



DR. B.R. AMBEDKAR'S IDEAS ON SOCIAL JUSTICE IN INDIAN SOCIETY

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Abstract

Resting on Ambedkar's thoughts, the Indian constitution guarantees equal rights to all, based on social justice and human dignity. It is observed, however, that Ambedkar's ideas of social justice could not be realized in a proper manner over the years. As such, his concept of justice will have to be propagated by institutions through civil society. Ambedkar was concerned about the overall development of the vulnerable sections of the Indian society and he chose to demolish existing caste discrimination by enacting the Constitution. Therefore, Ambedkar's ideas of social justice remain relevant in contemporary Indian society in promoting constitutional and legal methods for upholding the rights and dignity of the vulnerable sections.

Keywords: Ambedkar's thoughts, social justice, contemporary Indian society, legal methods

Introduction

Dr Ambedkar worked for the betterment of the people of India, particularly the downtrodden and the oppressed class. He was a champion of reforms and is considered the real hero of the Indian Constitution. The Father of the Constitution of India, Dr. Bhim Rao Ramji Ambedkar, popularly known as "Babasaheb" was an educationist, jurist, social reformer, economist and one of the greatest political leaders of India who relentlessly struggled to reform the Indian social structure. He was a man with a vision who was ready to serve the nation from the core of his heart. Throughout his political career, he worked for the welfare of the society, especially for women and the downtrodden class. He made laws that helped the lower caste people to have equal rights of education like everyone. For these works, Ambedkar received the Bharat Ratna award in 1990. He received this award after his death. Ambedkar was a freedom fighter. He worked a lot with Gandhiji to help in the independence of India. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar is a great national figure in our country. We should pay him our respect for his laws and equality. Because of him, everyone is receiving equal education today. Ambedkar has gifted India and her people a bright and beautiful future.

THE VIEWS OF DR. B.R. AMBEDKAR ON SOCIAL REFORM

Meaning of Social Justice according to Ambedkar

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar held that every citizen of India must be treated equally and should not be deprived of any opportunity and equality based on gender, work and caste differences. Therefore, the social justice for him is associated with social equality and individual rights. He wanted to establish a society in which an individual is the center of all social purposes, a society which is based on equality, equity of opportunities, liberty and fraternity.

Caste system and Social Exclusion

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar identified caste as an important institution, in understanding the Indian society. In evolving his political theory, one could not ignore the role of caste system in India. No political theory is possible without some understanding of the caste. Ambedkar is the first thinker who systematized the conception of caste in an analytical way. Earlier discussions on caste are ethnographic and descriptive in nature. His approach is more political rather ethnographical. He made an attempt to understand the origin and functioning of caste in order to understand the lives of the victims of the caste system. He understood that whole Indian social system was founded on the caste and the beliefs, customs, knowledge all are centered on caste system. All the human activities are determined by the caste. Caste has social, political and economic implications. In simple caste is the primary institution of Indian society and other institutions like family, state, nation, and school is directly or indirectly related/influenced by it.

Ambedkar tried to endow the lower castes with a glorious history of sons of the soil to help them acquire an alternative –not caste based –identity, to regain their self- respect and overcome their divisions. In *The Untouchables, who were they and why they became Untouchables?* (1948), Ambedkar refutes Western authors explaining caste hierarchy by resorting to racial factors¹. His interpretation is conspicuously complex. He explains that all primitive societies have been one day or the conquered by attacker who raised themselves above the native tribes. In breaking up, these tribes as a matter of rule give birth to a peripheral group that he calls the Broken Men. Ambedkar's understanding of the caste system undergoes certain significant changes over the period of his writing. Initially, he had argued that the characteristic of caste was superimposed on exogamy in a shared cultural ambiance. He found that the caste name is an important feature.

The Untouchables who were they and why they became untouchables?

In the preface of this book Dr. Ambedkar mentioned “ I mention this because in the course of my investigations into the origin of untouchability and other interconnected problems I have been confronted with many missing links” he tried to examining the social file of primitive society to get link of untouchability in order to find out whether or not it recognized untouchability in the sense mentioned above there can be no doubt that primitive society not only did believe in the notion of defilement but the belief had given rise to a live system of well- defined body of rites and rituals². Further Babasaheb conceptualized the untouchability based on the nature of practices he says “The Hindus who touch them and become polluted thereby can become pure by undergoing purificatory ceremonies. But there is nothing which can make the untouchables pure. They are born impure, they are impure while they live, they die the death of the impure, and they give birth to children who are born with the stigma of Untouchability affixed to them. It is a case of permanent, hereditary stain which nothing can cleanse.

Social Awakening

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar had several successful innings in his long career. His dynamic personality, disciple life oriented by consistent hard work greatly impressed the economically weaker sections in our subordination in fact he studied their deep rooted problems, set and discussed with them and made the aware of their basic rights. Being a political thinker, he gave vent this feelings through his public speeches and several writings which had deep impact on them. Pandit Nehru recognized his merits and appointed him as minister in his cabinet³. He was well conversant with the constitution law and was the maker of our constitution along with a galaxy of legal experts. He also played an appreciable role in giving vents to his feelings with regard to the linguistic. In Hindu society, caste is still the most powerful factor in determining a person's dignity⁴. The caste system is the result of the Hindu belief in Reincarnation and Karma. The four castes eventually developed into a social mosaic of 3000 sub-castes, with the untouchables at the bottom of the list and actually outside the list. Such a rigid caste system is not found anywhere in the world outside India. A person is born into a caste⁵. Once born in that caste, his status is predetermined and immutable. Birth decides one's status and this cannot be altered by any talent the person may accumulate. Similarly, the caste in which a person is born predetermines what vocation the person will pursue. One has to choice. Birth decides the occupation of the person in the question.

