Moon , Dr.Babasaheb Ambedkar (translated by Asha Damle),National Book Trust, India, 2004,p.222