Philosophy of Dr. Ambedkar

Dr. Ambedkar has played very eminent role to mobilize the Dalits in India. He has appeared as the leader of the community in Maharashtra by 1920. He was the first highly educated and active leader from within the community⁶. He gave the slogan-Educate, Unite and Agitate for the Social mobility of Dalits in India. He has organized a movement to accelerate political, religious, social and educational mobility among Dalits at large scale in 1924, he has formed 'Bahiskrit Hitkarini sabha', an educational and cultural organization which aimed at improving the social conditions of the Dalit community⁷. To mobilize the dalits of India through the political process, Dr. Ambedkar has formed three political parties named independent labour party, the scheduled caste federation, and republican party of India (1956)⁸.

Through the religious conversion, from Hinduism to Buddhism, Dr. Ambedkar has led the religious mobility among dalits especially mahars of Maharashtra. He has declared that I born in Hinduism because it was not in my hand but I will never die as a hindu. After this declaration he had adopted Buddhism in 1956 and, mobilized and inspired Dalits of India to do so⁹. Dr. Ambedkar has also launched the movement of temple entry at kalaram mandir, nasik and Parvati temple at Pune in 1920-30¹⁰ for the equal social status, dignity and self- respect of Dalits.

Dr. Ambedkar has greatly emphasized on education for Dalits with the view that only education could liberate them from traditional bondage and subordination to the upper castes and classes. In his opinion, education would enlighten them and expose them to realize their long cherished goals of embracing equality, liberty, fraternity and justice¹¹. Since the time of Ambedkar, Dalits in the country have started to achieve education. Along the education and socio –economic achievement upward mobility in several domains of their life but the degree of their status mobility is definitely low¹².

One can also argue about Dr. Ambedkar that he wishes to establish social democracy in India. Dr. Ambedkar expanded the meaning of political freedom by incorporating in its fold the less talked about issue of freedom from internal colonialism- caste based social exclusion. He assigned special importance to the principles of social democracy by championing the cause of the socially excluded sections of the Indian society. He wanted to strengthen the emerging sphere of political democracy in India by substantiating it with the institutionalization of the less talked about phenomenon of social democracy (Ram, 2010).

B.R. Ambedkar's views on equality

Equality is a prominent political ideal of the present day democratic world. It is an essential ingredient for social justice. It constitutes the voice of the oppressed against injustice for changing unfair social conditions. In this sense it is complementary to the principle of liberty. It is essential to understand the nature and essence of equality in order to determine its proper relationship with the principle of liberty.

The problem of equality and inequality had figured in political thought since earliest times. Aristotle thought that inequality was the cause of rebellion in many states¹³. The modern idea of equality seeks the correction of the prevailing inequalities insofar as they can be proved to be unjust according to the prevailing social consciousness. The modern idea of equality is derived from the theory of rights. The term equality has its root in Latin¹⁴. It refers the sameness in quantity, quality, size and rank for one thing or a person. It has uniformity in application or effect. In other words a person or thing possesses same rank and status to another. This explanation reveals that equality is a prescriptive term. As man is a rational being, he is endowed with the faculty of reason. By creation all men are equal. Naturally the physical, emotional and intellectual needs of all men are similar. Hence, they are entitled to equal rights and treatment in all institutions. However, it has certain limitation in its applications and enforcements because nature has created all things unequal.

Equality makes the content of liberty more relevant and substantive. The principle of equality is invoked to prevent some section of society from acquiring unlimited money, power or prestige. It is only intended to restrict the element of exploitation so that other sections of society are not deprived of their due share in these advantages. Further, it aims at widening the base of social benefits lest these benefits are concerned by a small and vocal minority impoverishing the rest of the community¹⁵. It is evident that liberty and equality are human rights which do not emanate from very different sources. They are based on the same logic and they are intended to serve the same social purpose. The terms human rights and civil rights refer a man's freedom to express, to preach and to live as he desired¹⁶. Thus, B.R. Ambedkar attempted all the possible methods and strategies to awaken the untouchables towards liberty and equality¹⁷. Hence, the present study is significant in this respect¹⁸. Equality is a prominent political ideal of the present day democratic world. It

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Annihilation of the caste system

B.R. Ambedkar worked for social integration in India. He believed in the in any form and wanted to get rid our society of this curse. He belonged for a community which had been suffering for generations form the ills of caste system and oppression. Hence, he devoted his career to the cause of depressed classes. In course of time he became as a messiah of suppressed community. He evolved a social ideology which is considered by many as the best in the Indian society. Hence, the present study tries to examine his social ideology²⁰. Ambedkar was called upon to play a stupendous role in his capacity as chairman of the drafting committee of the constituent assembly and as a minister of Law in the Nehru Cabinet. He was entrusted with the responsibility of safeguarding the rights of every Indian, especially for depressed sections. A quick glance at the provisions enumerated in part III, IV and XVI of the Indian Constitution.

Conclusion

Conclusion Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's vision of a socially equal and just India remains profoundly significant. His ideas on caste system eradication, women's rights, and economic reforms continue to guide efforts toward a more inclusive society. By understanding and embracing Ambedkar's vision, we can contribute to creating a nation where every individual enjoys equal rights, opportunities, and dignity.

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